

A STUDY OF FACTORS RELATED TO PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AT THE WORKPLACE

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Abstract: A study of factors related to psychological empowerment of women at the workplace.

The main objective of this study is to determine the relationship of psychological empowerment with job satisfaction, organization commitment, employee effectiveness, trust in management and job engagement of women employees. This paper examines the contribution of the four dimensions as defined by Thomas and Velthouse's (1990) and Spreitzer (1995), multidimensional conceptualization of psychological empowerment and overall psychological empowerment in predicting various outcomes of empowerment: job satisfaction, organization commitment and employee effectiveness. This study also determines the role of trust in management and job engagement in predicting psychological empowerment. Standardised questionnaires were used to collect data. The sample size was of 180 employees employed in various organizations. The data collected was subjected to bivariate and regression analysis. The findings suggest that there is a significant relationship between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction, psychological empowerment and organization commitment and psychological empowerment and employee effectiveness. Trust also emerged as a powerful correlate. The findings also show that women employees in service industry and govt. sector feel more empowered. The study has implications for organisations as well as social policy framers.

Introduction: The Objective Of This Study Is To Determine The Relationship Of Psychological Empowerment With Job Satisfaction, Organization Commitment, Employee Effectiveness, Trust In Management And Job Engagement Of Women Employees. This Paper Examines The Contribution Of The Four Dimensions As Defined By Thomas And Velthouse's (1990) And Spreitzer (1995), Multidimensional Conceptualization Of Psychological Empowerment And Overall Psychological Empowerment In Predicting Various Outcomes Of Empowerment: Job Satisfaction, Organization Commitment And Employee Effectiveness. This Study Also Determines The Role Of Trust In Management And Job Engagement In Predicting Psychological Empowerment. Standardised Questionnaires Were Used To Collect Data. The Sample Size Was Of 210 Women Employees Employed In Six Organizations. The Quantitative Data Collected Was Subjected To Bivariate And Regression Analysis. The Findings Suggest That There Is A Significant Relationship Between Psychological Empowerment And Job Satisfaction, Psychological Empowerment And Organization Commitment And Psychological Empowerment And Employee Effectiveness. Trust Also Emerged As A Powerful Correlate. The Findings Also Show That Women Employees In Service Industry And Govt. Sector Feel More Empowered. The Study Has Implications For Organisations As Well As Social Policy Framers Organizations are constantly transforming, trying to improve production and profitability, being able to adapt to change, compete with the best in the uncertain environment, be able to keep employees satisfied,

committed to organization, and effective in their performance organization need to empower their employees, make them feel empowered (psychological empowerment) rather than failing under the pressure of the competing organizations. When women are more satisfied with their jobs, committed to their organization and psychologically empowered, they could help organizations to thrive instead of trying to survive in a competitive environment (c. Bhatnagar, 2005; Bhatnagar, 2007; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997) (PIETERS, 2011)¹⁴.

Globalization has opened up various opportunities and challenges for organizations to compete internationally. Besides technological advancement, a developed, competent and empowered workforce will give organizations an edge over its competitors. Companies need to develop talent that can be routed across global sphere in order to compete globally. This can be achieved if employees feel or relate themselves to their organization.

Objective of the Study: The objective of the paper is to determine whether there is a relationship between Felt Empowerment or Psychological Empowerment and Psychological Variables for working women.

- 1) To determine the relationship between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction of women employees.
- 2) To determine the relationship between psychological empowerment and organization commitment.
- 3) To determine the relationship between psychological empowerment and employee effectiveness.

4) To determine the relationship between psychological empowerment and trust in management.

5) To determine the relationship between psychological empowerment and job engagement.

Research Hypotheses: This Study Will Test The Following Hypotheses:

H1: There Is A Significant Relationship Between Psychological Empowerment And Job Satisfaction In Women.

H2: There is a significant relationship between psychological empowerment and organization commitment in women.

H5: There is a significant relationship between psychological empowerment and job engagement by women .

Significance of the Study: The organizations where the research was done will also make use of these results to implement/consider implementing strategies to try and enhance psychological empowerment, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and effectiveness. The study focusses on women employees as organisations are trying to increase the empowerment of women. This could also increase the well being of the women employees as well as increasing productivity and profits of the organization.

In the future organizations could also make use of these findings to help them thrive in the dynamic, ever changing and competitive environment.

Employee Empowerment has received a wide recognition as an important subject in management circles, mainly, because it is seen as one of the fundamental elements of managerial and organizational effectiveness that increases when power and control are shared in organization (Ergeneli, et al., 2007). Generally, employee empowerment comprises of an innovative approach in working with people and a shift of power from the top management control to lower level management of the organization. (Tzafirir, et al., 2004)^{(Hamed, 2010)9}

Today, more than 70 percent of organizations have adopted some kind of empowerment initiative for at least part of their workforce. To be successful in today's business environment, companies need the knowledge, ideas, energy, and creativity of every employee, from front line workers to the top level managers in the executive suite. The best companies accomplish this by empowering their employees to take initiative without prodding, to serve the collective interests of the company without being micro-managed, and to act like owners of the business^{(Spreitzer, Empowerment at work, 2007)15}

Definition Of Empowerment: Employee Empowerment Is A Term Used To Describe An Employee Mindset of Responsibility, Accountability, Capability, And Autonomy. In Terms Of Business, Empowerment Is The Opposite Of Micromanagement. For This Reason, It May Be Very Beneficial For Managers To Empower Employees, Thus Fostering Employee Reliability And An Environment Of Team-Work.

Notions of empowerment are derived from theories of participative management and employee involvement (Spreitzer, Kizilos and Nason, 1997). The theories of participative management advocate that managers share decision-making power with employees to enhance performance and work satisfaction (Wagner^{III}, 1994). Lawler^{III}, (1991) on the other hand argues that employee involvement emphasizes cascading power, information, rewards, and training to the lowest level possible in the organizational hierarchy to increase worker discretion^{(Mushipe, 2011)12}

From a mechanist or top-down approach, employee involvement is about delegation and accountability (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1999)^{(Mushipe, 2011)12}

The notion of empowerment derived from alienation, industrial democracy, participative management and job enrichment (Eccles, 1993; Spreitzer et al., 1999b) and has become widespread (Bartunek and Spreitzer, 2006). It concerns a form of employee involvement initiative (Wilkinson, 1998) and refers to the degree with which employees are encouraged to make certain decisions without consulting their supervisors, so that organizational dynamics are initiated at the bottom (Michailova, 2002). Empowerment practices decentralize power by involving employees in decision making (Carless, 2004)^{(Sut I, 2011)17}

Over the last two decades, two complementary perspectives on empowerment at work have emerged in the literature (Liden & Arad, 1996)^{(Spreitzer, Empowerment at work, 2007)15}

The first is more macro and focuses on the social-structural (or contextual) conditions that enable empowerment in the workplace.

The second is more micro in orientation and focuses on the psychological experience of empowerment at work.

Psychological empowerment: Psychological empowerment has its roots in early work on employee alienation and quality of work life. Rather than focusing on managerial practices that share power with employees at all levels, the psychological perspective is focused on how employees experience empowerment at work.

This perspective refers to empowerment as the personal beliefs that employees have about their role

in relation to the organization (Spreitzer, Empowerment at work, 2007)¹⁵.

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) argued that empowerment is multifaceted and that its essence cannot be captured by a single concept. They defined empowerment more broadly as increased intrinsic task motivation manifested in a set of four cognitions reflecting an individual orientation to his or her work role: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact (Sut I, 2011)¹⁷.

- The first component, meaningfulness, relates to the value of the task, involving intrinsic caring about a given task. The employees' perceptions of how meaningful their tasks are affect their feelings of empowerment (1990).
- Competence, the second component, refers to the belief that individuals are able to perform the task activities skillfully when they try. Hançer and George (2003) assert that this component was the strongest control mechanism for empowerment, which only works when employees want to be competent.
- The third component, choice or self determination, is the degree to which employees feel a causal responsibility for choosing or regulating task actions.
- The last component, impact, is the degree to which employees perceive their behaviors as 'making a difference' in terms of accomplishing the task. In other words, the "employee feels that the work has impact beyond the immediate job" (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990).

Job Satisfaction: Many Authors Have Defined Job Satisfaction From Different Viewpoints Through Time And Considering Different Models To Substantiate Their Views.

Hirschfeld (2000) defined intrinsic job satisfaction as the way in which a person feels about the nature of the tasks itself and extrinsic job satisfaction as the way an employee feels about aspects of the work situation that are external to the job tasks. Job satisfaction is defined as "a state that depends on the interaction of employees, their personal characteristics and expectations with the working environment and the organisation" (Pinikahana & Happell, 2004, p. 120). They have highlighted that this is a state, meaning that it can be altered and influenced depending on how the employee see/experience these interventions (PIETERS, 2011)¹⁴.

Employee empowerment is thought to enhance job satisfaction. For example, (He et al, 2010) show that employee empowerment has positive effects on perceived service quality and job satisfaction. There has been a strong emphasis on the relation between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction in the studies performed (Aryee and Chen, 2006; Kuo et al., 2007; Sahin, 2007; Spreitzer et al., 1997; Wang and

Lee, 2009). Behavioral empowerment, convenient communications, an atmosphere of trust, and motivational tools provided by employers lead to a positive impact on job satisfaction (Babin and Boles, 1996; Yoon et al., 2001)^{(Elbey, 2011)⁶}.

Based on this review, following hypothesis is proposed.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between Psychological Empowerment and Job Satisfaction of women .

Organization Commitment: Robbins (2003) Defined Organizational Commitment As A State In Which An Employee Identifies With A Particular Organization, Its Goals And Wishes To Be Part Of The Organization. Luthans (2005) Added That Organizational Commitment Is Also The Willingness To Exert High Levels Of Effort On Behalf Of That Organization. This Means That Employees That Are Committed To An Organization Might Be Working Harder And Engage In Actions That Will Be To The Best Interest Of The Organization (Pieters, 2011)¹⁴.

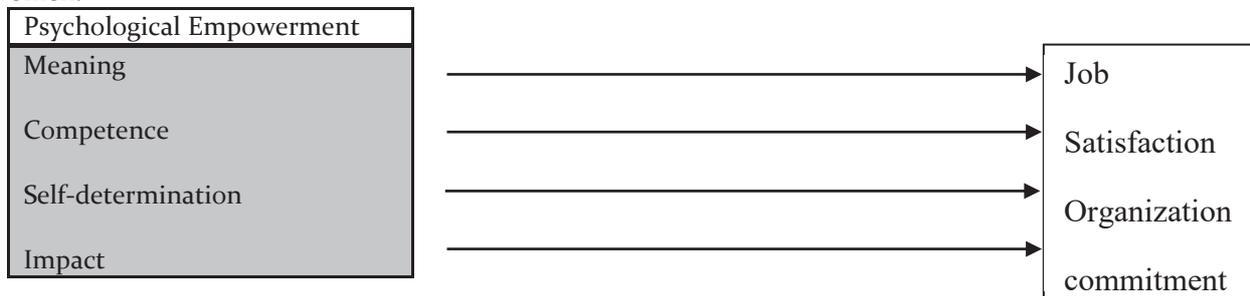
Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993), distinguished between three dimensions of organizational commitment (PIETERS, 2011)¹⁴.

- Affective commitment refers to the employees' emotional attachment to, identifies with and is actively involved in the workplace.
- Continuance commitment refers to an employee's behavioral orientation, this would be related to the cost of leaving are too high or whether other alternatives seem not to be so suitable since the personal costs of leaving are too high. They would be committed to the organization staying with the organization more out of desperation rather than anything else.
- Normative commitment refers to when employees feel that they are obligated to stay, ought to stay (Meyer & Allen; 1991; Meyer et al., 1993).

When viewing the three above mentioned components of commitment, research has shown that empowerment will especially influence the affective component or the normative component of commitment. The affective component because research already showed a positive relation between empowerment and affective commitment (Laschinger et al., 1999). Also a relationship between empowerment and job satisfaction has been demonstrated (Jun et al., 2006; Spreitzer et al., 1997). A relation between empowerment and normative commitment can be expected because of a sense of obligation caused by empowering the employee, for example when he is given more autonomy. A relation between empowerment and continuance commitment is less obvious, because the degree of continuance commitment depends on the need to stay in the organization and is assumed not to be caused by empowerment. It can be very important to

hold people within the organization, working toward the same goal and achieving a good performance (PIETERS, 2011)¹⁴.

H2: There is a significant relationship between Psychological Empowerment and Organization Commitmen of women.



Research Design: The research made use of causal survey research method to collect the data. Survey methods are inexpensive, can be used to assess a large group of participants, it can be administered from another location (can send it by mail or web link), make use of standardized questionnaires to assess and compare groups using the same measure and in most instances the subjectivity of the researcher is minimized.

Measuring Instruments

Standardized questionnaires were used to measure the variables of psychological empowerment (Spreitzer,1994), ommittment (Allen & Mayer, 1988) and Job Satisfaction

Result: The correlation between job satisfaction and psychological empowerment was found through simple correlation analysis, and then the Pearson correlation coefficient between each variable was estimated.

According to the findings a significant correlation at 0.01significance level was found between job satisfaction and psychological empowerment. Pearson coefficient,"r" was observed to be 0.510, with p=.000 (p<0.01).

The first hypothesis is supported

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction.

Meaning – Pearson coefficient, r=.481, p<0.01
 Competence – Pearson coefficient, r=.323, p<0.01
 Self-determination – Pearson coefficient, r=.389, p<0.01
 Impact - Pearson coefficient, r=.419, p<0.01
 Meaning dimension, a fit between work role and individual self belief is more strongly related to job satisfaction.

Organization Commitment And Its Relationship To Psychological Empowerment: The Correlation Between Commitment And Psychological Empowerment Was Found Through Simple Correlation Analysis, And Then The Pearson Correlation Coefficient Between Each Variable Was Estimated.

The result of the correlation analysis between commitment and psychological empowerment. In this analysis, commitment was taken as dependent variable and empowerment and its sub-dimensions as independent variables.

A significant correlation at 0.01significance level was found between commitment and psychological empowerment. Pearson coefficient"r" was observed to be 0.573, with p=.000 (p<0.01).

The second hypothesis was supported

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between psychological empowerment and organization commitment.

Correlations – Table2

		Tot empowerment	avg satisfaction
Tot avg empowerment	Pearson Correlation	1	.510**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	180	180
satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.510**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	180	180

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations – Table3

		Tot avg empowerment	Tot avg commitment
Tot avg empowerment	Pearson Correlation	1	.573**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	180	180
Tot avg commitment	Pearson Correlation	.573**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	180	180

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion: Study determined that the greater the level of psychological empowerment experienced by employees, the higher the level of their job satisfaction and commitment. This paper gave a brief introduction to the concepts as; psychological empowerment, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, employee effectiveness, trust in management and job engagement of women. Different perspectives from the vast range of authors were explored (conger & kanungo, 1988; thomas & velthouse, 1990; meyer & allen, 1991; meyer, allen & smith, 1993; spreitzer, 1995; allen & meyer, 1996; quinn & spreitzer, 1997) as well as how their perspectives through empirical research brought light to these constructs. This paper further went on to explain the methods to empirically test these construct in various industries and sectors, recorded these findings with the use of tables and brief explanations, followed by an in depth explanation and interpretation regarding these results. Where empowerment of women does exist in organizations it needs to be enhanced, supported by management and employees. Therefore, there is need for good leadership to be in place at all levels of the organization to formulate and implement policies of employees' empowerment. Employees' empowerment increases job involvement and promotes good employee relations in organization.

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