

INFLUENCE OF EMPOWERMENT ON JOB PERFORMANCE: A STUDY THROUGH ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND JOB SATISFACTION

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Introduction

The concept of modern organizational management within a competitive environment focuses on supporting persons to potentially use their abilities, skills, knowledge and competence for achieving organizational goals. Empowerment is a way to increase power and authority to help people handle their tasks freely by themselves.

Kanter's Theory of Structural Power in Organizations suggested that structural power and opportunity empowered people in an organization (Kanter, 1979 as cited in Pakkawan, 2005). The structural power helps people to access support, information, resources and opportunities to help people achieve success, rewards, recognition and desired career path in an organization. Power is one opportunity where people can freely show their abilities in working and increase their motivation. Meanwhile, Conger and Kanungo (1988 as cited in Orraphin et. al., 2002) defined empowerment as an emotional construct that is based on power and self-efficacy. Power is an intrinsic need for self-determination and self-efficacy refers to person's perceived competence. Moreover, Thomas and Velthouse (1990 as cited in Orraphin et. al., 2002) stated that empowerment is intrinsic task motivator consisting of autonomy, competence, meaningfulness and impact. Then, empowerment by definition needs people to feel empowered. Empowered people are supposed to feel in control and have a sense of personal power

together with the freedom to use that power. People need to feel that they have power to control events or situation and deal effectively with them as they arise. Empowerment affects a person's job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job performance both an individual and an organization level.

Many researches have shown the relationship of empowerment and job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job performance (Oraphin, 2002; Pakawan, 2005; Wanchai, 2001). Many studies have focused on only the relationship between job satisfaction or organizational commitment with job performance. We are not aware of any linking the direct and indirect relationship between empowerment, job performance, organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

For this study, we were interested in investigating whether there is a direct and/or indirect influence of empowerment on job performance through two mediating factors, organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the direct influence of empowerment on job performance
2. To study the indirect influence of empowerment on job performance through organizational commitment and job satisfaction as a mediator

Method

Participants

Sample: The sample of this study was 110 government officers of a government university in Bangkok. The subjects were selected by using simple random sampling.

Measurements

The measurement was a questionnaire which consisted of 4 parts: empowerment with a 5-point scale, job performance with

a 5-point scale, organizational commitment and job satisfaction with 7-point scale. The measurements relied on Cronbach's coefficient of .83-.95.

Procedure

Participants answered the questionnaires consisted of 4 parts; empowerment, job performance, organizational commitment and job satisfaction. After two weeks, the questionnaires were collected and checked the completion before data coding. The rechecked data was analyzed by computerized statistics program.

Results

The results of this study were as follows:

1. Empowerment affected job performance directly and significantly explained by a 63.1% variance ($p < .05$).
2. Empowerment affected job performance indirectly through organizational commitment and significantly explained by a 10.5% variance ($p < .05$).
3. Empowerment affected job performance indirectly through job satisfaction and significantly explained by a 20.0% variance ($p < .05$).

Discussion

1. Empowerment affected job performance directly (Oraphin, 2002; Pakawon, 2005). Empowerment is process by which organizations give power, support, information and resources to motivate people to use their intrinsic abilities for achieving goals. Empowered people believe that they can manage and control events and situations. An empowered person tends to work hard and effectively with freedom and self-determination (Conger & Kanngo, 1988; Kanter, 1977 as cited in Oraphin, 2002).

2. Empowerment affected job performance indirectly through organizational commitment.
 - 2.1 Empowerment directly affected organizational commitment (Scott & Tabe, 1994 as cited in Naruemol, 2001). Empowered people feel that their work is valued because they have the freedom to handle their tasks responsibly. Empowerment gives people a chance to participate in decision making. Empowered people think that they are part of an organization and have a commitment to the organization (Kanter, 1977 as cited in Pakhawan, 2005).
 - 2.2 Organizational commitment affected job performance directly (Duanruedee, 2001). Organizational commitment is person's good attitude toward their organization. Committed people evaluate their organization positively and feel that it is very supportive and helpful. They tend to work more effectively by giving the good things back to the organization.
3. Empowered people who have the freedom to work will have a good attitude and commitment to the organization. Thus, committed people are generally more responsible and handle their tasks competently for the success of organization. Empowerment affected job performance indirectly through job satisfaction.
 - a. Empowerment affected job satisfaction (Kanter, 1977; Baloff & Doherty, 1989 as cited in Pakkawan, 2005). Autonomy as a one construct of empowerment and job characteristics is the degree to which persons have control and discretion regarding the conduct of their jobs. Autonomy directly affected job satisfaction because people who are gained authority to improve, develop and make decisions on their jobs may utilize work experiences, skills, knowledge and abilities to enhance their productivities on their own ways. As their jobs have become more interesting, persons' intrinsic

motivation increases. Employees have autonomy to work freely. As a result, an empowerment is very critical for them primarily to increase autonomy, leading to persons' job satisfaction.

- b. Job satisfaction affects job performance directly (Kanter, 1977 as cited in Pakkawanm 2005). People who have a sense of belonging and are satisfied in their jobs feel that they are valued and meaningful responsibly to perform them toward their goals potentially. Persons' job satisfaction is associated with their beliefs on work which may affect job performance.

Empowered persons are motivated and encouraged to work with their intrinsic motivation. As people have gained autonomy, they tend to create, manage and make decisions on their job effectively pertinent with their own intrinsic needs on their own ways. They may feel that the job has become very meaningful and satisfying. Empowered people will handle their jobs creatively and tend to perform their jobs effectively.

Suggestions

Organization

1. Organizations should empower people through participation, supporting resources, information and rewards, freedom in handling tasks and opportunities to make decisions.
2. Organization should create a supportive work environment and job characteristics to empower person to work effectively such as job enrichment and promotion.

Research

1. This research should be examined in other private organizations in order to compare the different organizations.

2. Other variables should be investigated as mediators such as self-esteem, and leadership to study the patterns of relationship.

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