INFLUENCE OF STRUCTURAL EMPOWERMENT ON JOB SATISFACTION

[1]Linet Busieka, [2]Dr. Clive M. Mukanzi, PhD

JOMO KENYATTA UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY,
COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF VIHIGA, KENYA

Abstract: **The issue of service delivery is purely a human resource management responsibility and as such the human resource departments have to employ strategies like structural empowerment in order to improve service delivery. Results from various studies worldwide on structural empowerment suggest that this strategy leads to improved job satisfaction and organizational production. The objective of this study was to investigate the influence of structural empowerment on job satisfaction. The target population of the study was 220 employees which also formed the sample size. Data was collected by the use of a structured questionnaire. Both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were used to test for the relationship between structural empowerment and job satisfaction. The findings of this study are that structural empowerment has a statistically significant influence on job satisfaction. The implication of these findings is that organizations have to invest highly in structural empowerment in order to improve the job satisfaction of its employees and hence productivity.**

Keywords: **Empowerment, Structural empowerment, Employee job satisfaction, Human resource management.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Interaction between management and employees affects many facets within the business environment. Categorizations of these relationships have been identified, with structural empowerment and job satisfaction among the more prominent contributors. These categories do not stand alone; certain subsets can be considered antecedents or enablers to other subsets. For this reason, the interactions between these categories are also important. These subjects involve opportunity, information flow, management support, formal and informal power and as such should be given special attention in order to improve organizational performance.

Structural Empowerment Theory:

The theory of structural empowerment posits that certain factors in a work environment can enable or block employees' ability to accomplish their work in meaningful ways. The four empowerment structures are: - opportunity, information flow, management support, formal power and informal power. (Moore,2014). Structural empowerment represents a formal horizontal decentralization of authority such that decisional power flows to employees from the formal structure. As such, structural empowerment entails the delegation of decision-making prerogatives to employees, along with the discretion to act on one's own (Ungson & Mills, 2003). Structures shape people's practices, but it is also people's practices that constitute and reproduce structures (Sewell, 1992).

Sewell, (1992) further states that human agency and structure, far from being opposed, in fact presuppose each other. Structures are enacted by knowledgeable human agents, that is, people who know what they are doing and how to do it and agents act by putting into practice their necessarily structured knowledge. Structure operates in social scientific discourse as a powerful device, identifying some part of a complex social reality as explaining the whole. For instance, studies on Magnet hospitals has shown that hospitals that support unit-based decision making, have a powerful nursing executive, and promote professional nursing practice, are more likely to provide superior patient care (Armstrong, & Laschinger, 2006).

Manojlovich, (2007) further found that nurses who rated their work environments high in structural empowerment also rated their work settings highly on Magnet hospital characteristics and found also that nurses who practiced in Magnet hospitals reported higher levels of empowerment than did those in non-Magnet hospitals. Nurses who feel that their work environments are empowering are more satisfied, are more committed to the organization and report high quality of nursing care in their units. This theory relates directly to the independent variable in this research in that employees require among other things; an enabling environment to work in, knowledge skills and attitude to work and well serviced tools of work. When all these conditions are fulfilled, the employees are likely to be more committed to their work and will be satisfied with their jobs.

This theory is relevant in this study because it creates an enabling environment within which employees can work. It also equips employees with knowledge and skills whereby structures are enacted by knowledgeable human agents, that is, people who know what they are doing and how to do it and agents act by putting into practice their necessarily structured knowledge. Gives peo[ple opportunity to exercise their talents in a free and fair manner. There is information flow either top-bottom or bottom-up through the designed structure thus encourages management support. Formal and informal power operates in social scientific discourse as a powerful device, identifying some part of a complex social reality thus explaining the relevance.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to Huberman, (1994), conceptual framework is defined as a visual or written product which explains either graphically or in a narrative form, the main things to be studied that is the key factors, concepts or variables and the presumed relationship among them. Bernd, (1984) refers to conceptual framework as systems of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories that supports and informs your research. The issue in human resource management practices informed the researcher in construction of conceptual frame work which guided the study.

Structural Empowerment:

Structural empowerment of employees in this study envisages that the organizational management works in concert with the entire workforce to ensure there is free flow of information from the top hierarchy to the base and vice versa, employees to be given opportunity to exercise their potential, Management support, formal and informal power to be vested in employees but with checks and balances. Structural empowerment is one of the five components of the magnet models. This kind of management enhances job satisfaction. Within the context of Magnet Model, structural empowerment encompasses organizational structure, personnel policies and programs, professional development, community outreach and promotion of a positive nursing image (Bandura, 1977). How do these elements reflect structural empowerment? Through establishing a just culture which supports professional accountability and error reporting in an effort to improve patient safety rather than punish ostracize people for their mistakes (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Factors that promote structural empowerment include access to resources needed for one's work, access to information needed to get one's job done as well as knowledge and understanding of the organization. Also support for one's responsibilities and job performance and opportunity for professional growth and development. Having formal and informal power enhances these factors (Kanter, 1993). In addition, delayering the structures such that there is free flow of information, for example, top-down and bottom-up which creates a relationship between employee empowerment and job satisfaction (Lashley Conrad, 1995).

The social-structural perspective is embedded in the values and ideas of democracy – where power ideally resides within individuals at all levels of a system (Prasad, 2001; Prasad & Eylon, 2001). Employees at low levels of the organizational hierarchy can be empowered if they have access to opportunity, information, support and resources. This will have a positive impact on employees which creates satisfaction in employees both intrinsically and extrinsically where even the secretary, mail clerk, or janitor has potential in an organization with democratic principles. Of course, in contrast to a formal democracy, where each person has an equal vote in the system and the majority rules, most organizations stop short in behaving as a real democracy (Eylon, 1998). Employees at all levels can still have a voice in a system even if they don't have a formal vote when they have access to opportunity, information, support and resources.

The essence of the social-structural perspective on empowerment is the idea of sharing power between superiors and subordinates with the goal of cascading relevant decision-making power to lower levels of the organizational hierarchy (Liden & Arad, 1996). Empowerment from the social-structural perspective is about sharing power or control over organizational resources(Conger & Kanungo, 1988) through the delegation of responsibility throughout the organizational

chain of command. By sharing decision-making power, upper management may thus have more free time to think strategically and innovatively about how to move the organization forward. In this perspective, power means having formal authority or control over organizational resources and the ability to make decisions relevant to a person's job or role (Lawler, 1986). This is directly linked to and hence creates an element of employee job satisfaction.

Relevance is key, empowered employees have the power to make decisions that fit within the scope and domain of their work. For example, manufacturing employees might not be making decisions about firm strategy but instead make decisions about how and when to do their own work. Thus, social-structural empowerment is about employee participation through increased access to opportunity, information, support and resources throughout the organizational chain of command.

The social-structural perspective focuses on how organizational, institutional, social, economic, political, and cultural forces can root out the conditions that foster powerlessness in the workplace (Liden Arad, 1996).Practically, organizations can change organizational policies, processes, practices, and structures away from top down control systems toward high involvement practices where power, knowledge, information and rewards are shared with employees in the lower echelons of the organizational hierarchy (Bowen & Lawler, 1995). For example, management can change practices to allow employees to decide on their own how they will recover from a service problem and then surprise-and-delight customers by exceeding their expectations rather than waiting for approval from a supervisor.

In America they have developed a model known as the Magnet Model which was established by American Nurses Credentialing Centre which gives the following definition of the Magnet Model. It is a tool for the magnet recognition program that serves as a road map for organizations seeking magnet recognition and provide framework for nursing practices and research in the future. When a hospital receives magnet recognition, it means it has created an environment that supports nursing practice, focuses on professional autonomy and decision-making. It also involves nurses in determining the work environment, encourages professional education, career development and nursing relationship.

The main type of empowerment surface in studies that are related to this research is structural empowerment. According to (Ungson & Mills, 2003) there is a growing belief among some that structural empowerment provides the most appropriate basis for designing and implementing new organizations. However, from structural perspective, empowerment represents a moral hazard dilemma for managers, with the possibility of control loss and decreased organizational income. Conger and Kanungo (1988) posit that structural empowerment is associated with the delegation of power by managers to employees. Some people feel satisfied with their jobs while others are dissatisfied (Locke & Henne, 1985).

The concept of employee satisfaction within the framework of the linear relationship to structural empowerment is a relevant topic to this research. Job satisfaction resulting from experiences an employee has at work influences production (Locke & Henne, 1985). Locke *et al.,* (1985) further posit that there are types of satisfaction levels that occur along three threads: emotional responses to the work environment, the relationship between expectations and reality and satisfaction with compensation. There is a relationship between structural empowerment and job satisfaction (Ameer, Bhatti, & Baig, 2014). Ameer, *et al.,* (2014) further posit that other factors, including personality, have an effect on job satisfaction. If a person was generally content, he is more inclined to be satisfied at work. Ameer, *et al*., (2014) argued that there are three factors that could describe a large proportion of job satisfaction namely: - the immediate work environment, the social environment, and the organizational environment.

Ameer, *et al*., (2014) further states that the emotions involved in job satisfaction can migrate into more lasting feelings, which can affect the decision of an employee to remain or leave the company. Structural empowerment can be implemented through creation of working teams. According to (Zhang & Bartol, 2010) self-managing teams are one of the major keys in the innovative organization to solving complex problems, increasing productivity, and heightening creativity. Zhang and Bartol, (2010) further state that feasibility and success of empowerment are to some extent determined by factors relating to the culture and structure of the industries within which organizations are embedded.

Job Satisfaction:

Job satisfaction is commonly defined as the extent to which employees like their work, an attitude based on employee perceptions negative or positive of their job or work environment. Balzer, *et al.,*(1997) define Job satisfaction as the feelings a person has about her or his job. Job satisfaction is an assessment of overall job experience, and arises from many factors such as one's relationship with a supervisor, the sense of fulfillment of work, perceived congruence between pay and work production, and physical conditions of the working environment (Spector, 1997). Job satisfaction was one of the earliest anticipated outcomes of empowerment (Spreitzer, *et al.*, 1997).

Organizational scholars have long been interested in why some people report being very satisfied with their jobs and others express much lower levels of satisfaction (Locke, 1976). The drive to understand and explain job satisfaction has been motivated by utilitarian reasons, for instance, to increase productivity and organizational commitment, lower absenteeism and turnover, and ultimately, increase organizational effectiveness as well as humanitarian interests that is, the notion that employees deserve to be treated with respect and have their psychological and physical well-being maximized. Satisfied workers also tend to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors; that is, altruistic behaviors that exceed the formal requirements of a job (Schnake 1991; Organ & Ryan 1995).

Dissatisfied workers show an increased propensity for counterproductive behaviors, including withdrawal, burnout, and workplace aggression (Spector, 1997; Ellickson & Logsdon, 2001). Job satisfaction is commonly defined as the extent to which employees like their work (Agho, Mueller & Price, 1993), an attitude based on employee perceptions (negative or positive) of their job or work environment (Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991; Pool, 1997; Ellickson & Logsdon, 2001).

Meaning and self-determination are expected to improve job satisfaction. A sense of meaning is considered necessary for individuals to feel satisfied at work. Having a job that allows fulfillment of one's desired work values are likely to increase job satisfaction (Locke 1976). Low levels of meaning have been linked to feelings of apathy and lower work satisfaction (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). (Liden, *et al.*, 2000) argue that individuals who feel that their jobs are significant and worthwhile have higher levels of satisfaction compared to those who feel their jobs have little value. Empirical research finds a positive association between meaning and work satisfaction (Spreitzer, *et al.*, 1997; Liden *et al.*, 2000).

Self-determination positively influences job satisfaction due to its effects on intrinsic motivation. Individuals who have autonomy in determining their actions and behaviors find work more interesting and rewarding, thus creating feelings of satisfaction with their job. Higher levels of autonomy increase the amount of intrinsic rewards from work (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Self-determination improves job satisfaction as accomplishments can be attributed more to the individual than to other persons (Liden, *et al.*, 2000). Empirical results show a positive relationship between self-determination and job satisfaction (Spreitzer, *et al.,* 1997; Smith & Langfield, 2003). Although prior research indicates that competence and impact are positively correlated with job satisfaction, it does not support a direct association of competence and impact to work performance (Spreitzer, *et al.*, 1997), as such, only meaning and self-determination are expected to influence job satisfaction. (Thomas & Tymon, 1994) postulate that empowerment would accrue in higher levels of job satisfaction. They state that because the task assessments, that is, the facets of empowerment generate intrinsic rewards associated with the job, they should be positively related to job satisfaction.

III. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

A study by Armstrong and Laschinger, (2006) concerning structural empowerment in Magnet Hospitals and patient safety showed that empowered nurses did all in their power to make patients comfortable. On the other hand, a decade of hospital restructuring initiatives in Canada has resulted in the lay-off of thousands of nurses. Survivors of restructuring have faced increased responsibilities and fewer support staff to assist them. To add to this stress, the patients they look after are sicker. Such excessive workloads can lead to exhaustion. In addition, nurses report that their skills and abilities are not respected in the workplace. Consequently, it is not surprising that Canadian nurses have become increasingly at risk for burnout, with many leaving the profession all together (Baumann et al., 2001). The psychological state of those who survive downsizing can determine the viability of the smaller workforce.

TABLE 1: Structural Empowerment

Structural Empowerment	SD %	D %	N %	A %	SA %
Work well with organization	0	4.2	8.3	62.5	25
Adhere to organizational structures	0	0	4.2	68.8	27.1
Access to resources by management	4.2	29.2	18.8	41.7	6.3
Lower staff access to resources	16.7	31.3	8.3	33.3	10.4
Delegation of duty	2.1	6.3	22.9	43.8	25
Working teams	4.2	0	12.5	62.5	20.8
Supportive staff	2.1	20.8	8.3	50	18.8

A majority of respondents (87%) suggested that they work well with the organizational management and the entire workforce while 4.2% were of the opinion that they do not work well with their organization. 95.9% of respondents said that they adhere to the organizational structure, personnel policies and programs. 43.7% of the respondents said that employees have access to organizational resources whereas 48% said that employees have no access to resources within the organization. 68.8% of respondents agreed that empowerment from social-structural perspective is about sharing power through the delegation of responsibility whereas 8.4% of the respondents disagreed. 83.3% of the respondents embrace the structures in place and the implementation of creation of working teams whereas 4.2% of respondents disagreed. 68.8% of respondents feel the management exercises supportive leadership. The social-structural perspective is embedded in the values and ideas of democracy, where power ideally resides within individuals at all levels of a system (Prasad, 2001; Prasad & Eylon, 2001). Employees at low levels of the organizational hierarchy can be empowered if they have access to opportunity, information, support and resources.

IV. SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

Survey questionnaires were distributed to employees through self-administration. A total of 220 questionnaires were collected from employees. About half of the respondents were male and 76% of them between age 20 and 49 years. Approximately 70% of the sample received atleased some college education, whereas 14% received graduate education and slightly fewer than half were supervisors. The sample represented 220 employees among them heads of departments, section heads and supervisors.

Influence of structural empowerment on Employee Job Satisfaction:

Test of hypothesis:

The first objective was to establish whether structural empowerment influences employee job satisfaction. To achieve this objective, a null hypothesis was formulated and tested;

H_{01}: *Structural empowerment has no influence on employee job satisfaction.*

To test H_{01} a simple regression analysis was conducted. The data that was used to test for this hypothesis was obtained by asking respondents the extent to which they either agree or disagree with seven statements associated with this dimension of employee empowerment. The composite indexes of structural empowerment dimension and employee job satisfaction were computed and a regression analysis performed to establish the influence of structural empowermenton employee job satisfaction. The results obtained were as shown in Table 4.9.

TABLE 2: Regression results of Structural Empowerment and Job Satisfaction

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.447[a]	.199	.182	.45225	.199	11.455	1	46	.001
a. Predictors: (Constant): Structural Empowerment									

b. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction

Results in Table 4.9 confirmed that structural empowerment has a statistically significant influence on employee job satisfaction. This influence can be explained by 19.9 % of its variation ($R^2 = 0.199$). Similarly, even the overall model showed a statistically significant influence of structural empowerment on employee commitment (p-value = 0.001).

TABLE: 3 Coefficient Model for Structural empowerment on Employee Job Satisfaction

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
	(Constant)	2.723	.406		6.702	.000	1.905	3.541		
	Structural Empower-ment	.368	.109	.447	3.384	.001	.149	.587	1	1
a. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction										

The unstandardized regression coefficients β value of the computed (composite index) scores of structural empowerment was 0.368with a t-test of 3.384and at a significance level of p-value = 0.001 which means p-value< 0.05. Having achieved the objective, the study rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis that; *H$_{A1}$: Structural empowermenthas a significant positive influence on employee job satisfaction.*

Consistent with these findings, several studies found out that structural empowerment has a significant effect on the levels of employee job satisfaction (Patrick & Lashchniger, 2006; Khoshhal & Keshtager, 2016). The study by Ramos and Ales (2014) on structural empowerment as antecedent of job satisfaction in university settings also confirmed structural empowerment as having a positive influence on job satisfaction.

Influence of Structural Empowerment on Employee Job Satisfaction:

The first objective of the study was to establish the influence of structural empowerment on employee job satisfaction. Structural empowerment was comprised of a total of seven statement items. Respondents were asked to give the extent to which they agreed with the declarative statements about structural empowerment constructs. Employee job satisfaction was measured by seven statement items upon which respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed.

The results obtained confirmed that structural empowerment had a statistically significant influence on employee job satisfaction. This influence can be explained by 19.9 % of its variation ($R^2 = 0.199$). Similarly, even the overall model showed a statistically significant influence of structural empowerment on employee commitment (p-value = 0.001). Therefore, the null hypothesis that structural empowerment has no influence on employee job satisfaction was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. The theory of structural empowerment posits that certain factors in a work environment can enable or block employees' ability to accomplish their work in meaningful ways. The findings in this research support this theory. The factors that employers have to take care of structural empowerment of employees and relational empowerment so that the working environment is made conducive for the employees.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR MANAGEMENT OF ORGANIZATIONS AND CONCLUSION

It is imperative for organizations to put in place strong human resource management policies that ensure promotion of employee structural empowerment. This will in turn enhance employee job satisfaction and hence productivity. A satisfied employee will not only deliver on organizational objectives but will stay longer in the organization and reduce drastically on recruitment costs.

Areas of Further studies:

The dimensions used to measure structural empowerment along its constructs may not be exhaustive. A further review of structural empowerment practices would identify additional variables and possibly other constructs which may enlarge the range of influence between structural empowerment practices and employee job satisfaction. A study by Conger and Kanungo, (1988) concerning the empowerment process: integrating theory and practice showed that there is a positive relationship between structural empowerment and job satisfaction. Future research in this area should adopt a different research design such as a longitudinal one, so as to provide a better assessment of these two variables. A longitudinal testing of structural empowerment may also be critical in terms of establishing a causal linkage between the variable and employee job satisfaction. Future research should consider combining more internal informants with the views of other informants such as external members of the society in order to better and generalize the conclusions of the research.

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