

Chapter 1

Meta–Analysis of Antecedents and Consequences of Empowering Employees as a Contemporary Management Approach

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, as a critical contemporary management approach and a vital factor for organizations to gain competitive advantage, the concept of empowerment of employees is evaluated. The main purpose of this chapter is to investigate the antecedents and consequences of employees' empowerment. To achieve this, a meta-analysis was conducted including 216 independent studies. Among these are: organizational culture, organizational support, supervisor support, organizational justice, human resources practices, job characteristics and employees' personality characteristics. Moreover, by scanning the literature, the consequences of empowerment were remarked as, task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, organizational commitment, job satisfaction and creativity. Throughout the meta-analysis, positive relationships were witnessed between empowerment and these consequences. Moreover, empowerment was found to decrease turnover intentions and occupational stress of employees.

INTRODUCTION

As the business context is emerging and changing faster than ever, old-fashioned management styles are far from being effective. The continuous change in environment in which organizations operate, necessitates up to date management approaches. In today's world, not only information, communication, transportation and computer technologies emerge but also, human element of organizations evolves. The wants and needs of employees adjust due to changes in both business and social life. Besides, the core of management principles does not change, it is not effective to lead and manage employees regardless of their changing needs in today's turbulent business environment (Drucker, 1980).

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After 1980s, turbulent and changing environments have accelerated and new demands on the fields of managerial economics, strategic management, industrial organizations and entrepreneurship (Aytekin, 2013) were faced. Especially in the management literature, after 1970s, to cope with these types of changing demands in and out the organizations, contemporary management approaches gained importance (Jones, George & Langton, 2013). After the 1970s, contemporary approaches are widely seen as for example, lean management (Holloway & Hall, 1997), process reengineering (Grover, Jeong, Kettinger & Teng, 1995), learning organization (Senge, 1991), benchmarking (Camp, 1989), population ecology (Hannan & Freeman, 1977; Carroll, 1984), transaction cost approach (Williamson, 1981), institutionalization approach (Meyer and Rowan, 1977), resource dependence approach (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), competitive strategy (Porter, 1980), agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Among important contemporary management approaches, one of them has made significant contributions for both motivational factors for employees and organizational performance in turn. It is the 'employee empowerment'. Due to the continuous change in markets and business environment, empowered employees are needed more than ever in order to achieve organizational goals and objectives, and to help their organization gain competitive advantage and formulate organizational strategy (Spreitzer, 1995). Thus, the concept of 'empowering employees' has been well put in the front rows among contemporary management approaches (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Johnson and Thurston, 1997). The objective of this chapter is to set forth all the aspects of the concept of 'employee empowerment' especially the causes and effects of this approach. By investigating the antecedents and consequences of employee empowerment, it is intended to enlighten this approach from different perspectives. In order to achieve this, a highly reliable method of research, which is meta-analysis, will be conducted.

BACKGROUND

Empowerment in General

Although there is not a consensus on the definition of empowerment among researchers, empowerment refers to the degree of taking initiative and reacting to overcome work related problems (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997). In another definition, empowerment means employees' improving themselves in accordance with the job demands and acting extra roles besides what has been expected from them in the workplace (Thorlakson and Murray, 1996). In today's knowledge-based economy (Drucker, 1992), empowerment is needed to adapt to the environment for several reasons. Among these are, developments in information and communication technologies (Powell and Dent-Micallef, 1997), increased level of competition among organizations (Dobrev and Carroll, 2003), increasing need of democracy in organizations (Mantovani, 1994) and qualification-based expectations of employees (Holzhausen, 2000). To understand the empowerment concept, it should be analyzed in more details as a concept of employee empowerment.

The Concept of Employee Empowerment

According to Erstad (1997), employee empowerment refers to the degree of enabling employees to make decisions on their own or to assume responsibility of their own decisions and actions. Conger and Kanungo (1988) deepens the concept by taking employee empowerment as a process of increasing self-

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