

## **Analysis of Effective Factors on Psychological Empowerment of Employees (Case Study: Employees of Education Organization in 19 Regions in Tehran)**

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### **Abstract**

*This study was aimed to investigate the impact of organizational factors, supervision style, reward system and job design on psychological empowerment and its dimensions. This study was also aimed to measure the level of employees' psychological empowerment. Research method was survey-correlation using questionnaire as the measurement tool. Statistical population included all employees of education organization in 19 regions in Tehran (2355 persons). A total of 242 persons from nine regions was selected as sample using the cluster sampling method. Pearson test, one sample t-test, multiple-variable regression and path analysis were used to. Research findings indicate there is a significant relationship among organizational factors, supervision style, reward system and job design with psychological empowerment. Moreover, employees' psychological empowerment level was higher than the average level and among the above-mentioned factors reward system had the highest impact on psychological empowerment and self-determination.*

**Key words:** empowerment, psychological empowerment, empowerment factors, supervision style, reward system, job design.

### **Introduction**

Empowerment is an unavoidable program for more work and spending fewer expenses. Organizations have a lower option regarding whether they want to train empowered managers and employees or not. Anyway empowerment occurs because more successful organizations are discovering better methods to utilize employees' mental resources completely. Organizations perceive that their only real capital is their ability to think (Kinla, 2010). Changing conditions of organizations at present has led to changing their attitude to human force. Under such conditions employees are not a tool for the manager's success and they are converted into main leaders of work flow and partners of the organization as its capitals. Therefore, having leadership skills is not sufficient for managers and employees need to learn self-directing methods (Roy & Sheena, 2005). The organization must empower its most important competitive resource and factor, i.e. human force to obtain such characteristics (Ergenli et al., M, 2007). Traditional management methods under such conditions suppress employees' innovation sense, increase the work volume and create limitation for employees.

Total freedom at work would be led to disorderliness and disruption too. Indeed both above states waste physical and spiritual resources of the organization and no effectiveness is obtained (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004: 12). Traditional managers always give instructions and control employees but in empowerment environment the management should go out of mental framework of command and control and moves towards a supportive environment based on sense of responsibility so that employees would have opportunity for favorable cooperation (Shahrokni, 2003).

Therefore, employees' empowerment is the major topic of the present survey and recognizing and explaining the impact of organizational factors, supervision style, reward system and job design on empowerment of employees in 19 regions of education organization in Tehran is its main objective to provide the ground to protect human resources as human capitals and represent educational, cultural and social services to the society more desirably through recognizing factors. Scientific and reasonable framework and arrangements would be compiled for education managers given to the importance and effectiveness degree of important factors on empowerment and through their prioritization.

### **Research literature and theoretical principles**

Many managers view empowerment in the way that it gives decision-making power to people. Many employees believe that empowerment is gaining absolute freedom to do any action. Also, empowerment is liberalizing individuals' internal power to obtain wonderful achievements. It means giving power; that is helping people to improve their self-confidence and dominate their inability or failure, create enthusiasm of action in people and mobilize their internal motivations to conduct their tasks (Blanchard, 2003:39). Empowerment is a term used highly in organizational sciences but there is no agreement upon its definitions. Thus, it is used extensively in theoretical literature of the organization and management but it has no clear meaning. However, many experts believe empowerment is creating a status for people so that they feel they can control their fate and are able to obtain individual and organizational purposes (Spreitzer, 1996). Empowerment as an idea related to the organization's performance has its most obvious roots in explaining Douglas Mc Gregor's theory y (1960) in a book entitled "human face of the organization" (Whetten & Kameron, 1999). Before the 1990's empowerment meant managerial actions and strategies like authorization and decision-making for lower ranks of the organization (Foy, 1997), employees' information, knowledge and reward sharing (Bowen, 1999) but since the 1990's onward theoreticians considered empowerment from the viewpoint of employees' beliefs and feelings.

Although organizational theoreticians have defined the concept of empowerment in various methods but two general definitions are recognized in this regard: 1) empowerment as power division: many theoreticians have considered the concept of empowerment synonymous with employees' participation at work place. Employees' participation is a process through which power is divided among the individuals (Lawer, 1994). They argue that empowerment might be defined as granting more organizational power to employees (Noe et al, 2003) and authorization (Pearce et al, 2003). Unfortunately defining empowerment based on this method has limitations including A) power in the organizational system is stable thus exchange is dominant, B) the existing power to create empowerment by managers is sufficient.

2) Empowerment as motivational and cognitive concept: in this approach empowerment is defined as a motivational structure which is based on employees' perception with regard to their work environment (Parker 1994, Randolph 1995). Various factors and variables affect employees' empowerment as listed in Table (1).

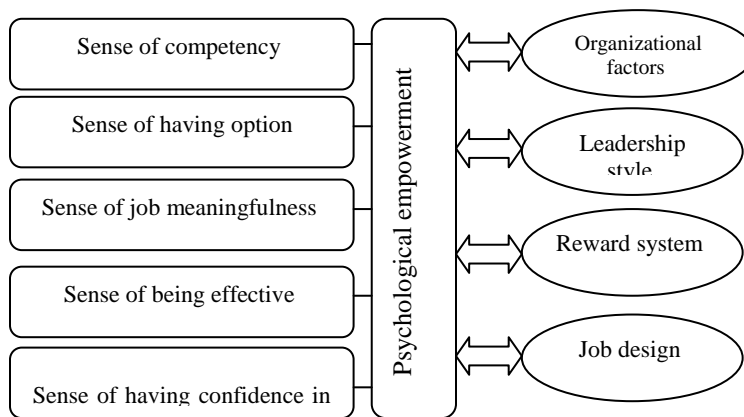
**Table 1- various ideas about empowerment dimensions**

| Researcher                          | Empowerment dimensions   |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Spreitzer, 1997                     | Individual and group characteristics, social structure of work characteristics   |
| Tomas and Wolthaus, 1990            | Sense of being effective, sense of having option, sense of competency, sense of being meaningful   |
| Spreitzer, 1995                     | Access to information (mission and performance of the organization), reward  |
| Bowen & Lawler, 1995                | Information, reward, power, knowledge  |
| Mishra, 1992                        | sense of competency, sense of having option, sense of being effective, sense of being meaningful, sense of having self-confidence            |
| Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997             | Organizational support, sense of security and stability, free flow of information and conducting team work, clarity of purposes and policies |
| Conger & Kanungo, 1988              | Organizational factors, supervision style, reward system, job nature   |
| Blanchard & Zigarmi & Zigarmi, 1985 | Clarity of purposes and policies, leadership style, education, access to resources, access to information                                    |
| Veten and Cameron, 1993             | Self-effectiveness, self-determination, meaningfulness, accepting results personally, confidence   |

Since motivational and cognitive approach doesn't have limitations of power division approach and has several distinct advantages it is regarded as basis of this survey. Psychological empowerment dimensions adopted from Mishra's viewpoint and effective factors on empowerment adopted from Canger and Kanungo's viewpoint are explained below.

**Conceptual model of the survey**

Given to theoretical principles and research background the conceptual model according to diagram (1) could be represented and research hypotheses are formed based on it.



**Diagram 1- conceptual model of the survey**

**Research hypotheses**

- 1- Organizational factors have a significant relationship with employees' psychological empowerment.
- 2- Organizational factors have a significant relationship with dimensions of psychological empowerment.
- 3- Supervision style has a significant relationship with employees' psychological empowerment.
- 4- Supervision style has a significant relationship with dimensions of psychological empowerment.
- 5- Reward system has a significant relationship with employees' psychological empowerment.
- 6- Reward system has a significant relationship with dimensions of psychological empowerment.
- 7- Job design has a significant relationship with employees' psychological empowerment.
- 8- Job design has a significant relationship with dimensions of psychological empowerment.

## Research methodology

Statistical population of the present survey included all employees (male and female) of education organization in 19 regions in Tehran equal to 2355 persons. Cluster sampling method was used to determine the sample volume, since volume of education regions in Tehran province was high and nine regions were selected among the 19 regions as sample regions (regions 3, 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 16 and 19). Size of the statistical sample was estimated equal to 180 persons based on the formula to determine sample volume.

Two types of questionnaires were used to collect data included Spreitzer's questionnaire with eighteen (18) questions to measure psychological empowerment and Canger and Kanungo's questionnaire with twenty-three (23) questions to study effective factors of empowerment. Validity was confirmed by a group of experts including university professors and education specialists. Sum of items of effective factors on empowerment was equal to 0.88 for the questionnaire that percents indicated high reliability.

## Data analysis and findings

Pearson correlation test was used to test hypotheses. Given to the correlation coefficient in table (3) psychological empowerment had a significant and direct relationship with organizational factors, supervision style, reward system and job design. Sense of being effective in job and sense of having confidence in others had a significant relationship with supervision style; sense of competency and self-determination had a significant relationship with organizational factors; sense of having confidence in others and sense of self-determination have a significant relationship with reward system and sense of competency and sense of self-determination have a significant relationship with job design among empowerment dimensions. They had no significant relation with other factors.

**Table 2- results of Pearson correlation test**

| Variables                 |                       | Sense of having competency | Sense of being meaningful | Sense of being effective | Sense of self-determination | Sense of having confidence | psychological empowerment |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Supervision style         | Correlation intensity | 0.023                      | 0.057                     | 0.166*                   | 0.095                       | 0.314*                     | 0.270*                    |
|                           | Significance number   | 0.721                      | 0.387                     | 0.010                    | 0.143                       | 0.000                      | 0.000                     |
| Organizational factors    | Correlation intensity | 0.135*                     | 0.012                     | 0.102                    | 0.255*                      | 0.014                      | 0.181*                    |
|                           | Significance number   | 0.036                      | 0.854                     | 0.112                    | 0.000                       | 0.830                      | 0.005                     |
| Reward system             | Correlation intensity |                            | 0.019                     | 0.007                    | 0.916*                      | 0.128*                     | 0.367*                    |
|                           | Significance number   |                            | 0.769                     | 0.910                    | 0.000                       | 0.046                      | 0.000                     |
| Job design                | Correlation intensity | 0.224*                     | 0.007                     | 0.114                    | 0.365*                      | 0.106                      | 0.210*                    |
|                           | Significance number   | 0.000                      | 0.911                     | 0.078                    | 0.000                       | 0.101                      | 0.001                     |
| Psychological empowerment | Correlation intensity | 0.094                      | 0.615*                    | 0.672*                   | 0.418*                      | 0.560*                     |                           |
|                           | Significance number   | 0.145                      | 0.000                     | 0.000                    | 0.000                       | 0.000                      |                           |
| Significant               |                       |                            |                           |                          |                             |                            |                           |

## Step by step multi-variable regression analysis of psychological empowerment

Regression analysis is conducted to determine the portion and impact of major variables on explaining and predicting changes of the dependent variable. According to the obtained results, psychological empowerment is more affected by reward system. Also variables of organizational factors and job design have been logged from the regression model.

**Table 3- statistics of multiple-variable regression related to psychological empowerment**

| Variable               | Beta  | t     | Sig   | Variance analysis |       | Multiple-correlation coefficient      | 0.445 |
|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------------|-------|---------------------------------------|-------|
|                        |       |       |       | F                 | Sig   |                                       |       |
| organizational factors | 0.030 | 0.489 | 0.626 | 14.664            | 0.000 | Coefficient of determination          | 0.198 |
| supervision style      | 0.239 | 4.050 | 0.000 |                   |       | Modified coefficient of determination | 0.185 |
| reward system          | 0.316 | 4.774 | 0.000 |                   |       | Standard error of estimation          | 0.371 |
| job design             | 0.060 | 0.937 | 0.350 |                   |       |                                       |       |

Structural model (figure 2) is tested using path analysis technique in order to study direct, indirect and whole effectiveness level of independent variables on psychological empowerment dimensions. This model is confirmed based on goodness of fit indexes in table (3). Results show:

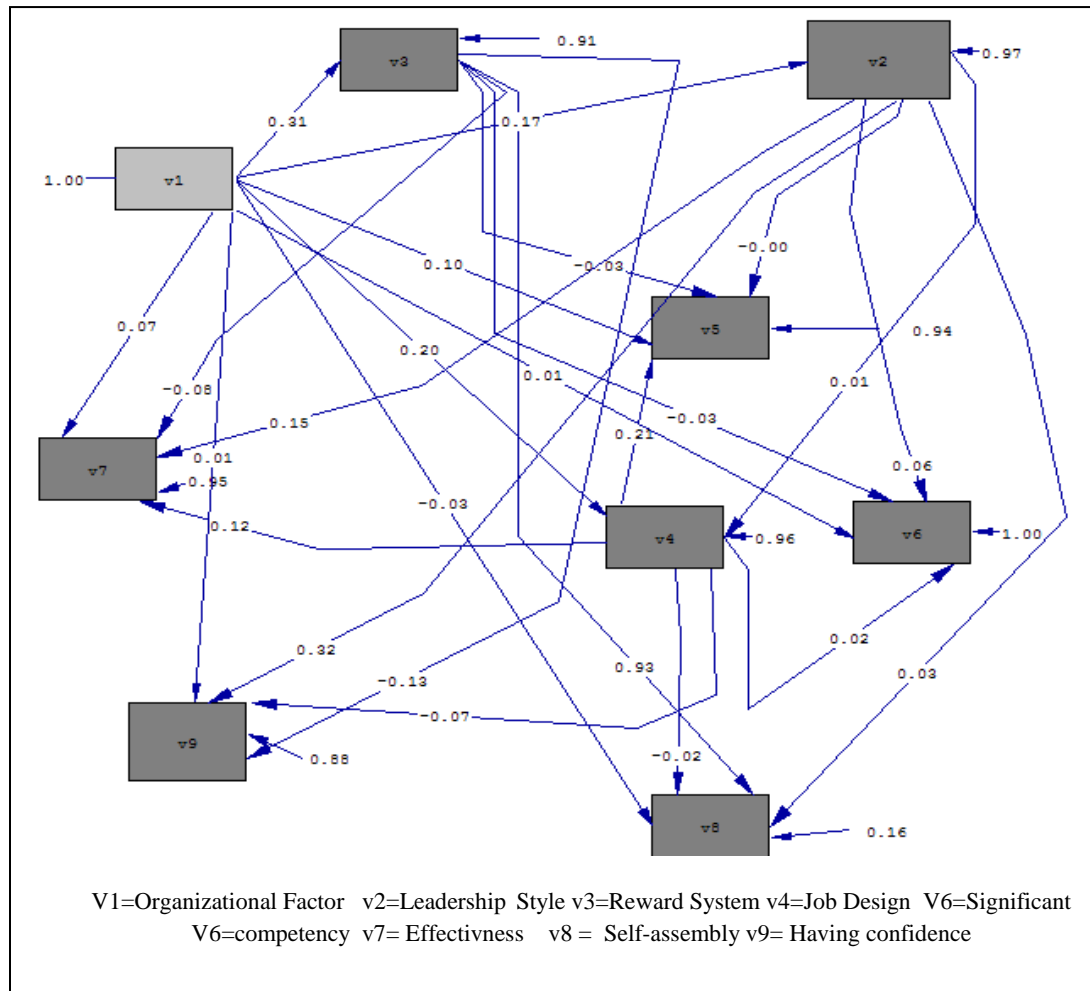
Self-determination path analysis is explained below given that analyzed impacts of independent variables (organizational factors, supervision style, reward system and job design) on dependent variables (sense of competency, sense of having confidence in others, sense of being effective in job and sense of meaningfulness) in the obtained path analysis were low.

- Direct impact of variables including organizational factors, supervision style, reward system and job design on "self-determination" has been significant and equal to 3, 3, 93 and 2% respectively.
- Direct impact of organizational factors on "self-determination" has been 3% and its indirect impact has been 28% and its impact on dependent variable of self-determination is totally equal to 25%.

Generally obtained results show reward system has the highest impact on dependent variable considering direct and indirect impacts and total independent variables. Also according to the amount of analyzed impacts it could be stated that 84% of changes related to self-determination have been explained through applied variables in the model.

**Table 4- path analysis of self-determination based on independent variables**

| Independent variables  | Impact type                    |                       | Total impact       | Analyzed impacts  | Unanalyzed impacts      |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
|                        | Direct impact                  | Indirect impact       |                    |                   |                         |
| Organizational factors | -0.03                          | 0.28                  | 0.25               | 0.84              | 0.16                    |
| Supervision style      | 0.03                           | -                     | 0.03               |                   |                         |
| Reward system          | 0.93                           | -                     | 0.93               |                   |                         |
| Job design             | -0.02                          | -                     | -0.02              |                   |                         |
| Error                  | Adjusted goodness of fit index | Goodness of fit index | Significance level | Degree of freedom | Quantity X <sup>2</sup> |
| 0                      | 0.95                           | 0.98                  | 0.000              | 12                | 172.25                  |



**Diagram 2**

: Structural model is tested to study direct, indirect and whole of independent variables on dependent variables

**Studying employees' empowerment level**

Null hypothesis  $H_0 = \mu = 0$

Alternative hypothesis  $H_1 = \mu \neq 0$

**Table 5- results of one-sample t-test related to employees' empowerment**

| Employees' empowerment    | t-statistic | Degree of freedom | Significance number |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Rejecting null hypothesis | 36.332      | 241               | 0.000               |

As it is observed in the above table, the calculated t-statistic is equal to 36.332, degree of freedom is estimated equal to 241 and the obtained significance number is equal to zero that is less than the error level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). Since t-statistic has positive sign null hypothesis is rejected and it could be concluded that employees' empowerment level is higher than the average level.

**Discussion and conclusion**

Empowerment is proposed as the most important challenge of managers at the present age. As a result managers should provide conditions under which each person could become more empowered.

The relationship among organizational factors, supervision style, reward system and job design with employees' empowerment was studied in the present survey. Obtained results confirmed the relationship among the above factors and employees' empowerment. Organizational factors such as communication systems of the organization, organizational bureaucracy, organizational changes, organizational decentralization and access to information and resources could play an important role in employees' empowerment. Major changes are occurring in traditional form of organizations having hierarchical structure and centralized power at the pyramid's summit. According to many senior managers, desisting centralized control in an environment where global competition and modern technologies are its features would increase flexibility of organizations. Employees' empowerment in this regard is the best decentralization philosophy.

Reward system plays an important role in the process of employees' empowerment. Rewards especially those accompanied by senior managers' admiration and acknowledge give sense of personality to individuals and motivate them to apply their potential ability to represent a better performance. Performance-based reward plays its role in individuals' psychological empowerment by affecting their perception from choice and competency. Obtained results confirmed the relationship among organizational factors and employees' empowerment. Since the population under study included education employees in Tehran province it is possible that material rewards don't satisfy individuals' satisfaction. According to Maslow's needs hierarchy theory individuals need social rewards at higher levels.

In job design communication systems of the organization, access to resources, manner of designing jobs, paying attention to employees' views in determining purposes, creating sufficient opportunities for progress in career path of employees and the necessary diversity in job descriptions provide employees' empowerment. Individuals should love their profession and the organization must create professional belonging in its members through implementing suitable programs. Professional belonging is led to personality growth of individuals and provides a tool to form their behavior. Obtained results confirm the relationship among organizational factors and employees' empowerment. On the other side, effective factors on employees' empowerment don't have similar importance in empowerment process. The obtained results in this regard reveal that reward system has the highest impact on employees' empowerment and sense of self-determination among effective factors on employees' empowerment. Therefore, education managers must have a special investment to enhance these two factors.

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