The Study of Effective Factors with Emphasis on Training for Employees' Empowerment in Center for Medical Documents in Social Security Organization

L. Forouzandeh Dehkurdi[1] (PhD)

Abstract

In an organization, human resources are known as a valuable and lasting capital. In order to get the most out of these resources, employees' empowerment appeared in the management literature. Empowerment refers to the delegation of authority in order to lay appropriate ground for self-motivation and self-efficacy among employees.The main aim of this study was to explore the effective factors, especially training for employees' empowerment. The statistical population of this study comprised 350 personnel of Center for Medical Documents (CMD), affiliated to the Social Security Organization.The sample consisted of 180 personnel who were randomly selected using sample size formula.The research tool was a self-report questionnaire.The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 16.The results revealed that among all factors, participative management,organic structure and supportive culture tended to show significant relations with employees' empowerment.The results also indicated that the organization needed to conduct proper short-term and long-term tailored training and to create appropriate ground for financial and spiritual motivation. Accordingly, the study suggests a program for employees' empowerment in CMD.

***Keywords*:** Employee, Empowerment, Training, Participation, Supportive Organizational Culture, Motivation, Teamwork, Organic Structure.

Introduction

In Oxford English Dictionary, "to empower" means "to enable", "to give power to", and "to permit". Figuratively, it means delegating authority to others and in an organizational context, it means bringing about changes in culture. In other words, empowerment refers to the design of an organizational structure under which self-supervised employees show readiness for more responsibilities. Empowerment encourages hardworking, honest and intelligent employees to be more

1. Faculty Member of Payame Noor University

self-supervised and become more competent to accept further important responsibilities. One can also say that employees' empowerment refers to the process through which the manager helps personnel become more competent to make decisions independently. This process affects not only the performance but also the personality.

The most important concept in empowerment is to delegate authority to lower organizational levels where decision-making becomes highly decentralized and thus managers have nowadays come to understand that empowerment can well enhance organizational productivity. Managers have to lay appropriate ground necessary for empowering their employees. Allowing employees to be more independent and participative in decision-making coupled with applied trainings can lead to more creativity and fundamental changes in their attitudes, thereby bringing about an appropriate atmosphere for both individual and organizational development.

In the new era, employees are known to be the partners of an organization; therefore, managers need to have leadership skills, and employees have to be self-supervised. This will on one hand strengthen individual's personality, and create an atmosphere of integrity in the organization on the other hand. As a supportive institution, Social Security Organization (SSO) plays a crucial role in creating individuals' security and hope for future among all walks of life employed and retired in the country. By providing supportive coverage including medical care and pension, the SSO alleviates stress and anxiety from the workforce and in turn creates hope and vivacity which act as a catalyst for achieving organizational goals.

Empowerment is a new way for the survival of pioneer organizations in today's competitive environment. Empowerment makes employees able to do what they are expected before being asked to. Empowered employees are able to find solutions to various problems in the workplace. It enhances the know-how and promotes the customer-orientation approach in the organization. Providing medical care and insurance services on a national scale, the SSO must meet the expectations of its clients by developing and updating its services. This can surely be met through skilled and motivated employees. Successful accomplishment of this objective requires a

prevailing culture of empowerment followed by a practical executive program.

Research findings in the UK indicate to the fact that operation managers suffer greatly from stress due to the threat of being downsized. In order to tackle this problem, empowerment of such employees was selected. In a report released by Witson Chemical factory, it is said that empowerment and development of production process have saved up more than twenty five million dollars for the business. The head of the factory attributes their success to his empowered employees who have opened up global markets to their products.

Edwards has shown in his studies that there exists a significant relationship between downsizing and the health of employees, and that empowerment can well reduce such stress (Quinn, 2005, P.15). Rajab Beigi (1994) in his research has shown that empowerment can promote employees' participation, establish good working relationship between supervisors and staff, and improve work processes which would lead to motivation among employees and a well-planned training program. In a semi-experimental study carried out by Ramzgooyan, he noticed that employees trained under some organizational change and in developmental programs tended to show more positive behavioral and attitudinal changes and would mostly think of expectations.

A piece of research conducted by Khaki (2001) in a production company was indicative of the fact that applied trainings had positive impacts on empowerment and creativity among employees, and it was found that those trained were more capable of presenting appropriate suggestions. He also noted that establishing a rapport between employees and managers and paying due attention to employee empowerment could lay a proper ground for tackling difficult problems among employees, thereby leading to higher productivity in the organization.

Based on a piece of research, Jalali and colleagues (1994) reported that training and motivating employees could positively influence empowerment, teamwork and customer-orientation and affect their behavior and attitudes (RajabBeigi, 1994, P 27). Also, national and

international research findings (Spreitzer and Gretchen,1992, P 489) show that empowerment increases employees' satisfaction where they no longer feel being used for nothing. Thus, they make their best efforts to have their duties accomplished, establishing a concrete commitment to the organizational goals. Supervision changes to self-supervision, and working conditions and inter-personnel relationships and attitudes also improve.

In empowerment programs, employees must feel they are competent and effective in the achievement of organizational goals.Some factors effective in creating this feeling are as follows (Khaki, 2001):

Table 1. Factors Affecting Empowerment Programs

Measures taken for empowerment	Feeling of Effectiveness	Feeling of Excellence
Charismatic Leadership		*
Change Leadership	*	*
Delegation of Authority	*	
Participative Decision-making		*
Encouraging Self-supervision		*
Job Enrichment	*	
Creating Autonomous Work-teams	*	
Establishing Supportive Culture	*	*
Encouraging Goal Setting	*	*
Training and Apprenticeship for employees		*

Advantages of Empowerment (Smith, 2005, p 130)

Feeling of Effectiveness
Feeling of effectiveness refers to how content an employee might be with his/her performance regarding the actualization of organizational goals. Research findings have shown that lack of this feeling in the organization may push employees to become desperate in identifying opportunities and also lead to a decline in motivation.

Feeling of Excellence
This term which was introduced by Wight refers to the self-confidence of an employee in his/her own capabilities for doing a given task.

Bandura referred to the same term as an individual's maturity. He found out that low feeling of excellence prevents a person from believing in his/her own abilities.

Personal Values
This implies the fact that an employee evaluates organizational duties and objectives within his/hers system of values. Empowerment will bring about a high level of commitment for, participation in and concentration on duties assigned.

The Right to Choose
This refers to taking responsibilities for results yielded/produced by an employee. Empowerment creates an atmosphere of freedom and the right to choose which promotes creativity, innovation and self-supervision among employees. Given the behavioral aspect, it causes both internal and external behaviors. The external stimulated behaviors include dynamic and task-focused behaviors. The internal stimulated behaviors may include flexibility, initiation, and quick reactions against problems.

Based on the cognitive model for empowerment, employees become content only if accomplishments are major, and thus minor successes are known as failures. Such employees try to imagine a clear picture of their future success (optimism) and avoid thinking of any failures (pessimism) (Smith, 2005, p 130). By having positive images of future success, feelings of excellence and effectiveness will increase among employees.

However, the objectives of this study were as follows: (a) Identifying effective factors in employees' empowerment from operation and senior managers' perspective, (b) Identifying impacts of employee empowerment on the accomplishment of organizational goals, and (c) Uplifting managers' awareness of the role of training and motivation in employee empowerment.

The hypotheses of this piece of research can be enumerated as follows:

1.There is a significant relationship between participative management and employee empowerment,

2.There is a significant relationship between organic structure and employee empowerment,

3.There is a significant relationship between employee qualifications (education-work records) and empowerment,

4.Supportive organizational culture has more influence on employee empowerment,

5.There is a significant relationship between employees' training and apprenticeship and their empowerment,

6.There is a significant relationship between remuneration and empowerment,

7.There is a significant relationship between motivation and employee empowerment.

Research Materials and Methodology

The statistical population of this study comprised 350 personnel of Center for Medical Documents (CMD), affiliated to the Social Security Organization. The sample consisted of 180 personnel who were randomly selected using sample size formula. In this study, a self-made questionnaire was distributed among the personnel of the CMD. Also, senior staff and officials in the Center confirmed the content validity of the questionnaire to which Cronbach's alpha coefficient was applied to test the reliability. Based on the calculations made, alpha coefficient for this questionnaire comprising/consisting of thirty-five questions on effective factors in empowerment was % 87 which is indicative of a high level of reliability.

Results

Given the literature of subject under the study, some mechanisms effective in empowering are as follows:

Enhancing Job-skills

Delegation of Authority

Creating best working practices

Access to Information

Applying Social incentives and motives

Emotional and Spiritual Support

Table 2. Frequency and Gender Percentage

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	118	65.6
Male	62	34.6
Total	180	100

Table 3. Age of Employees

Age of Employees	Frequency	Percentage
20 – 30	58	32.2
31 – 40	76	42.3
Over 41	46	25.5
Total	180	100

Table 4. Employee's Education

Degree	Frequency	Percentage
High school Diploma	54	28.9
BA/BS	108	60.0
MA/MS and PhD	20	11.1
Total	180	100

Table 5. Service Term

Service Term(yrs)	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5	39	21.7
5 - 15	94	52.2
Over 17	47	26.1
Total	0	100

Table six represents data related to the relationship between the seven tested hypotheses of the study and variables.

Table 6. Relationship Between Empowerment and Its Variables

Hypothesis	Variable	Pearson's Correlation	Significance Level	Number
First Hypothesis	Participative Management	0.372	0.0	180
Second Hypothesis	Organic Structure	0.430	0.0	180
Fourth Hypothesis	Supportive Org. Culture	0.185	0.013	18
Fifth Hypothesis	Training and Apprenticeship	0.393	0.0	180
Sixth Hypothesis	Remuneration	0.283	0.0	180
Seventh Hypothesis	Motivation	0.774	0.0	180

Third hypothesis: Multivariate regression analysis of empowerment including employees' personal qualifications.

Table 7. Constant, Level of Education and Service Term

Regression Model	Variables	T Value	Significance Level
Time Multiple	Constant	22.95	0.00
	Level of Education	-3.46	0.001
	Service Term	1	0.317

Discussion

The First Hypothesis
There is a significant relationship between participative management and employee empowerment**.** As the significance level is Sig = 0.001, one can be %99 sure to claim that there is a significant relationship between participative management and employees' empowerment. This is indicative of the fact that participative management lays proper ground for employees' empowerment.

The Second Hypothesis
There is a significant relationship between organic structure and employees' empowerment. Given the correlation coefficient (r= 0.430) and the significance level (Sig = 0.001), one can be %99 sure to claim

that there is a significant relationship between organic organizational structure and empowerment. Thus, organic organizational structure is also conducive to empowering employees.

The Third Hypothesis
There is a significant relationship between employee's qualifications (education-service term) and empowerment.

As the value of **t** for education is (r = -3.46) and the significance level is (Sig = 0.001), there is a reverse relationship between the level of education and empowerment and this is indicative of the fact that those with lower level of education have paid less attention to the importance of empowerment. In addition, considering the significance level for service term (Sig = 0.317), one can be %95 sure to claim that there exists no significant relationship between employee's service term and empowerment.

The Fourth Hypothesis
Supportive organizational culture has more influence on employee empowerment. Taking into consideration the correlation coefficient (r = 0.185) and the significance level of (Sig = 0.013) which is also lower than (alpha= 0.05), one can be %99 positive that Supportive organizational culture has more influence on empowerment.

The Fifth Hypothesis
There is a significant relationship between employees' training and apprenticeship and their empowerment**.** Taking into consideration the correlation coefficient (r = 0393) and the significance level (Sig = 0.001) which is actually lower that alpha=0.01,one can confidently claim that there exists a significant relationship between training and empowerment and that the more the trainings the greater the empowerment.

The Sixth Hypothesis
There is a significant relationship between remuneration and empowerment. As the correlation coefficient (r= 0.283**)** and (Sig= 0.001) which is lower than alpha = 0.01, it can be asserted, with 99% certainty, that there is a significant relationship between remuneration

system and employee empowerment. The bigger the employees' remuneration, the higher the degree of their empowerment.

According to the findings of the first hypothesis, the significant relationship between participation and empowerment points to the fact that employees believe their participation in decision-making will enhance empowerment. The direct relationship demonstrates 37% strong influence of participation on empowerment. According to the findings of the second hypothesis, the significant relationship between organic structure and empowerment shows 42% strong influence of organic structure on employee empowerment. According to the findings of the third hypothesis, there is a reverse relationship between education and empowerment. This finding shows that people with low educational status do not have a clear conception of empowerment. Empowerment appeals to the educated workforce that is, to some extent, conscious of its effects and results. These desirable conditions are imperative for the employees' familiarity with the effects and benefits of empowerment. According to the findings of the third hypothesis, there is no significant relationship between work record and empowerment. Therefore, longer work record has no influence on employee empowerment. According to the findings of the fourth hypothesis, the direct significant relationship between supportive organizational culture and empowerment, with a coefficient of 18%, shows that a supportive organizational culture in the organization will help create ground necessary for empowerment. According to the findings of the fifth hypothesis, the direct significant relationship between employee training and empowerment, with a coefficient of 39%, shows that training and apprenticeship provides the basis for the enhancement of employees' empowerment
Suggestions:

The study and the findings of this piece of research point to the fact that there are a number of cultural and structural impediments to the promotion of participation as one of the elements of empowerment, and that participative management can elevate employees' motivation by directly involving them. Participation results in self-confidence, loyalty, compatibility, and motivation of human resources. In order to increase employee participation,

managers must basically believe in this notion and lay the ground for participation through orientation meetings and training sessions. In addition, the structures required for participation must be prepared, and the subject and scope of participation, especially in terms of decision-making, need to be defined. Also suggestions system should be activated and individuals should be rewarded and encouraged for offering their suggestions.

According to the research findings, organic structure is one of the effective components of empowerment. Today environmental conditions are constantly changing. Organizations that recognize these conditions and adapt to them using appropriate strategies will succeed in executing/conducting their mission. One feature of successful strategies is the presence of an appropriate structure. The findings of this piece of research show that paying attention to organic structures such as project management-matrix, and adhocracy contributes to the empowerment of the human resources. Investigating the current structures and establishing new structures will increase employee empowerment. Accordingly, it is suggested that a team of experts in the field of structural design should study the current structures and establishment of new structures and lay the ground for employee empowerment by forming work groups and teams, exchanging information and expanding electronic communication.

Based on the findings, people with low educational status did not have a clear conception of empowerment. Therefore, it is suggested that by raising employee educational levels and implementing specialized courses, employees be familiarized with empowerment concepts. This is in fact an application of management and is not possible without availability of trained employees.In order to enhance career development of employees,authorities should plan trainings based on appropriate occupational needs and implement them in organizations to empower employees. In planning such trainings, cost-benefit relationship should not constitute the criteria for educational assessment. Instead, proper organizational behavior and quality improvements of employees should serve that purpose.

In a training program, proper attention to the following will promote effectiveness:

a-Training is one of the organization's subsystems which interacts with other subsystems. The status of this subsystem can vary across various situations. Those administrating the training play a major role in the effectiveness of training. As a result, the success of training programs depends on understanding the conditions and the skills and knowledge of the program administrators.

b-Training undertakes to improve and qualify human resources of the organization; and hence, directly or indirectly, create and develop necessary elements and settings for the empowerment. Therefore any action should be of strategic nature.

c-Training requires needs analysis and rigorous planning and it can be effective only when it is designed and administrated in response to the needs of empowerment.

d-Training should be evaluated from two viewpoints. In fact it should receive two kinds of feedback: one on outputs based on processing criteria and the other, on the value of the outputs for the receiving system.

e-Training program serves as the delimiter and facilitator of the employee empowerment process.

The individuals receiving training should be granted the opportunity to practice the skills they are learning. They should rehearse the skills they have learnt so many times that they become routine and internalized.

f-By providing employees with feedback, encouragement and guidance, we can determine the flow and path of their progress and empowerment and give them the opportunity to move along this path.

According to the research findings, there is a significant relationship between organizational culture and employees' empowerment. Organizational culture provides an organizational identity for employees, facilitates group commitment, promotes social system policy within the organization and helps form the employee behavior. Strengthening and expanding organizational culture will offer the possibility of employee empowerment. In this regard, attention should be given to the following points:

g- Different kinds of culture, adaptability or participation, mission or consistency, which have been classified by Professor Denison,

should be dealt with by taking the organization's conditions and requirements into account. Denison's study showed that a proper relationship between strategy and environment increases effectiveness culture of the organization. Consequently, the authorities of the organization, with the help of researchers, should identify and foster appropriate organizational behavior. In short, strengthening the present culture will increase employees' empowerment.

Principally, an organizational culture with the following characteristics will increase employees' empowerment.

1.Using competent, resourceful, practiced, and sympathetic managers who are acquainted with concepts of empowerment.

2.Communication in the organization at all levels should be earnest, friendly, honest and fairly informal. Adequate amount of time should be spent on encouraging staff's creativity and work.

3.Trusting the staff, respecting them, and involving them in decision-makings should not be ignored.

4.The organization should emphasize the assessment of the successful and creative managers and employees.

5.The ground for the contribution of ideas, viewpoints, thoughts and plans in the organization should be prepared.

6.Care should be given to the values and beliefs of the human resources and also to the society and the compatibility of the organizational culture with them.

Finally, the stronger the organizational culture, the more familiar the employees will become with the objectives of the organization.They will accept the cultural values of the organization and will feel responsible for and committed to them. In this situation, employees' level of satisfaction will increase, they will become prepared for empowerment and will pursue their own and their organization's growth and development.

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