



Empowerment in a Developing Economy: A Case Study of Jordan

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ABSTRACT

A case study was conducted to find out to what extent Jordan Business Organizations (JBO's) use empowerment at different managerial levels and to explore the attitudes of the employees towards empowerment, to see if they are familiar with this concept. 100 Jordanian enterprises were contacted and received responses from 70 enterprises who agreed to participate in the research. Two managers from each enterprise were interviewed and filled out surveys, a total of 140 respondents. The results showed that empowerment concept was very clear to the vast majority of respondents based on the practices of HRM. Results show that (50%) of responses ranged between clear and very clear, on questions regarding the empowerment concept in delegation of authority, delegation of skills and team control. and the rest are not so clear in question one. About 79% are clear or very clear on the empowerment concept in achieving employees' objectives. Approximately 56% are clear or very clear on the empowerment concept and the optimal use of HRM. About 72% of respondents see the clear/very clear connection of the empowerment concept through the democracy level in the organization. About 50% of respondents believe that always that the improvement of the organization depends on employee empowerment and approximately 36 % of respondents believe it always increases production and 50% or respondents believe that always glorifying achievement of employees shows the extent of empowerment. Results also showed that more than 57% are always satisfied with work while the rest are mostly satisfied. More than 71% of respondents believe that empowerment improves work atmosphere and approximately 50% of respondents believe that opportunities are always utilized when empowering employees. Greater than 64% of respondents believe that it always boosts confidence levels when empowering employees.

1. INTRODUCTION

"The foundation of national wealth is really people – the human capital represented by their knowledge, skills, organizations and motivations; the primary assets of a modern corporation leave the workplace each night to go home to dinner" (Hudson Institute, Inc, 1987, p. 116).

Empowerment means many things to many people; it is an act of building, developing and increasing power through cooperating, sharing and working together (Rothstein, 1995). Empowerment is also when employees "own" their jobs; when they are able to measure and influence their individual success as well as the success of their departments and their companies (Caudron, 1995). Empowerment is a fundamentally different way of working together at employees' level where employees feel responsible not.

just for doing their job, but also for making the whole organization work better. The empowered employee is an active problem solver who helps plan how to get things done and then does them at organization level. Organizations are structured in such a way that people feel that they are able to achieve the results they want, that they can do what needs to be done, not just what is required of them and be rewarded for doing so. (Scott, 1991). Additionally, empowered employees may positively influence different aspects such as corporate culture, employee commitment, corporate citizenship, and ultimately productivity and customer satisfaction (Bagheri, Matin, & Amighi, 2011).

Empowerment today is recognized as being critical to the survival and success of organizations. Empowerment is not about increasing.

the power of employees; rather, it is about releasing the knowledge and motivation that employees already have (Randolph, 1995). Also enhancing the knowledge of the organization's employees is very essential to employees to feel empowered, from a human resource perspective, Wang, Wang, and Bih-Shiaw (2017) concluded that employees become very valued and appreciated through developing a set of behavioral competences through on the job training, career development, leadership training and talent sharing (Wang, Wang, & Bih-Shiaw, 2017). The traditional organization needs employees that do their jobs and not ask questions however, nowadays the workplace needs employees who can make decisions, solve problems and are accountable for results. Furthermore, employees who are active participants anywhere can stimulate empowerment along with confidence and eagerness (Larkin, Cierpial, Stack, Morrison, & Griffith, 2008). Research supports the notion that a manager is expected to be a role model; and they fail due to communicating conflicting or inconsistent messages with their employees. The sustainability of any firm can be endangered due to weak administration, bad management of human and non-human resources, and unfitting job behavior and performance of its workforce. (Singh & Twalo, 2015). Empowerment is a vital tool to survival in today's competitive marketplace. Empowerment is not considered a substitute of a blatantly authoritarian leadership; on the contrary, it is more democratic than traditional autocratic management style practiced in the Arab world.

1.1 Need for the Study

Writers on organizations have long stressed empowerment in western countries but this subject is totally being ignored in Arab Management literature. Additionally, there are several misconceptions regarding empowerment, which are viewed mostly inter-changeable with other terms such as controlling, and delegation of authority. A fundamental problem has been facing managers since the end of last century and today which is how to exercise acceptable control in an organization that demands flexibility and innovation. Effective leaders empower their employees because they have faith in the intrinsic potential of people to innovate and add value (Simons, 1995). Empowerment is viewed as one of the main tools to achieve that, which has remained a much-neglected topic of study in the Arab countries. This neglect is related to the wider Arab social and cultural context. Arab managers tend to emphasize and exercise control as a sign of power without considering

its consequences on creativity. One of the major criticisms of Arab leadership style that it had historically evolved around the central idea of the great man theory.

In order to cultivate creativity in an organization, a manager needs to balance the amount of control over his/her employees; creative employees will not be creative or innovative under highly controlling management (Kacerauskas, 2016). This case study aimed to focus on this subject of empowerment; it is really important to study empowerment because it is totally being ignored in the Arab management literature. This study intends to clarify any misconceptions regarding this subject. Empowerment is viewed as control, and delegation of authority. Also, one of the major criticisms of the Arab leadership styles is that it has historically evolved around the central idea of the great man theory.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This exploratory study is aimed to fill a gap in the academic literature. Because empowerment is a new phenomenon in particular presently existed in Jordanian Business Organizations (JBO's), more specifically this present study aimed at achieving the following objectives: The first is to find out to what extent JBO'S use empowerment at different managerial levels. The second objective is to explore the attitudes of the employees towards empowerment, to see if they are familiar with this concept.

Furthermore, this study highlights the topic in more detail through empowerment which has become a hot topic in the last decade. To this day, Arabic organizational research practitioners did not shift their focus from command and control of the organization. Traditionally empowered organization, due to cultural and social system in the Arab world, is characterized by excessive lack of delegation of authority, tightly centralized and highly bureaucratic organizational design. Entry level employees have almost no say in making decisions and the dominant style of managers is authoritarian.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Once again, there are different interpretations of empowerment. Such interpretations are usually not consistent even within the firm. Not much material is available on its feasibility and how it can be evaluated or measured. Empowerment is defined as enhancing the individual or group's ability to make decisions and such decisions should lead to desired outcomes for the organization (Alsop, 2006). If

organizations want to be competitive, they ought to ponder on the adoption of an egalitarian leadership style as it is associated with high financial performance and sustainability than *laissez faire* or authoritative leadership styles (Puni, Ofei, & Okoe, 2014).

autonomous or participative forms of leadership is the most preeminent of all leadership styles for of the benefits that result from it by the employees among the overall performance of the organization. It is essential to understand the effect of changes of leadership as the need arises in an organization for the purpose of meeting targets and enhancing performance (GO & JE, 2015).

Empowerment is not about increasing the power of employees; rather, it is about releasing the knowledge and motivation that employees already have (Randolph, 1995). Empowerment is considered a hot topic to achieve better quality and maximum productivity also as one of the main characteristics of successful and effective leaders. Arab managers tend to emphasize control as a sign of power, without considering its consequences on creativity and innovation. The Great Man Theory's roots were derived mainly from the patriarchal social structure which leads to power concentration in the hands of the higher authority and an absence of delegation of authority. According to Jreisat (1997), the importance of the great man theory is that the leader does not follow established rules which deepens the dependence on the individual and progressively exalting this person as the great leader where followers develop loyalties and strong beliefs in the supremacy of the leader and they become more willing to grant him more authority which leads to dictatorship (Jreisat, 1997). The great man theory, according to Thomas Carlyle, focused on the role of great men or leaders and ignored the needs and the voices of society as it was divided to leaders and masses (Grinin, 2010). In relation to the wider social and cultural context, Arab managers, avoid threats or being blamed by avoiding taking action, and making decisions which may hold them accountable for these actions. The above mentioned abolishes any innovative nature due to this heritage of Arab leadership. Although many change efforts made by organizations, yet they are short-lived due to the actions of the people, the change agents, behind these change efforts (Dew, 1997).

Both Arab organizational researchers and business leaders did not shift their focus on command and control from the traditional school of thought to

empowered organization due to cultural and social system in the Arab world. Metcalfe and Mimouni (2011) concluded that in spite of ongoing efforts at upgrading management practice, leadership in Jordan is still mostly traditional in terms of limited future direction and extreme lack of delegation of authority (Metcalfe & Mimouni, 2011). Among the needed things to be done, according to Burke (2016) is for top management to make employee empowerment in the Arab world' workplaces a priority and an HRM goal. Also, managers and supervisors need to be trained to practice transformational leadership. However, cultural change would require psychological efforts to change the attitudes and behaviors of employees. Additionally, increasing participation of employees, mentoring and coaching them as well as providing training to increase self efficacy (Burke, 2016).

Effective empowerment of the workforce, on the other hand, may lead to higher levels of consumer responsiveness, innovation, employees' motivation and job satisfaction. Also, lowering stress levels for employees, enhancing their skills as well as better time management for all including management. Empowerment would fail to take place if only one or two aspects were implemented, individual attitudes and mindsets, team behaviors and organizational values levels must be all approached. Lack of contribution will make the employees become passive, and so they would not try to improve or consider applying new ideas. A study conducted by Jiang, Sun, and Law (2011) concluded that employees in the service sector when they are empowered, they have motivation to be involved in a corporate citizenship behavior. Additionally in order for empowerment to be most effective, management should alter the organization' structure to make it adhere with the empowerment practices (Jiang, Sun, & Law, 2011). Gustavson and Liff (2014) argued that in order to develop an atmosphere that addresses organizational challenges is through creating an atmosphere where everyone is a leader. An environment where each employee works with his/her colleagues, takes initiative and ownership. Gustavson and Liff developed a five-stage model of empowerment; after creating a self-directed team, the first stage consists of a team leader conducts a one-to-one interaction with each team member. Second stage, leader led circle with some interactions between team members. Third stage leadership becomes shared by some team members stepping up, the fourth stage is when most of the team members are providing leadership. The fifth stage however is when all team.

members are stepping up to provide shared leadership (Gustavson & Liff, 2014). Higher justice perception is of great importance; according to Savoie, Plunier and Cacciatore (2010) claimed that unsupportive climate in organizations due to employees' perceptions of lack of higher justice. Therefore, managers' duties are to empower employees by utilizing empowerment strategies to improve such perceptions (Savoie, Plunier, & Cacciatore, 2010). Furthermore, building manager-subordinate relationship is vital; according to Kwak and Jackson (2015) Leader Member Exchange (LMX) has a positive effect on empowering employees. Kwak and Jackson also argued that such positive effect happens due to perception bias where when the leader with high LMX gives the impression to each employee that he/she is exclusive when it comes to trust and support (Kwak & Jackson, 2015). This study, however, attempts to contribute to Human capital research, the human resource is the major asset in any organization. Also, this study aims to lay the foundation for future research and to stimulate further studies in this regard.

3. METHODOLOGY

For this study, qualitative means were used, and the researchers contacted (100) enterprises in Jordan. (70) enterprises agreed to participate in the research, a response rate of 70% representing all sizes of firms and types of industries. only 140 usable responses were used in the analysis. As for the methods of data collection, field research was conducted by using the most widely used method in the social sciences, the survey. This took the form of a questionnaire as well as interviews were also used to collect relevant data. The data was processed and entered into the computer by

Table (2) indicates that (35.71%) of the employees had only occupied their current positions within the present firm for less than 5 years, also the same percent who had between 5-10 years, and (28.57%) had more than 10 years length of time in the present position within the current firm. However, Table 2-Table 5 are demographic information for the research participants.

using a modified version of the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS). The results were tabulated according to the different variables representing the main aspects of the research to detect the significant relationship between variables. The 0.5 level of significance was used. A pilot study was conducted on 10 participants and was not included in the survey count which led to a slight tweaking of the survey to enhance its clarity which enhances the validity of the survey. To validate the study further the researchers interviewed the participants and varified all answers to the questions.

4. RESULTS

After data was collected and entered into the computer; then the following results were produced in the form of tables. Table (1) gives us the needed information about the sample investigated, which relates to the types of the firms by industry studied. It shows that (7.14%) of these firms are in Banking, (28.57%) in services and (64.29%) are in other types of Industry.

Table 1. Type of Industry

Type of Industry	No. of Firms	Percentage
Banking	10	7.14%
Services	40	28.57%
Other	90	64.29%
Total	140	100%

Table 2. Experience

Total managerial experience	F*	P**
Less than 5 years	50	35.71%
5-10 years	50	35.71%
More than 10 years	40	28.57%
Total	140	100%

**P: Percentage

*F: Frequency

Table (3) shows that (42.86%) of the respondents are between 20-30 years old, while (35.71%) of the total sample are between 30-40 years old, (7.14%) are between 40-50 years old and also (7.14%) are 50

old or more.

Table 3 Age Group

Age Group	F	%
20-30	60	42.86
30-40	50	35.71
40-50	20	14.29
50+	10	7.14
Total	140	100%

Table (4) shows significant point that (78.57%) of the sample studied are male and (21.43%) are female.

Table 4. Sex

Sex	F	%
Male	110	78.57%
Female	30	21.43%
Total	140	100%

Results as shows in table (5), (71.43%) of the respondents are married, and (28.57%) of the sample are single.

Table 5. Marital Status

Marital status	F	%
Married	100	71.43%
Single	40	28.57
Total	140	100%

Table (6) indicates level of education the respondents have completed. Results shows that (21.43%) of respondents have a secondary degree, (7.14%) diploma degree and the most salient point emerging from table below, is the high proportion of employees having graduate degree (71.43%).

Table 6. Education

Education	F	%
Secondary	30	21.43%
Diploma	10	7.14%
B.A.	80	57.14%
M.A.	20	14.29%
Total	140	100%

4.1 Clarity of Empowerment definition in general

To see whether employees regard the empowerment concept from the view of employees in the employee’s participation (question one), in employee’s freedom (question two), and in employee’s creativity (question three). Analysis of table (7) shows that (85.71%) of responses ranged between clear and very clear, (14.29%) are not so clear, about question one. Also, this table shows the results of question two which are (28.57%) not so clear and (71.43%) are nil. Whereas responses regarding question three, results show that the majority of respondents (50%) felt that clarity of empowerment definition in employee's creativity is very clear, while (42.86%) are clear and (7.14%) are nil.

Table 7. Empowerment concept from the view of employees

Clarity	Employees Participation		Employees Freedom		Employees Creativity	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Very clear	50	35.71	40	28.57	70	50
Clear	70	50	0	0	60	42.86
Not so clear	20	14.29	0	0	0	0
Nil	0	0	100	71.43	10	7.14
Total	140	100	140	100	140	100

Table (8) shows the empowerment concept in delegation the authority, on authority delegation (question one), on delegation of skills (question two)

and on team control (question three). Results shows that (50%) of responses ranged between clear and very clear, and the rest are not so clear in question one. In question two the results show that (78.57%) of the responses are clear and very clear, and (21.43%) are not so clear. Whereas the majority of respondents (42.86%) are equally in clear and very clear, and (14.29%) are not so clear in question three.

Table 8. Empowerment concept in delegation the authority

Clarity	Authority Delegation		Delegation of Skills		Team Control	
Very clear	40	28.57	50	35.71	60	42.86
Clear	30	21.43	60	42.86	60	42.86
Not so clear	70	50	30	21.43	20	14.29
Nil	0	0	100	71.43	0	0
Total	140	100	140	100	140	100

Table (9) is about empowerment concept from the use of HRM. Question one is about empowerment concept receiving in the change in HRM practice, the results show that (78.57%) are between clear and very clear, and the rest are not so clear. Question two about the optimal use of HRM as shows the table (85.71%) of responses ranged between clear and very clear, and (14.29%) are not so clear.

Table 9 Empowerment concept from the use of HRM

	Change in Use of HRM		Optimal Use of HRM	
	F	%	F	%
Very clear	70	50	70	50
Clear	40	28.57	50	35.71
Not so clear	30	21.43	20	14.29
Nil	0	0	0	0
Total	140	100	140	100

Table (10) answers questions about empowerment achievements of the employees of the organization. Question one achieving employee’s objectives and question two about democracy level in the organization. The results show in question one (78.57%) is between clear and very clear, (14.29%) are not so clear and (7.14%) are nil. Whereas responses regarding question two, results show that the majority of respondents (35.71%) for clear and very clear where as (21.43%) for not so clear and the rest for nil.

Table 10. Empowerment Achievements in organization

	Achieving Employees Objective		Democracy Level	
	F	%	F	%
Very clear	60	42.86	50	35.71
Clear	50	35.71	50	35.71
Not so clear	20	14.29	30	21.43
Nil	10	7.14	10	7.14
Total	140	100	140	100

4.2 The Extent of Successful Empowerment

Table (11) shows the improvement of the organization depends on empowerment for question one, increasing in production and profitability of the organization in question two and glorifying the achievements in question three. The table shows that (50%) of responses ranged always, (35.71%) are sometimes, and the rest are mostly about question one. But in question two the results (35.71%) of responses are always, (50%) are sometimes, and (14.29%) are mostly. Whereas responses regarding question three, results show that the majority of respondents (50%) felt it always, while (42.86%) regard this factor is between sometimes and mostly, and the rest are never.

Table 11. Improvement of the organization

	Organization Improvement		Increasing Production		Glorifying the Achievements	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Always	70	50	50	35.71	70	50
Sometimes	50	35.71	70	50	30	21.43
Mostly	20	14.29	20	14.29	30	21.43
Never	0	0	0	0	10	7.14
Total	140	100	140	100	140	100

Empowerment and the employees satisfaction is in table (12) and it has two questions. The first one is about satisfaction with work and the results show that (57.14%) of responses are always and the rest are mostly. The most salient point emerging from the table below is that a high percentage (71.43%) of respondents believe always that empowerment make atmosphere improvements, (14.29%) are sometimes and also (14.29%) of responses are mostly.

Table 12. Employee's satisfaction

	Satisfaction of Work		Atmosphere Improvement	
	F	%	F	%
Always	80	57.14	100	71.43
Sometimes	0	0	20	14.29
Mostly	60	42.86	20	14.29
Never	0	0	0	0
Total	140	100	140	100

Table (13) is about the availability of utilization and confidence boost. Question one is about opportunity utilization and it indicates that (50%) of the responses are always, (42.86%) are sometimes, and a low percentage (7.14%) of respondents are mostly. Whereas, in responses regarding question two, results show that the majority of respondents (64.29%) are always, (14.29%) are sometimes and (21.43%) are mostly.

Table 13. Availability of utilization and confidence boost

	Opportunity Utilization		Confidence Boost	
	F	%	F	%
Always	70	50	90	64.29
Sometimes	60	42.86	20	14.29
Mostly	0	7.14	30	21.43
Never	0	0	0	0
Total	140	100	140	100

CONCLUSIONS

This study concluded that (78.57%) agree that the concept of empowerment is more comprehensive than delegation of authority from the top management to lower level of management. Also, the majority agrees that the biggest hindrance of employees in the top management as they focus on achieving short run goals as well as their vague targets. Additionally, respondents also agree that the evaluation of the employee by his or her direct manager is considered as a clear message that he or she is responsible towards him or her. Additionally, the majority agree that there is no harmony between strict censorship and creativity. Also, the majority agrees that using some kind of jobs like part time workers affect the sense of belonging to the organization. The study also concluded, based on the results, that employees are not planning to quit their current jobs and join another one that offers better chance of authority delegation in decision making. Furthermore, (71.43%) agree that centralization or decentralization in decision making affect the employees' belonging to the establishment. The same above percentage of employees also agree that the one who hasn't been delegated the authority for further delegation can't delegate it to the subordinates.

(85.71%) of employees agree that there are specified policies that guide the organization in delegating the authorities, and a small percentage of (14.29%) disagree. Moreover, (50%) agree that the organization of their establishment allows empowerment activity also (64.29%) agree to participate in a confidence boost activity. The majority agree that there is seriousness in delegating power by top management, which is met by responsible usage of the lower management. What's more, the majority agree that the missions of their direct manager require skills that they don't possess at the moment, and they are working on attaining them by self-study. The majority of employees also did not agree that empowerment cancels the top management privileges while (35.71%) disagreed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although there is little research done in the Arab region similar to this case study however, there is evidence from previous research that supports our findings as it adds to its reliability. For example, Burke (2016) concluded that top management should make employee empowerment in the Arab world' workplaces a priority and a human resource management goal. Burke study is in line with this research findings. Burke also, as mentioned in the literature review, concluded that managers and

supervisors need to be trained to practice transformational leadership. However, cultural change would require psychological efforts to change the attitudes and behaviors of employees. Additionally, increasing participation of employees, mentoring and coaching them as well as providing training to increase self efficacy (Burke, 2016). Additionally, Gustavson and Liff (2014) study is in agreement of this current findings which concluded that creating an atmosphere where everyone of the employees is a leader, an environment where each worker works with his/her colleagues, takes initiative and ownership which is a brilliant way to empower employees as they take part of the authority and decision making process.

To ensure the validity of the study triangulation was utilized where data was collected by more than a single source. This research collected data through the use of questionnaires and also through interviews. The implementation of new concepts is not an easy task, for both experienced and inexperienced managers. The managerial curriculum throughout the managerial schools must be always updated upon the new concepts in business, therefore, more training should be done in those fields, with constant observance of the outcome and how to improve it even more along with adjusting it to the local cultural environment. Additionally, the learning process must be an on going one, organizations should be aware of the developments in the business concepts, and try to adopt the most suitable ones through training of the existing staff on a regular basis.

Limitations

Although this study has essential contributions to the current body of knowledge, it is not without limitations. For one, the population size being studied was not large which may affect the generalizability of the results. Even though procedures were put in place to maximize on the accuracy and integrity of the data collected, it is possible that different researchers with different types of respondents may have different findings. For example, as it is apparent from the data demographics above that the majority of the respondents were men; it is possible that other researchers may have different results if respondents were mostly women.

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