Psychologically Empowered Employee, Strong Organization: A Review of Psychological Empowerment Perception

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Abstract
The concept of empowerment, especially psychological empowerment, has recently emerged as a critical psychological issue anda management practice. As to understand the positive aspects of empowered minds, it is crucial to study on psychological empowerment perception of individuals in detail. This study will examine empowerment and psychological empowerment conceptions in detail while assessing them as the source of psychological wellbeingand several constructive work outputs.The psychological empowerment concept, its identifiers and positive outcomeswill beconceptually defined in this article.
Key Words: *Psychology, Empowerment, Psychological Empowerment*

I. Introduction

The most significant power of organizations that are continuously seeking to remain standing in the face of uncertainty and competition is human resources. Human resources is the keyof success only when it does transform into a potent human capital for the organization. For this transformation, it is also vital to employ resources effectively; beyond the routine human resource management process, a series of activities centered on quality development that will result in genuine commitment should be undertaken. Organizations advancing with a prudential perspective and an ever-growing performance target should recognize that using the power properly is critical rather than having it.

The empowerment concept is closely related with both organizational and managerial effectiveness by taking the advantage of human resources. While psychological empowerment which means as the development of individual's self-confidence, as a result of which they find their jobs meaningful, feel competent in their professions, have the authority to make decisions about their jobs, and believe that they have an impact on their responsibilities, is important at individual level and team levels, it should be considered at strategic level in organizations. The most important subject on this issue is the employee perception rather than the empowerment provided by the organizations; hence, the employees feel psychologically empowered. In the light of this perceptual process, the term psychological empowerment perception is used in the study title.

Given these considerations, the objective of this study is to cover the topic in detail with its identifiers and positive outcomes. By doing so, contributing to the existing literature is aimed.

II. Empowerment Concept

Organizations striving to adapt to competitiveness in a changing environment have begun to consider empowering their employees as a critical aspect, in addition to competing in an era of rapidly changing technology, procedures, and systems. Building commitment through employee empowerment is almost like a strategy for distinguishing organizations from each other (Rawat,2011).

According to Laschinger, empowerment is a motivating tool encouraging employees in taking initiative and coping with the challenges at work. The emotion level of the employees toward the empowerment process is also a determinant of the organizational characteristics (Tolayand others,2012). In their book entitled '50 Activities for Empowerment', Berry, Cadwell, and Fehrmann defined empowerment as enabling employees to have a sense of ownership of their jobs by providing opportunities to develop their unique abilities. Furthermore, empowerment activity is essentially a process of converting employees into leaders and achieving the organization's better results, according to these authors(Berry et al,1994).

Herrenkol, Judson, and Heffner approached the empowerment concept as the distribution of power and authority. They also interpreted this concept as assuring the participation of the highest level of employees in the organization's success, decision-making processes, and vision sharing(Taştan, 2013). At this point, it is critical

to distinguish the concepts of participation and empowerment. While participation in decision-making processes may be limited to a specific period or with particularprojects, empowerment refers to employees considering themselves as the work owners who are constantly involved in the decision-making processes by possessing autonomy in their work (Çekmecelioğlu and Eren, 2007).

Empowerment mainly refers to the inclusion of all employees in the organization's success in achieving organizational objectives. Since employees' empowerment means strengthening the organization, implementing empowerment practices will provide a significant commercial advantage to remain competitive (Lashley,200). Empowerment practice isa vitally necessary fuel for organizations; therefore, making progress would be extremely challenging without it.

According to Koçel, empowering is a process aimed athaving employees the owners of their work (Koçel, 2014). The most fundamental attempts to boost this process are increasing expertise through training and development and providing information and resources to employees to fulfillthe necessary tasks (Yürür and Demir, 2011).Undoubtedly, one of the most prominent goals of the empowerment practices is to improve employee loyalty via implementing a win-win strategy. Furthermore, employees who believe their skills are improvedand that their work is meaningful will be more devoted to it. Empowerment practices aim to raise employees' skills and knowledge levels; in other words, to make them better equipped and improve the eigenvalue of their subordinates (Çalışkan,2011).

Rosabeth Kanter (1977), who developed the structural empowerment theory, defined empowerment as the ability of individuals to utilize resources and make decisions to attain their objectives. The six aspects of structural empowerment, according to Kanter, are opportunity, knowledge (the information necessary to conduct the job properly), resources (the money and equipment to accomplish the job), support (the help, guidance, and feedback received by an individual from superiors, subordinates, and colleagues), formal power, and informal power (O'Brien, 2010).John Tschohl, one of the world's leading customer service specialists (gurus), identified empowerment with the concept of servant leadership, claiming that managers who refuse the empowerment process are less likely to succeed. Instead of spending money on advertising to gain and retain customers, Tschohl believes that it is more logical for businesses to empower their employees to make quick and innovative decisions when communicating with customers (Tschohl, 2010).

As a simplified definition made by Bowen and Lowler (1992), empowerment is employees having the right and opportunity to make decisions on their work (Çekmecelioğlu and Eren, 14).Borghei, Jandaghi, Matin, and Dastani stated that empowerment is the sum of the skills listed below (Borgheiet al., 2010);

- The power of makingdecisions for the work of interest,
- To access the information and resources necessary to makedecisions,
- To have several options to choose from,
- The ability to express determination in collective decision-making processes,
- To have the power of positive thinking to makechanges,
- The ability to modifyothers' perceptions democratically,
- To involve in constant development and change processes,

Coffey, Cook, and Hunsaker (1994) emphasized that the introduction of the empowerment practices in organizations is based on three components; the personnel to be empowered, the manager to administer the empowerment process, and the organization where the empowerment activity will take place (Yüksel and Erkutlu, 2003). Koçel also highlighted that there must be the interaction of three components in the organization for the empowerment process to take place, and he articulated these components as follows (Koçel,477):

1.   *Organization component*: Organizational structures and operating styles influence empowerment directly. Elements such as the organizational flatness, the ability to participate in job descriptions, the system built to allow information sharing, and the settings of learning environments, for instance, all promote empowerment.
2.   *Personnel component*: The employees should also yearn for empowerment to take place. Factors such as employees' ability to comprehend themselves well, their ambition for constant improvement, their openness to change, and their willingness to listen and receive feedback will all influence the success of empowerment.
3.   *Managerial component*: The success of empowerment practices is directly related to management style and executive behavior. Managers should be able to develop trust, be interactive and share knowledge, generate learning opportunities and provide effective feedback, minimize the fear of making mistakes, and guide employees.

Similarly, Berry, Cadwell, and Fehrmann highlighted three dimensions of empowerment, including individual, organizational, and leadership, and remarked that the communication factor colligates all these dimensions (Berry et al, 8).Employees tend to react rationally to every event they encounter, and if these events

are structured in such a way that employees feel empowered, organizations reap significant profits regarding both positive attitudes of the employees and organizational effectiveness(Heather et al.,2002). Although the empowerment process is a follow-up of delegation, participation, and motivation, its primary differences are that it has a broader scope and is more challenging to implement than others(Yüksel and Erkutlu, 132). The empowerment grid developed by Ford and Fottler stated that empowerment in the workplace is only achievable if employees make and implement decisions to broaden the scope, meaning, and job contents.
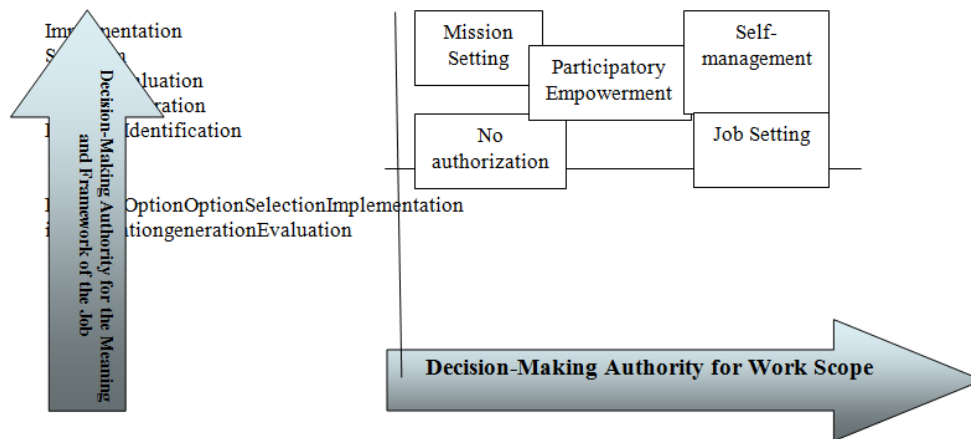
Source: Ford, Fottler, 1995.

Figure1. Employee Empowerment Grid

The followings are the empowerment areas elucidated by Ford and Fottler(Ford and Fottler, 1995):

• *No authorization field* refers to traditional assembly line employment featuring highly routine and repetitive tasks. Other than the employees, individuals design and control these types of jobs. Individuals working in these jobs have no authority to make any decisions on the scope or meaning of the job.

• *Job setting field* refers to the organizational work reflecting the essence of many empowerment-related programs currently in use. At this phase, the employee is granted the authority to make decisions about the scope of the job, albeit not the meaning. The employee is empowered to decide the best ways to complete the assigned work. In such cases, the management sets the mission and vision, and the employee is empowered to find the best means of achieving them.

• *Participatory empowerment* refers to typically autonomous working groups granted partial decision-making authority. These groups are frequently involved in problem identification, conducting alternative research, and offering the best solution.

• *Mission setting* is an uncommon form of empowerment. An authorizing team to decide whether it would be more effective to engage an outside contractor for an activity rather than existing employees may be given as an example to this group. Such decisions may cause significant modifications in the missions of the units.

• *Self-management* means that the equipped employees have full authority in every aspect of their work. Such status requires a strong determination that employees possess the skills necessary to boost the organization's efficiency. Concurrently, employees must also be ready and willing to contribute to the organization's objectives and goals. Choosing to empower employees that much in the face of rapidly changing environmental conditions, technical advancements, and competitive challenges is the highest manifestation of trust.

III. Psychological Empowerment Concept

In the relevant literature, the concept of empowerment is discussed basically in two particular contexts; structural empowerment and psychological empowerment. While structural empowerment theory focuses on the existence or absence of empowering conditions in the workplace, psychological empowerment theory mainly concentrates on employees' reactions to these conditions(Laschinger and others, 2001).

Yet, psychological empowerment is a concept that focuses on employees' motivational cognitions and how they relate to their job functions(Wang and Lee, 2009).Spreitzer explored the issue from a psychological standpoint, stating that employees should experience psychological empowerment for the empowerment practices to be successful in the organization(Spreitzer, 1995,).Approaching the matter from this perspective necessitates a focus on intrinsic motivation beyond the management practices aimed at improving employees'

power levels (Taştan, 140).The empowered employees are the principal aspect of success in modern organizations striving for creativity, and the psychological empowerment, which expresses the psychological dimension, encompasses taking responsibility in its most basic form and is especially vital for contemporary organizations(Rawat, 143).

When people are psychologically empowered, it is possible to see positive changesin cognition, attitude and so behavior, whichwill also lead to a positive change in value orientation, improved self-esteem, self-consciousness, self-efficacyand better psychological well-being which will ensure a peaceful and developing society (Oladipo, 2009).According to Zimmerman, psychological empowerment is a combination of the individuals' interactions with their surroundings and internal empowermentperceptions(Zimmerman,1995).Psychological empowerment, one of the internal motivation sources of the employees, is one of the most critical decisive factors of job adoption achieved through power-sharing between the organization and the employees. Psychological empowerment entails not only delegating authority and responsibility to the employees but also rediscovering experience and expertise that the employees have been unable to use for various reasons(Ulukapı and Yılmaz, 2016).Spreitzer stated that the components determining the empowerment are the perceptions of employees towards these practices rather than the objective facts emerging in the activities conducted to empower employees (Spreitzer, 1995).

Employees have acquired significant behavioral improvements through psychological empowerment, eliminating personal weaknesses or elevating self-efficacy(Altındiş and Özutku, 2011).Increasing individuals' self-confidence and self-efficacy, strengthening their commitment to the organization, raising their willingness for personal development, and taking responsibility for decision-making and problem-solving issues are all regarded as some of these positive changes (TopluandAkça, 2013).

According to Zimmerman, psychological empowerment is a sense ofdecision making, motivation to control, problem-solving and a critical awareness of one's environmentand participatory behaviors (Zimmerman, 1995). Figure 2 presents these features of psychological empowerment as intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral components.
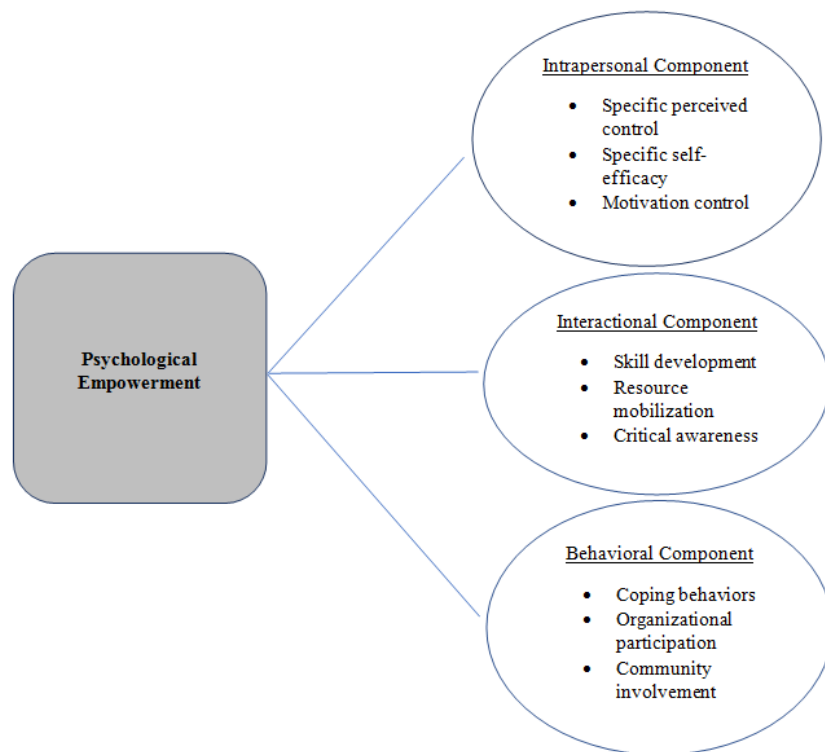
Source: MthokozisiMoyo, 2015.
Figure 2. Nomological Network for Psychological Empowerment

IV. Spreitzer's Approach to Psychological Empowerment

Spreitzer defined psychological empowerment fundamentally as the development of individuals' self-confidence; hence, they find their jobs meaningful, feel competent in their professions, have the authority to make decisions about their jobs, and believe they influence their responsibilities (Spreitzer, 1995). At this point, employees' perceptions of these factors are the most significant consideration. If employees negatively percept

any of these factors, they will fail to feel psychologically empowered. For instance, employees believing that their job is meaningless will not perceive themselves as empowered, even if they have the authority to make decisions about their work and have great self-esteem in their skills (Bozkurt, 2009).

The notion of empowerment appears to be established on participative management and job enrichment concepts; however, psychological empowerment refers to the psychological aspects of empowerment practices in the workplace (Spreitzer, 1995).Psychological empowerment is one of the necessary prerequisites for employees' motivation in the work environment (Robbins and others, 2002).

Spreitzer further developed Conger and Kanungo's (1988) studies considering psychological empowerment as intrinsic motivation and described it within the scope of the dimensions below (Spreitzer, 1995):

- *Meaning*: It is a dimension of the job characteristics model that denotes the alignment between employees' roles and their beliefs, values, and behaviors, suggesting that employees find their jobs meaningful. It reveals the meaning of the value of the job goals when the employee's own will and standards are considered.
- *Competence*: This term denotes the confidence level of employees with their skills and capacities to perform their duties. This dimension of psychological empowerment reveals a complete personal belief that the job in question may succeed without the intervention of the organizations.
- *Autonomy*: The term refers to employees' ability to decide how to perform and overcontrol their job. An employee with the freedom to make decisions feels autonomous since he/she feels no pressure. Employees with autonomy have a high level of responsibility and accountability.
- *Impact*: It is the polar opposite of learned helplessness, and it refers to how much an employee affects strategic, managerial, and operational outcomes. Occasionally, the terms impact and locus of control are confused; nevertheless, they differ in the following aspects; while the impact is related to the job content, locus of control is a personality trait originating from the situations the person encounters.

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) also stated that the combination of these four dimensions explains psychological empowerment, and the lack of any of the dimensions may impair empowerment perception (Tolayet al, 452).
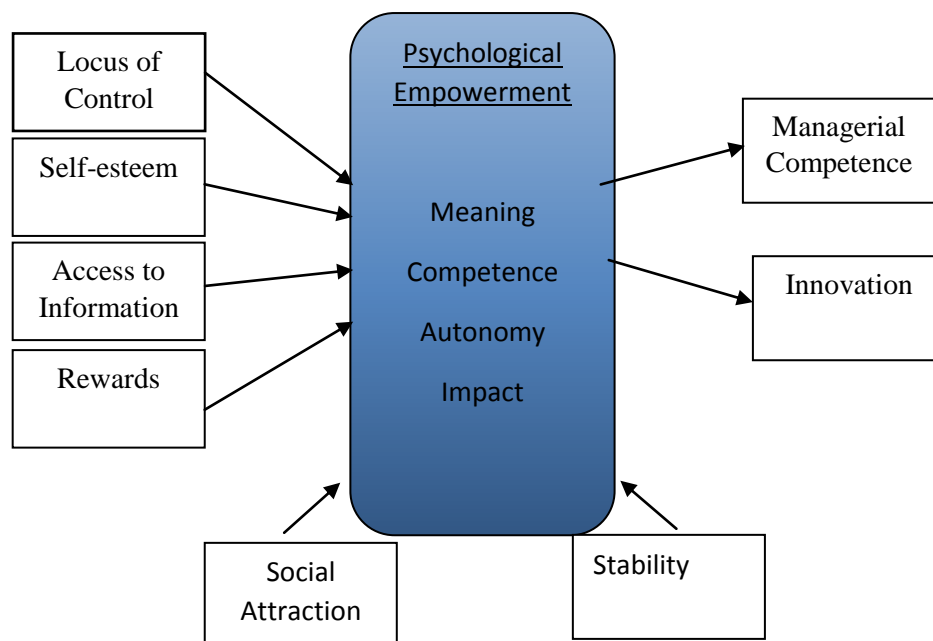
Source: Gretchen M. Spreitzer, 1995.

Figure3. Psychological Empowerment Network in Organizations

V. Identifiers of Psychological Empowerment
Spreitzer developed the ideas of Lawler (1986) and Kanter (1989) grounded on some specific management empowerment practices they considered as the decisive factors and discussed these identifiers of the psychological empowerment as follows (Spreitzer,1995):

Self-esteem: This term is used as a broad definition of individuals' ability to feel respected(Brockner, 1998:7). Individuals with high self-esteem regard themselves as valuable resources with talents and are more active in contributing to their working units (Gist and Mitchell, 1992:184). Contrarily, it is feasible to argue that individuals with low self-esteem may not consider themselves capable of making a change or contributing to their workplace.

Locus of control: Thomas and Velthouse (1990) suggested that the concept of locus of control is the most relevant variable for empowerment (Spretizer,1995).Locus of control refers to the degree to which individuals believe they have greater control over events in their lives than external factors (Kormanik and Rocco, 2009:466). Individuals with an internal locus of control feel more capable of forming events in the workplace as they handle life, and such a belief allows them to feel empowered. They believe they are the key components impacting events in the workplace rather than being controlled by external aspects. Conversely, individuals with a high external locus of control feel that the system strongly influences and controls their behavior (Spreitzer,1995).

Access to information: According to Kanter, if organizations wish to empower their employees, they should ensure more employees of various ranks with access to more information via diversified tools(Kanter,1984:156). According to Lawler (1992), employees require access to two types of information: (1) information about the organization's mission and (2) information about performance. Information about the mission may assist employees in acquiring a sense of meaning and purpose and developing the capacity to make decisions with the organizational goals. However, performance information makes it easier for the employees to comprehend their contribution to the work unit and set future performance targets precisely (Spreitzer, 1995).

Rewards: Another crucial variable for psychological empowerment is the rewarding practices. At this point, the most critical issue is employees' unique and individual successes being recognized and appreciated, as they often have difficulties in understanding how much they contribute to the organization. In particular, some individual-based rewarding systems are regarded as boosting empowerment. This process occurs in two ways; (1) acknowledging and developing personal competence and (2) enabling individuals to participate and even impact decision-making through incentives.

VI. Positive Outcomes of Psychological Empowerment

Executing successful empowerment strategies in organizations requires the interaction of all elements and dimensions (Spreitzer,1995). Along with this interaction, an organizationrecognizing the vitality of its employees' ability to cope with uncertainty, develop new ideas, and take risks is a critical factor in their success in the globally competitive environment should allocate the necessary resources to employees, share the essential information, and establish a suitable reward system. Similarly, a successful empowerment process is built on the ability of employees to take the initiative in extending the scope and structure of their work(Ceylan, 2002:117).

Psychological empowerment, allowing or even encouraging employees to influence their work environment, focuses on empowering and motivating them since power and control are the critical motivational resources(Borghei and others, 1158).The definition of employee empowerment refers to the transfer of the highest possible delegation of decision-making authority and power to employees. As a result, empowered employees are expected to be willing to take responsibility and make decisions (Robbins and others, 435).Achievement of all these processes depends on employees' feeling that there is harmony between their function at work and personal value judgments, that they are competent in performing their job, and knowing that they have control over their work(Rawat, 144).

It has seen in the study of Yürür and Demir (2011) that empowerment applications in the organizations increase the level of justice perception of employees. Zhang and Agarwal (2009) also indicated in their study that psychological empowerment applications increase the justice perception of employees.

Yolcu and Çakmak(2017), made a study on development agencies and stated that psychological empowerment has a positive effect on proactive behavior. Also Parker (2006), determined in his study that supportive management styles increase the level of proactive behavior.

In light of the data acquired and the study revealed, Spreitzer and Quinn (2001) enumerated the characteristics of empowered employees in the presence of psychological empowerment as follows (Ngang, 2012):

- Empowered employees not only feel more productive in their jobs but also their colleagues rate them as effective.
- Empowered employees are less resistant to change since they feel hopeful about coping with the organizational problems.
- Empowered employees are more innovative and unafraid to try new things.
- Empowered employees possess revolutionary leadership skills.
- Empowered leaders are perceived as charismatic personalities by other employees, strengthening their hands while transforming organizations.
- Empowered employees have desired levels of self-efficacy
- Empowered employees tend to have psychological ownership on their organization
- Empowered employees have equity sensitiveness
- Empowered employees are more pro-active than others

Figure 3 depicts the direction the work attitude of the empowered employee.
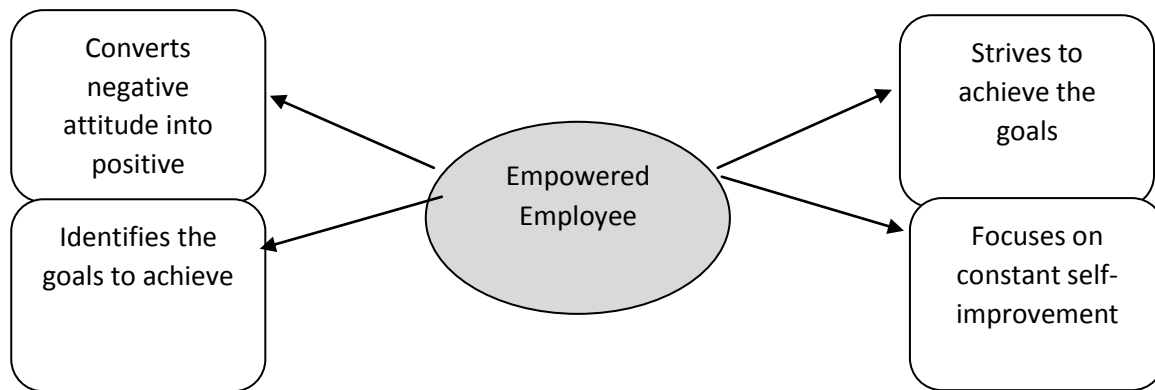
Source: Adnan Ceylan, 2002.
Figure3. Empowerment and Work Attitude

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