

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

Effects of Employee Empowerment on Performance in Public Sector: Case of Murang'a Law Courts

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Abstract:

The study assessed the effect of employee empowerment on performance in public sector: case of Murang'a law courts. Judiciary plays a very important role in delivering justice fairly, impartially and expeditiously, while promoting equal access to justice and advancing local jurisprudence by upholding the rule of law (Mutunga, 2012). This mandate has not yet been fully realized. Consequently, the backlog of cases has been increasing. This has been caused by various intervening factors including one of employee- employer relationships among others. The theory adopted in conceptualizing the objectives was Kanter's structural empowerment theory. The specific objectives were to investigate how psychological, role, organizational and embedded empowerment affected reliability, effectiveness, job turnover and job accomplishments respectively. The research design for this study was qualitative though with some quantitative data analysis. Target population were be all the fifty two (52) judiciary staff. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaire and was supplemented by secondary data obtained from judiciary and government published reports. Data analysis involved establishment of categories, application of these categories to raw data through coding, tabulation and then drawing conclusions. The process involved establishment of categories, application of these categories to raw data through coding, tabulation and then drawing conclusions. The data collected was checked for completeness ready for analysis then coded. Data was analyzed through the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 21) package. Tables and charts were used for further representation for easy understanding and analysis. Inferential statistic was used to establish the relationship between performance and employee empowerment.

The conceptual model used in the study was: $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \epsilon$

Keywords: Performance, empowerment, judiciary

1. Introduction

Numerous researchers have recognized a relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational citizenship related behaviors, voluntary behaviors claiming that individuals who feel more psychologically empowered are more likely to reciprocate by being more committed to their organization and exhibiting all those voluntary efforts (Spreitzer, 1995). Experiencing psychological empowerment and feeling psychological power can result to an individual being more engaged in voluntary behaviors at work.

Employers are shifting focus on how they empower their employees for better performance at work. It is now evident that organizations which have performing employees are the organizations which consider the psychological dimensions of their employees. However major part of literature has tended to limit itself to considering only financial empowerment ignoring the other outputs such as psychological, role, organizational and embedded empowerment which was the major focus in this study. Thus this study was intended to look not only on one perspective of empowerment but on the wider concept and dimensions of empowerment which can be employed by organizations for better results and good performance.

In the last decade the notion of empowerment has become popular in industrial and organizational psychology and management circle. Some of the proponents of empowerment have even gone further to state that, 'no vision, no strategy can be achieved without able and empowered employees (Argyris, 1998). In management, empowerment denotes the enhancement of employees' autonomy in their work or increased involvement and influence in decision – making more generally within the wider agenda and interests of the organizations (Meyer and Allen, 1997).

Role empowerment was the original emphasis of research and practice and remains of central concern today. This is evident as outlined by Robbins, (2002) in an integrated model of empowerment. Research on empowerment has largely focused on groups that are or ostensibly powerless. Once employees have been empowered in their different roles then performance will definitely improve (Menon, 2001). Empowered employees take responsibility of their roles and pray accordingly.

Different employee roles must be stamped with authority if effectiveness is to be achieved at the organization level and each individual employee should be held accountable for their roles in the organization. The firm and the industry must realize that role empowerment is just as important as any other kind of empowerment. However major part of literature has tended to limit itself in considering role empowerment and its effect in effectiveness in undertaking duty which are a major focus in this study.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Judiciary plays a very important role in delivering justice fairly, impartially and expeditiously. Promoting equal access to justice and advance local jurisprudence by upholding the Rule of Law. The national government has empowered the judiciary financially by annual allocation within the budget .Equally the parliament has empowered the judiciary by enacting legislations affecting the judiciary. However, the performance in the judiciary is still below par. This has been contributed mostly by lack of psychological, role, organizational and embedded empowerments.

It is with these in mind that this study was carried out to establish the effects of employee empowerment on performance in public sector, a case study of Murang’a law courts. The gaps surrounding actual performance in the judiciary and how the above mentioned types of empowerments can help in increasing the performance of the employees.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

1.2.1. General Objective

The general objective of this study was to establish the effect of employee empowerment on the performance in public sector, case of Murang’a law courts.

1.2.2. Specific Objectives

1. Determine the relationship between psychological empowerment and employee performance in Murang’a law courts.
2. Establish the relationship between role empowerment and employee performance in Murang’a law courts.
3. Establish the relationship between organizational empowerment and employee performance in Murang’a law courts.
4. Determine the relationship between embedded empowerment and employee performance in Murang’a law courts.

1.3. Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between psychological empowerment and employee performance in Murang’a law courts?
2. What is the relationship between role empowerment and employee performance in Murang’a law courts?
3. What is relationship between organizational empowerment and employee performance in Murang’a law courts?
4. What is the relationship between embedded empowerment and employee performance in Murang’a law courts?

1.4. Conceptual Framework

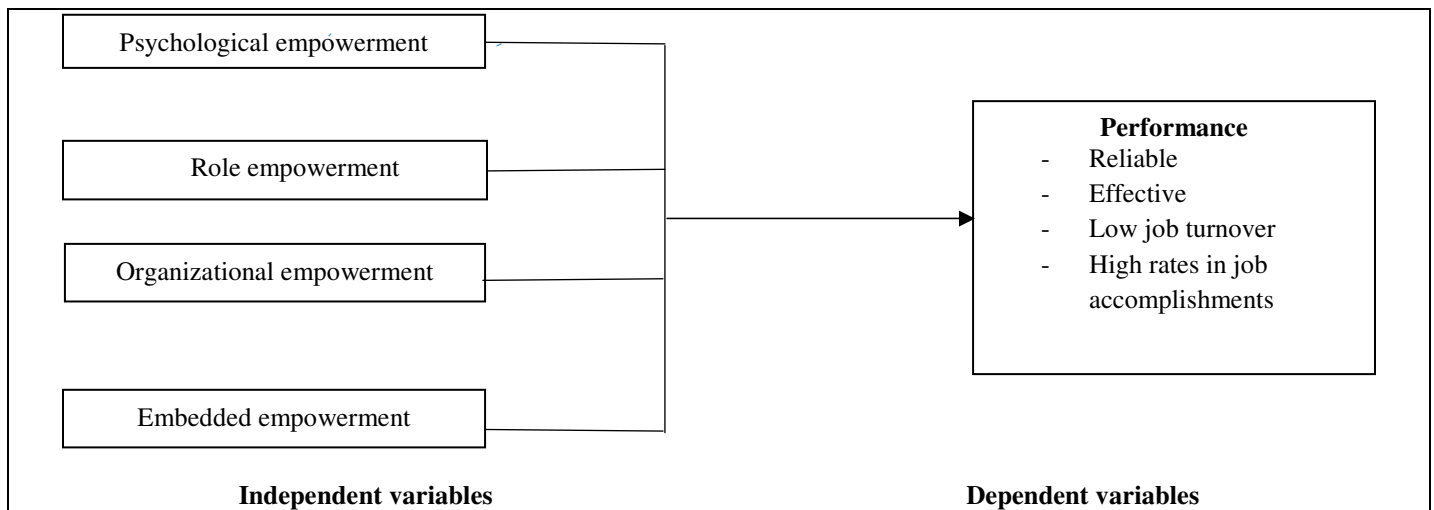


Figure 1: Effects of employee empowerment on performance

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Literature

Kanter’s theory of structural empowerment was used in this research. The six conditions required for empowerment to take place according to Kanter include; opportunity for advancement, access to information, access to support, access to resources, formal Power and informal Power. These six conditions are what many organizational behaviorists have based their work and studies on.

According to Elton Mayo and the human relations school of thought (1933), in the work situation, greater productivity would be registered if informal groups were allowed to merge.

The Hawthorne effect grew out of a series of studies. The theory states that participants will act and react in different manners because they are aware they are being watched. Specifically in McGregor's X and Y theory states that the manager's approach affects the outcome of the worker. If you give your employees even a little attention, they will equate that attention to 'special' treatment that is different from the treatment that others receive (Adam, 1978). The basic understanding to boss subordinate relationships lies in the foundation that the habits of the managers hold the power to create productive or counterproductive environments (Adam, 1978).

Another theory that explains boss-subordinate relationships is Workplace Relationship Quality and Employee Information Experiences (David, 1978). This study was conducted by Patricia Sias, and points out the theory of Leader-Membership. This theory is believed to be the most widely accepted theory regarding superior-subordinate relationships The main point being that employees with the best access to information are the most likely to succeed (David, 1978). Furthermore, employees with a higher quality relationship with their supervisor have more access to such information and will be more likely to succeed in the workplace. Sociological empowerment often addresses members of groups that social discrimination processes have excluded from decision-making processes through - for example - discrimination based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion or gender. Empowerment as a methodology is often associated with feminism.

2.2. Empirical Review

2.2.1. Effects of Psychological Empowerment on Performance

As Menon, P. (2001) asserts, in today's turbulent world organizations compete more powerful, more all round, much of the energy is spent on the performance of employees. Because it is obvious that people within the organization are the main factor for survival in a highly competitive arena and a major factor in the productivity of their organizations. Today's organizations rely on human resources within the organization to further improve their operations and create different units within the organization such as the unit of planning resources, units of training and so on are important signs (Menon, 2001). Indeed the performance is a set of measures and activities that are done by the staff to achieve the set out goals of organization. This variable is formed of several factors which include: personal skills, managerial and technical skills thus the personnel performance of employees could be realized. (Jick, H. 2003).

2.2.2. Role Empowerment Effects on Performance

Role empowerment was the original emphasis of research and practice and remains of central concern today. This is evident as outlined by Robbins, (2002) in an integrated model of empowerment that encompasses all four aspects of empowerment in organizations. There are multiple perspectives on empowerment and the particular meanings given to the construct, according to persons, settings, goals and other variables. Once their roles have been highlighted and taken to be of value, employees learn how to be dependent and they can make major decisions on their own without fear of being victimized by the top management (Menon, 2001).

2.2.3. Organizational Empowerment and Performance

In today's highly competitive talent marketplace, organizations that want to attract, retain and advance top talent must be skilled at developing people (Argyris, 1998). As the rate of change in the marketplace accelerates, organizations are constantly trying to help employees adopt the critical new behaviors necessary to keep pace. Over the past three decades, different successful organizations have developed a highly effective methodology which they call the 'empowering organization' to enable talent development, behavior change and the cultural transformation needed to further both. This methodology has been deployed in large and small organizations and trained hundreds of practitioners to deliver it. If an organization has one or more of the symptoms of a disempowering culture, it will be difficult to further any change initiative.

2.2.4. Embedded Empowerment

Workplace relationships are unique interpersonal relationships with important implications for the individuals in those relationships and the organizations in which the relationships exist and develop (Siasi, 2005).

Studies show that workplace relationships directly affect a worker's ability to succeed. Workers spend on average 50 hours a week in the workplace, these long work hours are resulting in the formation of workplace friendships. These connections can be both positive and have the potential to become harmful (Hartman, 2009).

However major parts of literature had tendered to limit it to considering group relations to workplace ignoring major factors of embedded empowerment, friendship in work place which is a major focus in this study particularly in relation to the rates in job accomplishment.

2.3. Research Gap

Many proponents have written about psychological, role, organizational and embedded empowerment in other places but little is known about employee empowerment in the judiciary and how psychological, role, organizational and embedded empowerment can help in improving employee performance, which will be addressed in this study.

3. Methodology of the Study

The study was descriptive. Descriptive research studies are designed to obtain pertinent information concerning the current status of a phenomenon and whenever possible to draw valid general conclusion from the facts discovered. The study was undertaken at Murang'a law courts, located in Murang'a South Sub-County of Murang'a County. The target population comprised of all the fifty-two (52) employees working at Murang'a law courts. The study used both primary and secondary data which was collected for the purposes of this study. Primary data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules to capture information useful in meeting the stated objectives as well as answering the research questions. Secondary data was sourced from written materials including books, public reports, journals and newsletters. The study used questionnaires for data collection. The questionnaires had both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The open-ended questions yielded qualitative data while the closed ended questions yielded quantitative data. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the judiciary staff. The developed research instruments were pre-tested using an identical sample at Kangema Law courts. This enabled the content reliability and relevance of the instruments. Items found to be inadequate for measuring variables were either discarded or modified to improve the quality of the research instruments. Data analysis involved establishment of categories, application of these categories to raw data through coding, tabulation and then drawing conclusions. Data was organized into meaningful patterns and the relationship between various variables established. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used. The data collected was checked for completeness ready for analysis then coded. Data was analyzed through the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 21) package. Tables and charts were used for further representation for easy understanding and analyzes. Inferential statistic was used to establish the relationship between performance and employee empowerment. The conceptual model used in the study is given as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + C$$

4. Result and Interpretation

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are used to describe the basic features of the data in a study. They provide simple summaries about the sample and the measures. Together with simple graphics analysis, they form the basis of virtually every quantitative analysis of data. Descriptive Statistics are used to present quantitative descriptions in a manageable form. In a research study we may have lots of measures. Descriptive statistics help us to simplify large amounts of data in a sensible way. Measures of central tendency gives us one single value that represents the entire data. Average of observations in a ritcher scale cannot adequately describe a set of observations unless all observations are alike which is impossible for our research data obtained. Therefore it's necessary to describe variations or dispersion of the results. Dispersion refers to the spread of the values around the central tendency. There are two common measures of dispersion, the range and the standard deviation. The Standard Deviation shows the relation that set of scores has to the mean of the sample.

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Psychological	10	2.34	4.11	3.23	1.33
Role empowerment	9	2.45	4.47	3.46	1.421
Organizational	11	2.43	4.79	3.61	1.53
Embedded	7	2.20	4.70	3.45	1.54

Table 1

Source: Research data (2016)

Table above shows the overall ratings (on a 5-point scale) of the various observations .Each of the observation has different average ratings out of the totals and varying standard deviations.

Psychological empowerment-This has a mean score of 3.23 and standard deviation of 1.33. The mean is high ,tends to a maximum of 5.0, meaning that the ratings of psychological empowerment on its effect on employee performance is high. This standard deviation is very small compared to the mean. Implying that most respondents saw that psychological empowerment enhances performance.

Role empowerment-This has a mean score of 3.46 and standard deviation of 1.421. The mean is high ,tends to a maximum of 5.0, meaning that the ratings of role empowerment on its effect on employee performance is high. This standard deviation is small compared to the mean. Implying that most respondents saw that role empowerment enhances performance.

Organizational empowerment-This has a mean score of 3.61 and standard deviation of 1.54. The mean is very high, tending to a maximum of 5.0, meaning that the ratings of organizational empowerment on its effect on employee performance is high. This standard deviation is small compared to the mean. Implying that most respondents saw that role empowerment enhances performance.

Embedded empowerment-This has a mean score of 3.45 and standard deviation of 1.54. The mean is high, tending to a maximum of 5.0, meaning that the ratings of embedded empowerment on its effect on employee performance is high. This standard deviation was small compared to the mean. Implying that most respondents saw that embedded empowerment affects employee performance

From the study findings and the conclusions drawn, the researcher was for the opinion the following could be done to enhance employee empowerment in the judiciary. To improve psychological empowerment, staff should be allowed to freely bring new ideas to the judiciary, the court premises should be friend to all the employees including the disabled, and there should be employees' equality irrespective of the office held. To improve role empowerment, senior staff members should be role models to other staff,

chain of command should be well defined and every new staff should be formally inducted in the service. To improve organizational empowerment, all staff cadres should be represented in the management committees and provisions set aside to strengthen skills of individual employees. The judicial services should be decentralized to give different departments autonomy. For embedded empowerment, interaction among employees and management should be cordial, social occasions should be introduced and employees should be allowed to interact freely. The study limited in scope in the sense that it was confined to only one law court. The study was limited to only the four types of empowerment, other areas such as reward, open communication, safe failure, plenty of context and accountability empowerments need to be researched on.

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