



A STUDY ON THE EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT AMONG EMPLOYEES OF LOGISTICS FIRMS IN CHENNAI

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Abstract

Employee empowerment is seen as giving autonomy to an employee so as to enable him to make decisions on his job and be accountable for his actions. It is the integrating of ownership, authority, and accountability at work while challenging the employee to meet certain objectives. It enables employees to gain a greater sense of achievement from their work and reduce operational costs by eliminating unnecessary layers of management, staff functions, quality control and checking operations. This study tries to identify the factors and strategies that contribute to the empowerment of employees in Logistics firms in Chennai and study the level of empowerment of the employees and its impact on their quality of work life. The study is descriptive in nature and the results have shown level of empowerment of the respondents is high through the factors Job knowledge, Job design and Job enrichment while low on decision-making. The quality of work life of the respondents high and level of empowerment and the quality of work life of most of the respondents is high.

Keywords: Employee Empowerment, Job, Quality of Work Life.

Introduction

“Empowerment” as vested authority implies clarifying an employee’s mandate and our expectation of his or her performance. The employees in turn must be willing to accept responsibility and accountability or consequences. That’s where attempts at empowerment often fall short. If employees fear they will be punished for honest mistakes, they will protest themselves and only fellow orders. This turns a business into a bureaucracy where people delegate upward when in doubt. Successful companies need people to share ideas and information, innovate, resolve customer’s problems on the spot and participate in high performance teams. In traditional bureaucracies, we managed employee energy. In an empowered organization, we need to manage both their energy and intelligence.

Employee empowerment is seen as giving autonomy to an employee so as to enable him to make decisions on his job and be accountable for his actions. It is the integrating of ownership, authority, and accountability at work while challenging the employee to meet certain objectives. To be successfully implemented, employee empowerment depends upon a number of factors which are interrelated to each other.

Review of Literature

An analysis of the literature on employee empowerment shows that there are different perspectives of empowerment (Lakew, 2011). Robbins (2005) believes it to be ‘participative management, delegation and the granting of power to lower level employees to make and enforce decisions’. On the other hand Brymar (1991) defines it as ‘a process of decentralizing decision-making in an organisation, whereby managers give more discretion and autonomy to the front line employees’.

According to Ghosh (2015) empowerment is ‘the process of shifting authority and responsibility to employees at a lower level in the organisational hierarchy.’ Thomas and Velthouse (1990) gave a different perspective on empowerment by defining empowerment in terms of a cognitive motivational concept or psychological empowerment. On the other hand, Carlzon (1987) perceives empowerment as a motivational construct, which helps fulfils the role of freeing someone from rigorous control by instructions, policies, and orders, and giving that person freedom to take responsibility for his/her ideas, decisions and actions’.

Significance of the Study

Empowerment can speed up decision making processes and accelerate the response time to meet the changing needs of the customer, release creativity of employees, provide for greater job satisfaction, motivation and commitment, and give people more responsibility. By empowering employees, through greater commitment to the organizational goal, they take more responsibility for their own performance and the success of the organization.

It enables employees to gain a greater sense of achievement from their work and reduce operational costs by eliminating unnecessary layers of management, staff functions, quality control and checking operations. Inherent skills and talents within the employees can be realized and put to work for the benefits of the organization to produce more satisfied customer and greater profits.

Statement of the Problem

With the changes taking place in the current corporate scenario and the growing awareness that the customer is central to the scheme of things. It is important that the company's employees are equally committed to the concept as the management. Therefore it is valuable that an organization checks on a regular basis how the staff perceive their day to day work and its immediate work environment where employees recommendations are regularly sought, listened to and implemented. So, the organizations are adopting various empowerment strategies in order to empower its employees and boost up their morale, so that they work towards the vision and mission of an organization. This has aroused great interest on the part of the researcher to find out present scenario prevailing in the industry towards the empowerment of the employees.

Research Objectives

- i. To identify the factors and strategies that contributes to the empowerment of employees in Logistics firms in Chennai.
- ii. To study the level of empowerment of the employees and its impact on their quality of work life.

Methodology

The study was descriptive in nature and has relied heavily on primary data. The tool used for the study was a non-standardised questionnaire. The sampling technique was convenience sampling and the sample size was restricted to 60 respondents who are employed in IT firms in Chennai.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Factors Contributing to Empowerment of Respondents

| Factors | High | Low | Total |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Job Knowledge | 48 (80) | 12 (20) | 60 (100) |
| Job Design & Job Enrichment | 49 (82) | 11 (18) | 60 (100) |
| Suggestion Scheme | 46 (77) | 14 (23) | 60 (100) |
| Decision Making | 40 (67) | 20 (33) | 60 (100) |
| Problem Solving | 46 (77) | 14 (23) | 60 (100) |

Figures in Parenthesis denote Percentage.

The above table gives the distribution of various factors and the extent of their contribution to the empowerment of employees. It can be observed that Job Design and Job enrichment (82%) and Job Knowledge (80%) have high contribution towards the empowerment of the respondents. Whereas Suggestion Scheme(77%) and Problem Solving (77%) have equally moderate contribution while Decision Making is the only factor which contributes least towards the empowerment of the respondents.

Table 2: Department Vs Level of Empowerment

| Department | Level of Empowerment | | Total |
|---------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| | High | Low | |
| Technical | 25 (76) | 8 (24) | 33 (100) |
| Non-Technical | 25 (93) | 2 (7) | 27 (100) |
| Total | 50 (83) | 10 (16) | 60 (100) |

Figures in Parenthesis denote Percentage

Chi-Square value with 1 degree of freedom : 1.939
With Yate's correction. Insignificant at 0.05 level

The purpose of doing this cross tabulation is to find out which department has high and low level of empowerment of the respondents. The above table reflects the distribution of respondents by their department and their level of empowerment.

It can be observed from the table that almost all (93%) the respondents of the Non-Technical Staff have high level of empowerment, which is even greater than the level of empowerment which the respondents of the Technical Departments possess. Further it can be seen that nearly one fourth (24%) of the respondents from the Technical Departments have low level of empowerment when compared to Non-Technical Departments. Thus it can be inferred that level of empowerment found high among the respondents of Non-Technical Staff when compared to Technical Departments.

Since the calculated value of the Chi-Square is less than the tabulated value, there is no statistical significance between the Department of the respondents and their level of empowerment.

Table 3: Respondents by their Department Vs Factors of Empowerment

| Factors | Level of Empowerment | Department | | Total |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | | Technical | Non-Technical | |
| Job Knowledge | High | 25 (76) | 23 (85) | 48 (80) |
| | Low | 8 (24) | 4 (15) | 12 (20) |
| | Total | 33 (100) | 27 (100) | 60 (100) |
| Job Design & Job Enrichment | High | 25 (76) | 24 (89) | 49 (82) |
| | Low | 8 (24) | 3 (11) | 11 (18) |
| | Total | 33 (100) | 27 (100) | 60 (100) |
| Suggestion Scheme | High | 23 (70) | 23 (85) | 46 (77) |
| | Low | 10 (30) | 4 (15) | 14 (23) |
| | Total | 33 (100) | 27 (100) | 60 (100) |
| Decision Making | High | 22 (67) | 18 (67) | 40 (67) |
| | Low | 11 (33) | 9 (33) | 20 (33) |
| | Total | 33 (100) | 27 (100) | 60 (100) |
| Problem Solving | High | 22 (67) | 24 (89) | 46 (77) |
| | Low | 11 (33) | 3 (11) | 14 (23) |
| | Total | 33 (100) | 27 (100) | 60 (100) |

Figures in Parenthesis denote Percentage

Chi – Square value with 1 degree of freedom

| | |
|---|---------|
| Department Vs Job Knowledge | : 0.034 |
| Department Vs Job Design & Job Enrichment | : 0.946 |
| Department Vs Suggestion Scheme | : 1.220 |
| Department Vs Decision Making | : 0 |
| Department Vs Problem Solving | : 2.950 |

With Yate’s correction. Insignificant at 0.05 level

The main purpose of doing this cross tabulation between Department and factors of empowerment is to identify the factor that contributes to the high and low level of empowerment of the respondents in each department. The above table shows the distribution of the respondents by their department and factors of empowerment.

In the Technical Departments, high level of empowerment of the respondents is equally (76%) contributed to a large extent by both the factors Job Design & Job Enrichment and Job Knowledge. Whereas high level of empowerment is moderately (70%) contributed by the factor Suggestion Scheme while Decision Making and Problem Solving contributes more (33%) to the low level of empowerment of the respondents.

Similarly, in the Non-Technical Departments, high level of empowerment of the respondents is equally (89%) contributed to a large extent by the factors Job Design & Job Enrichment and Problem Solving. Whereas high level of empowerment is equally (85%) contributed to a moderate extent by the factors Suggestion Scheme and Job Knowledge while Decision Making contributes more (33%) to the low level of empowerment of the respondents. Thus it can be inferred that level of empowerment of the respondents found high in the Non-Technical Departments which is highly contributed by the factors Job design and Job enrichment and Problem Solving when compared to Technical Departments.

Since the calculated value of the Chi-Square is less than the tabulated value, there is no statistical significance between the factors of empowerment (Job Knowledge, Job design and Job enrichment, Suggestion Scheme, Decision Making and Problem Solving) and the Department of the respondents.

Table 4: Designation Vs Level of Empowerment

| Designation | Level of Empowerment | | Total |
|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| | High | Low | |
| Technical Staff | 35 (83) | 7 (17) | 42 (100) |
| Non-Technical Staff | 15 (83) | 3 (17) | 18 (100) |
| Total | 50 (83) | 10 (17) | 60 (100) |

Figures in Parenthesis denote Percentage

The purpose of doing this cross tabulation is to find out the designation of the respondents, which has high and low level of empowerment. The above table shows the distribution of respondents by their designation and the Level of empowerment. It can be seen from the above table that most (83%) of the respondents of both Technical Staff and the Non-Technical Staffcadre equally have high level of empowerment.

Similarly, a little less than one fifth (17%) of the respondents of both the Technical Staff and the Non-Technical Staff equally have low level of empowerment. Thus it can be inferred from the above table that level of empowerment found high among both the Technical Staff and Non-Technical Staff.

Table 5: Respondents by their Designation Vs Factors of Empowerment

| Factors | Level of Empowerment | Designation | | Total |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | | Technical | Non -Technical | |
| Job Knowledge | High | 34 (81) | 14 (78) | 48 (80) |
| | Low | 8 (19) | 4 (22) | 12 (20) |
| | Total | 42 (100) | 18 (100) | 60 (100) |
| Job Design & Job Enrichment | High | 34 (81) | 15 (83) | 49 (82) |
| | Low | 8 (19) | 3 (17) | 11 (18) |
| | Total | 42 (100) | 18 (100) | 60 (100) |
| Suggestion Scheme | High | 33 (79) | 13 (72) | 46 (77) |
| | Low | 9 (21) | 5 (28) | 14 (23) |
| | Total | 42 (100) | 18 (100) | 60 (100) |
| Decision Making | High | 27 (64) | 13 (72) | 40 (67) |
| | Low | 15 (36) | 5 (28) | 20 (33) |
| | Total | 42 (100) | 18 (100) | 60 (100) |
| Problem Solving | High | 32 (76) | 14 (78) | 46 (77) |
| | Low | 10 (24) | 4 (22) | 14 (23) |
| | Total | 42 (100) | 18 (100) | 60 (100) |

Figures in Parenthesis denote Percentage

Chi Square value with 1 degree of freedom

| | | |
|--|---|-------|
| Designation Vs Job Knowledge | : | 0.005 |
| Designation Vs Job Design & Job Enrichment | : | 0.021 |
| Designation Vs Suggestion Scheme | : | 0.284 |
| Designation Vs Decision Making | : | 0.357 |
| Designation Vs Problem Solving | : | 0.033 |

With Yate's correction. Insignificant at 0.05 level

The main purpose of doing this cross tabulation between Designation and factors of empowerment is to find out the factor that contributes to the high and low level of empowerment of the respondents in each cadre. The above table shows the distribution of the respondents by their designation and factors of empowerment.

In the Technical Staff cadre, high level of empowerment of the respondents is equally contributed to a large extent (81%) by both the factors Job Design & Job Enrichment and Job Knowledge. Whereas high level of empowerment is contributed to a moderate extent by the factors Suggestion Scheme (79%) and Problem Solving (76%) while Decision Making is the only factor which contributes more (36%) to the low level of empowerment of the respondents.

Similarly, in the Non-Technical Staff cadre, high level of empowerment of the respondents is contributed to a large extent (83%) by the factor Job Design & Job Enrichment. Whereas high level of empowerment is equally contributed to a moderate extent (78%) by the factors Problem Solving and Job Knowledge while Decision Making and Suggestion Scheme equally contributes more (28%) to the low level of empowerment of the respondents. Thus it can be inferred that level of empowerment found high among both the cadres Non-Technical Staff and Technical Staff which is highly contributed by the both the factors Job design and Job enrichment as well as Job Knowledge.

Since the calculated value of the Chi-Square is less than the tabulated value, there is no statistical significance between the factors of empowerment (Job Knowledge, Job design and Job enrichment, Suggestion Scheme, Decision Making and Problem Solving) and the Designation of the respondents.

Table 6: Work Experience Vs Level of Empowerment

| Work Experience(in Years) | Level of empowerment | | Total |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| | High | Low | |
| Below 30 | 18 (82) | 4 (18) | 22 (100) |
| Above 30 | 32 (84) | 6 (16) | 38 (100) |
| Total | 50 (83) | 10 (17) | 60 (100) |

Figures in Parenthesis denote Percentage

Chi-Square value with 1 degree of freedom: 0.056

With Yate's correction. Insignificant at 0.05 level

The main purpose of doing these crosses tabulation between the work experience and Level of empowerment of the respondents is to find out the particular work experience which has high and low level of empowerment among the respondents. The above table reflects the distribution of respondents by their work experience and their level of empowerment.

It can be observed from the table that most (84%) of the respondents having above 30 years of work experience have a high level of empowerment which is even more greater than the level of empowerment which the respondents having below 30 years of work experience possess. Similarly a little less than one fifth (18 %) of the respondents having below 30 years of work experience have a low level of empowerment when compared to the respondents having above 30 years of work experience. Thus it can be inferred that level of empowerment found high among the respondents having above 30 years of work experience.

Since the calculated value of the Chi-Square is less than the tabulated value, there is no statistical significance between the work experience of the respondents and their level of empowerment.

Table 7: Respondents by their Work Experience Vs Factors of Empowerment

| Factors | Level of Empowerment | Work Experience (in Years) | | Total |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| | | Below 30 | Above 30 | |
| Job Knowledge | High | 21 (95) | 27 (71) | 48 (80) |
| | Low | 1 (5) | 11 (29) | 12 (20) |
| | Total | 22 (100) | 38 (100) | 60 (100) |
| Job Design & Job Enrichment | High | 18 (82) | 31 (82) | 49 (82) |
| | Low | 4 (18) | 7 (18) | 11 (18) |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Total | 22 (100) | 38 (100) | 60 (100) |
| Suggestion Scheme | High | 15 (68) | 31 (82) | 46 (77) |
| | Low | 7 (32) | 7 (18) | 14 (23) |
| | Total | 22 (100) | 38 (100) | 60 (100) |
| Decision Making | High | 15 (68) | 25 (66) | 40 (67) |
| | Low | 7 (32) | 13 (34) | 20 (33) |
| | Total | 37 (100) | 38 (100) | 60 (100) |
| Problem Solving | High | 17 (77) | 29 (77) | 46 (77) |
| | Low | 5 (23) | 9 (24) | 14 (23) |
| | Total | 22 (100) | 38 (100) | 60 (100) |

Figures in Parenthesis denote Percentage

Chi – Square Value with 1 Degree of Freedom

| | | |
|--|---|-------|
| Work Experience Vs Job Knowledge | : | 3.770 |
| Work Experience Vs Job Design & Job Enrichment | : | 0.106 |
| Work Experience Vs Suggestion Scheme | : | 1.398 |
| Work Experience Vs Decision Making | : | 0.036 |
| Work Experience Vs Problem Solving | : | 0.007 |

With Yate's correction. Insignificant at 0.05 level

The main purpose of doing this cross tabulation between Work experience and factors of empowerment is to find out the factor that contributes to the high and low level of empowerment of the respondents having any particular years of work experience. The above table shows the distribution of the respondents by their work experience and factors of empowerment.

Among the respondents having below 30 years of work experience, high level of empowerment is contributed to a large extent by the factor Job Knowledge(95%). Whereas high level of empowerment is equally contributed to a moderate extent by the factors Job design and Job enrichment (82%) and Problem Solving (77%) while Decision Making and Suggestion Scheme is the factors which equally contributes more (32%) to the low level of empowerment of the respondents.

Similarly, among the respondents having above 30 years of work experience, high level of empowerment of the respondents is equally contributed to a large extent (82%) by the factors Job design and Job enrichment and Job Knowledge. Whereas high level of empowerment is equally contributed to a moderate extent by the factor Problem Solving (77 %) and Job Knowledge(71 %) while Decision Making is the only factor that contributes more(24 %) to the low level of empowerment. Thus it can be inferred that level of empowerment found high among the respondents having above 30 years of work experience which is highly contributed by the factors Job design and Job enrichment and Suggestion Scheme when compared to the respondents having below 30 years of work experience.

Since the calculated value of the Chi-Square is less than the tabulated value, there is no statistical significance between the factors of empowerment (Job Knowledge, Job design and Job enrichment, Suggestion Scheme, Decision Making and Problem Solving) and the work experience of the respondents.

Table 8: Quality of Work Life of Respondents

| Quality of Work Life | No. of Respondents | Per cent |
|----------------------|--------------------|------------|
| High | 45 | 75 |
| Low | 15 | 25 |
| Total | 60 | 100 |

The distribution of respondents by their Quality of work life has been depicted in the above table. It can be observed that three fourth (75 %) of the respondents are of the opinion that quality of work life is very high while one fourth (25 %) of the respondents quality of work life is low. Thus it can be inferred that the quality of work life of most of the respondents in the field of study is high.

Table 9: Level of Empowerment Vs Quality of Work Life

| Level of Empowerment | Quality of work Life | | Total |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| | High | Low | |
| High | 44 (88) | 6 (12) | 50 (100) |
| Low | 1 (10) | 9 (90) | 10 (100) |
| Total | 45 (75) | 15 (25) | 60 (100) |

Figures in Parenthesis denote Percentage

Chi- Square value with 1 degree of freedom : 24.99
With Yate's Correction. Significant at 0.05 level

The main purpose of doing this crosses tabulation between Quality of work life of the respondents and their level of empowerment is to find out whether the empowerment level of the respondents has any impact on their quality of work life. The above table shows the distribution of the respondents by their level of empowerment and quality of work life.

It can be observed from the table that nearly almost all (88%) the respondents who are having high level of empowerment has their quality of work life as high which is even more greater than the respondents having low level of empowerment.

Similarly, almost all (90%) the respondents who have low level of empowerment has their quality of work life as low when compared to the respondents having high level of empowerment. Thus it can be inferred that the level of empowerment and the quality of work life of most of the respondents in the field of study is high.

Since the calculated value of the Chi-Square is greater than the tabulated value, there is statistical significance between the level of empowerment of the respondents and their quality of work life. Therefore the level of empowerment of the respondents has an impact on their quality of work life.

Findings of the Study

Overall Level of Empowerment and Its Factors

The level of empowerment of the respondents found to be high through the factors Job knowledge, Job design and Job enrichment while low level of empowerment of the respondents is through the factor decision-making in the field of study.

Department and Level of Empowerment

Level of empowerment of the respondents is found to be high in the Non-Technical Departments which is highly contributed by the factors Job design, Job enrichment and Problem solving.

Designation and Level of Empowerment

Level of empowerment of the respondents is found to be high among both the cadres Non-Technical Staff and Technical Staff which is highly contributed by the factors Job Knowledge, Job design and Job enrichment.

Work Experience and Level of Empowerment

Level of empowerment is found to be high among the respondents who are having above 30 years of work experience which is highly contributed by the factors Suggestion scheme, Job design and Job enrichment.



Quality of Work Life

The quality of work life of the respondents in the field of study is very high.

Level of Empowerment and its Impact on Quality of Work Life

- The level of empowerment and the quality of work life of most of the respondents in the field of study is high.
- There is a statistical significance between the level of empowerment of the respondents and their quality of work life.

Suggestions

In the current scenario, Organisation has various employee empowerment programmes like involving the employees in taking part in management activities like Decision Making, Problem Solving, Suggestion Scheme and various training programmes for the benefit of the employees. Based on this, various suggestions have been given by the researcher in this study.

The empowerment of employees can be made more effective by the following ways.

- Designing jobs in such a way that they encompass some aspects like skill variety, autonomy, feedback etc. This will make the job more interesting for the job holder.
- Helping employees to achieve mastery over the job by providing proper training, coaching and counselling.
- Allowing more control by giving employees discretion in performing the job and making them accountable for results.
- Providing successful role models by allowing employees to observe their peers who have already performed successfully on the job.
- Using social reinforcement and persuasion by giving praise, encouragement and feedback meant to raise self-confidence.
- Giving emotional support by reducing stress and anxiety through clear role definition, task assistance and showing care.

Conclusion

Every organization needs to have empowered people to perform the activities that have to be done. There exists a favourable opinion in the field of study with regard to the existence of empowerment programme is concerned. The survey has highlighted very much positive points about empowerment as a major development process. Employees in the field of study are very much satisfied with their job and they receive reward and recognition for their performance.

Employees' best suggestions have been rewarded and also processed in time. Their participation in decision making process is also high and they are satisfied with the decisions taken in their work related issues. Their superiors also encourage and motivate them to solve their problems related to work. Problems faced by the employees in the work place are considered as an opportunity to learn.

The researcher throughout the method of observation has come to the conclusion that level of empowerment of the respondents in the field of study is high through the factors like Job Knowledge, Job Design and Job Enrichment and it also have a high positive impact on their quality of work life.

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