

# **PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT IN THE WORK PLACE: A STUDY ON EMPOWERMENT EFFECT ON CRITICAL WORK OUTCOMES OF HIGH-TECH MANUFACTURING CONTEXT IN SRI LANKA.**

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**Abstract:** The objective of this exercise is to review empirical evidence on the psychological empowerment effects on critical work out comes in the Sri Lankan context. Hypothesis of the study; Psychological empowerment measured through four dimensions Meaningful work, Self confidence , Autonomy and Impact has a significant positive correlation to work outcomes; Organizational commitment and Jobs satisfaction was tested in two Sri Lankan high-tech manufacturing industries. Two samples were used from operator level employees and middle level managers. Both samples showed significant positive correlation between four dimensions of psychological empowerment and work out comes at (0.91,  $p < 0.01$ ) confidence level supporting the hypothesis.

## **Introduction**

The psychological empowerment of employees in the work place had gained much popularity in the complex area of people management paradigms. This study has been carried out in two high-tech manufacturing organizations in Sri Lanka. One is engaged in manufacture of cigarettes enjoying a monopoly in the market and the other one is engaged in manufacturing garments,

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producing exclusive brand of lingerie for the western market. Both are enjoying the status of most productive and most innovative manufacturing unit of the group for several years consecutively. These organizations have won national productivity award, 5S Housekeeping practices national award, Safety awards in the Sri Lankan context, and have certified quality assurance systems. It is known that both organizations have high emphasize on structural empowerment of employees through innovative HRM practices.

The objectives of this study are focus on to review empirical evidence on the presence of psychological empowerment construct under the dimensions of Meaning full work, Self confidence, Autonomy, and Impact of psychological empowerment beyond work. And to examine the effects of psychological empowerment on critical work out comes as organizational commitment, and job satisfaction

## **Literature Survey**

The managers need to draw distinctions being in authority and being an authority. Empowering mangers act as authorities for empowered employees [1]. The empowerment goes beyond the needs of the current business climate; it is essential to resolving the tensions in the employment relationship, and in society at large. The empowered organization allows a faster response to environmental change and allows the organization to benefit from the harnessing of the strength of the whole workforce in the effective satisfaction of customer needs. Employees gain greater job satisfaction through the use of a wider range of skills and abilities together within increased sense of worth, whilst employees gain a more committed, better informed and more focused workforce. Kanter's [2] structural determinants provide a framework for examining organizational empowerment within the workplace. The structure of the work environment is an important correlate of employee attitude and behaviours in organizations.

**Psychological Empowerment:** Speitzer [3], and Conger & Kanungo [4] defined Empowerment as the motivational concept of self Efficacy. Dewettinck, et al. [5] have distinguished between

two major perspectives on empowerment, the structural and psychological approach. Psychological empowerment reflects an active orientation to work, and pass on the notion that individuals not only want to, but are able to, shape their work role and context [6]. Psychological empowerment is a process because it begins with the interaction of one's personality characteristics within the work environment; then the interaction of environment with personality shapes the empowerment cognitions, which in turn motivate individual behavior. Spreitzer's [3] psychological model, based on the Thomas [7] approach included four dimensions: (a) the work has personal meaning to the employee, (b) the employees feels self confident in their ability to perform the work, (c) the employee has a degree of autonomy or self-determination in their ability to choose and regulate task action, and (d) the employee feels the work has impact beyond the immediate job.

**Critical work outcome:** Organizational commitment, Job satisfaction have been considered as critical work outcomes of psychological empowerment. Organizational commitment has been described as consisting of two constructs, affective and continuance, affective organizational commitment is a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization. The counterpart to affective organizational commitment is continuance organizational commitment. Job satisfaction is a state of pleasure gained from applying one's values to a job believes that job satisfaction can be considered as a global feeling about the job or attitudes about various aspects or facets of the job.

### **Research Design**

A total of 105 employees participated from two samples were used in this study. 80 operator level employees and 25 middle level managers were randomly selected from two manufacturing organizations. The population were selected from different functions, divisions. Likert-Scale questionnaires were administered for both samples to collect the data. The overall

response rate in the present study was 90%. With regard to the gender 62% of the employees were men. Mean age was 35 years. They have GCE ordinary level qualifications to University degree or professional qualifications. Also managers involved in HRM from both organizations were interviewed one to one by the researcher to obtained more information.

## Analysis & Findings

In order to investigate the relationship between Psychological Empowerment and Critical work outcome, the descriptive statistics for all variables of the present study are presented in Table 1. The overall Cronbach alpha reliabilities were greater than 0.80 for all scales may be considered acceptable. The Operator level Employee's and the middle level managerial Employees sample shows that, both Psychological Empowerment dimensions and work outcomes have a mean close to the highest obtainable mean with a low standard deviation. Therefore we can infer that there is a high presence or strong sense of Psychological Empowerment and strong sense of Organizational commitment and Job satisfaction.

The intra-scale correlation coefficients showed the psychological empowerment dimensions had positive correlation with each other (0.05-0.48). Thus, with the exception of the correlation between autonomy with meaningful work in sample 1(-0.01) and self confident with impact in sample 2(-0.06) were had negative correlation. Correlation between psychological empowerment and critical work outcome of both samples had a significant and strong higher positive correlation (0.89, 0.93).

Table 1 – Descriptive Statistics for the variables of the two Samples

Variables	Sample1-Operators			Sample2-MiddleMgrs		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Meaningful work	70	4.22	0.27	25	4.33	0.25
Self confident		4.13	0.33		4.17	0.33
Autonomy		4.19	0.34		4.32	0.23
Impact		4.02	0.46		4.32	0.37
Commitment		4.14	0.19		4.27	0.18
Job satisfaction		4.12	0.22		4.20	0.33

Source: Survey data

The result of the correlation analysis explains that there is a significant positive correlation between self confidence and autonomy (0.36,  $p=0.05$ ) and between self confidence and impact (0.46,  $p=0.01$ ) of operator level employees. There are no other significant relationships between other dimensions, however overall psychological empowerment dimensional effect shows a significant positive correlation with all the dimensions with self confidence, autonomy and impact (0.79, 0.58, 0.78,  $p=0.01$ ) with meaningful work (0.46,  $p=0.05$ ). There are no significant positive correlations between the psychological empowerment dimensions of Managerial level Employees. However overall average dimensional effect is positively correlated to all the individual dimensions (0.64, 0.54, 0.58, 0.62,  $p=0.05$ ).

The results confirm that the psychological empowerment and critical work outcome had strong positive significant correlation (0.91,  $p<0.01$ ). The relationship seems especially strong for operational level employees. Although the relationship less strong with middle level manager still it was significant. The competence and impact dimensions showed to be more important direct drivers of employee performance than the meaningfulness and self-determination dimension.

Table 2 – Correlation Coefficient Analysis of the Psychological Empowerment Dimensions for Outcomes

Variables	Mean	SD	Organizational Commitment	Job Satisfaction	OC Effect
1.Meaningful work	4.28	0.26	0.332*	0.439*	
2.Self confident	4.15	0.33	0.405**	0.702**	
3.Autonomy	4.26	0.29	0.316*	0.450*	
4.Impact	4.17	0.42	0.621**	0.616**	
PED Effect			0.847**	0.830**	0.911**
OC Effect			0.850**	0.792**	

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Survey data

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of this study would appear to suggest that the hypothesis, which is psychological empowerment construct of employees measured through four dimensions, is positively

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correlated at high significant level to work outcomes organizational commitment and Job satisfaction is largely supported. This result was consistent for both samples in the study, operator level employees and middle level managers.

The mediating effect of empowerment especially is apparent between the participation dimension of psychological empowerment and the critical work outcome of the organization. Psychological empowerment has a mediating effect between operator level employees and middle level managers. This result implies that characteristic in the work environment and the job should result in a different sense of empowerment which, should lead to different level of organizational outcomes.

This research takes the initial step towards developing a conceptual frame work for further studies of psychological empowerment and the empowerment interactions in the Sri Lankan context. Future studies also could address the interdependency of two outcomes of psychological empowerment, organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Also outcomes like job knowledge, job performance could be assessed in the work life.

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