

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This study's point of origin was to link employee empowerment and social work through the "Employee Assistance Programme" and in terms of the concept of 'employee wellbeing'. An outline of what the researcher intended with this study was presented in Chapter 1. The goal and objectives were stated, and the research methodology to be used for this study was discussed. The crucial concepts—'empowerment', 'empowered organisation' and 'empowered employee' were defined. The possible limitations of the study were identified.

Chapter 2 forms an integral and crucial part of this study. The researcher undertook a thorough investigation of the concept of 'employee empowerment'. In the course of the literature review, the researcher identified seven dimensions of employee empowerment. The search also identified how employees can be empowered, the possible pitfalls and limitations of employee empowerment and the current measurements that exist for employee empowerment. The second part of Chapter 2 described how an empowered organisation should look. The researcher identified nine dimensions of an empowered organisation. The role management play in employee empowerment was also explained.

Chapter 3 presented the research methodology. The methodology was broken down into two main components, scale development and indicator development. This study was undertaken to develop a scale to measure employee empowerment and to develop a set of indicators which reflect levels of employee empowerment. Faul (1995) developed scale development methodology and Roestenburg (1999) developed indicator development methodology. The focus of this study was not on the development of methodology, however. For this reason, Faul's and Roestenburg's methodologies were utilised since both these

methodologies have been tested in practice and are currently used. The different main moments and steps of scale development were described, together with the different stages of indicator development, as used in this study.

Chapter 4 provides background information on the factory where the research was conducted. This gives the reader a better understanding of the organisation and of how the employees fit into this study.

Chapter 5 formed the data analysis of this study. The initial analysis examined the descriptive variables in Section A of the questionnaire. A factor analysis was done on Section B of the questionnaire. Three factors were identified as being statistically significant. The researcher identified these factors as support, responsibility and employee empowerment. A comparison between the three factors and descriptive variables was done by means of independent sample tests. The next data analysis was a crosstabs study between Section C and Section A of the questionnaire.

Chapter 6 considered the degree of validity and reliability of the study. This chapter outlined the development of the set of indicators for this study. A T-test, regression analysis and linear model of regression were used to identify indicators. The results were verified according to the literature survey in Chapter 2.

The study concludes with the following conclusions and recommendations.

7.2 CONCLUSIONS

7.2.1 Methodological conclusions

In this section, conclusions are drawn about the research methodology used in this study.

- A quantitative-qualitative approach was used. It was applicable since the researcher had studied the theory in order to develop an operational theory. The scale and indicators are instruments that can be utilised in practice.

- Data gathering was done by conducting a focus group with the management of the factory. This focus group was of value since data was gathered for utilisation in the questionnaire. It also gave the researcher a better understanding of the factory. Three hundred questionnaires were completed by employees working at the factory. The questionnaires proved effective in gathering the required data. The questionnaire was administered on a one-on-one basis by Zulu-speaking fieldworkers. It was an effective method of completing the questionnaires as the majority of respondents were illiterate. The literature study was also used to compile the questionnaire.
- Data analysis was done by Statkon and interpreted by the researcher. The results of the questionnaire led to the development of a set of indicators which reflect levels of employee empowerment. These indicators also serve to identify the factors which are most effective in measuring employee empowerment.
- Results were verified by the literature. Since Chapter 2 consisted of an in-depth study of employee empowerment, this literature could be utilised to verify the results. The literature study was therefore extremely valuable.
- Validity and reliability were assessed in terms of face validity, content validity and a factor analysis. Reliability was assessed by means of the split-half reliability test and computing the coefficient alpha. Further detailed validation and preparation of the finalised scale will be completed following this study.
- The set of indicators for each factor were identified by means of a T-test, regression analysis and a linear model of regression. The researcher found it was valuable to use more than one method to identify the set of indicators. Because of the human element, some statistical scores were not very high. Using more than one method served to confirm many of the findings which originally appeared relatively statistically insignificant.

7.2.2 Content conclusions

Conclusions regarding the content of the study focus on employee empowerment. The content conclusions consider the newly developed scale as well as the set of indicators which reflect employee empowerment. It was concluded that the employees at the factory needed to know what their job descriptions was, they wanted to perform different tasks in the factory and wanted to feel that their ideas were implemented. All of above had impact on their empowerment, support and responsibility levels. Employees who received feedback on their work performance and who were paid monthly had higher levels of empowerment and support, than the other employees.

Knowing the mission statement and receiving training from the factory also impacted on the employees' levels of empowerment, responsibility and support. Further factors were the employees' home language, being single and threats made among the employees, which impacted on empowerment, responsibility and support levels. ~~The conclusions were presented in Chapter 6 in different tables; these were intended to make the conclusions easily accessible to any reader.~~

7.2.3 Contextual conclusions

The conclusions presented in this section relate to the context of the study and are more general than the content conclusions.

The choice of the organisation is crucial. The organisation must have sufficient employees to conduct a study of this nature. Allwear was large enough to provide a forum for this study, and so ensure that the data obtained could be implemented successfully at a later date. It is possible that empowerment would be less structured and formal at Allwear since the factory is in a rural area. It is also possible that respondents are less educated about empowerment.

The researcher must be prepared to face the language barrier. In this case the questionnaire was translated into Zulu and back again into English. Zulu-speaking intermediaries presented the questionnaires to the respondents. It was very important to train the fieldworkers well to make sure that the data was gathered in the correct way.

There are different status levels in a big organisation. This may be a problem when conducting research. Certain employees from top management and employees from grassroots might not want to mix. In this study the majority of employees are more or less on the same level. Interviewing the respondents directly made obtaining their co-operation in answering the questionnaire much easier.

A lack of co-operation by respondents is obviously detrimental to a study like this. The fact that the respondents were Zulu-speaking and the researcher English-speaking was initially a problem. However, the fact that the questionnaire was in Zulu and that the fieldworkers could speak Zulu helped to place the respondents at their ease. They were initially wary, but as soon as the objectives of the research were explained to them, they relaxed and co-operated.

The questionnaire was developed on the basis that the majority of respondents were not highly educated. Because of this, the researcher had to ensure that the questionnaire was simple enough for the respondents to understand. At the same time, the questions still had to measure what they were intended to measure.

The factory specialises in school uniforms. Because of the nature of the business, it makes it less possible to generalise beyond the sample.

The research was conducted in a rural area. The fieldworkers came from an urban area. The researcher was aware that this could cause misunderstandings.

It is crucial to realise that empowerment is a multi-dimensional concept. Empowerment does not happen overnight, but is an ongoing process. If

employees grasp these terms, empowerment strategies have more chance of working.

Employees need to realise that empowerment strategies do not need to be elaborate, sophisticated or particularly complex. The empowerment strategies must be made applicable to the specific workforce. To do this, management should employ measurement tools. Employees can increase employee empowerment levels by giving feedback to employees, rotating employees in the factory, implementing the ideas of employees and communicating the mission statement.

With the development of the scale, valuable data was gathered and interpreted. This data gives the factory a better understanding of the employees and shows where the strengths and weaknesses of employee empowerment within the factory lie.

The researcher found that the indicators were great tools to indirectly measure employee empowerment using three or four questions. This makes the development of employee empowerment in the factory easy and workable.

These three or four questions indicating employee empowerment can be used at the factory on an ongoing basis. The results of these questions help the factory to determine what they can do in order to either improve or sustain empowerment.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made on grounds of this study.

7.3.1 Recommendation 1

It is recommended that similar research be undertaken in different factories and organisations to compare results. The objective would be to determine whether results differ from factory to factory.

7.3.2 Recommendation 2

The researcher recommends that similar research be undertaken with a different cultural group. It would be beneficial to the study to know if the results differ from cultural group to cultural group.

7.3.3 Recommendation 3

A recommendation is that the factory reconsiders its policy of giving verbal job descriptions, and changes these to written job descriptions for the employees. The focus should be on women employees who do not currently have written job descriptions.

7.3.4 Recommendation 4

It is recommended that the factory considers paying employees monthly instead of weekly. The focus should be on Zulu-speaking employees.

7.3.5 Recommendation 5

The researcher recommends that the factory develop a system by means of which they can give feedback to their employees on work done. The focus should be on female employees.

7.3.6 Recommendation 6

A recommendation is that the factory creates a platform where employees can share their ideas with management. Management doesn't have to use all the ideas, but should implement the ideas where applicable. The focus should be on the female employees.

7.3.7 Recommendation 7

The factory should start a programme of in-house training which should enable the employees to rotate tasks. In this way training at the factory is reinforced and employees have the opportunity to perform different tasks.

7.3.8 Recommendation 8

The researcher recommends that a formal mission statement be drawn up and distributed. The mission statement must be of such a nature that everybody in the factory must be able to understand it. It should also stipulate what is expected of the employees and indicate where they fit into the organisation.

7.3.9 Recommendation 9

If the support factor is to be reinforced, a lot of time must be spent on providing feedback to employees on their job performance and ensuring that they are given supervision.

7.3.10 Recommendation 10

Give the employees different tasks to do in order to instil responsibility in them.

7.3.11 Recommendation 11

To reinforce employee empowerment, the factory needs to give feedback on work performance and to implement the employees' ideas. All employees should be granted perks such as tea breaks. If employees are threatened by colleagues, the factory must address the problem as soon as possible.

7.3.12 Recommendation 12

The three recommendations presented above are the most crucial indicators of employee empowerment. Further studies should be conducted to test these indicators.

7.3.13 Recommendation 13

The scale developed in this study needs to be administered in different contexts to determine how valid and reliable it is.

7.4 CONCLUSION

Employee empowerment is a tool that can benefit both the individual and the organisation. The researcher is of the opinion that it is crucial that organisations become empowered. The strategies employed in this process can only prove beneficial. It is an ongoing process that needs constant supervision and has to be maintained. Like anything else, however, it is not the perfect solution and it does not promise to solve all the organisation's problems.

This is why measuring instruments play such a vital role in empowering employees and organisations. To start an empowerment programme and be able to measure results as well as levels of empowerment can only keep the empowerment programmes afloat. Developing indicators of empowerment for organisations ensures that the organisations will reinforce employee empowerment in the right manner.

This study has made it possible to do something that has not been done to date: to measure and predict levels of empowerment in Zulu-speaking people. The

organisation involved should now ask the most relevant indicator questions from time to time to see whether their profile is improving.

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