Employee Empowerment and Job Satisfaction: A Study of the Employees in the Food Manufacturing Sector in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This study is based on the Zimbabwe employee involvement model that focuses on three areas which are decision-making, information-sharing and power sharing. The model was initiated in the country in the 1980s as a way of empowering employees in different companies in the land. Government initiated the model as a way of addressing the inevitable change in the business environment. The study carried out in the Food Manufacturing Sector argues that involving employees in decision-making, information-sharing and power sharing results into the employees experiencing job satisfaction. The study is in a case study format was carried out in four different companies in Zimbabwe. After experiencing a number of obstacles data was obtained and analyzed. The results indicated a positive relationship between employee involvement and job satisfaction.

Key words: Employee Empowerment, Employee involvement, Change, Resistance to change, Job Satisfaction.

Introduction

Research Objective

The research objective is to establish the impact of employee empowerment/involvement or lack of it on employee job satisfaction. The construct of employee empowerment/involvement is broken down to include decision-making, information sharing and power sharing.

Propositions

Proposition 1: Decision-making is positively associated with job satisfaction.

Proposition 2: Information sharing results in job satisfaction

Proposition 3: Power sharing results in job satisfaction

Need for Change

In the 1980s the Zimbabwe Government initiated an empowerment model that recommended employee involvement in the general running of the organizations they worked for. This was a way of addressing the changes that were taking place in the general business environment. The empowerment model conceived under the umbrella of the Labour Act included some aspects of the workers’ committees and works’ councils.
Change is necessitated by the escalating development of global markets, increasing rapid changes in work technologies, shifting workforce and customer demographics, and increased emphasis on quality, productivity, customer satisfaction and flexibility in products and services (Hammuda and Dulaimi, 1997). The driving forces for change are well known: new technology, new types of competition, economic uncertainty, evolving customer needs, deregulation, globalization and fragmentation of markets. So many factors argue for change that to not change is to assure obsolescence (Lawler 111, 1991). Subsequently, given the changes in the environment, the need to change the way organizations conduct business has never been greater.

Literature has it that the environment people work in can shape their attitudes and behaviour in either positive or negative ways; and that being the case an understanding of how individuals in organizations are influenced by the organizational context becomes imperative (Robertson, 1994). As Bayat (1991) observes “human beings as history has repeatedly shown, tend to develop a strong desire to exercise control over their own lives, and by the same token to reject attempts by other humans to restrict their freedom”.

**Employee Involvement**

Empirical research has recommended empowerment as a change strategy that will align organizations with the changes in the environment (Nykodym, Simonetti, Nielsen and Welling, 1994; Alkahtani, 2000; Des and Peken, 2000). Employee empowerment here refers to sharing of information among individuals who are otherwise hierarchically unequal (Locke and Schweiger, 1979; Wagner, 1994; Hickey and Casner-Lotto 1998), the involvement of employees in decision-making (Nykodym et al., 1994; Cotton, 1988) and sharing of power (Pun, Chin and Gill, 2001). At the same time Johnson and Thurston (1997), give examples of TRW, Hercules, Whirlpool and McClanahan Book Companies as organizations that have realized organizational benefits from their empowerment initiatives.

**Contextualization of employee involvement**

In this study employee involvement is synonymous to worker- participation in decision-making, information sharing and power sharing and that is also generally equated to employee empowerment. The three aspects of employee involvement address how one perceives his/her total work situation to be an important part of his life and central to him / her and his/her identity because of the opportunity it (the work situation) affords him/her to meet important needs. Central to that definition is
the notion of “the opportunity to meet important needs”. For someone to feel that opportunity they need to have power to participate in decision-making and information to make informed decisions. However, decision-making, information-sharing and power sharing are very much intricately interlinked. The components are further explained for a better understanding of each construct.

Different attributes of the constructs of employee involvement discussed in this study are decision-making, information sharing and power sharing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision-making</th>
<th>Information sharing</th>
<th>Power sharing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning daily activities</td>
<td>Team work</td>
<td>Ownership programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Setting targets</td>
<td>Suggestion boxes</td>
<td>Labor-management partnerships</td>
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<td>Setting policies and procedures</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Profit sharing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using personal judgment</td>
<td>Consultation with supervisor</td>
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(a) (b) (c)

Literature Review

Employee involvement or empowerment is a complex concept; it tends to mean different things to different people. According to Nielsen and Pedersen, (2001), “employee empowerment” as defined by (McClelland, 1975; Conger and Kanungo, 1988) may be seen as part of the broader concept of “employee involvement” which also includes “participative management” (Lawler et al., 1992; Cummings and Worley, 1997) “job enrichment” (Hackman and Oldham, 1980), and “industrial democracy” (Poole, 1986. The term “empowerment” is elastic and so it is not always clear what it means in different organizations (Wilkinson1998; Dainty, et al, 2002).

Notions of empowerment are derived from theories of participative management and employee involvement (Spreitzer, Kizilos and Nason, 1997). The theories of participative management advocate that managers share decision-making power with employees to enhance performance and work satisfaction (Wagner111, 1994). Lawler 111, (1991) on the other hand argues that employee involvement emphasizes cascading power, information, rewards, and training to the lowest level possible in the organizational hierarchy to increase worker discretion. As it turns out employee involvement is a multidimensional concept.
However, in this study employee involvement is about decision-making, information sharing and power sharing.

Some researchers have also equated it to decision-making. For example Nykodym et al., (1994) posit that employee empowerment or participative decision-making is neither a new or simple management concept; while Bowen and Lawler, (1992) point out that empowerment enables employees to make decisions and Pastor (1996) emphasizes the taking of responsibility for decisions made. From a mechanist or top-down approach, employee involvement is about delegation and accountability (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1999). Collins (1996) argues that that is a narrow definition of empowerment since it hinges more on accountability than any wider change in the process of work and decision-making which might be implied by a more active modeling of empowerment.

According to Olshfski and Cunningham (1998), empowerment is about delegation or sharing of power, authority or responsibility by those in the organizational structure to those lower levels of the organization. This in essence is the process of decentralizing decision-making in an organization where managers give more discretion and autonomy to the front-line managers. Wagner 111, (1994) calls it a process in which influence is shared among individuals who are otherwise hierarchically unequal. Collins (1995) sees that as a limiting type of empowerment as at the end of it, the workers are empowered only in the sense that they have a greater responsibility to act within a narrow sphere and then held accountable for their limited action.

Hickey and Casner-Lotto (1998:58) state that empowerment is about delegating directly to non-management employees a significant amount of decision-making authority commonly reserved for managers. They further argue that a truly participative organization is characterized by work systems that are structured to make employee involvement ongoing. This is what Estad (1997) refers to as the involvement of everyone, including both management and employees, that results into the disappearance of boundaries between formal and informal leader to that of an inclusive organization where there are “leaders of leaders”. At that level everyone in the organization feels empowered. That kind of participatory management practice in a way balances the involvement of managers and their subordinates in information sharing, decision-making or problem-solving endeavors (Wagner 111, 1994). However, (Hammuda and Dulaimi, 1997) posit that empowerment is not meant to be a delegation revisited, but rather a wider meaning of employees controlling their own destinies.

Conger and Kanungo (1988), define empowerment as a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organizational members through the identification of conditions that
foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal organizational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information. Brewer (1994), lending support to Conger and Kanungo’s definition, posits that empowerment entails suggestion involvement that culminates into suggestion schemes, quality circles and job involvement where employees are in control of their jobs by designing job content.

Collins, (1995) argues that democratic empowerment, represents a much more active, or activist model of empowerment that is representative of a process whereby workers gain or assume power and represent a process in which workers “act with a greater grasp and sense of their own powers”. Consequently, empowerment only truly occurs when workers actively take the initiative and attempt to wrest control from managers (ibid).

Pun, Chin and Gill, (2001) points out that empowerment is a process whereby employees are taking part or having shares in managerial decision-making. They further point out that true involvement draws people on the hierarchy up to the levels above them and then shares the power that is available. They however, point out that many conventional managers would see employee involvement as the giving away of control since true involvement draws people lower on the hierarchy up to the levels above them and then shares the power that is available. Most definitions of empowerment refer to some aspect of control—control over decision making, control over work processes, control over performance goals and measurement, and/or control over other people (Howard and Foster, 1999).

Ford and Fottler, (1995) emphasize that the empowerment process necessitates the sharing of information and knowledge necessary to enable employees to contribute to organizational performance. At the same time Bluestone and Bluestone (1997) posits that participation turns out to work best when it is organized jointly between union and management and when workers have a voice independent from management that cannot be unilaterally stifled. Obviously, the transfer of power and decision making authority, are at the centre of the empowerment process. As Gilbert (1991) puts it, empowerment is about trust, and most importantly it is about accountability. On the other hand Johnson and Thurston (1997), adopted a thematic definition after their study of Multicorp, and decided to define empowerment in the context of authority, control and trust.

Taking a holistic approach to defining employee involvement, Kinlaw (1996) points out that it is the process of achieving continuous improvement in an organization’s performance by developing and extending the competent influence of individuals and teams over the areas and functions that affect their performance and that of the total organization.
He adds that empowerment also requires structural and systematic changes in the organization, like shortening the lines of communication and modifying reward systems.

As can be derived from the above definitions, empowerment has been glorified as a splendid (Olshfski and Cunningham, 1998). The linking thread in the employee involvement concept is the encouragement of employees including management to utilize their skills and experience by giving them power to use more judgment and discretion in their work. Simply put it is the involvement of employees in decision-making, information sharing and power sharing.

**Decision Making**

Making decisions closer to the point at which they are actually carried out has advantages and provide economic motivations (Malone, 1997). At the same time people are more energetic and creative if they have autonomy in both how they work and what they do (ibid). In the empowerment models they advanced, Nykodym et al., (1994) and Cotton, (1988), emphasized decision-making as a major determinant of participation. Dainty et al., (2002); Ford and Fottler (1997), posit that genuine empowerment is likely to include decision-making authority over not just job content, but job context as well.

**Information sharing**

Marketers define information sharing as internal marketing or two-way communication (Davis 2001). Under such conditions, employees are listened to and encouraged to provide their input and ideas. Ideally, much more information should be shared with employees. The intent is to find out what employees think and want, so programs can be adapted based on the employees’ input (ibid).

Information is at the very core of what makes a group of people an organization (Lawler 111, 1991). Apparently, information has been identified as a source of power and effectiveness in organizational co-ordination and cooperation; and without it, employee participation and involvement become impractical and dangerous (ibid). Moreover, decision-makers frequently have access to information that helps them make good decisions (Malone, 1997).

The empowerment process necessitates the sharing of information and knowledge to enable employees to contribute to organizational performance (Ford and Fottler, 1995). In support of Ford and Fottler, Hammuda and Dulaimi (1997) argue that part of the empowerment program is to provide the necessary information for
employees to enable them to perform their jobs autonomously and effectively. Consequently, sharing of information is important as it enables individuals to make informed decisions. British Gas implemented an employee suggestion program which resulted in the company realizing positive results (Estad, 1997).

**Power Sharing**

In this study power sharing is the same as authority. According to Webster’s College dictionary authority is the power to settle issues. The workers in the Zimbabwe firms are empowered by having a say in the running of the organization through the workers’ committees, works’ council, employee ownership and profit sharing schemes. Paul, Niehoff and Tromley, (2000), point out that suggestion systems, gain sharing plans and quality circles are part of parallel suggestion involvement. The schemes are also in tandem with Conger and Kanungo’s (1988) assertion that the empowerment process enhances feelings of self-efficacy among organizational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal organizational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information.

Pun, Chin and Gill (2001) argue that true involvement draws people on the hierarchy up to the level above them and then share the power that is available. Olshfski and Cunningham, (1998) also point out that empowerment involves the sharing of power, authority or responsibility by those in the organizational structure to those lower levels of the organization. Changes in ownership, such as employee stock ownership plans, and changes in reward systems, such as profit sharing and gain sharing are attempts to involve employees in organizational decision-making (Paul et al., 2000). Employee ownership tends to increase workers’ desire for control and the ownership rights may include the rights to information, decision-making and in general, increased participation (Bartkus, 1997)

**Outcome of Employee Empowerment**

According to the research question the outcome of employee involvement is job satisfaction. Employee empowerment has been contextualized to include decision-making, information sharing and power sharing.

**Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is an area that has been well researched in the industrial and organizational psychology literature. However, it is a concept that is still surrounded
by controversy because much of the literature is inconclusive in nature Morgan et. al., (1995).

Defining job satisfaction is problematic since it has been considered in a variety of ways, and defined differently in various studies (Lam, Zhang and Baum, 2000). They further argue that if there is consensus about job satisfaction, it is the verbal expression of an incumbent’s evaluation of his/her job. The popular definition that has been made reference to in the literature is that advanced by Locke, (1976). He defined the concept of job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences. Locke further argues that the satisfaction is achieved when one realizes one’s important job values provided these are congruent with or help to fulfill one’s basic needs. The values or conditions conducive to job satisfaction are:

- Mentally challenging work which the individual can cope successfully
- Personal interest in the work itself
- Work that is not too physically tiring
- Rewards for performance that are just, informative and in line with the individual’s personal aspirations
- Working conditions that are compatible with the individual’s physical needs and that facilitate the accomplishment of his work
- High self esteem on the part of the employee
- Agents in the work place who help the employee to attain job values such as interesting work, pay and promotions, whose basic values are similar to his own, and who minimize role conflict and ambiguity.

Locke’s definition in this case incorporates both Maslow’s (1954) hierarchy of human needs and Hertzberg’s (1960, 1976) two-factor theory. However the list of values reads more like a long shopping list that is also cosmetic in nature because at the end of it all it is rather difficult to understand what job satisfaction really means. However, the majority of researchers have defined job satisfaction based on Locke’s (1976) definition. For example (Lam, Baum and Pine, 2001; Schweiker Jr. (2001); Lam, Zhang and Baum (2000); Testa, (1999); and Weiss, (1976); Kalleberg, 1977; Locke, 1976; Smith, Kendall and Hulin, (1969) and Curriivan, (1999), defined job satisfaction as the degree of positive emotions an employee has toward a work role. Robbins and Coulter (1996); Currivan, (1999) highlighting the attitudinal nature of the construct stated that job satisfaction is an employee’s general attitude towards his or her
job. Spector (1997) simply defined job satisfaction as the feeling people have about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs. He concludes by saying that it is an attitudinal variable.

A few studies on job satisfaction have tried to define it slightly differently. For example (Currivan, 1999) defined job satisfaction just as an employee attitude or “orientation”; and Spector (1997) posits that the attitudinal perspective has become the predominant one in the study of job satisfaction. Ivancevich, et al., (1997), also defined job satisfaction as an attitude that individuals have about their jobs; which results from their perception of their jobs and the degree to which there is a good fit between the individual and the organization.

Schweiker, (2001), argued that job satisfaction may be both intrinsic and extrinsic. Internally, satisfaction is derived from mediated rewards such as the job itself and opportunities for personal growth and accomplishment. Externally, satisfaction is derived from mediated rewards such as satisfaction with pay, company policies and support, supervision, fellow workers, chances for promotion and customers. On the other hand McGue and Gianakis (1997), define job satisfaction by conceptualizing it. They highlight the elements of job satisfaction that include the actual work and its outcomes, or intrinsic job satisfaction pay, benefits and other rewards directly associated with doing the work, or extrinsic job satisfaction. Included also is the environment in which the work is done, including relations with coworkers, organizational culture, the organization’s policies and procedures, participation in decision making, involvement with the organization, and job status. That definition encompasses almost every theme that describes employees’ attitudes.

The thread that runs through the different authors’ definitions is that of attitudes, orientation and the fact that job satisfaction may be intrinsic and extrinsic. Based on the definitions, it appears that the employee involvement program in this study has both intrinsic and extrinsic attributes. The decision-making and information sharing through the workers committees, team briefing system are intrinsic while profit-sharing; and employee shares are extrinsic.

**Employee involvement and Job Satisfaction**

As it turns out, the assessment of employee attitudes such as job satisfaction has become a common activity in organizations in which management is concerned with the physical and psychological wellbeing of people (Spector, 1997). Rosenberg (2009) also
amplifies the importance of employee involvement when she cited resource-transformation as the movement of information rather than materials within an organization. Akbar, Yousaf, Haq and Hunjira (2011) in their empirical research assessing the impact of employee empowerment and job satisfaction found a positive relationship between the two.

Nykodym, Simonetti, Nielsen and Welling (1994) assert that even the earliest research findings suggested that great potential existed for improving job satisfaction and performance through the use of worker participation as could be seen through Japan’s quality circles. Results from some studies showed a positive correlation between job satisfaction and consultative participation (ibid). Some researchers also found a positive relationship between empowerment and job satisfaction. For example Rinehart and Short (1994) found a strong and positive relationship between empowerment and job satisfaction. Dennis (1999) also found a strong relationship between the variables of employee involvement and job satisfaction in his search for factors influencing job satisfaction in the prison environment.

Some interesting positive links between employee involvement and job satisfaction have been found in the nursing field. For example, Kanter (1993) in her studies argued that in nursing, empowerment has been shown to predict important organizational outcomes, such as trust in management, perceived control over nursing, organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Nykodym, et al.1994) assert that participation causes greater job satisfaction because the employee feels more valued and trusted by management and because the worker gains a better understanding of management difficulties by dealing with some of the same problems. A positive correlation between job satisfaction and consultative participation was demonstrated in six different areas: participation in work decision, consultative participation, short-term participation, informal participation, employee ownership, and representative participation.

At the same time a positive relation was also found between informal participation and job satisfaction and employee ownership and participation. The relation between representative participation and job satisfaction was found to be positive for at least the representatives. However the relation between work decisions and job satisfaction was found to be positive among supervisors and management. That type of an analogy is in line with the Zimbabwean empowerment model that has all the types of participation as outlined by Nykodym at al., 1994). Finn, (2001) also
highlighted the link between autonomy and job satisfaction established during a physicians’ strike in Israel. Nurses were forced into a full autonomous practice to provide primary care and 31 percent of the nurses reported a significant increase in job satisfaction due to the increased autonomy.

**Equating an Employee to a Customer**

Borrowing literature from the marketing discipline, an employee can be equated to a customer to show the importance of job satisfaction. Rust, Stewart, Miller and Pielack (1996) equate an employee to a customer since both have needs and wants that have to be satisfied. Customer needs and wants are satisfied when they perceive goods and services to have value that meet or exceed their expectations (*ibid*). By the same token, employee needs and wants are satisfied when they perceive that they are empowered by the organization in the form of information sharing, decision-making and power sharing.

Davis (2001), pointing at the link between information and job satisfaction, highlights the example of Sears Roebuck that is investing in rewarding managers who improve employee satisfaction levels by consulting the employees. Again the examples that come out of the literature are from western countries only and nothing from the third world let alone Zimbabwe. In this study job satisfaction is conceptualized as the degree of positive emotions an employee has toward a work role (Kalleberg, 1977; Locke, 1976; Smith, Kendall, and Hulin, 1969; Currivan, 2000). Put simply, it is the degree to which people like their jobs (Spector, 1997).

**Conclusion on Literature Review**

What comes out of the literature reviewed is that empowerment is about participative decision-making or autonomy. Participative decision-making is a situation in which decisions pertaining to activities are arrived at, by the very persons who are to execute those decisions (Hammuda and Dulaimi, 1997). At the same time there is the notion of information sharing. Part of the empowerment program is to provide the necessary information for employees to enable them to perform their jobs autonomously and effectively (*ibid*). There is also the sharing of power, authority or responsibility in this whole empowerment exercise. Ford and Fottler (1997), and
Dainty et al., (2002), posit that genuine empowerment is likely to include decision-making authority over not just job content but job context as well.

Forrester (2000) argues that to understand empowerment requires understanding what power is. Power as defined by Luke (1974) in Forrester (2000) is the capacity to obtain the results one wants. Power is further defined by (Pfeiffer, 1981; Kotter, 1976; McClelland and Burnham, 1976), as the ability of those who possess power to bring about the outcomes they desire or ability to get one’s way. In organizational change it is necessary that the employees possess power to bring about the outcomes they desire. That empowerment is achieved through employees’ participation in decision-making, information sharing and power sharing. Arthur (1994) also argues that, although there is growing evidence that managers’ involvement in lower echelon employees is necessary in today’s business environment, many managers are hesitant to involve lower echelon employees because of the fear of losing control (ibid). That then calls for an element of trust on the part of management. From the literature it has been established that empowerment is linked to job satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

This section of the study narrates the information gathering process undertaken in this study. The research question was “is there a link between employee involvement and job satisfaction?” The purpose of the inquiry was exploratory and was meant to find out what was happening in different companies and to seek new insights to the concept of employee involvement. Remenyi, et al., (1998) observe that there are at least three major philosophical questions that should be addressed at the outset of the research. The questions are: why research, what to research and how to research? In order to address the questions, propositions that show the relationship between employee involvement and the construct of job satisfaction was formulated. The proposition is that employee involvement/empowerment results into job satisfaction.

Research Methods

The qualitative research method employed was two-pronged. It embraced the case study and survey strategies. The combination of survey and case studies (both
institutional and individual) provides useful complementary information giving valuable insights into the issue (Robson, 2001).

Case Study Approach

The case study approach was used to identify the objects of study in the manufacturing industry. Although the case study approach should not be equated to qualitative study per se, the majority of case studies build on qualitative data since that makes it possible to examine complex and ‘rich’ phenomena (Huemer 1998). At the same time the use of cases is advocated from a positivistic, realist and naturalistic point of view (Easton, 1995; Eisenhardt 1989, Lincoln and Guba1985 cited by Bryman, 1995). According to Yin (1994) case studies are the preferred strategy when “how and why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon with some real-life context. Stake (2000) emphasized the case study approach as an early step in theory building. When using that method, research is conducted through an intense and/or prolonged contact with a “field” or life situation (Amaratunga et al., 2002). The research problem that addresses the influence of employee involvement on the construct of job satisfaction is more of a social nature since it encroaches on issues of work life.

Survey Approach

The use of the survey method became imperative when access was denied to interviewing the lower level employees. At that stage a questionnaire had to be designed targeted at the other employees besides the key informants.

Sampling

Mwanje and Gotu (2001) argue that sampling rather than complete enumeration becomes useful in terms of time, cost and available resources and practicability. The choice of the industry was influenced by the size of the sector. The manufacturing industry is the 3rd largest contributor to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) after agriculture and the distribution, hotels and restaurant industry (Central Statistics Office, 2002). It also has the largest number of blue-collar employees. At the time of the research there were forty-eight (48) registered companies which employed about eighteen thousand (18 000) employees. The four companies that formed the sample employed a total of two thousand four hundred and sixty-two (2 462) employees amongst themselves and that was about fifteen percent (15%) of the
work force in the entire industry. The companies have been operating in the country for at least 30 years. These companies understood the political/economic situation better especially after going through the era of the liberation struggle, and the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) era.

Sampling Design

Stratified random sampling was used in all four organizations. The employees were stratified according to their hierarchical levels, which are top, middle and low level, but questionnaires were only given to low level employees, since that was more in line with the research question.

Sample Size of low level Participants

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>CO.#1</th>
<th>CO # 2</th>
<th>CO # 3</th>
<th>CO # 4</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>140</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

FINDINGS

The researcher used the information from the lower level respondents since that addressed the research question. The data was all lumped together since the same questionnaire was administered to all respondents in all four companies.

Decision-Making and Job Satisfaction

The proposition being advanced in this section is that employee involvement through decision-making results into job satisfaction. The descriptive data are given in the form of tables and graphs and not put in the appendices as recommended by Saunders et al (1997). The attributes of decision-making highlighted are depicted in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision-making and Job Satisfaction</th>
<th>Satisfied (Percent)</th>
<th>Not satisfied (Percent)</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning daily activities</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting own targets</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting procedures</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct influence on work</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of personal judgment</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of work/ Multi skilling</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion on decision-making

Decision-making is an intrinsic motivator under Hertzberg’s two factor motivation theory. The whole concept of decision-making and job satisfaction can be equated to the principle of job design, whose primary motive is to raise morale of employees. Job design entails job enrichment and job enlargement, which in this case are realized in different forms of decision-making as depicted in Table 1 above. Decision-making enhances self-actualization, which is the highest need on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory. That feeling culminates in meaningfulness of the job and brings about a sense of responsibility on the part of the individual (Hackman and Oldham 1975, 1980 in Burke 1987). The latitude given to employees to make decisions is a positive reinforce (Skinner 1953, 1971) as evidenced by the positive job satisfaction.

Gould (1996) regards employee involvement to be a transformation strategy that delegates decision-making to the shop floor of the organization and it engenders a sense of process ownership among workers. Bowler and Lawler (1992) argue that employee involvement enables employees to make decisions with the individuals taking responsibility for their actions. In essence Organizational Development focuses on change that will more fully integrate individual needs with organizational effectiveness through better utilization of resources, especially human resources, and change that will provide more involvement of organization members in the decisions that directly affect them and their working conditions (Burke, 1987).

In this era of globalization and information technology it becomes imperative to involve employees in decision-making. Organizations with highly involved employees can certainly have a competitive advantage over those with less involved employees (Alkahtani, 2000). At the same time the empowered manager is distinguished from the competent traditional manager by breaking the rules and by asking for forgiveness rather than for permission (Quinn, et al 1996).

Information Sharing and job satisfaction

The proposition advanced in this section is that information sharing through team-work, availability of suggestion boxes and receiving feedback on one’s performance results into job satisfaction.
Information sharing and Job Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree (Percent)</th>
<th>Disagree (Percent)</th>
<th>No of respondents</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of suggestion boxes</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback from management</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management consulting with subordinate</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in Table 2 above show that most employees got job satisfaction from information sharing in their organizations. The Labor Act that recommends establishment of structures such as the workers’ committees, representation through the trade unions, Works Councils, collective bargaining and the Tripartite Negotiating Forum facilitated information sharing. Besides, the organizations had other home-grown programs that encouraged information sharing such as the ‘tombola’ game, ‘sunrise project’ and “padare”. In that respect the employees felt committed to their organizations due to information sharing as they worked in teams. McClelland (1961 in Kreitner and Kinicki, (1998) equated teamwork to socialized power (s Pwr).

In the same vein, information sharing is seen as empowering by Hicky and Casner-Lotto (1998) in their Participation, Achievement, and Reward (PAR) Model that encourages team based work and labour management partnerships. Integration of technology and people and communication and information sharing in general are also contributory to job satisfaction. Hammuda and Dulaimi (1997) argue that information for employees enables them to perform their jobs autonomously and effectively. On the other hand Laschinger and Wong, (1999) also report that factors such as access to information have a major influence on employees’ ability to get work done.

Information sharing should be taken seriously since it plays an important role in overcoming resistance to change. This is at the centre of the whole exercise of aligning organizations with the changing environment. Change is associated with uncertainties and by making information available, trust is built. As observed by Kets de Vries and Balazs (1999) leaders driving change effort need to empower their subordinates by sharing information fully, avoiding secrecy and delegating responsibility. That aspect of avoiding secrecy is addressed by the legal structures such as the Labour Act and its many provisions. According to Lawler 111 (1991)
information is at the very core of the development of an organization and is fundamental for its success.

**Power Sharing and job satisfaction**

The proposition advanced in this section is that power sharing leads to job satisfaction. Empowerment is realised through power sharing in general, employee ownership programmes, labour-management partnership and profit sharing. In other words power sharing can be tangible and intangible in nature.

**Power sharing and job satisfaction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Satisfied (Percent)</th>
<th>Dissatisfied (Percent)</th>
<th>No of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power sharing in general</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Ownership Programmes</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Management Partnership</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profit Sharing</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in **Table 3 above** show that most of the employees were not satisfied by the level of power sharing in their organizations. This was despite the fact that companies, as per the findings, had indicated that they had expanded the empowerment model from decision-making and information sharing to include power sharing. Power sharing in the form of share ownership has always been a major problem in organizations. Subsequently, Government came up with a number of policies to address the issue of power sharing. The policies include Growth with equity, indigenization, and employee share ownership plans.

McClelland (1961 in Kreiner and Kinicki 1998) argues that there are basically two types of power; the socialized power (s Pwr) and personalized power (n Pwr) and the two have some influence on power sharing. Naturally, the owners of capital have a high need for power which is characterized by the “if I win you lose”. From the results, the organizations seemed oblivious of the fact that empowerment involves the sharing of power, authority and responsibility by everyone in the organizational structure (Olshfski and Cunningham 1998).

However, it is also natural that many conventional managers would see employee involvement as giving away control to workers at lower levels (Pun, Chin and Gill 2001). Such managers find it difficult to share power with subordinates because of the desire to control. Besides, there is just too much at stake such as the
need for control, recognition needs and security, thus managers hold on to power (Forester, 2000).

CONCLUSION

The general conclusion in this research is that employee involvement in decision making and information sharing results in job satisfaction. On the other hand power sharing as part of employee involvement was found not to be positively linked to job satisfaction; the reason being that power sharing was rarely practiced in the organizations studied.

Decision-making

The study showed that participation in decision-making is positively linked to job satisfaction. Decision-making is a very important aspect of empowerment. It embraces a number of areas such as self-governance, freedom and self-control. In this study it embraced such attributes as individual’s involvement in setting own targets and use of personal judgment among others. That aspect of involvement enhances the individual employee’s self-actualization. At the same time decision-making as an empowerment strategy engenders process ownership among workers and that can result in competitive advantage over other organizations that do not involve employees. Employee involvement brings about a sense of belonging and that psychological bond ties the employee to the organization.

Information –sharing

The study showed a positive link between information sharing and job satisfaction. Information sharing facilitates the whole empowerment exercise in a number of ways. For example it is of paramount importance in overcoming resistance to change. In this study the Labor Act played a pivotal role in the provision of information and the establishment of workplace democracy. Management taking cognizance of the importance of information sharing promoted teamwork in their firms to the extent of coming up with new programs as the Sunrise Project, Tombola and Padare.

Information sharing is the epitome of teamwork and it encompasses feedback. The importance of feedback is to find out what employees think and want so programs can be adapted based on the employee’ input. Information- sharing in a changing business environment such as the one experienced in Zimbabwe is of
paramount importance. Organisations have to align themselves with the changes by keeping their fingers on the pulse of the changing environment. Suggestion boxes as information sharing tool may sound trivial, but to the workers that was something within their reach. However, management did not seem to take that information seriously and that obviously, had a negative impact on employees.

**Power -sharing**

When asked about power sharing in general a positive relationship between power sharing and job satisfaction appeared, but by a very narrow margin. When it came to the specifics of power sharing, no association was established between power sharing and job satisfaction. That was attributed to the natural mistrust between labor and management and the fact that many conventional managers would see employee involvement as giving away control to workers at low levels. The major bone of contention was the ownership programs and the profit sharing schemes. Organizations seemed not to be aware of the strength of empowerment to those at the lower levels of the hierarch. Power sharing is supposed to empower workers and enhance feelings of self-efficacy. Identification and removal of conditions that render organizational members powerless is an essential part of the process and that was found to be lacking in this study.

Naturally, power is difficult to share with subordinates and it becomes more problematic when it involves the owners of capital and the workers. The Zimbabwean situation is worsened by the fact that the majority of the business enterprises are multinationals who symbolize classic capitalism, where workers are separated from ownership and control of the means of production. However, separation of workers and capital results in critical conflict of interests and that must be addressed if the firms are to remain dynamically competitive.
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Encouraging challenges to the status quo, leaders of organizations in the new century will need to share knowledge with-and empower—All their employees.”


Huemer, L (1998) *TRUST IN business Relations* Published by Borea


