

Employee Empowerment

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Introduction

This paper demonstrates a concept analysis of “employee empowerment.” The word “empowerment” was first used in the 17th century and it meant to “invest with authority.” In 1990s, “empowerment” became popular as more general usage of “to enable or permit,” and has been received attention in many different disciplines such as psychology, sociology, management and nursing.

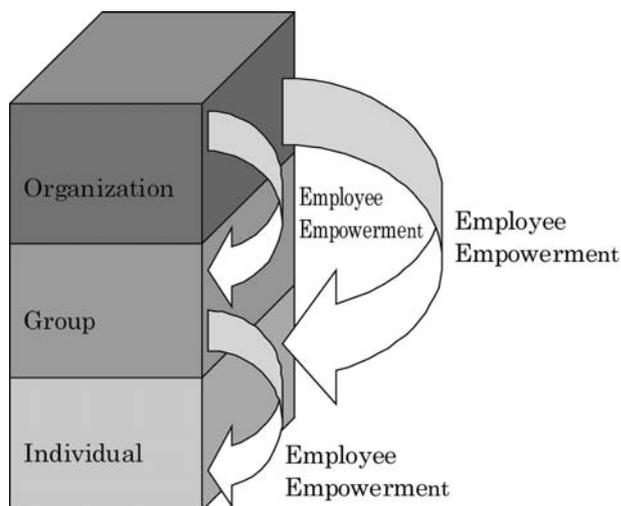
According to Merriam Webster’s Third New International Dictionary (1993), “empowerment is to give official authority to, delegate legal power to, and to give faculties or abilities to” (p.192). Empowerment is defined as “earned autonomy based on consistent contribution as situational leader, for the good of the employee, the customer, and the organization” (Steiner, 1986, p.12).

Empowerment in psychology, sociology and nursing focuses on psychological and behavioral changes of individuals and/or groups whereas these changes are considered as antecedents of organizational changes in management (Figure). The focus of this paper is “employee empowerment” in organization, not on individuals nor groups. In nursing, however, empowerment mainly focuses on clients’ psychological and behavioral changes as consequences of interactions between nurses and clients.

This paper consists of two parts: an annotated bibliography (Table 1) and application of concept analysis of employee empowerment using Walker and Avant’s (2005) framework (Table 2). Concepts are mental constructions (Walker & Avant, 2005); therefore, it is essential to identify the exact attributes of each concept when conducting researches.

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Figure : Employee Empowerment at three different focuses



This figure indicates three different focuses on employee empowerment. In any organization, there are three different levels to be analyzed such as an individual level, a group level and an organization level. Individuals work in an organization but are placed in a unit in the organization. In an organizational system, individuals are empowered by both groups and organization, whereas groups are empowered by the organization. Each arrow indicates the direction of empowerment. Empowered individuals and groups demonstrate behavioral changes and the total behavioral changes can be considered as employee empowerment. The ultimate objectives of employee empowerment are organizational effectiveness and higher productivity.

Table 1 : an Annotated Bibliography of Employee Empowerment

Author(s)	Conclusion	Concept Definition	Relational Statements
Conger & Kanungo, 1988 The empowerment process: integrating theory and practice	Suggested new important directions for research on empowerment. 1. the effectiveness of the model should be tested. 2. should validate the proposed antecedent conditions of powerlessness & appropriate intervention strategies. 3. study on direct link b/w empowerment practice and leadership.	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 practice and informal techniques of providing efficacy information (p.474).	<i>Empowerment as a related construct:</i> Power is primarily considered as a relational concept. An idea of delegation and the decentralization of decision-making power is central to empowerment. Empowerment deals with participative management techniques. A critical question: does the sharing of authority & resources with subordinates automatically empower them? <i>Empowerment as a motivational construct:</i> Individuals are assumed to have a need for power, which connotes an internal urge to influence and control other people. Power is intrinsic need for self-determination (p.472).
Ahanotu, 1998 Empowerment and production workers: a knowledge-based perspective N. Duru Ahanotu Stanford University California	The benefits of empowerment are long-term and only gradually evident.	This paper discuss a great amount of empowerment among production workers, but its definition is not stated. The author stated that empowered production workers must participate more in processes of innovation, however the concept of empowerment in the argument has never been stated.	Active knowledge development among production workers will enable to work better, less resilience on technical specialists for handling production contingencies, and increase capability of the entire production system. Again, this statement contains a lot of undefined concepts.
McGraw, 1992 The road to empowerment James P. McGraw, RN, MN, CCRN CEN Trauma Clinical Nurse Specialist Harris Methodist Fort Worth Texas	The author developed the model of Maslow's hierarchy of needs parallels empowerment and its antecedents. This model provides a tool for identifying training employees.	Allow employees to identify and solve work place problems at the time and place the difficulty occurs (p.16).	Maslow's hierarchy of needs parallels to the development of empowerment. Physiological needs vs work environment Safety needs vs Organizational security Social needs vs Organizational Culture Esteem needs vs Organizational esteem Self-actualization vs empowerment

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<p>Honold, 1997</p> <p>A review of the literature on employee empowerment</p> <p>Linda Honold President of Empowerment Systems, Milwaukee, Wisconsin</p>	<p>Employee empowerment is multidimensional such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership --creating vision & developing common goals, continually scanning the environment. • Teams & collaborative working arrangements. • Personal responsibility epitomized in job enrichment, control over decisions directly relating to one's work, multi-skilling & cross training. • Decentralized structure has controls. • Contingent reward system, pay for performance and making win-win strategies. 	<p>Kanter (1989): Giving power to people who are at the disadvantaged spot in the organization (p.203).</p> <p>Murrell (1990):an act of building, developing and increasing power by working with others (p.204).</p> <p>Menton (1995):a cognitive state of perceived control, perceived competence and goal internalization (p.204).</p> <p>Foster-Fishman & Keys (1995): the process of gaining influence over events and outcomes of importance to an individual or group (p.204).</p> <p>Thomas & Velthouse (1985): Occurring as "cognitive variables" change. Cognitive variables are environment, tasks, behavior of leader, individual's interpretive styles, impact & meaningfulness of the task (p.204).</p> <p>Rothstein (1995): An act of building, developing, & increasing power through cooperating, sharing, & working together (p.205).</p> <p>Gorden (1995): Managing organizations by collaboration where workers have a voice (p.205).</p> <p>McLagan & Nel (1997): The establishment of a system of corporate values (p.207).</p>	<p>The literature on employee empowerment is divided into 5 groups: leadership, the individual empowered state, collaborative work, structural or procedural change, and the multi-dimensional perspective (p.203).</p> <p>Three critical elements of employee empowerment by Ward (1993):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clarity and consistency of the organization's over-all production and development goals, and an alignment of all systems and management and employee levels towards those goals. 2. Ongoing evaluation and development of the professional needs of the employees with preparation for a greater sense of process ownership and accountability. 3. Assurance of congruence between corporate goals, management goals, and the goals of the organization's employees (p.205~206). <p>A key of employee empowerment by Malone (1997): Technological improvements in communications.</p> <p>Six dimensions to empowerment by Vogt & Murrell (1990): Educating, leading, mentoring/supporting, providing, structuring, and one that incorporates all of the above (p.206).</p> <p>Key components by Caudron (1995): Self-directed work teams; free flow of information about company goals & directions; training and continual development of work, management, and leadership skills by all employees, Managers are more like coaches. Employee control of needed resources. Continual positive feedback and reinforcement on performance (p.207).</p>
<p>Rappaport, 1984</p> <p>Studies in empowerment : Introduction to the issue</p>	<p>An issue of a step toward understanding the mechanism of empowerment and the key to psychology of prevention in human services.</p>	<p>Viewed as a process. The mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their lives (p.3). The form of process varies.</p>	<p>Empowerment is the active ingredient in a wide variety of human interactions. The end result can take on a variety of forms. Empowerment is easy to define in its absence: powerlessness, learned helplessness, alienation, loss of a sense of control over one's own life Empowerment includes political, economic, interpersonal, psychological or spiritual control. Empowerment is seen as a transformation from an initial sense of powerlessness.</p>

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<p>Gibson, 1991</p> <p>A concept analysis of empowerment</p> <p>Cheryl H. Gibson, BN, MScN Doctoral student Boston College Chestnut Hill MA</p>	<p>Empowerment has great utility for nursing practice, education, administration and research.</p>	<p>A social process of recognizing, promoting & enhancing people's abilities to meet their own needs, solve their own problems and mobilize the necessary resources in order to feel in control of their own lives (p.359).</p>	<p>Empowerment is viewed either as a process or and outcome. It is an abstract concept. Empowerment is a developmental concept where individual, family and community growth and potential are enhanced. In the process of empowerment, conflict, tension and growth are intertwined. Empowerment entails a process of helping individuals develop a critical awareness of the causes of their problems and develop readiness to act.</p>
<p>Appelbaum & Honeggar, 1998</p> <p>Steven H. Appelbaum Concordia Univ. Montreal, Canada Karen Honeggar Catherine Booth Hospital Centre Montreal Canada</p>	<p>Empowerment: a contrasting overview of organizations in general and nursing in particular-an examination of managerial behaviors, job design, and structural power.</p> <p>Strategies of building blocks as team actions and personal actions are presented in subcategories such as authority, trust, security, growth opportunities, an exciting vision, etc.</p>	<p>Empowerment embodies a vision that calls for a substantial increase in the influence that lower-level employees will have in an organization that adopts an empowerment philosophy (p.30).</p>	<p>Critical elements of success of empowered workforce by Peipert.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Performance evaluation drawn from multiple sources. 2. Variable rewards. 3. Error tolerance. 4. Enhanced communication. 5. Generalists: more cross trained. <p>Schmieding identified three variables considered as components of empowerment: context, structure, and process. "Context" is "as having a shared vision that commits people to action this vision provides a contextual whole and represents the organizing principle of empowerment (p.38)."</p>
<p>Pastor, 1996</p> <p>Empowerment: what it is and what it is not</p> <p>Joan Pastor Affiliated with Joan Pastor & Associations, Oceanside, CA</p>	<p>In workplace, hierarchies of responsibility and power exist. One of the misconceptions about empowerment is to letting their team loose on the project.</p>	<p>Empowerment is not a static "event", rather a dynamic evolutionary process in which the manager, employee and team are all involved. Empowerment in the workplace must integrate aspects of personal empowerment (p.6).</p>	<p>Five distinct levels/stages of empowerment in which a team and its manager operate (p.6).</p> <p>Stage 1: the manager makes the decisions and informs the team. Stage 2: the manager asks the team for suggestions, and makes the decisions. Stage 3: the manager and the team discuss the issues, and the manager makes decisions. Stage 4: the decisions are made cooperatively between manager and the team. Stage 5: the manager delegates the decision making to the team.</p> <p>There are two aspects of empowerment. The first is personal empowerment. The second dimension of empowerment has to do with the way in which people work with others to nurture their sense of self-esteem, autonomy and growth (p.5).</p>
<p>Nykodym, N., Simonetti, J.L. et al., 1994</p> <p>Employee Empowerment</p>	<p>Participation is not appropriate for every decision making situation.</p>	<p>Employee empowerment is considered as participative decision making in organization.</p>	<p>Participation in work decisions and consultative participation both focus on work issues such as what is to be done, how it is organized, and who will do what (p.47). Participation is formal, direct and long-term type. The amount of influence by employees varies.</p>

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<p>Page & Czuba, 1999 Empowerment: what is it?</p> <p>Nanette Page Former Connecticut PEP Facilitator Michigan</p> <p>Cheryl Czuba Extension Educator, Community Development, Families University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System</p>	<p>Empowerment is a process that is similar to a path or journey. Aspects of empowerment vary according to the specific context and people involved.</p>	<p>Empowerment is a process that challenges the basic assumption about power, helping, achieving, and succeeding.</p> <p>The core concept of empowerment is power. Empowerment requires that power can change. The concept of empowerment depends upon the idea that power can expand. Empowerment is a process of change (p.2). Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives (p.3).</p>	<p>Power does not exist in isolation nor is it inherent in individuals. Power is created in relationships. Empowerment depends upon power that can expand. Multi-dimension in empowerment means sociological, psychological, economic, and many others. How can we recognize empowerment? How can we evaluate?</p>
<p>Chandler, 1992</p> <p>The source and process of empowerment</p> <p>Genevieve E. Chandler, PhD RN, Assistant Professor School of Nsg Univ. of Massachusetts</p>	<p>If staff nurses perceive empowerment as enabling others by increasing resources, capabilities and effectiveness and as the ability to act while being recognized, appreciated, and rewarded for such behaviors.</p>	<p>Empowerment is assumed to be experienced when someone higher in the organization delegates power. Empowerment is originated in people and derived from interactions.</p>	<p>Managers have attempted to empower and control through participative management techniques, quality circles, and management-by-objectives.</p>
<p>Beach, 1996</p> <p>Empowerment to the people: creating an atmosphere for growth</p> <p>Audrey J. Beach Director of Human Resources at PQ System, OH</p>	<p>Some may see empowerment as only a current, passing fad, or as something that has been tried. Management tries to empower others only to be disappointed.</p>	<p>Empowerment is an inner urge that drives people to some sort of action (p.29).</p>	<p>No one can create intrinsic motivation for another. No one can cause another to be in an empowered state. Management can create extrinsic conditions with help lead employees in the direction of attaining empowerment (p.29).</p>

The table 1 is an annotated bibliography of employee empowerment. In each article, author(s), conclusion, concept definitions and relational statements are identified. In authors' sections, not only names of authors but also their work places and positions are identified. Relational statements proclaim a relationship of two or more concepts. In this section, related concepts of employee empowerment are identified.

Table 2: Concept Analysis Using Walker and Avant’s Framework

Concept	Identify All uses	Defining Attributes	Antecedents and Consequences	Define empirical referents
Employee Empowerment	Dictionary defines: “empower” 1. to give people the power or authority. 2. to give people more control over their own lives or the situation they are in “empowerment”. 3. the empowerment of the individual. “Empowerment Theory” Individual/psychological Empowerment Organizational Empowerment Community Empowerment	Power upon others Sense of control Helping process Enable Self-determination Autonomy on the job	<i>Antecedents:</i> There is a relationship between the boss and subordinates. The boss has power to influence his/her subordinates. Employee participation. Individuals have a responsibility of own work tasks. Respect Trust <i>Consequences:</i> There are two levels: Individual/group and Organization <u>Individual level:</u> This level is also an antecedent of the organizational level Higher the motivation. Job enrichment. Improve subordinates’ task behavior. Creatively overcoming obstacles to serve the customer. <u>Organizational level:</u> Organizational success. Organizational effectiveness. Customer satisfaction.	Trust between employees and their supervisor. Are the employees motivated to their work? Is the employees’ motivation elevated? Are the employees able to make appropriate decisions? Is the productivity of the organization increased?

Table 2 is a collection of concept analysis of employee empowerment based on Walker and Avant (2005). In the “identify all usage” section, all usages of the term “employee empowerment” are identified. Deciding “Defining attributes” is “the heart of concept analysis” (Walker & Avant, 2005, p. 68). Based on concept analysis of employee empowerment, six defining attributes are identified. Antecedents are incidents that must take place prior to the occurrence of the concept, whereas consequences are the events that occur as a result of the occurrence of the concept (Walker & Avant, 2005). In employee empowerment, the consequences are identified as two levels such as an individual and an organization level. Identifying empirical referents is the final step of a concept analysis, and these are categories of existing phenomena (Walker & Avant, 2005). In this analysis, five empirical referents are identified.

The followings are the continuation of a concept analysis based on Walker and Avant (2005). A model case, a borderline case and a contrary case are presented.

Model Case:

Maya has been a Registered Nurse working at an emergency unit for 7 years. She has been a full-time staff nurse since she graduated. She would like to be a Clinical Nurse Specialist for critical care nursing. In order to become a Clinical Nurse Specialist, she needs to go to a graduate school. She discussed her career goal with Mei, who is Maya’s immediate supervisor. Mei has known Maya for 7 years and evaluated her as an excellent

clinical nurse. Maya wanted to continue her job even as a part-time because she wanted to keep up her skills and also she needed to support herself financially. Mei listened to Maya's intension and came up with a new work shift which was a 12-hour-night shift for weekends. Mei's idea was to work 3 consecutive days to work nights on every weekend such as Friday night through Monday morning. In this way, Maya would be able to take any courses at school during week days and would still be earning decent income. Maya was satisfied with Mei's suggestion and felt that Mei was supportive of what Maya wanted to accomplish for her career.

Borderline Case:

Michiko was a staff nurse for 15 years. She was interested in patients with diabetes. Her assessment for diabetic patients was always accurate and other staff nurses often asked her about nursing care of diabetic patients. Michiko conducted clinical research on diabetic patient care and had a chance to report her study at the regional nursing conference. When she talked to Yoko, her supervisor about the conference, Yoko told Michiko that it would be very difficult to arrange the work schedule for Michiko to present her study at the conference. Yoko said that she would try to accommodate her work schedule, but could not guarantee. So Michiko would not know whether she would be able to present her study until the last minute. In this case, "helping process," which is one of the defining attributes of empowerment (Table 2) is not functioning.

Contrary Case:

Harumi started working at a new hospital as a pediatric clinical nurse specialist. At the first day of work, the Director of Nursing assigned her at a surgical unit as a staff nurse. Harumi was surprised and asked the Director of Nursing why she would work at a surgical unit instead of a pediatric unit. The Director of Nursing told her that Harumi needs more experiences. Although she had had experiences working at a surgical unit before entering a graduate school, the director did not take into consideration her previous experiences. Harumi was shocked and thought she would quit the job. She worked at surgical unit for one year and kept asking to work at a pediatric unit.

This is a contrary case because no defining attributes (Table 2) are met. In fact, this is an actual case occurred in Japan, though the name and her major area were not actual in order to protect privacy of the subject. She did not have any control over her job in terms of what she wanted to do for her career. Later, Harumi finally become a clinical nurse specialist at the hospital after the director retired.

Discussion

Performing a concept analysis of empowerment through literature review, I noticed that there is a misconception between concepts of “empower” and “power” in some articles. The word “power” is a noun and static meaning of authority. Empower, however, is a verb that is to authorize. Definitions of power do not imply empower which is a process of influencing and enabling to others.

Empowerment studies using Kanter’s power structural model in nursing need to delineate between “power” and “empower” (Laschinger, et al., 1996; Laschinger et al., 2000; Lashinger et al., 2001). A premise that there is a difference in position power between supervisors and their subordinates does imply subordinates always need multidimensional empowerment from their supervisors. The discipline of nursing needs investigation in depth of employee empowerment in light of its concepts and essential prerequisites.

Conclusion

A concept analysis of employee empowerment is conducted. Although it contains very broad aspects and popular in many different disciplines such as psychology, sociology, management and nursing, empowerment is considered as both process and outcome. Employee empowerment differs from empowerment in psychology, sociology and nursing domains. It expects outcomes like organizational effectiveness as a result of behavioral changes of employees. I would like to propose that research on employee empowerment needs two phases: behavioral changes among individuals and groups and organizational changes.

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