



Employee Empowering and Its Positive Effect: A Critical Review

Mallick Rakibul Hasan^{1*}

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The principal objective of this study is to determine different ways of empowering and its multi-faceted impact on different employee and organizational performance parameters. To serve this purpose, an in-depth literature was reviewed.

Methodology: It is mainly a review-based article and so conclusion was drawn on the basis of the literature review by the authors.

Findings: The findings suggest that empowering employees can be done in different ways from simply thanking employees till using complicated process of work and it affects the employees and the organization profoundly. It has an impact on employees' job satisfaction, commitment, stress level and the overall organizational output.

Limitations: The major limitation of this study is that being a review-based study it has no practical exposure and any specific field orientation.

Practical Implications: The knowledge shared in the article have two implications. The academicians can enrich their knowledge of the empowerment theories and accordingly they will be able to accommodate their knowledge when and where necessary. And secondly the managers will be able to apply the knowledge in their practices to empower their employees to ensure best output.

Originality/Value: It will enrich the knowledge of the readers through giving him/her an overview of the effect of employee empowerment on employee performance and organizational output. The managers can follow the process of empowering while they will practice it. It will also open an opportunity for researchers to do their research on any one of the effects or processes in future.

1. Introduction

Now-a-days employees are treated to be invaluable resource of the organizations beside all the physical and intellectual resources. The ultimate utilization of this human resource is considered to be the highest considerable factor for the organizational managers. One of the ways of doing so is to empower the employees as it is a useful management

* Corresponding Author

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Business Studies, BGMEA University of Fashion and Technology (BUFT), Nishatnagar, Turag, Dhaka-1230, Bangladesh, Email: mallickrakibul@buft.edu.bd

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technique which will benefit the organization from various stand points. Randolph (2011) stated that transferring power from management to employees is employee empowerment and sharing of between top management and employees is also employee empowerment Khan et. al. (2014). So employee empowerment refers to a situation or context or an environment where the employees are allowed to make decisions without the interruption of the top management. In other words, we can say that developing the feeling of self-efficacy through any kind of managerial style is employee empowerment. As per the literature of management employee empowerment have got different look. Scholars have defined it in different ways. Someone defined it as intrinsic task motivation (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) and/or reflective motivation of the person–environment fit (Zimmerman, 1990). In other literature, perceptions are another look of empowerment (Parker & Price, 1994) and as commitment-based designs (Spreitzer, 1996). Researchers have also defined empowerment as the transfer of power or authority (e.g., Burke, 1986; Kanter, 1977) sharing of resources and information (e.g., Blau & Alba, 1982; Hardy & Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998). Empowerment is dependent on management or leadership actions (e.g., Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Block, 1991) and human resource practices such as training programs or reward systems (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Lawler, 1986).

Empowerment is an idea that tries to change employees’ working arrogances by imparting in them an honest dedication to reach organizational goals and attain a high quality service. Employee empowerment shortens the duration of tasks as it brings decision-makers and employees closer.

Empowering is now a world-wide well-known practice. It is notified that 70% or more of the organizations have already implemented few empowerment initiatives for their workforce (Lawler et al., 2001). Ensuring every employee’s enthusiastic participation is highly required for the success of an organization. And it is possible through empowering the employees to take initiative without poking, for fulfilling collective interests of the company without being self-centered and with the feeling of ownership of the business (O’Toole and Lawler, 2007).

2. Literature Review

2.1 How to Empower?

Empowering employees is crucial for an organization. An organization can get full support from employees if they are properly empowered. But the question is how can that be done? In order to empower employees an organization can offer educational programs, let employees be involved in decision-making and have adequate reward systems (Maxwell, 2005) and should follow logical internal organization process as well.

2.1.1 Increasing Employee Participation

One of the best way of empowering the employees is increasing the participation of the employees in decision making. It will make him responsible and will increase his self-efficacy. According to Johnson (1993) employees can become truly empowered with high participation. Meyerson, G., & Dewettinck, B. (2012) has given a nice logic behind it. They stated that the situational approach of empowering employees of Conger and Kanungo (1988) is all about passing power from higher-level management to lower level employees by involving them in decision making. So ensuring the participation of the employees in the decision making is a prerequisite of for employee empowerment.

2.1.2 Providing Training

Voegtlin et al. (2015) explained in their research that the results indicated a positive relationship between training participation and increased levels of collective psychological empowerment, with differential effects on the dimensions of empowerment. Training increases the efficiency and confidence of the employees in their work. Training programs designed to provide required technical skills together with a culture that encourages self-determination and collaboration instead of competition. (McClelland, 1975).

2.1.3 Improving Organizational Politics

Block (1991) in his book tells that the path to empowerment is to shed the traditional negative political culture and create a positive political culture by moving away from a bureaucratic cycle of management to an entrepreneurial cycle. This creates improved relationships between all the people within the organization and empowers everyone to take responsibility for the organization as if it were their own. This makes work a better place for all employees, improves relationships with clients and makes the organization more successful.

2.1.4 Showing Confidence in Employees

A good way of empowering employees is showing confidence in employees that they will be high performing. The empowerment strategy is to free employees from rigorous control imposed by instruction, policies, and orders and in their place give employees the freedom to take responsibility for their ideas, decisions and actions (Corlzon, 1987). Researchers have identified activities and organizational structures that power through the development of knowledge and skills, access to information, support, function and responsibilities defined as empowering cases (Greasley et al, 2008).

2.1.5 Sharing of Information

Employees should have to have easy access to the information. It will create trust and confidence among the employees. With more information, people tend to experience

self-regulating, self-control and more confidence. All the information necessary to perform the work should be given to the employees, if a manager wants to increase sense of empowerment in employees (Abdollahi, 2004, p 64). Accurate, timely and related information is considered as the most important factor in creating authority and accuracy of decision making (Abadi et.al. 2013).

2.1.6 Sharing of Power and Authority

According to McClelland (1987) theory of need everyone has the need for power and authority. So sharing of power and authority can be good technique for empowering employees. It is found that the theory of management suggests participative management techniques i.e. MBO, quality circles, and goal setting by subordinates as the means of sharing power or delegating authority.

2.1.7 Decrease the Feeling of Powerlessness

There are some factors in the organization that increase the feeling of powerlessness among the employees. These factors differ from organization to organization. This feeling of powerlessness demotivates the employees. They feel severely less empowered. So we have to identify the factors to remove from the organization and making them feel empowered. It is natural that strengthening of self-determination need or self-efficacy belief of employees will increase the feeling of powerfulness and any strategy that weakens the self-determination need or self-efficacy belief of employees will decrease their feelings of powerlessness. Oxford English dictionary defines the verb empower as "to enable." Management scholars preferred to use empowerment in the sense of delegation rather than in the sense of enabling. Enabling means the process of identifications the factors of powerlessness and removing them accordingly through providing them efficacy information. (Conger and Kunango, 1988).

2.2 Empowerment Process

Empowerment can also take place through different processes. These systematic process will enable the managers to empower their employees through strategic manner. Here two models of empowerment are given:

2.2.1 The Process of Empowerment

The need to empower subordinates becomes critical when subordinates feel powerlessness. The following process of empowerment was suggested by (Conger and Kunango, 1988). The process involves five stages. Stage 1 is the step that will identify the factors which may lead to enhance the sense of powerlessness of the employees. Stage 1 will indicate what should to be done in stage 2 to remove this powerlessness feeling from the employees. So, stage 2 is the articulation of the managerial strategies and

techniques that will be helpful for eradicating this powerlessness feelings. Stage 3 is the all about the field-on work to make the employees powerful. It involves providing self-efficacy information to the employees. And stage 4 is the result of having the self-efficacy information and necessary changes in the employees' powerlessness status. At the end the behavioral changes will be observed at stage 5.

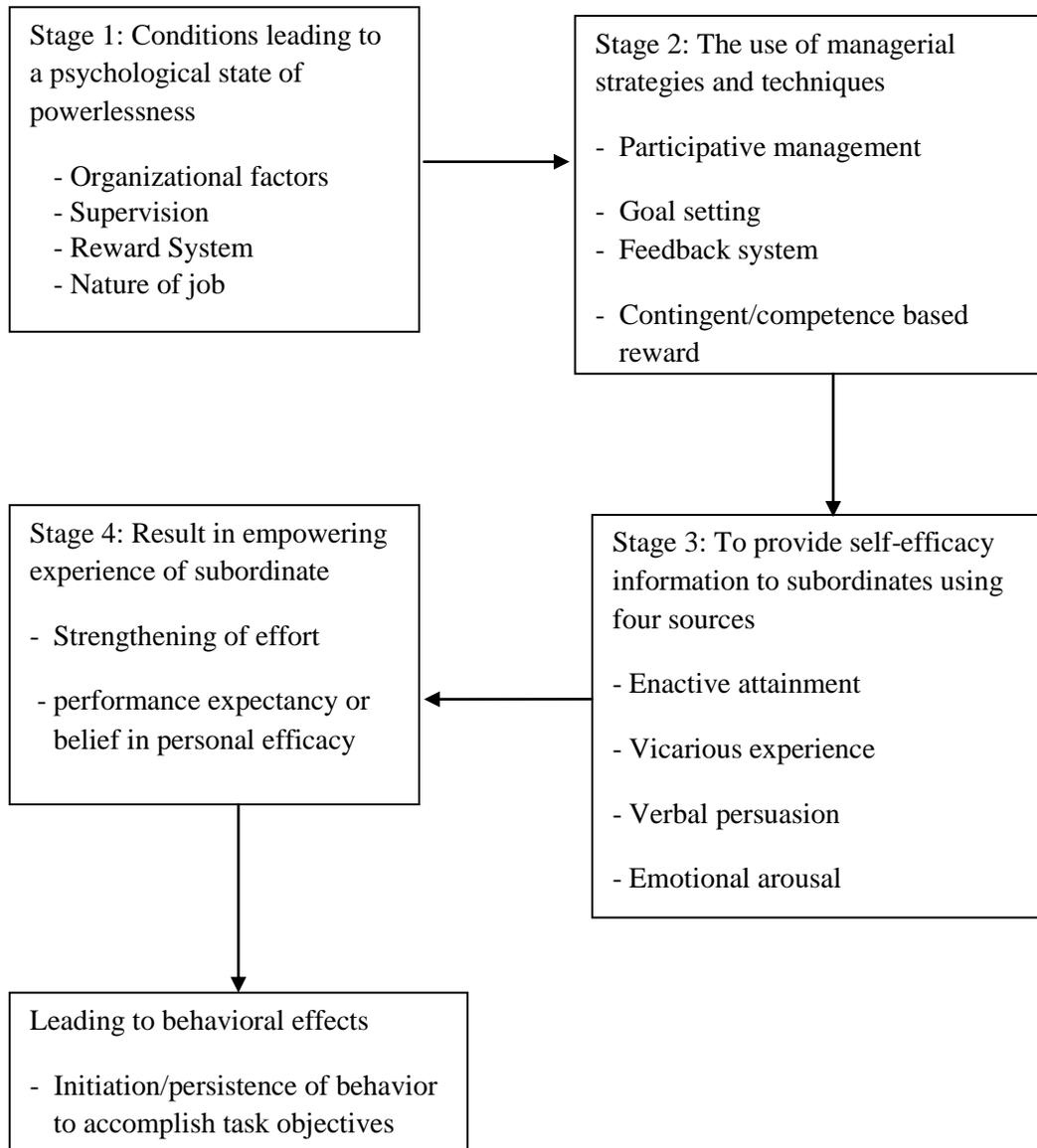


Figure 1. The process of Empowerment. Source: (Conger and Kunango, 1988).

2.2.2 The Process of Empowerment (Robbins et al., 2002)

Another model of empowerment was proposed by Robbins et. al., (2002). The model is a bit different from the model of (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). This model shown in (Figure 2) provides the process by which empowered behaviors are demonstrated through the linkage between perceptions, attitudes, and consequent psychological empowerment with elements of the organization context and local work environment. Reaction of a local work environment within a broader organizational context is the biggest challenge. It will provide both an opportunity to exercise one's full range of authority and power and the intrinsic motivation within employees to engage in that type of behavior i.e., psychological empowerment. Relationship 2 in (Figure 2) represents the linkage between the broader organization context and elements in the local work environment. The broad organization context i.e. relationship 3 in (Figure 2) and local work environment, relationships 4–9 in (Figure 2) influences both employee perceptions i.e., perceived “opportunity” to influence workplace outcomes and perceived level and nature of “organizational support” and attitudes i.e., “trust” and “commitment”. The intervening perceptions and attitudes are key links in the process by which both the organization context and the local work environment influence psychological empowerment i.e., relationship 1 in (Figure 2). The individual differences will influence both the organization context and the local work environment i.e. links 11 in (Figure 2) and directly influence the intervening perceptions and attitudes i.e., relationship 10 in (Figure 2), as well as the level of psychological empowerment experienced relationship 12 in (Figure 2). As shown in (Figure 2), the relationship between psychological empowerment and empowered behaviors is proposed to be moderated by the organization context and elements of the local work environment links 14 in Figure 2) that directly define the range of authority granted.

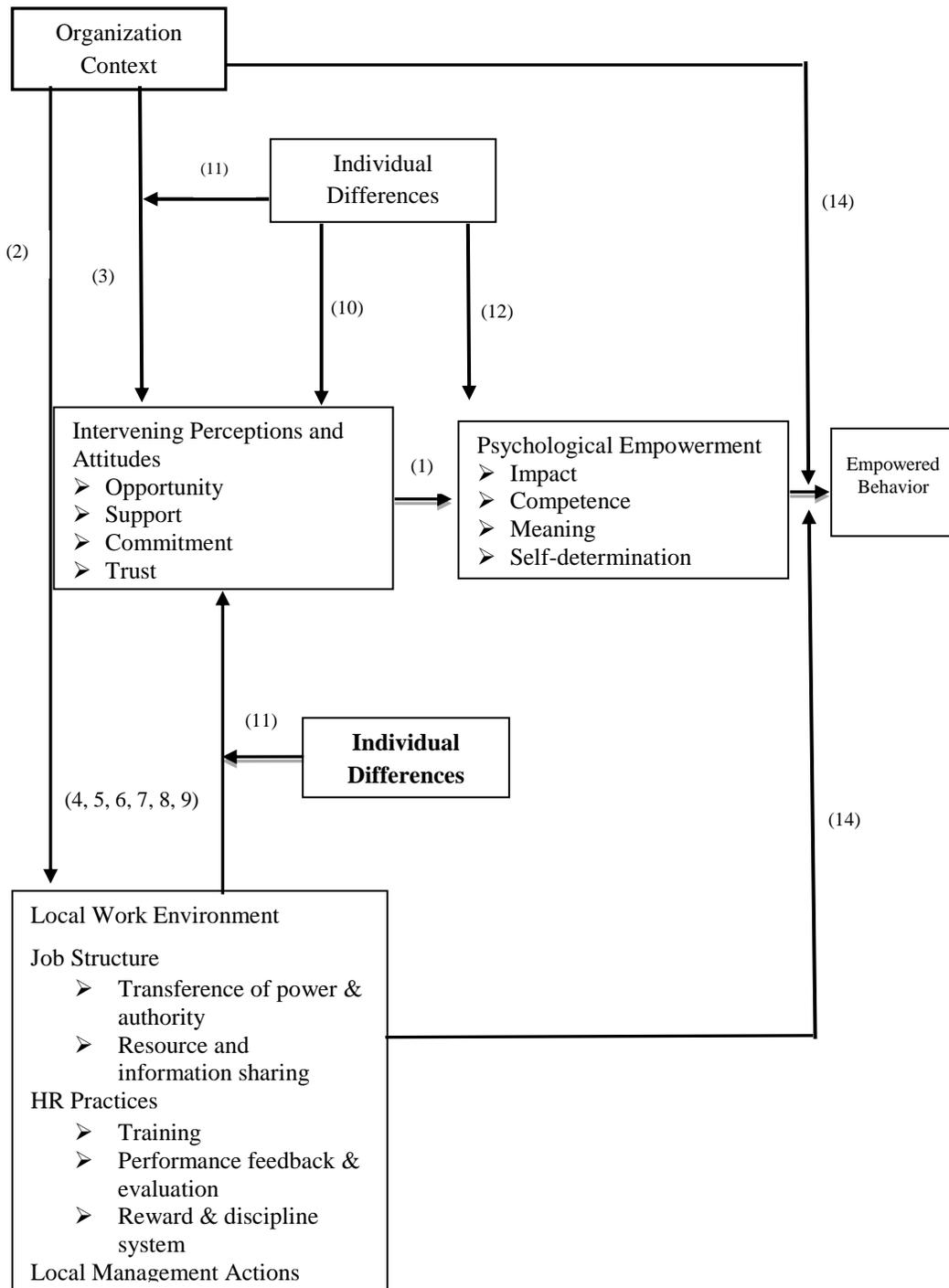


Figure 2. The process of Empowerment. Source: (Robbins et. al., 2002)

2.3 Positive Effect of Employee Empowerment

It is an unmatched benefit for an organization if they have empowered and committed workforce. Employees are treated as the life-blood of an organization and treating employees strategically is crucial need for an organization. It is widely claimed that they are essential for the effective functioning of modern organizations (Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Corsun & Enz, 1999; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999).

Employee empowerment can be a new management technique that will help management for doing the work done by the employees through maintaining high job satisfaction, organizational commitment and higher job involvement (Karia & Assari, 2006; Ongori, 2008; Mullins and Peacock, 1991).

2.3.1 Employee Empowerment and Job Satisfaction

The foremost effect of employee empowerment is, it brings job satisfaction among the employees and job satisfaction is the root cause for better performance of the employees. If the employees are satisfied, the management has nothing to worry for the output. There are some factors those affect job satisfaction i.e. employment status (permanent or temporary), employment duration, establishment location, work content, position of employment, opportunities for development, work routine, wages, opportunities for promotion, managerial styles, relations with colleagues, benefits, security of job, physical conditions, shifts, job-family balance, support of the organization, participative decision-making, organizational culture and climate, job orientation, employee empowerment, adaptation, as well as such demographic factors (Arvey et al., 1989; Ezzedeen, 2003; Griffin, 2001; Gu and Siu, 2009; Gunlu et al., 2010; Oshagbemi, 2000; Ryu et al., 2010; Spector, 1997; Tepeci and Bartlett, 2002). Another research of Pelit, E., Öztürk, Y., & Arslantürk, Y. (2011) found out that if psychological and behavioral empowerment are taken as a whole it will have a significant impact on job satisfaction of the employees. And it is believed that there is a positive effect of employee empowerment on service quality and job satisfaction (Aryee and Chen, 2006; Kuo et al., 2008; Wang and Lee, 2009; He et al. 2010). Few researchers have also mentioned how job satisfaction takes place i.e. Yoon et al., 2001 and Babin and Boles, (1996) narrates that job satisfaction comes through behavioral empowerment, convenient communications, an atmosphere of trust, and motivational tools provided by employers. Empowerment bring job satisfaction for not only as individuals but in teams too (Kirkman and Rosen, 1999). Empowerment also removes job strain (Spreitzer et al., 1997) and thus improve job satisfaction. Sharing of decision making power by the managers with employees which are one of the means of empowerment can help to enhance performance and job satisfaction (Cotton, 1993; Miller and Monge, 1986). Studies is different on different professions also shown that empowerment factors significantly influence job satisfaction (Jun & Lee, 2000; Geralis and Terziovski's 2003).

2.3.2 Employee Empowerment and Organizational Commitment and Less Turn-Over

Employee empowerment initiatives also have a crucial effect on increment of the organizational commitment. It is reported that empowered employees represent higher

levels of organizational commitment (Avolio, et al. 2004;). As empowerment increases employees job satisfaction, the empowered employees has less propensity to turn over (Sparrowe, 1994; Koberg et al., 1999).

2.3.3 Employee Empowerment and Employee Performance

Optimum performance is the key expectation from the employees. The performance of the employees is greatly influenced by the empowerment. Empowerment is also related to positive work performance – more specifically, effectiveness of managers and employees (Spreitzer, 1995; Spreitzer et al., 1997), employee productivity (Koberg, et al., 1999), and performance of the new employees (Chen and Klimoski, 2003). Jacqueline (2014) stated that people who are empowered try to perform exceptionally through using their skills and knowledge. Saifullah et.al. (2015) also added that Empowerment is an effective strategy that can be adopted by the manager to improve the performance of the employees as if an employee is empowered, he will be more efficient in performing his tasks.

3. Result and Findings

This is a review-based article. This article has two focuses as follows:

3.1 Empowering

Empowering involves 7 ways and two processes. All the ways are influenced by both processes.

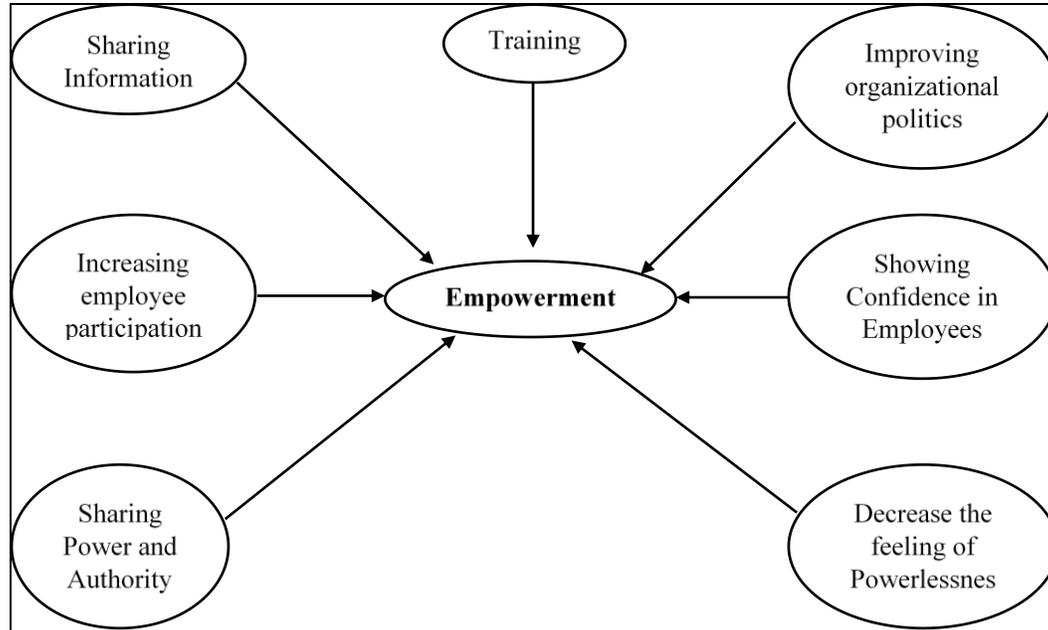


Figure 3: Influence of the Empowerment Process on the Different ways of Empowerment.
 Source: (Conger and Kunango, 1988)

3.2 Effect of Empowerment

Employee empowerment has an impact on the overall organization, but specifically they can be as follows:

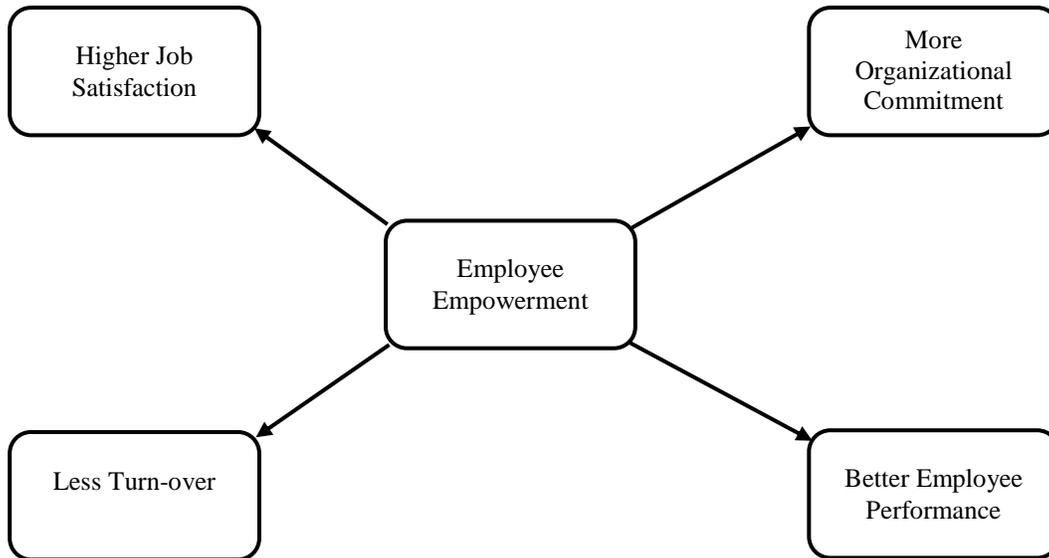


Figure 4: Positive Effect of Employee Empowerment. Source: Authors Derived

4. Discussion

The central objective of this study is to accumulate the knowledge of employee empowerment specially the ways and processes of empowering the employees and also identify the positive results of it. This article will have similar importance to the general readers and the management practitioners. The readers will have the opportunity to learn about empowering procedures and its impact in a single paper and the managers will get the theoretical framework of empowerment practices. So that they can have the opportunity to do this in a different manner, if needed. Empowerment can be done in 7 ways i.e. increasing employee participation, providing training, improving organizational politics, showing confidence in employees, sharing of information, sharing of power and authority, decrease the feeling of powerlessness. It can also be done using any of the two processes i.e. The empowerment process prescribed by Conger and Kunango, 1988 and by Robbins et. al. 2002. These ways can be incorporated in both the processes. There are some positive effects of empowering the employees i.e. increase of job satisfaction, improvement of performance and organizational commitment and less turn over. All these effects, ways and processes were found and extracted out from different research findings. One of the major limitation of this paper is that, being a completely literature based article, it is less practically exposed. But this study will open new opportunities for

further research i.e. the researchers can do an action research on the applicability of those ways and processes of empowering in their own country in different sector and they can also analyze the outcomes.

5. Conclusion

Empowering employees is an emerging management technique. Now-a-days managers of different multinational and local organization are commonly using this technique. It is nothing but giving employees few authorities and some decision making power and eliminating the factors which may create the feeling of powerlessness among employees. There are some ways and processes of empowering the employees that can be utilized by the managers. The ultimate effect of empowering employees is that it will create a friendly working environment and will thus build a motivated and effective, efficient and devoted workforce which will affect the overall organizational performance. The applicability of the processes and the ways of empowering is yet questionable, as it is a review article. The outcomes are showed here is the output of the other researches. These outcome and findings may vary across countries, cultures and organizations.

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