

DYNAMICS OF EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT ON ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE AT FOOD RETAIL OUTLETS: A CASE STUDY OF FOOD RETAIL OUTLETS IN ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, the food retail outlets in Zimbabwe were characterised by signs of distress, scaling down operations and closure of some shops, even though they had strategies in place employee empowerment was neglected, and treated as an after-thought despite strategic planning. This study evaluated the effectiveness of employee empowerment in the food retail outlets in Zimbabwe. The research involved identifying key success and failure factors on employee empowerment and established the relationship between empowerment and organizational performance. A positivism approach was used which emphasized the independency of the researchers as observers. Causal research design was employed. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used as research instruments for data collection. The data collected was analysed using SPSS descriptive data analysis. The study discovered the existence of many barriers to employee empowerment and these ultimately impeded organizational performance.

The critical theory paradigm guided this study because the intention was to change and transform employee practices by gaining insights on ways that influence employee empowerment. The researcher also used the pragmatism philosophy in his study and a qualitative study was employed where interviews, focus group discussions, documents and questionnaires were used. In this study eighty (80) employees and fifty (50) customers formed the convenient sample of study. Sixty (60) managers were purposively selected to participate

[Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Review \(AJMRR\)](#)

ISSN 2582 8088

Volume 2 Issue 3 [June - July 2021]

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in the study. From the findings it was low employee morale leads to high labour turnover in search of better working conditions. It was also deduced from the findings that job satisfaction does not only emanate from monetary incentives. It was also deduced from the research that employees who are not empowered have the following attributes. The research findings also portrays that empowerment develops an individual's knowledge so that he or she takes a broader and more proactive approach to the job and more ways of doing the job. The research experienced limitations in terms of time and threat to confidentiality but their effects were countered through control measures developed by the researcher. The study recommends that Retail Outlets Shops should set up training and development centres that will lead in the development of a culture that values employee empowerment techniques will professionalize these outlets. The researcher also recommends that management should ensure recruitment of personnel with professional qualifications than students who have just graduated from high school.

Keywords: 1.Empowerment 2. Training 3.Development.4 Pragmatism 5.Philosophy 6.Theory 7 Paradigm

1 INTRODUCTION

Human resources is the lynchpin of any organisation, either non profit or profit oriented. Without people, an organisation cannot exit. Although many retail outlets are empowering their employees, there is high level of churning rate. The employees though empowered they are faced with a lot of problem in decision making, due to continues use of multi-currency. The use of multi-currency which was in force since February 2009, was recently barred by the government through Statutory Instrument 142 Of 2019. This research is aimed at revealing the extent to which employee empowerment has impacted on service quality at food retail outlets. This research will advance knowledge and increase practice like any other research work (Graziano and Raulin, 2008). Employees in food retailing shops like Spar, TM are constantly faced with situations where there are not empowered enough to make decisions that would allow them to complete a transaction when serving a client without referring some aspects of detail of the transaction to their superiors. The research is important for it can be used by other players in the food retailing shops to improve service quality. At the same time the researcher

whilst undertaking this research benefited a lot as he gained some important skills in terms of research skills. The research is also important for it is going to be used by other readers in their preparation for other research techniques. The research on the other extreme is also going to assist organizations in their service delivery. The fundamental logic of the author's work is to bring to students a sense of direction in the implementation of inquiry methods that value new ways of knowing. It is also important to make every employee feel recognised at the workplace and by this research develop a sense of pride of satisfaction in their work. The point therefore to be made is to consider how seriously food-retailing shops are utilizing their resources in order to improve organizational performance. The research therefore sought to determine the importance of employee empowerment in an organization to improve service quality delivery in food retailing shops.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Many organisations often find themselves in ruckus and topsy-turvy positions due to dynamic and unpredictable operating environment. As such many fail due to inconsistency in empowerment. In general parlance empowerment is a set of measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self determination in people and communities in order to enable them to represent their interest in a responsible and self determination way, acting on their own authority. Many schools of thought defined empowerment but one of the universally accepted definition of the subject is According to Bloom (2019) who stipulates that "Empowerment is a management strategy that aims to give employees the tools and resources necessary to make confident decisions at the workplace. In essence, it seems the self motivation was an essential part of empowerment, not in any egotistical sense, but rather in terms of self control and self participation. This research paper therefore intends to evaluate employee empowerment on performance in the food retail outlets.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In an organisation, empowerment means that each staff member is responsible for creating that organization's culture. The term empowerment has different meanings in different

sociocultural and political contexts, and does not translate easily into all languages. The Webster dictionary (2010) defines the word empower as “to give power or authority to, to give ability to, enable, permit”. These definitions assumes the act of power being given to someone be someone else. An exploration of local terms associated with empowerment around the world always leads to lively discussion. These terms include self-strength, control, self-power, self-reliance, own choice, life of dignity in accordance with one’s values, capable of fighting for one’s rights, independence, own decision making, being free, awakening, and capability—to mention only a few. These definitions are embedded in local value and belief systems. Empowerment is of intrinsic value; it also has instrumental value. There aren’t many motivating forces more potent than giving your staff an opportunity to exercise and express their idealism(Mullin,2015:320) Various environmental problems have been experienced in food retailing shops in Zimbabwe such as severe shortage of foreign currency on the local market. There are various forms of employee empowerment. *Wilson as cited in Mullin (2015)* points out that self-directed teams feature high in the list of most popular management tools in a study by the Institute of Management with Bain & Company. ‘Once people are fully committed to team working and enthusiastic about getting on with it, training can be a rewarding experience for everyone involved and also great fun. According to Wall and Wood (2015) empowerment makes greater use of the knowledge, skills and abilities of the workforce, it encourages teamwork and if there is meaningful participation it can aid to successful implementation of change programmes. Empowerment can be one of the most effective tools in raising both productivity and profit. Most retail outlet shops prefer that popular slogan “The customer is always right” or “The customer is the king” at the detriment of employee empowerment. Most business emphasis customer satisfaction as one of their priority, inevitably placing employees in inequitable position in relation to their customers (Han, Bonn and Cho, 2016).Lack of employee empowerment may lead to customer incivility including insulting comments, verbal attacks, expressing anger towards employees and using condescending behaviour. This customer incivility has become an ubiquitous phenomenon in various sectors including retail outlets, hotels and restaurants(Han and Lee et al 2016)According to Jack Welch (2010) the management guru energizing others is just about eloquence in speeches but it takes a deep knowledge of your business and strong persuasion skills to make a case that will galvanize others. Empowerment can be used as a ploy or game

plan to lure employees to remain attached to the organisation. According to Rowden and Conine (2005), trained employees can easily satisfy their customers. Resultantly, that customer satisfaction will aid in building a relationship that will also satisfy the employees from within, thereby increasing retention. Tsai, Yen, Huang and Huang (2007), suggests that employees who learn as a result of training programs show a greater level of job satisfaction which will improve their chances of remaining on the job along with increased performance, which will help to achieve organizational goals. Walker et al (2016) posits that employees who are not empowered are also likely to have incivility which is regarded as a form of service failure that undermines the service quality and the organisation's reputation. A non empowered work force may also lead to customer, employee turnover and revenue losses (Porath and Pearson, 2013).

Luthans (2010) posits that empowerment can be viewed as the sharing of social power in an organisation. Individual employees share goals and combine efforts to reach those goals. This fosters creativity and a stronger stake in the organisation's outcomes and future.

Although employees are empowered to make decisions they believe will benefit the organisation, they must be held accountable and responsible for results than continue to consult on daily basis. According to Robbins and Coulter (2009) this accountability is not intended to punish mistakes or to generate immediate, short-term results. Instead, the intent is to ensure that the employees are giving their best effort, working toward agreed upon goals, and behaving responsibly toward each other. When these behaviours are exhibited, management is able to continue empowering employees to proceed at their own pace and in their own ways.

When employees are empowered to make decisions they believe will benefit the organisations, they must also be held accountable and responsible for results. This accountability is not intended to punish mistakes or to generate immediate, short term results. Empowering employees should raise the level of trust n organisation. According to Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) refers to altruistic calling and stewardship as important in employee empowerment. According to the authors "altruistic calling describes a leader's deep-rooted desire to make a positive difference in others' lives. Because the ultimate goal is to serve, leaders high in altruistic calling will put other's interests ahead of their own and will diligently work to meet followers' needs. Such selflessness can be translated into an attitude of humble service

4. HYPOTHESIS OF STUDY

A Hypothesis is tentative answer or ‘intelligent guesses or ‘probable answer’ to the research question or sub problems (Dolgopolovas et al,2019). Therefore, this research is based on the following hypothesis

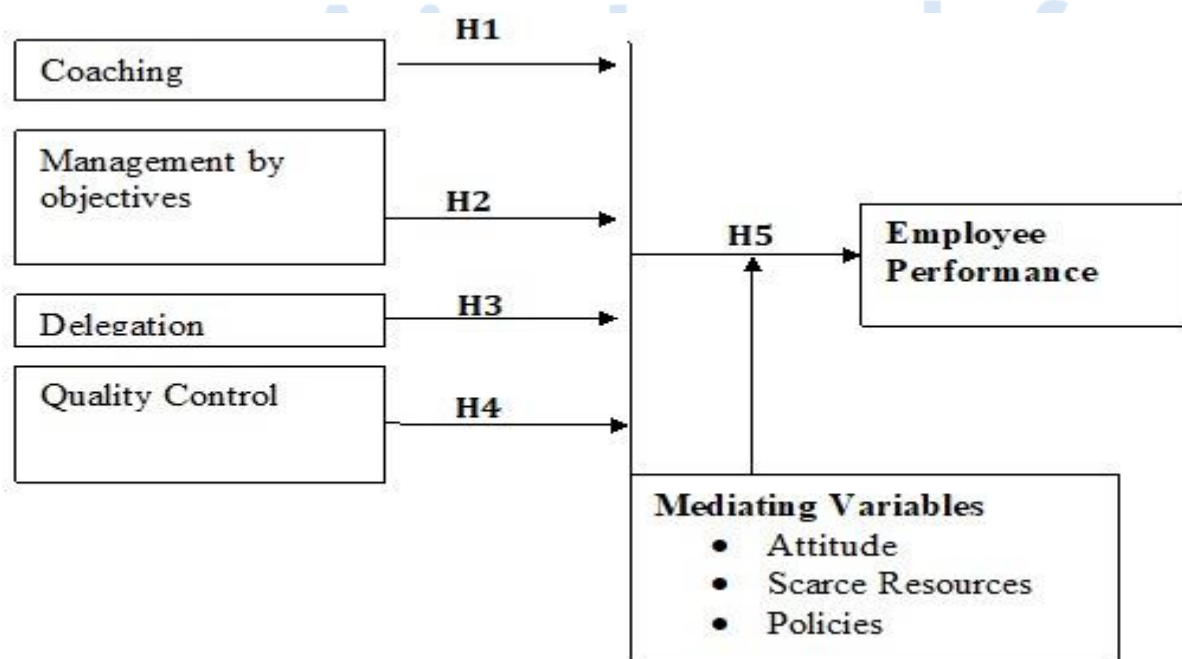
H1: Coaching positively leads to empowerment of employees

H2: Management by objectives positively leads to employee empowerment

H3: Quality Controls positively leads to employee empowerment

H4: Delegation positively leads to employee empowerment

Conceptual Framework

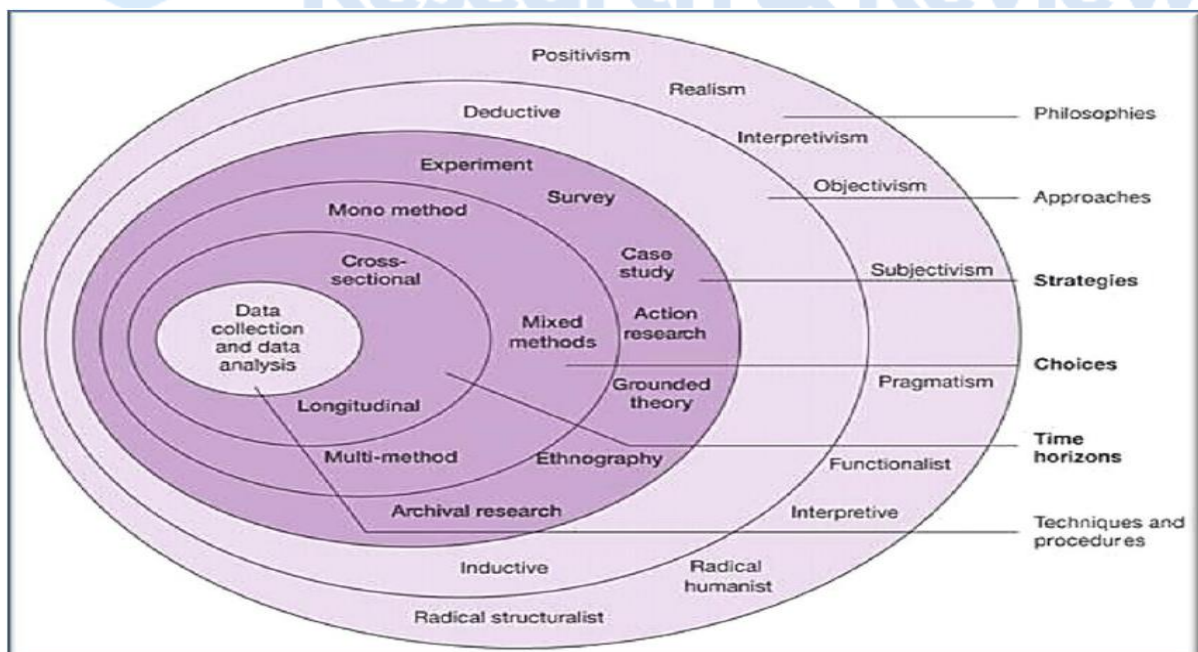


5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research will use questionnaires as data collections and other instruments for his research. The research philosophy to be adopted is illustrated in the research onion below.

5.1 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

In Order to articulate on the research philosophy adopted by the researcher it is of paramount importance to illustrate the research onion. The research was undertaken based on the pragmatism philosophy. . Saunders and Lewis (2012) define a pragmatic research philosophy as one which is guided by the research questions and research objectives. Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. It may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically. In it we study the various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying his research problem along with the logic behind them. It is necessary for the researcher to know not only the research methods/techniques. The research instruments to be used are questionnaires, interviews and observation guides.



6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

FIG 1.1 : AN OVERVIEW OF RESPONDENTS

Age Range	Customer Number	Customer Percentage	Employee Number	Employee Percentage
Below 20	6	7.5 %	0	0
20-29	22	27.5%	9	18%
30-39	30	37.5%	28	56%
40-49	15	18.75%	8	16%
50-59	5	6.25%	4	8%
60and above	2	22.55	1	2%
Total	80	100%	50	100%

From the table above the researcher found out that there were a small number of customers below the age of 20 since most are not employed and they rely from other family members for financial support. Employees with much experience were those between the age of 30-39 and 56 % of the employees were of this age group. Employees of 60 and above were only 2% due to the tiresome work in food retailing shops most employees are not able continue with work after this age.

Gender of Respondents

Table 1.2 Gender of Respondents

Gender	Employee Number	Employee Percentage
Female	60	75%

Male	20	25%
Total	80	100 %

Of the 80 employees who responded 75 were female and 5 were male. Observations which were done by the researcher show that most employees were female. The reason was that catering industry is female dominated hence the number of females.

Nature of employee complaints

FIG 1.3: Areas of employee complaints

Response Item	Managers		Employees	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1.Poor Remuneration	15	25%	60	75%
2. No Protective clothing	25	42%	70	88%
3. Long Working Hours	12	20%	75	94%
4. Shortage of tools of work	70	88 %	14	23%
5.lack of delegation	10	17%	62	78%
6.Poor Communication	12	20%	50	63%
Total	-	-	-	-

According to the figure 1.3 above 75% of the employees agreed that lack of empowerment was mainly due to unresolved issues of remuneration. Many employees argued that the remuneration was too small for them to work on their own and produce good results. At the same note 25% of managers concurred with the employee's assumptions of lack of remuneration. Figure 1.3 also showed that most food retailing shops do not provide protective

clothing that motivates employees. Statistics showed that 88% of the interviewed employees had a strong belief that no protective clothing at food retailing shops caused a decrease in performance in employees. On the same note 42% of the managers agreed to this complaint by employees. Figure 1.3 also showed that employees complained about long working hours. Employees believed long working hours contributed to poor service delivery in most food retailing shops, Ninety four percent (94%) of the employees agreed that poor service delivery is due to long working hours whereas only twenty percent (20%) of managers concurred with the employee complaints. Employees also complained of shortage of tools of work. At least 88% of the managers believed poor service delivery is due to shortage of tools of work because of current economic hardships. Whereas only twenty three percent (23%) of employees agreed to the managers' notions raised above. Figure 1.3 also showed that lack of delegation leads to poor service delivery. Seventy eight percent of the employees said poor service delivery is due to lack of delegation and complained about this. Managers on the other hand seventeen percent (17%) agreed with employees' complaints whereas eighty three percent (83%) of the managers disagreed with the complaint. Lack of communication is also another complaint raised by employees. Amongst those interviewed sixty three (63%) of the employees complained bitterly about lack of communication and twenty percent (20%) of the managers agreed with the employee complaints and eighty percent (80%) of the managers disagreed with the employee notion.

Leadership activities which food retailing shop managers can use to improve employee empowerment.

FIG 1.4: Leadership activities

	Actual employee Number	Total Employee Number	Actual Employee Percentage	Total Employee Percentage
Coaching	60	80	75%	100%
Delegation	70	80	88%	100%
Quality Control	62	80	78%	100%

Empowerment	65	80	81%	100%
Management by Objectives	50	80	63%	100%
Total	-	-	-	-

❖ **Management by objectives**

The managers interviewed suggested that management by objectives should be used to appraise all the managers at all levels because it employs objective standards of measurement. The concept of Management by objectives is of paramount importance was first coined by Peter Drucker (1965) who posits that “ this is a systematic approach to setting objectives and appraising by results would lead to improved organisational performance and employee satisfaction. The basis of the system is that every manager is given a clear ideal of the results expected the appraisal is made by comparing results with targets. The interviewees said that this would help them to work towards achieving one goal that is satisfying the employee needs.

❖ **Coaching**

According to Luthans (2010) coaching supports, facilitates and develops people, guides others to improve themselves for the future. Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents said that coaching would help in improving its customer orientation culture. Coaching encourages others to think for themselves that is teaching them to fish rather than feeding them with fish. Coaching is a form of leading people to think differently. Coaching motivates those employees who have a high need of achievement as stated by McClelland in his theory of motivation. If one thinks for himself then it would mean that the employees would feel as being part and parcel of the organisation. Chances are high that if there is need for change no one would resist as they would be aware of the benefits.

❖ **Quality circles**

These are work groups, particularly those that are self directed who produce record breaking output levels and generate cost reduction methods that are of essence to the organisation as a whole (Bloom et al ,2019). Seventy eight percent (78%) of the interviewed employees suggested that quality circles would help management to have a customer oriented culture.

Quality circles are defined by Jewel (1998) as groups of six to eight employees who come together to decide on matters affecting their jobs. The interviewees said that quality circles would help management in food retailing shops to improve the processes and design as would be suggested by employees. The shop floor employees deal directly with customers thus they are the best people to tell top management on areas which need improvement.

❖ **Delegation**

Eighty eight percent (88%) of the interviewees said delegation would help management in being effective when it comes to dealing with customer queries. Nyamuda (2004) said that “Delegation is not about merely telling someone what to do. Your delegates must be able to act in your absence”

❖ **Empowerment**

Some employees said that empowerment was effective route to achieving a customer orientation. Most employees at most at food retailing shops are not empowered to make some decisions. The researcher observed that there is need for management at food retailing shops to empower their employees so that it becomes more customers oriented and efficient. Zimmerman (1984) has stated that asserting a single definition of empowerment may make attempts to achieve it formulaic or prescription-like, contradicting the very concept of empowerment. Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important.

7. CONCLUSION

The main objective of the research was to assess how food retailing shops are empowering its employees as a basis of improving service quality case. The research findings showed that there was a gap between employee expectations and the actual service offered management. The following were some of the findings by the researcher. Nature of employee complaints, working conditions that needs to be improved, Style of management practice in food outlets in Harare, Leadership activities which food retailing shop managers can use to improve employee

empowerment, compensation methods that improve employee empowerment, The required training needs or methods to improve employee empowerment.

According to Porath and Pearson (2013) concludes that empowerment is a complex process. In order to be successful it requires a clear vision, a learning environment both for management and employees, and participation and implementation tools and techniques. Lack of employee empowerment leads to burnout .According to Van Jaarsveld et al (2010) is an emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and diminished personal accomplishment. Being a tough manager may have worked well a decade ago when corporate were “Lean and mean” . The aspect of employee empowerment is of essence to organisation performance. It is the prerogative of management to see to it that the employee needs are taken on board. An organisation does not operate in vacuum employees are the panacea of organisational success. Management at large should not sugar coat errors but device means to rectify them. Food outlets in order to have a motivated workforce should adopt some of the measures highlighted above

From the information gathered by the researcher empowerment encourages innovation because employees have the authority to try out new ideas and make decisions that result in new ways of doing things. Those employees from retail outlet shops that are empowered tend to be more innovative than anyone else. They are self driven and exercise high level of punctuality and no signs of absenteeism at all. It was also established by the researcher that management at retail outlet shops must develop trust in their employees as stipulated by Matt Weinstein and Luke Barber(2012) a management consultant who helped companies build better environment for empowerment using tactics as bringing champagne to work to celebrate an employee’s greatest failure, to get rid of the negative stigma..He believed when work is fun, employees feel more relaxed and truly empowered. The researcher also concluded that management with high altruism calling practice a lot of employee empowerment and feels it is the only way to determine motivation at work

8. LIMITATIONS

There was a contrasting set of response from both employees and managers due differing status, roles and organizational ethics. There was a lot of confidentiality from both the employees and managers. Financial constraints also affected the research as it influenced the size of the sample being studied. Most questionnaires were not returned in time or not answered properly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to acknowledge the assistance rendered during my research by Dr.Martin Dandira. The Midlands State University library staff as well as my wife Rumbidzai Zhakata for the moral support and typing services. The following retail outlet shops need to be appreciated for the support offered OK Marimba Management, Ok Five Avenue and lastly Newlands TM for the unwavering support during my entire research efforts. Greatest appreciation goes to my fellow student at Chinhoyi University Of Technology for their positive comments. Employees who provided voluntary information must also be applauded.

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