

Structural & Psychological Empowerment: A Literature Review, Theory Clarifications and Strategy Building

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Abstract:

This research explored the concept of empowerment. It aimed to discuss theoretical clarifications and review its explanatory frameworks. It aimed also at highlighting ways of building strategy of structural and psychological empowerment. Therefore, a descriptive analytical approach was used in order to help with understanding contemporary dimensions and discussions of empowerment in the literature of management and organizations. However, the research underlined important issues including; empowerment is recently interpreted as organizational strategy more than an organizational concept. Furthermore, in order to have effective outcomes of this strategy, organizations should provide organizational support and constructive attitudes to support empowerment at workplace. Finally, there is a collection of challenges facing implementing empowerment at the Middle Eastern context; most notably is culture of employees, managers and decision-making process.

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يهدف البحث الى شرح الأطر الفكرية للتمكين، والعمل على اقتراح إطار عملي لاستراتيجية شاملة للتمكين. كما يهدف الى مناقشة مسببات ونتائج التمكين كاستراتيجية عمل وليس كمفهوم تنظيمي فقط. واخيراً، فإنه يسعى الى مناقشة وعرض آليات وأبعاد قياس مفهوم التمكين في الواقع العملي. لقد صمم هذا البحث وفق آليات المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، حيث يركز على وصف عناصر ومكونات ظاهرة التمكين وأنواعها، ومن ثم تحليل مسبباتها والنتائج المترتبة عن تطبيقها في الواقع العملي. بعد المناقشة والعرض المفصل للأفكار الرئيسية للبحث، توصل الى إبراز عدد من النقاط أهمها: (1) تطور مفهوم التمكين من مفهوم تنظيمي الى استراتيجية عمل متعلقة بكيفيات إدارة الموارد البشرية بالمنظمات وتوظيفها بشكل فعال. (2) إبراز أهمية الاعداد المسبق وتهيئة الظروف والمناخ البيئي المشجع والداعم لاستراتيجية التمكين. (3) وجود تحديات ثقافية عديدة متعلقة بتنفيذ هذه الاستراتيجية في المنظمات العربية التقليدية، حيث ان ثقافة المديرين والموظفين تعد من اهم تلك التحديات.

Introduction:

Employee empowerment is one of the organizational concepts that has been considered to help with achieving higher efficiency in organisations. It works through transferring freedom and self-goal making to employees in lower levels of management hierarchy. This research focuses on reviewing the literature and exploring mainstream conceptualizations of empowerment. Particularly, it discusses perspectives of empowerment, through analysing the relationships between employee empowerment and several organisational variables. It

aims to identify and discuss meanings of employee empowerment and shed the light on its important consequences on workplace, through following debates and arguments around it. Therefore, this research is divided to discuss and follow four main topics; 1) conceptual frameworks of structural and psychological empowerment, 2) outcomes of empowerment, 3) antecedents of empowerment, and 4) measurement of employee empowerment. However, although, this research is aimed at demonstrating empowerment and revise the theoretical respects of the construct, basically, it is based on giving holistic contemporary insights around empowerment.

Research objectives:

This research aims to achieve three objectives

- 1- To clarify mainstream theoretical frameworks of employee empowerment and suggest a framework of empowerment as HRM strategy.
- 2- Draw conclusions of antecedents of employee empowerment, through addressing its correlated antecedents.
- 3- Discussing techniques and tools of measuring employee empowerment, so researchers and academics would be aware of measuring and cultural issues and challenges of empowerment.

Research questions:

Based on the objectives above, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1- How mainstream literature interpreted employee empowerment?

- 2- What antecedents and outcomes are identified of employee empowerment?
- 3- How employee empowerment is been measured?
- 4- How does empowerment fit for the Middle East context?

Research contribution:

Through achieving the research objectives outlined above, this research will contribute to the literature through evaluating and re-directing theoretical frameworks of employee empowerment. Reviewing the literature is a well-known technique that helps researchers to keep updated about the reviewed topic. Thus, this research is expected to provide researchers with advanced details and theories of employee empowerment. Therefore, the contribution of this research is seen through assisting future research in the academic community to capture and assess theoretical frameworks those guiding new research regarding employee empowerment. However, management practitioners are expected to develop better understanding of empowerment strategy, as a tool for better organizational performance.

Research methodology:

The literature review is mainly a descriptive and analytical tool. Therefore, this research will adopt a descriptive analytical approach to achieve research objectives. Further, a deductive logic is used to draw conclusions from previous studies around employee empowerment. This

would be captured through evaluating secondary data published in academic journals written mainly in English.

Mainstream conceptualizations of psychological empowerment:

Empowerment is used in many fields of science like sociology, psychology, political sciences and management but, in each field, it has specific allocated meanings and interpretations. By reviewing the literature about empowerment, it is obvious that researchers have identified various definitions for empowerment, because of their different perspectives to look at empowerment (Lincoln et al., 2002; Chiang and Hsieh, 2012). There are several definitions of employee empowerment in organizational studies, as Herrenkohl et al., (1999) supported that empowerment is best seen as; sharing power with workers, redistributing authority and control, having equal responsibilities between superiors and subordinates. They added, empowerment is enlarging employees' contribution to an organisations' success and decision-making. It also contributes to employee self-motivation, which enhanced through an understanding of responsibilities and appropriate authority. This view refers to allocating extra involvement of employees to actively take part in improving organizational performance. Furthermore, Thorlakson and Robert (1996) defined empowerment as *“a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organisational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both*

formal organisational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information” (p2). This definition illuminates both individuals (psychological) and organisational (structural) aspects of empowerment.

Using employee empowerment as a term in organization studies and practices has appeared in the middle of last century. It pointed to transforming delegation of decision-making, and access to information and resources to lower levels of hierarchy (Spreitzer, 1995). Although the concept of empowerment is considered as a relatively modern concept in organization studies, Huang et al., (2006) pointed out that before 1990 empowerment were underlain different organizational constructs, such as, participative management, TQM, individual development, quality circles and strategic planning. Moreover, empowerment might be implicitly underlies with people-oriented approaches, democratic leadership and Y theory of McGregor (Wall et al., 2002; Pitts, 2005). Since 1990, large number of papers, articles and research has addressed empowerment as a construct appeared in two facets; individual and organisational facets (Huang et al., 2006). Reviewing the literature has highlighted two important approaches of studying employee empowerment. First, structural “organisational or relational” empowerment approach. This approach based on the idea that empowerment is a set of managerial practices, techniques and strategies. Hechanove et al., (2006) have explicitly explained that this approach focuses on actions taken by the organization to enforce empowerment

strategy. Therefore, was defined as “*sharing four organisational ingredients with frontline employees; A-information about organisation’s performance; B- rewards based on the organisation’s performance; C- knowledge about contributing to organisational performance; and D- the power to make decisions that influence the organisation’s performance*” (p72). This standpoint reflects three levels; giving employees the right to recommend, more job involvement and employee ownership. Thus, empowerment has been shown as a set of managerial practises. Further, Research has interpreted structural empowerment as a HRM technique that involves transferring power from upper levels to lower levels within the organisation. Indorsing this interpretation, Geralis and Terziovski (2003) have defined empowerment as “*involving delegation of responsibilities from management to employees, non-hierarchical forms of work organisation and sharing information between and within different levels of the organisation*” (p 46). In addition, Val and Lloyd (2003) maintained that managers and academics could use empowerment and participation with the same meaning. They added that because of the multi-facet nature of empowerment, it is difficult to measure the degree of empowerment at workplace. They elucidated that empowerment encompasses; employee involvement and commitment. Therefore, they saw empowerment as “*involvement of employee in the decision-making process, inviting the members of the organisation to think strategically and to be personally*

responsible for the quality of their tasks, animating, favouring and rewarding employees for behaving always in a way they consider more suitable to satisfy customers and to improve the organisation's functioning" (p102).

Second approach is the psychological "motivational" approach. Contrary with the first approach, this approach focuses on the psychological state of subordinates which results from empowerment implementations and concerns with the empowerment as a cognition state of individual (Wall et al., 2002; Huang et al., 2006; Chi Keung Chan et al., 2010). This approach is based on perceptions and attitudes of individuals towards their work and roles. From this standpoint, empowerment is seen as an individual state of mind, where employees could perceive their selves as empowered staff. One significant definition of empowerment introduced by Spreitzer (1995). She defined empowerment from a psychological perspective as "*a motivational construct manifested in four cognitions; meaning, competence, self-determination and impact, all reflect an active orientation to a workplace*" (p1443). In this sense, psychological empowerment is a four-dimensional construct. These dimensions reflect a good understanding for empowerment as a set of cognitions supported by work environment (Spreitzer, 1995). In this sense, psychological empowerment is defined as a continuous variable reflects feeling empowered, (Houghton et al., 2005; Namasivayam et al., 2014).

Therefore, researchers affirmed that when employees are autonomous and self-sufficient to accomplish objectives, they are empowered. Thus, being empowered involves delegation, having individual responsibilities, sharing decision-making and feeling of self-efficacy (Thorlakson and Robert, 1996; Herrenkohl et al., 1999; Ritter et al., 2014).

Moreover, Matthews (2003) maintained that studies of empowerment should indicate the type of empowerment they are studying. They stated that, while structural empowerment, or top-down process of empowerment, occurs when managers- within the hierarchy- share power with lower levels in the same hierarchy, the psychological empowerment focuses on perceptions of workers of empowerment. Therefore, empowered employee is employee who thinks that he is empowered. According to Koberg et al., (1999) empowerment might be studied using both perspectives; *“A-The structural construct which is individual’s power and control relative to others, sharing power, transmission power, and control from individual. B- The psychological construct is individual’s cognitions and perceptions that constitute feelings of behavioural and psychological investment in work”* (p72). Another study outlined that a good definition for empowerment should be operational and match practical facts of empowerment, thus empowerment is *“a set of dimensions that characterize an environment’s interaction with persons in it, so as to encourage their initiative to improve process and to take action”* (Herrenkohl et al., 1999, p375).

This definition includes two aspects; employees' actions, organisations' support for these actions, which reflects an empirical definition to empowerment and comprising structural and psychological perspectives. Recently, researchers have introduced empowerment as a process whereby individuals feel confident that they can perform and successfully execute a certain course of action (Suominen et al., 2007). However, according to Pitts (2005) empowerment is seen as a multi-dimensional concept created from several factors including; power, decision-making, information, autonomy, initiative, knowledge and responsibility. In addition, applying empowerment strategy requires reshaping management roles, effective rewarding system, new job design and supportive organisational environment (Bhatnagar, 2005). Practices of empowerment aim to move delegation and decision-making responsibilities to the lower levels of the hierarchy, and encouraging high involvement and making job-related decisions (Wall et al., 2002).

Research has highlighted that empowerment points to releasing existing skills, power and knowledge of employees through self-management, trust and directing them to achieve organisational goals (Melhem, 2004). Wall et al., (2002) outlined two types of empowerment; A- *Role empowerment*; includes widening subordinates' responsibilities for scheduling their jobs, task allocation, selection and training of staff. B- *Core task empowerment*; includes delegating decision-making authority to employees, and giving job-related autonomy. Additionally,

Silver et al., (2006) interpreted empowerment as a strategy by defining it as “*a compelling leadership strategy that involves sharing control with employees to allow decisions to be made and actions to be taken at the lowest level in the organisation that is appropriate*” (p48). They have demonstrated that empowerment is associated with three main management techniques:

1- Information sharing: to provide employees with information about significant issues in the organisation, such as, problems, opportunities, financial situation, strategies and plans to achieve the organisational goals.

2- Developing clear boundaries: to share a clear understanding of the organisation’s goals, policies and processes so that might enable them to take autonomous actions.

3- Usage of self-managed teams: to utilise teamworks at all management levels, in which teams take responsibilities of supervisors and managers.

Supporting the conceptualisations of empowerment as management strategy, research has highly accepted empowerment as a model opposite to the model of *command-and-control*, because it is freeing individuals from rigorous, rules, instructions, and orders to introduce responsibility for what the individual’s decisions, notions and behaviours (Melhem, 2004). Research reviewing empowerment-related literature addressed that empowerment literature has been discussed in six topics; leadership, job enrichment, job autonomy, internal

organisation power and control, team cooperation and employee participation. Research concluded that empowerment is a multi-dimensions construct, which will not happen naturally in organisations, where individuals and leaders are those who could make empowerment strategy. In this sense, managers are responsible on creating and supporting commensurate environment of empowerment, while employees should choose to be empowered or not. Furthermore, this research has indicated that empowerment literature in general focuses on; leadership, team and collaborative work, personal responsibilities, decentralised structure and contingent reward systems (Honold, 1997; Petter et al., 2002; Matthews et al., 2003; Ritter et al., 2014).

To sum up, several definitions of empowerment have been produced, and each one is based on researcher' perspective. Turning to summarising mainstream theories of empowerment, three points could be emphasized:

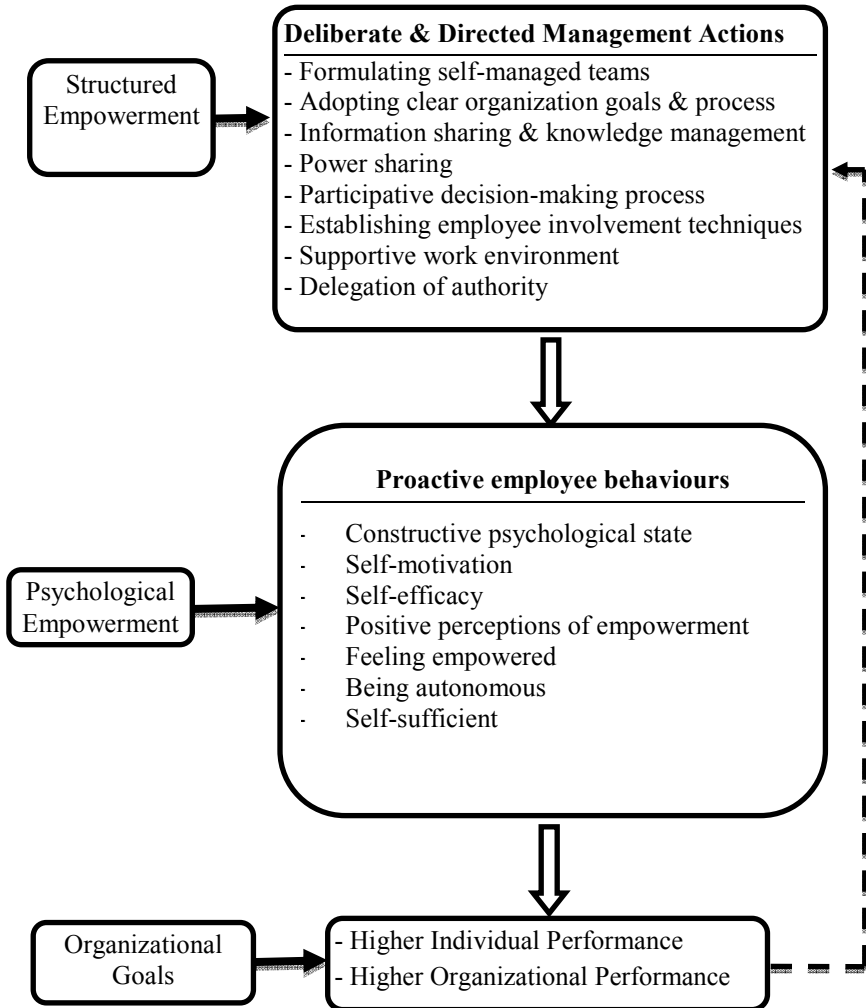
i- Various definitions have taken into an account that empowerment is a *cognitive state*, which makes the employee feels that he/she is empowered, these definitions underlie the psychological empowerment perspective.

ii- As shown earlier there are some definitions stressed a holistic perspective of empowerment by referring to empowerment as delegations process, providing supportive environment and destructive attitudes.

iii- Aligning with the organisational perspective, different research interpreted empowerment as a HRM strategy aiming towards higher performance and effective achievement of organizational goals.

However, the majority of literature is concerned with one or few dimensions of employee empowerment, these dimensions usually based on one of empowerment perspectives or, in some cases, with both perspectives. Nevertheless, to fully answer the first research question, figure (1) concludes and suggest a theoretical framework of empowerment as follows:

Figure (1) a holistic procedural framework of empowerment strategy



Outcomes of employee empowerment:

Research has identified several positive consequences of psychological empowerment on employees due to global competition and organisational change. Therefore, organisations are in need to skilful, talented, qualified and empowered workforce to accomplish two goals: A- Effectiveness, through; making a positive influences on employees' jobs and work environment, raises concentration, initiatives and resiliency, achieving high commitment and performance, dealing with difficult situations and high goal-expectations. Consequently, higher effectiveness could be achieved. B- Innovative behaviour, which stems from autonomy, less constrained actions, self-efficacy, change and flexibility (Spreitzer, 1995). Furthermore, Koberg et al., (1999) supported that empowerment has influences over managerial and organisational effectiveness. It is highly recommended to adopt empowerment strategy in changing environments and making constructive relationships between managers and their subordinates. Besides, it has influences on various organisational variables. Such as; turnover, psychological strain, job satisfaction, job burning and absenteeism (Islam et al., 2016; Jaiswal and Dhar, 2016).

On the other hand, research has pointed out that lower empowerment might lead to: poor communication, centralisation, role conflict, non-contingent reward systems, and role ambiguity. Whilst, appropriate empowerment has significant effect on job-related variables, such as

motivation, job stress, job involvement and organisational commitment (Honold, 1997), recent research noticed that high performance organisations have similar characteristics with empowering organisations at the following attributes: multi-skilling, cross training, self-directing work team, systems of learning and developing, job enrichment, innovative plans and TQM. In addition, empowerment has been seen to foster employees to release; implicit knowledge, flexibility, initiatives and commitment, as these factors are required to achieve organisational goals. In addition, empowerment is thought to have connections with downsizing, delayering and re-engineering (Wall et al., 2002)

Additionally, research has supported the positive correlation between empowerment and both job satisfaction and job performance (Hechanove et al., 2006). Empowerment is also found to lead to higher problem-solving skills, increase communications between unites, more energetic and enthusiastic employees, harder, more cooperative and performance oriented employees (Silver et al., 2006; Ugwu et al., 2014). In addition, there are some desirable behavioural outcomes of empowerment, including; innovation, higher self and organizational effectiveness and higher affective commitment (Bhatnagar, 2005; Chiang and Hsieh, 2012; Jha, 2014). Research added that empowerment enables employees to take quick changes, which are appropriate to the costumer's requirements. Therefore, organisations will be able to move

swiftly with positive changes of the external environment (Lashley, 1999; Meyerson and Kline, 2008). Empowered employees have enhanced concentration, creativity and resiliency. They are more likely to show greater trust in their superiors (Zhu et al., 2004; Meng, and Guo, 2016).

Due to the nature of empowerment, researchers have asserts that empowerment is not sufficient to achieve efficiency and high employee performance. Because, empowerment is not appropriate to practice in some situations, and it contradicts other organisational concepts. Therefore, it is not suitable as a universal concept to arise organisational effectiveness (Wall et al., 2002). Furthermore, research pointed out that empowerment is unworkable, inefficient way of controlling and strong leadership is more effective than empowerment to achieve organisational goals. However, research argues that applying empowerment requires organisational change before producing positive results, thus, change could be the main reason beyond achieving organizational performance, not empowerment. Further, Honold (1997) maintained that managers usually apply empowerment in order to exploit individuals' minds and hands without realistic compensations. Besides, empowerment might mean too much work for individuals and some of them might not like to be empowered (Petter et al., 2002)

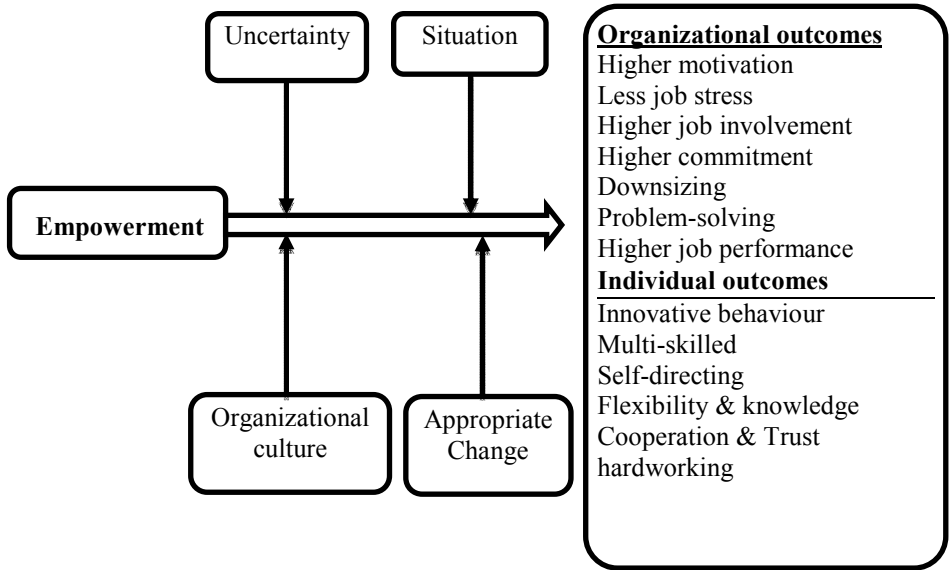
According to Thorlakson and Robert (1996), there are several constraints on applying empowerment, such as; A- *peer-group pressure*,

which might diminish cooperation and participation between employees; B- *managerial coercion*, which might influence consequences of employees; C- *managerial retribution*, which represents managers' actions against employee involvement; D- *re-entry*, one of the results of termination of empowerment is dissatisfaction and less enthusiastic; E- *lack of shared vision*, this might lead to unfavourable results.

A contingent point of view reaffirmed that different situations require different techniques. Therefore, needs for theory and practice of empowerment depends on circumstances, where some of them might not require such strategy. For instant, Wall et al., (2002) conducted a study based on contingent perspective of empowerment. They argued that empowerment depends on the degree of operational uncertainty. They demonstrated that effects of empowerment on performance depend on the degree of uncertainty. In other words, empowerment will be efficient in some circumstances, in which the degree of uncertainty is high and if the degree of uncertainty is low empowerment will not be efficient or motivating factor. Furthermore, Edwards and Collinson (2002) explained that in some situations empowerment is seen as "*a new iron cage*" for employee, in particular, when organisations do not consider enough preparation to the organisational culture and environment.

However, by now a clear conclusion of mainstream theories of outcomes of empowerment could be drawn, as figure (2) displays outcomes of empowerment;

Figure (2) outcomes of empowerment and mediating factors



Antecedents of employee empowerment:

Empowerment, as an organizational and HRM strategy, needs serious and solid efforts before it could be applied at workplace. These efforts include; management training and development and providing organisational supportive environment. Further, research has emphasized that in order to successfully implement empowerment strategy, the following actions need to be considered: adopting a holistic approach of leadership, not just a single process of empowerment, effective circling of employee feedback, focusing on the right level of management to lead and control empowerment implementations (Silver et al., 2006; Meng, and Guo, 2016). As it was highlighted in the discussion above, structural

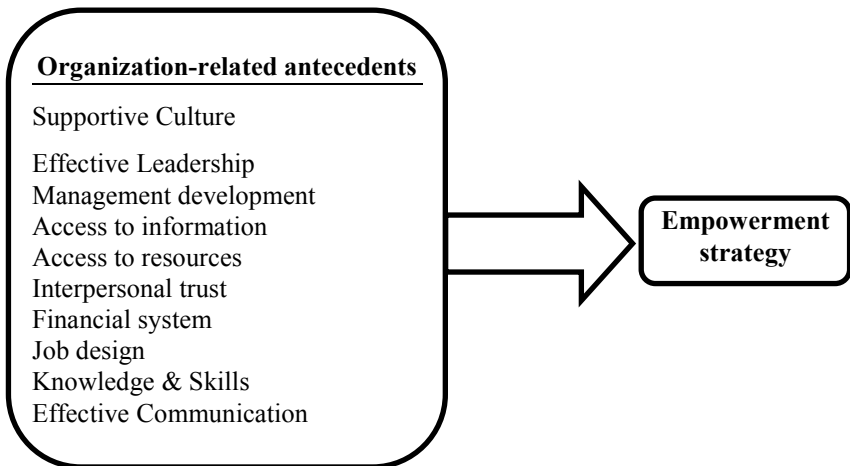
empowerment has been recognised as a major antecedent for employees to feel empowered (psychological). In other words, managers should implement changes in the organisational environment before implementing empowerment. However, change such as, access to information, access to resources and organisational culture, is seen as vital for implementing effective empowerment (Bhatnagar, 2005; Lana and Chong, 2014).

Before empowering employees, research has stressed that organisations should prepare three main respects; *supportive culture*, *inspirational leadership* and *interpersonal trust* to achieve their organisational goals (Petter et al., 2002). Further, Zhu et al., (2004) pointed out that empowerment should be preceded by adjustments to some organisational factors; supervision style, financial systems and job characteristics. According to Melhem (2004), applying empowerment in organisations requires; first, *more knowledge & expertise*; which means provide employees the necessary knowledge and skills to deal with issues that confront them and help with decision-making. Second, *effective communications*; this antecedent is crucial for information sharing, because to share information employees need to make communications with all relative respects in the organisation and sharing information about financial systems, strategies and operational measures. Third, *expressing trust*; this means that leaders should trust their employees by sharing power with them, show confidence in employees,

giving the necessary resources and tolerate their opinions. Fourth, *rewarding performance* refers to focusing on rewarding employee’s performance and relay on employee’s efforts and behaviours. This sort of rewarding is vital to reduce risks of self-interested behaviour and for fostering employees to involve in problem solving. In addition, researchers have stressed that implementing empowerment reflects the need for making a huge work redesign, employee’s roles, responsibilities and job requirements (Wall et al., 2002).

Even though, research has taken fast steps to test antecedents of empowerment strategy, recent research still wondering about what may help with adopting appropriate empowerment strategy (Chiang and Hsieh, 2012; Namasivayam et al., 2014). However, figure (3) portrays antecedents of effective empowerment strategy.

Figure (3) antecedents of effective empowerment strategy



Measuring employee empowerment:

Although, there are considerable amount of studies about empowerment “psychological or structured”, few measurements have been designed. However, that most used measurement is that of Spreitzer’s scale (1995). This measure based on four dimensions for psychological empowerment: A- *Meaning*; which refers to value matching of work with the set of beliefs and values of the individual. B- *Competence or Self-Efficacy*; refers to the belief and capability of the employee to perform his/her job skilfully. C- *Self-determination*; refers to the ability of an individual to have a choice to control and make decisions. D- *Impact*; refers to the individual’s ability to influence the organisational outcomes. For example, Hechanove et al., (2006) have developed a questionnaire to measure the relationship between psychological empowerment, job satisfaction and performance. Moreover, Huang et al., (2006) have used the same scale to investigate the impact of participative behaviours on psychological empowerment and organisational commitment. On the other hand, Matthews et al., (2003) have introduced another important measurement. This measurement focused on the organisational “*macro environment*”, suggesting that the most effective way to measure empowerment is to look at both psychological and structured perspectives, and maintained three dimensions for empowerment: A- *Dynamic Structural Framework (DSF)*; this dimension represents the idea that empowerment should be

applied in a dynamic environment. B- *Control Workplace Decisions* (CWD); in which employees and teams should have control and they can make their decisions. C- *Fluidity in information sharing* (FIS); all information should be available for individuals in the organisation.

A comparative study has conducted on two types of organisations, for-profit and non-for-profit organisations, using a survey instrument called “*Empowerment Barometer*” with 30 items to measure the organisational empowerment within three dimensions; *information sharing, clear boundaries* and *self-managed teams*. In this study, researchers have made several additional qualitative interviews and observations to understand exactly how the organisational climate influences employee empowerment (Silver et al., 2006; Jha, 2014). In the service sector, a study on empowerment indicated to examine the necessary antecedents of empowerment used a 12- item scale designed for service context. This scale considered three dimensions: *responsiveness, control* and *discretion*. Other research analysed the relationship between empowerment practices and services quality outcomes, used a survey instrument to collect quantitative data about four dimensions: *employee autonomy, access to information* and *resources* and *involvement practices* (Geralis and Terziovski, 2003; Meyerson and Kline, 2008).

However, Petter et al., (2002) addressed the need for qualitative studies on empowerment. They explained that, because of the divergent

nature of empowerment, it is difficult to consider only one definition of empowerment to mean the same thing by everybody. Therefore, they argued and maintained the idea of conducting qualitative studies of empowerment. Thus, they used in-depth interviews and they doubted quantitative research, specially, when aiming for developing a universal scale of empowerment (Petter et al., 2002; Islam et al., 2014). Supporting the qualitative research method, Edwards and Collinson (2002) pointed out the essence for subjectivity point of view when studying empowerment.

Employee empowerment fit in the Middle East context:

Turning now to another point of discussion, which concerns how would empowerment fit with social culture in the Middle East? Discussing this point, Suliman and Abdulla (2005) maintained that managers in the Arabic countries need to improve their work environment to include a balance of common goals among employees and organizations. They argued that work climate in organizations in these countries requires to develop the communication systems, and pointed out that work environments in the Middle East should be more employee involvement and more employees respecting. In addition, other research has described the Middle Eastern work environments that they suffer from lack of knowledge, skills and empowerment- related difficulties (Al-khalifa and Aspinwall, 2000). As it has been discussed in the literature above, empowerment requires participative leadership

styles and employee engagement and involvement. In this regard, Javidan et al., (2006) pointed out that leaders in Egypt, particularly and Middle East generally, tend to adopt an autocratic style of leadership rather a participative style. Furthermore, Al-Zamany et al., (2002) highlighted several managerial characteristics of management in Yemen. They noted that there is a shortage of management by delegation, no consideration for strategic planning was found, managers are the dominants of setting goals and missions and values for their organizations. Hence, no roles for employees in setting goals in Yemen even in determine goals for their selves. Other research added that employees in the middle east prefer higher levels of hierarchical authority at work, being rule-oriented and still have the lowest rate in employee participation in the world (Dedoussiss, 2004; Al-Hamadi et al., 2007; Metcalfe, 2007). On the other hand, research has outlined that when managers interpreted asking their employees to participate as a sort of weakness, and they exercise their authority in a personal manner (El-Kot and Leat, 2008; Islam et al., 2014). Based on these characteristics, it is obvious that work environments in the Middle Eastern countries lack the availability to implement effective strategy of empowerment, as empowerment requires high skilled employees, participative management style and more responsibilities for employees. On the other hand, it is believed that employees in such work environments are seriously seeking empowerment programs. These

programs will enable them to achieve individual and organizational goals in efficient and effective way.

Conclusion:

Based on the discussion above, empowerment is recently interpreted as HRM strategy that involves both structural and psychological perspectives of employee empowerment. Despite the fact that employee empowerment has several definitions, researchers argued about the practicality of finding a universal definition for empowerment. Furthermore, research has proposed multiple dimensions of empowerment, which could be used to understand, measure and explain deep thoughts of empowerment. Such dimensions include; participation in decision making, sharing information, transferring power from top to down through the hierarchy, maintain organizational trust, perceptions of meaningful work, self-determination, autonomy and responsibilities. However, empowerment is no longer seen as an isolated concept of organization studies. It is been considered as work-related strategy of HRM. In this sense, empowerment has captured interests of researchers due to its important outcomes at workplace. Therefore, huge research has focused on understanding its nature and ways of implementing it at organizations. Significance of empowerment can be seen through its effects and achievement of organizational goals. These effects are described as favourable and constructive for organisations. They include several outcomes such as, high organizational and individual

performance, commitment, job satisfaction, efficiency, innovation at workplace and lower turnover rate and workforce downsizing. The literature review has discussed antecedents of empowerment as a strategy. Therefore, its suggested that managers ought to implement various preparations before applying empowerment. These could include; altering organisational environment to be compatible with empowerment strategy, encouraging organisational culture and management development. However, this research has thoughtfully discussed tools of measuring empowerment. Thus, it highlighted that the majority of research conducted around empowerment has used quantitative approaches, where several scales has been used to measure different dimensions of empowerment, such as that of Spreitzer's (1995) and Matthews et al., (2003). However, recent researches have suggested conducting qualitative researches to understand the nature of empowerment in more depth. Finally, this research ends the discussion with a question of how empowerment could fit with culture and management approaches in the Middle East. In this regard, management environments and practices did not to hold support for empowerment, unless, many efforts are exert to make huge change in culture and leaderships attitudes at the Middle Eastern countries.

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