



EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT CHARACTERISTICS AND JOB SATISFACTION: A REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE AND THE NEW AVENUE OF RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

The role of the employee empowerment strategy in organizational contexts has received significant attention in management research. Studies have investigated whether employee empowerment influencing employees' job satisfaction. Recently, literature provides evidence that companies, under different reasons, focused on the human capital importance in which it directed the organizations and companies paradigms to be changed about the management of people. The main objective of this study is to review the literature that investigated the relationship between employee empowerment and job satisfaction. The literature to date seems to offer inconsistent results, even though studies mostly show significant relationship. This conclusion suggests that the effectiveness of employee empowerment must be improved and future studies should further investigate the role of employee empowerment on mitigating job satisfaction with paying attention to some factors such as the moderating role in this relation. Finally, this review of the literature is hoped to help managers, owners, and researchers to evaluate the employee empowerment role and hence enhancing its monitoring on job satisfaction of employees.

Keywords: Employee Empowerment, Job Satisfaction, Jordanian Companies, Moderator, Mediator.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Economic Complexity Index (ECI) mentions that the sector of manufacturing in Jordan was ranked in the world in 2015 as the 86th largest export economy. The top export destinations for this sector are the Saudi Arabia, Sudan, India, Iraq, and United States (ECI, 2015). According to Jordan Chamber of Industry (2016) this sector is considered an important economic sector that increases the government budget with 1.4 billion USD as annual taxes and supports the exchange rate for Jordanian Dinar. In addition, Fanek (2015)



states that manufacturing sector contributed to the total national export by 90% in 2015, additionally, it is considered for the jobs as a second most significant source after the public sectors. The total number for the manufacturing companies in Jordan reached 2,000 as well as this sector has employed in 2015 20% out of the labor force (Fanek, 2015). Nevertheless, Al Sharif (2017) declares that the statistics revealed that the uncertainty situation in the region has negatively influenced the economy of Jordan in general and the manufacturing sector in particular. This study will include three huge companies: Phosphate Company, Lafarge Cement Company, and Arab Potash Company (APC), they are seen as huge companies in Jordan as they play an important role in the Jordanian economy as well as they include a big number of employees.

Human resources are seen as strategic asset of any company or organization (Asgarsani Duostdar, & Rostami, 2013). In addition, human resources are known to be for organizations as production's most valuable factor as well a main source of essential competencies and competitive advantage, and the most important capital (Saravani, & Abbasi, 2013). According to Osterman (2006) human resource management (HRM) practices has two systems: traditional and innovative. Firstly, traditional System, this kind of system includes individual-based job design, no job rotation, and an individual-based incentive system. The individual-based job design is related to the tasks designed for the employees in order to perform these tasks individually. No job rotation system is available which means that the employees perform the same tasks repeatedly. An individual-based incentive system that is associated with the rewards that are based on the performance of the employees. This traditional system is known as traditional because of its use since the 1960s by many U.S. firms (Ichniowski & Shaw, 2003). Secondly, innovative system, this kind of system includes incentive pay plans, careful recruitment and selection, extensive labor-management communication, problem-solving teams, employment security, and flexible job assignment (Gant et al. , 2002).

These three companies pay attention to the human resource sector that they have as it plays an important role. As for the Phosphate Company, the company efforts aim at developing the human resources skills and abilities, it has during 2014 (165) training courses where (2003) employees from the various locations of the company (Annual Report, 2014). Additionally, Lafarge Cement Company considers training and development the key elements to achieve its objectives in performance improvement and cost reduction. The annual training and development plan of 2017 included a large segment of employees at the different hierarchical levels of the organization, focusing on health and safety as the first priority and overarching value as well as improving the technical and non-technical competencies of employees and contractors in the training (Annual Report, 2017).

2.0 Overview of the Jordanian Manufacturing Sector

The manufacturing sector is the second biggest industrial sector in Jordan after services sector. The manufacturing sector contributes 18.17% to the GDP in 2016, while the services sector contributes 66.76%, the industrial sector contributes 10.77%, and the agriculture contributes 4.3% to the total GDP in 2016 (Jordan: Economy, 2018). The main manufacturing exports in Jordan include garments and textiles, pharmaceutical products, jewelry, electrical appliances, machinery and equipment, furniture, chemicals, minerals and plastic products. The countries which receive imported goods from the Jordanian market are from the surrounding Arab countries (44%), North America (28%), Asia (21%), EU (3%) and other (3%)



(Economy of Jordan,” 2016). According to the Economic Complexity Index (ECI), the manufacturing sector was the 86th largest export economy in the world in 2015. The top export destinations are the United States, Saudi Arabia, India, Sudan and Iraq (“Economic Complexity Index,” 2015). The manufacturing sector is considered as one of the important economic sectors that support the Jordanian exchange rate and increase the budget of the government with USD 1.4 billion as taxes annually (Jordan Chamber of Industry, 2016). It further contributes 90% to the total national export, and it is also the second most significant source of jobs after the public sector in 2015 (Jordan Times, 2015). The total number of manufacturing companies reached 2,000, and this sector employed 20% of the labor force in 2015 (Jordan Times, 2015). Nevertheless, statistics indicated that uncertainty in the region has negatively affected Jordan’s economy in general and the manufacturing sector in particular (Al-Monitor online, 2017).

The Jordan Free Zone Investor Association (2015) has reported that the Jordanian manufacturing sector is adversely affected by the unrest stemmed from countries in the Middle East region. For instance, due to the unstable condition in Iraq and Syria, exports were on a declining trend (Jordan Times, 2014). Iraq and Syria are considered Jordan’s largest export partners within the greater Arab trade zone (Al-Monitor online, 2017). For example, the exports to Iraq, one of the main importer countries, have declined. In 2013, the exports to Iraq reached 1.38 billion USD, while in 2014, 2015, and 2016 the exports dropped to 1.28 billion USD, 749 million USD, and 497 million USD respectively. The loss of land routes to the Mediterranean has forced the companies to ship freight via the Suez Canal, rather than transport overland to Syrian or Lebanon ports for transshipment which resulted to weigh heavily on Jordan’s manufacturing sector (“Jordan’s industrial,” 2018).

Manufacturing industry, which is the main source of Jordan's export, has also been strongly affected by the neighboring instability in the region. The manufacturing sector in Jordan expected low sales because of slumping demand which resulted in a sales decrease of 12% in the manufacturing sector in 2015 (Jordan Times, 2015). Jordan Times (2015) stated that this is a significant decline that not only could reduce industrial profits, but could also reverse the expected profits into definite losses. Furthermore, the industrial output registered a negative growth 1.1% in 2015 and industrialists were obliged under fierce competition to reduce their prices in the same period by an average of 13.6%, yet they were unable to maintain their share of the market (Jordan Times, 2015). If the reduction of prices were never a relevant option, the prices would have been raised to increase profits (Jordan Times, 2015).

2.1 Job Satisfaction

The word ‘satisfaction’, is derived from the Latin ‘*satis*’ which means “enough” and *facere* “make or do” denotes the state of being satisfied; contentment (Dictionary Com; Oliver, 2010). According to Okaro, Eze, and Ohagwu (2010) there are many various attempts by many various authors to define the term “job satisfaction”. For example, Mishra (2013) define job satisfaction as it is a general attitude that is resulted by some specific attitudes in three areas: individual characteristics, specific job factors and group relationships outside the job. In fact, several researchers and authors suggest that the job satisfaction concept has no clear agreement regarding its definition (Bernal, Castel, Navarro, & Torres, 2005; Oplatka & Mimon, 2008). Job satisfaction concept has no universal definition (Oplatka & Mimon, 2008).



2.2 The Employee Empowerment

The word empowerment has various definitions that depend on the perspectives viewed. For example, it is defined as the employees exercising power, control, discretion, and autonomy in their job in order to deliver the expected performances in which empowerment will be about enhancement of employees' autonomy in their work, and an increased involvement and influence in decision making (Kok, 2011). Empowerment is seen as moving decision-making authority down the traditional organizational hierarchies as well as granting the employees in the organization the ability to affect the outcomes of the organization significantly (Menon, 2001). According to Greasley et al., (2005) using the term "power" appears to be common throughout the definitions of empowerment. In this regard, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) expound that to empower means to give power to. Power, however, has several meanings. In a legal sense, power means authority, so that empowerment can mean authorization. Power also may be used to describe capacity, as in the self-efficacy definition of Conger and Kanungo. However, power also means energy. Thus, to empower also can mean to energize.

2.3 Job Rotation

Job rotation can be defined as the performance by an employee of a new assignment on a temporary basis for an agreed period of time (Alquraan, 2011). In addition, Adjei (2012) declares that job rotation is where an individual is moved through a schedule of assignments designed to give that individual a breadth of exposure to the entire operation. The term job rotation can also mean the scheduled exchange of persons in offices, especially in public offices. According to Padula, Comper, Sparer, and Dennerlein (2017) job rotation is defined as the rotation of workers in tasks with different exposure levels and job demands for workers. Additionally, Malinski (2002) notes that job rotation comes in many forms and it is useful in many situations. Job rotation is the systematic movement of employees from one job to another. How this movement is accomplished depends on the purpose that you wish to achieve and how dramatic a move you are willing to take.

2.4 The Relationship among Employee Empowerment, Job Satisfaction, and Job Rotation.

Job satisfaction is considered significant factor that has drawn the managers' attention in the organizations and academicians (Anju & George 2015). It is also known as an important factor that influences any organizational performance (Jiang, Sun, & Law, 2011). The job satisfaction is referred to the sense of enjoyment and fulfillment for the employees at the workplace, determining their concern for and commitment to the organization (Hosie, Jayashree, Tchanchane, & Lee, 2013; Top, Akdere, & Tarcan, 2015). In other words, the satisfaction of employees is referred to a collection of negative or positive feelings that an employee has towards her or his own job. This satisfaction is also seen as a significant part of an employee's life satisfaction. It is the contentment or pleasure amount that is associated with a job (Singh, & Jain, 2013).

Recently, the world has shown a new era for the intense competitions in all directions. This also affects the organizations to transform their orientations from a line production to



concentrate on creating knowledge by each and every employee in the organizations themselves (Anju & George 2015).

According to Lu, While, and Barriball, (2005) job satisfaction is seen as a topic that has wide interests to both people and researchers who study them and people who work in organizations, and it is also considered a related attitudes about various facets or aspects of the job or a global feeling related to the job. Job satisfaction also is seen as a key condition for improving the functions of organization (Dinis & Fronteira 2015).

Job satisfaction is defined as the fulfillment that is resulted from the employees' emotions such as loyalty, dedication, and love to a job (Kabak, Şen, Göçer, Küçüksöylemez, & Tuncer, 2014). Job satisfaction is also defined as an affective orientation that the employees have towards their works (Price, 2001). Kong, Jiang, Chan, and Zhou (2018) define job satisfaction as the employees' general positive attitudes towards their job. Consequently, it could be said that job satisfaction is an individual's positive emotional state towards his/her job that is resulted by his/her own experience. As it is a crucial element that it improves and develops the organization productivity, it also could be affected by some factors that may impact positively or negatively the employees' job satisfaction such as employee empowerment and job rotation.

3.0 CONCLUSION

Accordingly, organizations and companies have to understand what things satisfy their employees and how these organizations can increase the satisfaction of the employees with their jobs, which the current study attempts to investigate among the employees of . This job satisfaction will be an important factor that should be treated effectively as it improves the productivity and develops the company in a way to achieve its own goal. The empowerment practice of providing employees with information about goals and performance also has a positive and sizable effect on job satisfaction (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2015). This proves that employee empowerment has an important role that could play to increase employees' job satisfaction. This study will also see the effect of job rotation on this relationship. It seeks to identify does job rotation strengthen or weaken this relation?

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