

Employee Training and Empowerment: A Conceptual Model for Achieving High Job Performance

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Abstract

In this paper, the primary objectives were to review the literature on employee training, empowerment and employee performance, and then to propose a conceptual model for achieving high job performance. The review revealed that training when given properly has a significant effect on employee performance. It further established that employee empowerment if implemented properly will lead to improvement of performance of employees. The conceptual model hypothesized that the presence of employee training and empowerment will lead to high job performance. The review concludes with a recommendation for further studies to be done to test the model proposed.

Keywords: employee empowerment, training, job performance

1. Introduction

Employee training and empowerment have been said to be indispensable components of strategic human resource management, as well as a means of reducing uncertainty in the market place and achieving organizational goals. Every organization expects its employees to work towards the attainment of its mission and business goals (Pinnington & Edwards, 2000). Employee training and empowerment equip employees to achieve organizational goals. Ohemeng (2009) proposed that to improve job performance of employees, the key requirements are training and empowerment of employees. Essentially, employee training and empowerment provide sustainable opportunities for employees in accordance with their aspirations and talents to acquire knowledge and skills and to apply them in a favourable work environment in order to achieve individual and organizational performance.

The objectives of this paper are to:

- a) Review the literature on employee training, empowerment, and job performance.
- b) Propose a conceptual model of employee training, empowerment, and high job performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Employee Training and Job Performance

An organisation is only as effective as the people working in it. It is a fact that the provision of quality goods and services by any organization depends on the quality of its workforce. Cole (1993) defined training as any learning activity which is directed towards the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills for the purposes of an occupation or task while Cascio (1992) referred to performance as an employee's accomplishment of assigned tasks. Cascio posited further that pre-determined standards should be set against which actual performances are measured and that without any rule of measurement, it will be difficult to assess performance. In other words before claims can be made that people are under-performing then there must be some performance expectations. The relationships between training and job performance have been well established in literature.

Abay (2008) reported that significant relationship was found between the employees training and their resultant performance in accomplishing different tasks. It was found that those employees who have taken trainings were more capable in performing different task & vice versa. Training has direct relationship with the employees' performance. Similar findings were reported by Elnegal and Imran (2013), Jagero and Komba (2012), Saeed and Asghar (2012), Singh and Mohanty (2012), and Tennant et al (2002). However, Jagero and Komba (2012) posited that while training is a factor in job performance, it is the combination of factors such as working environment, employee skills and knowledge, motivation and rewards, communication flow and organizational culture that significantly improve employees' performance.

Thomas (1997) argued that employee training equip employees with skills that enable them to become more efficient and productive workers. Furthermore, employees who are well-trained often have higher motivation and morale because they feel that the company has invested in their ability and development. This also results in lower turnover rates. Devins, et al. (2012) found that trained employees often work better as teams because everyone is aware of the expectations and can achieve them together smoothly. Trained employees are also more confident in their performance and decision-making skills. In addition, employees who receive regular training are more likely to accept change and come up with new ideas. Employees who learn new skills through training make good candidates for promotions because they have shown their ability to learn, retain and use information.

Reliable, skilled employees can also be empowered to train other employees, the fact that reduces pressure for the management team.

The practical implications of training require that training must be effective in order to affect job performance. Kennedy (2009) found that more costly but effective training can save money that is wasted on cheap but inefficient training. Latif (2010) found four subscales to have a significant contribution towards establishment of an effective training program. The study identified four factors to be contingent to an effective training, they were: Satisfaction with the training session, Training content satisfaction, Trainer satisfaction, Transfer of learning.

Kennedy (2009) found that the frequency of training received have an impact on job performance. After analyzing data from employees of the Judicial Service of Ghana, he reported that many employees associated frequent in-service training with improved job performance. Similarly, Singh & Mohanty (2012) found a significant relationship between frequent on-the-job training and employees' performance. They stated that frequently training employees resulted in employees making fewer mistakes, getting more work done in a given time period and managers spending less time on supervision of employees.

However, Derouen, & Brian (2010) argued that lack of frequent training is not necessarily the cause of under-performance of employees. He stated the need to determine whether a problem can be solved by training. Whenever employees are not performing their jobs properly, it is often assumed that training will bring them up to standard. This is not always the case. For instance, training is less effective for problems arising from an employee's lack of motivation or lack of attention to the job. Similarly, Daniels (2010) posited that training is not a panacea; it cannot eliminate core problems like low capitalization or a product line that does not meet customers' needs. Although training can provide extraordinary improvements in the organization, the key to getting the best return on investment from training is to view it strategically rather than tactically.

2.2 Employee Empowerment and Job Performance

In the literature, employee empowerment has variously been defined. Fortier (2013) defined it as the act of giving more responsibility to employees in the workplace. He explained that employee empowerment relates closely with the various concepts and techniques designed to democratize the workplace. The concept of empowerment also refers to the ability to do things; it means to be able to do (Gibson 1991). Employees who feel strong empowerment have qualities, which make possible a strong sense of self-esteem, successful professional performance and progress in their work (Suminen, et al., 2005). Basically employees' empowerment is mainly concerned with trust, motivation, decision making and breaking the inner boundaries between management and employees (Ongori and Shunda, 2008). Empowerment enables employees to participate in decision making, helping them to break out of stagnant mind-sets to take a risk and try something new.

The importance of empowerment in improving employee's performance has well been established in many ways. Awamleh (2013) found a clear link between empowerment and job performance. He stated that empowerment plays significant role in employee's satisfaction thus promoting their performance in organizations. Employee's participation in decision making, delegation of power, access to information and resources and job enrichment are common forms and tools of empowerments. Similar finding was reported by Said (2010), whose results also showed statistically significant positive relationships between employees' empowerment and job satisfaction. Klidas et al (2011) conducted a survey of employees of 15 hotels in 7 different European countries and reported that stimulating empowerment in employees lead to attainment of targeted goals. Yans and Choi (2012), Wang and Lee (2009) also found significant relationship between empowerment and job performance.

Furthermore, Zemke and Schaefer (1989) found that many famous enterprises, including US Air and Federal Express, applied employee empowerment to improve customer satisfaction. Sparks et al. (1997) also explored the effects of employee empowerment on customer satisfaction. Results revealed that fully empowered employees produce more customer satisfaction. Hartline and Ferrell (1996) agreed but indicated that the use of employee empowerment could have both positive and negative consequences especially for service firms' employees.

3. Conceptual model of employee training, empowerment and high job performance

A hypothesized research model of employee training, empowerment (HR Capacity building) and high job performance is illustrated in figure 1.

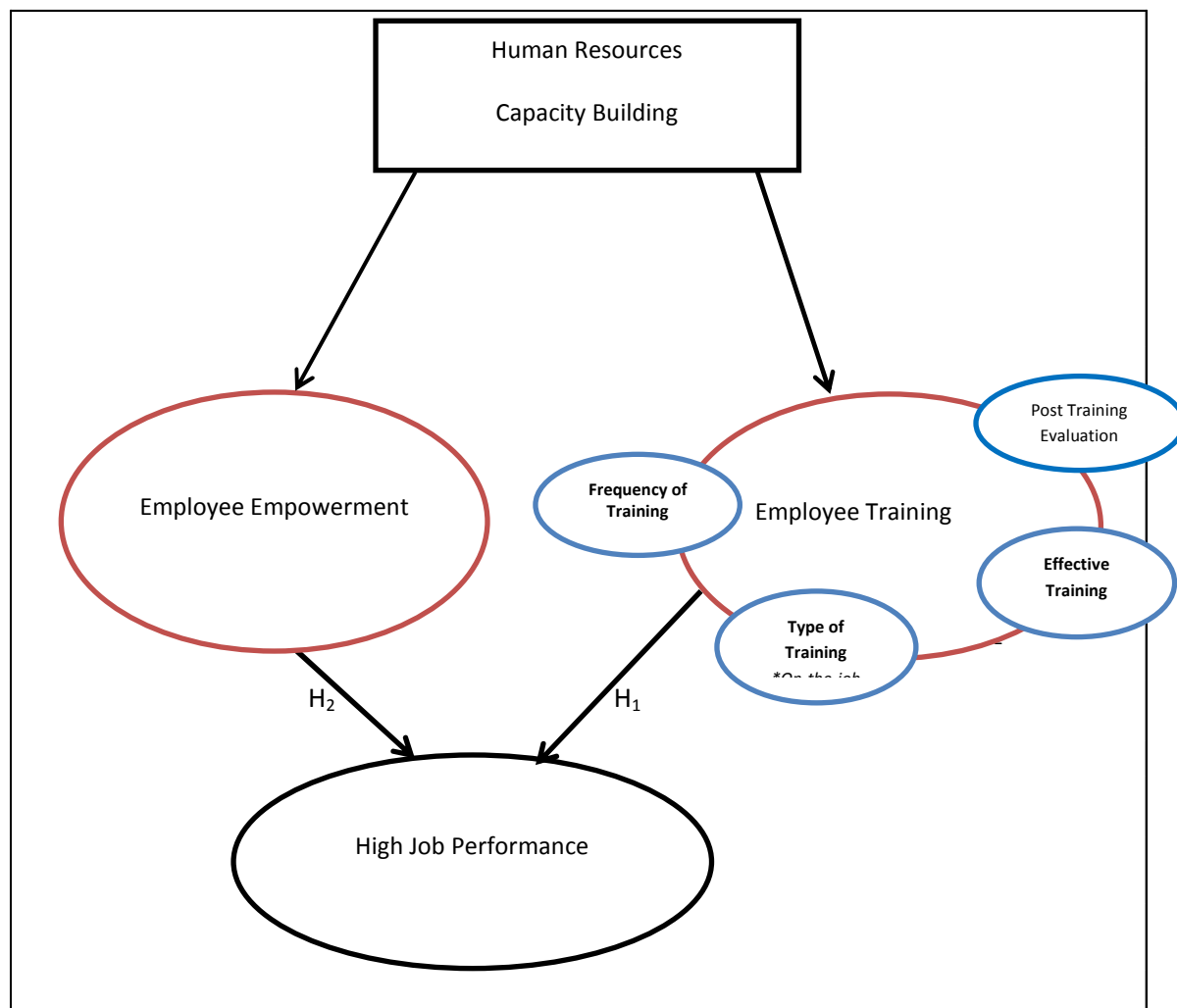


Figure 1 Hypothesized Research Model of HR Training, Empowerment and High Job Performance

In fig 1 above, the proposition is that employees should possess two key variables, namely, training (H_1) and empowerment (H_2), and the combination of these two variables would lead to high job performance. Furthermore, training has sub-variables of effective training, type of training, frequency of training, and post-training evaluation. The proposition is that these attributes should be part of employees training to significantly influence job performance.

4. Conclusion

This paper was about employee training, empowerment and job performance. The objectives were to review the literature on the relationships between employee training and job performance, employee empowerment and job performance, and to propose a model for achieving high job performance. It is widely assumed that improvement in the skills and abilities of workers results in improved performance. The review established significant relationships between training and employee performance, and also, empowerment and employee performance. The hypothesized model proposed that a combination of employee training and employee empowerment would lead to high job performance. It is recommended that further studies are undertaken to test the relationships outlined in the conceptual model. This will contribute to current knowledge on the subject and fill gaps in relation to the combined effects of employee training and empowerment on job performance.

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