



# The relative importance of organizational conditions in empowering managers

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## ABSTRACT

### Keywords:

Empowerment, Clear and Challenging Goals, Evaluation of Function, Access to Resources, Rewarding

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Considering the importance and role of organizational conditions for achieving the empowerment, the current study aimed to investigate the effect of organizational conditions on empowering of managers at universities in Ardabil. This study was carried out through a descriptive and survey method. The population for the study was 220 participants and the managers of Ardabil universities participated in this research. The results indicated that components of organizational conditions had different effects on empowering of managers. Among variables, evaluation of function, access to resources, and clear and challenging goals were known as effective variables and rewarding system was recognized to have less effect on empowering of managers.

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## Introduction

Empowering is removing the barriers to growth, encouraging commitment to the goals, encouraging risk taking, creativity, innovation, enabling people to solve problems, increasing accountability, and it is eliminating and alleviating fear. Since the main and the most important asset of any organization are its efficient and competent human resources, equipping and preparing human resources in the new global competition and in exposure to

changes is of particular importance. Organizations have attempted to provide the necessary context to foster the empowering of efficient employees. This highlights that in case of success and receiving benefit from empowering, not only the commitment of human resources increases, but also it expands the trust, importance, and capacity of human resources. The outcome of this will be a positive and motivated working environment. The principal asset of any organization is its sufficient human resources, because competent human resources advance efficient organizations. Empowerment is one of the most promising concepts of business world but it has low utilization. Nowadays, the leading and supporting role of it in flourishing society is displayed (Blanchard, Carlos, & Randolph, 1999).

Inglis (1997) defined empowerment as a procedure through which the role of individuals becomes clear to enable the organization to accomplish its goals and get accustomed to changing environment. Human resources empowerment focuses on human capabilities of organizations and it enables individuals in a society. Put differently, empowerment considers creating conditions in which people can act rationally with inner motivation to attain success. Rising expectations, globalization, and advanced technology are important elements which caused organizations to act variously in comparison with traditional organizations. The focus in traditional organizations was on human resources management. Nowadays, organizations, in addition to energy, pay considerable attention to intellectual power and creativity. To this end, hierarchical methods of ordering and controlling would not be appropriate. Today's work environment necessitates the presence of managers and employees who are capable of self-management and can provide solutions. In addition, they are expected to be creative and able to recognize opportunities. Also, they should be knowledgeable and responsive to their own work. With this perception, the outcome will have a significant impact on creating a positive work environment (Geminian, 2004).

In order to validate and assess the ability of managers many empirical studies are undertaken in non-teaching organizations. But few studies have been conducted in educational organizations. If organizations cannot recruit and get the right and efficient people, they will lose many opportunities and occasions in finding efficient individuals who they can reliably and efficiently place them in the right roles to effectively support the organization.

Educating and replacing new members are required to continue growing and progress and it is of great importance for globalization or even for staying at this level. Despite the fact that empowerment has different meanings for different people (Adams, 2008), there is a wide

agreement about its use. It is worth noting that the future belongs to those who have special plans and goals. In this setting, higher education as an innovator and operative system in all societies should be desirable in terms of human resources and it is expected to take into account all dimensions quantitatively and qualitatively. Following this, the most influential planning in the evolution of human resources and observing the improvement of higher education system tends to be empowerment of employees at universities. Clarke (2001) argued that empowerment is a widely used term but the way it is conceptualized varies. Empowerment can bring continual growth and a competitive advantage to an organization and admitting that many managers consider empowerment desirable, most organizations have encountered problems in its application and use. In fact, empowerment is a vast and questionable theme, so this study tries to move in this direction to strengthen the proficiency of managers and employees. The present study investigates four components of organizational conditions, i.e., clear and challenging goals, evaluation of function, access to resources, and rewarding. Besides, it examines the effect of each of these factors on empowering managers.

### **The Literature Review**

In the era of scientific management, the focus was on methods and tools and mankind was marginalized. With the evolution of human relations movement, job satisfaction, job enrichment, democratic leadership, and empowerment of people were presented. To date, human resources theories form because of the existence of humans in organizations. Then, we noticed the value and usefulness of employees' morality, creation of energy, sense of responsibility, belief in goals, structural participation of people, and finally the existence of ethics in issues related to management.

In empowering managers, spirit at work which increases the chance of developing working environment should be considered. Spirit at work, at the personal level, demonstrates a distinct state that includes strong feelings of wellbeing, a belief that an individual's work leads to involvement and support, communication with others and common purpose, an awareness of attachment to something larger than self, and a sense of excellence (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2004). A number of factors might have negative influence on empowering managers. Many employees may feel insecure at work; they may be less committed to their employer; and their efficiency and creativity decrease (Frone, Yardley, & Markel 1997). The

well-being of employees has decreased. They report more stress, poorer mental health, increased absences from work, and less life and work satisfaction (Schor, 1993).

It is worth noting that giving close attention to the flourishing of employees in a stimulating relationship of being a member of an organization and determining appropriate identity replace coercion and requires to be obeyed. McGregor's theory X and theory Y can be treated as a theoretical basis for the advancement of empowerment (Kopelman, Prottas, & Davis, 2008). The results of positive outlook at mankind in organizations enable people to get involved in decision-making process. The additional benefits of positive outlook are encouraging communication for improvement, attention to employees' comments and suggestions, giving opportunities to individuals for taking greater responsibilities, manager's commitment to its employees' self-actualization, and career development. In this respect, special attention is devoted to Maslow's hierarchy of needs such as physiological needs, safety, belonging, respect, self-actualization, and self-transcendence.

Positive outlook guided successful and influential leaders to concentrate their powers on empowering managers and employees for accomplishing particular purposes (Andrews, Herschel, & Baird, 1996). In addition, this sort of vision led to the preference for social management and democratic style in organization rather than using dictatorship and authority style (Hershey & Kizzer, 1992). Researchers propose that in order for organizations to be effective and profitable, employees need to be committed to and passionate about their work (Fairholm, 1997; Moxley, 2000; Secretan, 1997) and call for workplace cultures, leadership, and work processes that develop such commitment and passion (Fairholm, 1997; Jacobson, 1994; Mitroff & Denton, 1999). The more employees undergo personal aim and meaning at work, the more they have sense of commitment to the organization (Milliman, Ferguson, Trickett, & Condemi, 2003); therefore, employers try to find ways to facilitate meaningfulness at work.

The notion of empowerment is considered in literature of human resources in various ways. Thus, in 1950 academic recourses of management involved nearly considerable amount of this material, indicating that managers should have favorable attitude toward their employees which is called human relations.

In 1960, it was declared that managers must be responsive to the needs and motivations of employees which is known as sensitivity training. In 1970, managers had to seek help from employees by involving employees in the organization's affairs and in 1980 they were demanded to create and organize groups and pursue the policy of collective decision-making

which is called quality circles. The stability of these subjects in 1990 and also in the following years states managers need to learn the ways of developing empowerment.

The notion of empowerment was first proposed in Lewin's social science (1951), in Herzberg's (1968) enrichment theory in developing the control and individual's decision in a work, and in a research about self-alienation by Seeman (1959). Besides, Kanter (1979) and Tannenbaum (1968) refer to empowerment and explain it as involvement in power and control which improve organizational capability and increases its effectiveness. Moreover, Beckhard (1969) considered empowerment in a group. Also, the employees' participation is reviewed by Lawler (1992). All of these have great importance in the formation of empowerment notions and they are considered as the pioneers in the field of empowerment.

Kanter (1977), Block (1987), and Bennis (1989) are among the researchers in the field of empowerment and they speak of empowerment as a strategy. They state that empowerment enables and authorizes subordinates as a useful organizational or managerial component. In any organization, empowerment is subject to nature, culture, and needs of that organization. Empowerment has been examined by other researchers from different perspectives. For example, self-control, career self-management, group, and performance-based systems all are known as enabling or empowerment. Menon (1995) deals with this as a kind of ability and states that series of subjects including job enrichment, performance-based pay do not refer only to individual empowerment. In actual fact, these are known as management techniques that provide the ground and measures to empower and permit the employees to become familiar and get accustomed to empowerment.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Previous studies reveal that several elements influenced the human resources empowerment. To this end, various models and structures related to these factors and indicators have been investigated. With reference to the foundations of the basic theory of research and studies by Abdollahi and Ashrafi Fashi (2013), and organizational conditions studied by Spreitzer (1995), Scribner, Truell, Hager, and Srichai (2001), Abtahi and Abesi (2007), and Abdollahi and Naveh Ebrahim (2007), the variables which had the greatest impact in these studies were used and then these variables were entered into the model in order to evaluate them.

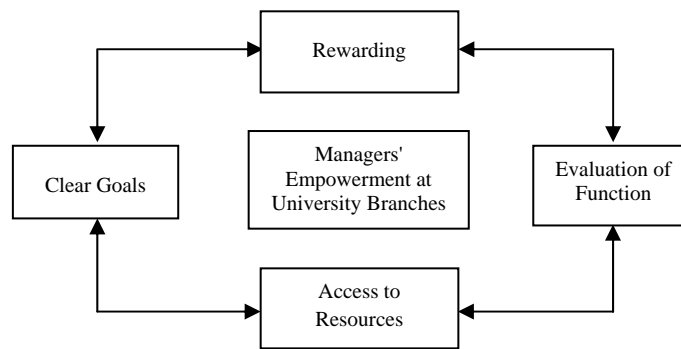


Figure 1. Conceptual model of research

### Research Hypothesis

The following hypothesis guided the study:

The components of organizational conditions, namely clear and challenging goals, evaluation of function, access to resources, and rewarding with relative weight and importance impact the empowering managers at units of Ardabil universities.

### The Study

Regarding the purpose of the study, this research was a practical research and it was executed using a descriptive and survey method. The participants of the study were the managers of Ardabil universities including chancellors, managers, and vice presidents of education, research, and studies. For saving time and decreasing the costs of travelling and transportation which constitute large amount of research costs, cluster sampling was used and 230 individuals were selected based on clustering sampling. After collecting the questionnaires and the elimination of incomplete questionnaires, data collected from a total of 220 individuals including 137 chancellors and managers of universities and 83 vice-chancellors of universities was used in the analysis.

The subject domain of the current study referred to the topics in the field of organizational behavior with the aim of evaluating the relative importance of organizational conditions in empowering managers. The questionnaires that the individual people responded were used as the units of analysis. The questionnaire included 5 questions about the demographic characteristics and 46 questions using a five-point Likert scale. Questionnaires were administered and the respondents were presented with them in their first calling. Next, in their second calling the questionnaires were collected. The questionnaire design process

involved referring to the available questionnaires relevant to the topic under investigation and consultation with scientific experts and specialists.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire and it showed 90 per cent reliability. The validity of the questionnaire was tested using the content validity and according to the scientific experts' opinions. Due to the failure of existing methods in determination of the relative importance of independent variables and in influencing the dependent variables, a method called Johnson's technique was used.

## Results

The technique that Johnson (2000) has provided took advantage of the conversion of variables to collateral variables. It not only uses the regression coefficients of collateral variable, but also it considers the relationship between the main independent variables and collateral variables. Figure 2 shows the graphical scheme of relative importance using Johnson's technique in the case of three variables.

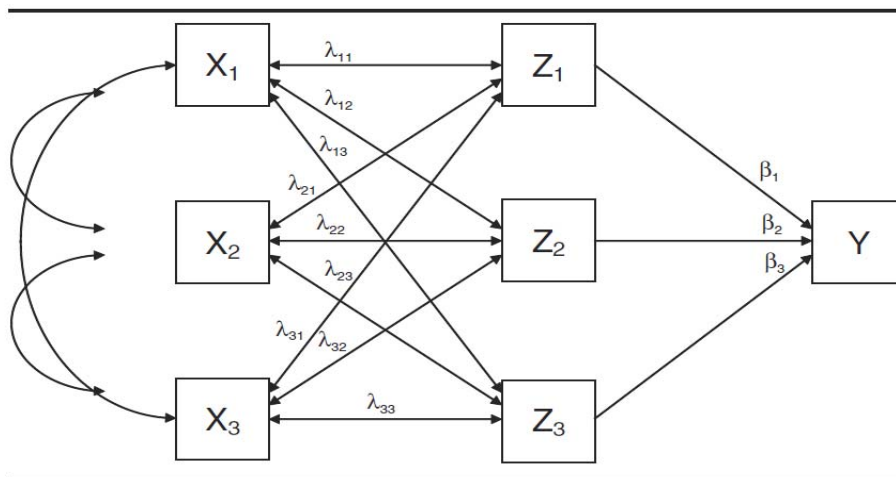


Figure 2. Graphical scheme of relative importance using Johnson's technique in the case of three variables (Johnson & LeBreton, 2004)

## Calculation of the Relative importance of Organizational Conditions in Empowering Managers

When there is a correlation between the predictor variables, using the methods of changing variables is the most appropriate method to calculate the relative importance of each of the independent variables in determining the dependent variable or criterion variable. This method uses collateral variables to assess the relative importance. To this end, the first step in determining the application of this method refers to obtaining variables that are highly

associated with independent variables but there exist no correlation between these variables (collateral variables). The process of obtaining collateral variables is as follows.

If we let the vector of criterion variable be  $n \times 1$  and show by  $Y$  and the matrix of predictor variables be  $n \times p$  and be represented by  $X$  and all variables be standardized, the matrix of  $X$  using the singular value decomposition (SVD) can be written more simply as:

$$x = p\Delta Q'$$

Where  $p$  and  $Q$  represent the special amount of vector related to  $xx'$  and  $x'x$ , respectively and  $\Delta$  is the diagonal matrix which include the singular value of  $X$ . Johnson shows that under these circumstances the collateral matrix for matrix  $X$  can be obtained as follows:

$$z = pQ'$$

After obtaining the values of matrix  $Z$ , we can calculate the values of  $\beta_k$  (the regression coefficients of  $Y$  on  $Z$ ) and  $\lambda_{jk}$  (the regression coefficients of  $X_j$  on  $Z_k$ ). Finally, the weight of each variable in determining the dependent variable can be calculated using the following formula:

$$\varepsilon_1 = \lambda_{11}^2 \beta_1^2 + \lambda_{12}^2 \beta_2^2 + \lambda_{13}^2 \beta_3^2$$

In the present article, 4 variables were considered as aspects of organizational conditions. Variable  $Y$  refers to empowering managers which is used as the criterion variable. Using the Johnson's technique, the importance of each dimension of organizational condition was as follows.

Table 1  
*The Relative Importance of Organizational Conditions' Factors in Empowering Managers Using Johnson Method*

Raw	Variables	The Relative Importance of Each Variable (Raw)	The Relative Importance (Percent)
1	Evaluation of Function	0.087	44.3
2	Access to Resources	0.056	28.4
3	Clear and Challenging Goals	0.043	21.8
4	Rewarding	0.011	5.6
	Total	197	100

## Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of organizational conditions on empowering of managers at universities. Nowadays, in the competitive world, organization and managers owe their success to empowerment, and a number of other items such as total quality become



efficient in light of empowerment. Empowerment is considered to be a cultural movement and its rise relies on attitudes and views of community leaders and managers. By creating an appropriate culture conditions, organizational factors interact with empowerment and influence the success of empowerment process. The members of an organization could be empowered if the community leaders as a whole and managers and employees of universities and other organizations as part of a community take steps for empowerment of their members. They can do this by using the advantage of current research and by getting benefit from research results.

Studies that are closely related to the theme stated that for empowering the human resources, a general and systematic view should be used to prepare a meaningful and consistent planning and to use it for empowering human resources. This consideration implies that people cannot become empowered until the community leaders and organizations do not accept empowerment and do not present and offer supportive circumstances. So, the favorable organizational conditions can be considered as a bed and coherent planning for empowerment of human resources.

The results confirmed the hypothesis of the research indicating the significant positive impact of organizational conditions on empowering managers. The components of organizational conditions with different weight and relative importance impact the empowerment of managers. Following this, the results of investigating the effects of organizational components on empowering managers showed that evaluation of function, access to variables, clear and challenging objectives, and rewarding were effective in empowering managers, respectively. Evaluation of function, access to resources, and clear and challenging objectives had the greatest relative weight in empowering managers. In contrast, rewarding had the lowest relative weight. Therefore, a series of items as the practical suggestions for giving more importance to the issue of empowerment and effective organizational factors for reducing the instability of rate and constant changes, improving individuals' job skills, increasing labor and improving the working environment, and constantly increasing job satisfaction must be taken into account.

## **Conclusion**

According to the importance and role of organizational conditions for achieving the empowerment, the current study aimed to investigate the effect of organizational conditions on empowering managers at universities in Ardabil. Findings of the study revealed that the

organizational conditions had a significant positive impact on empowering managers. This consideration implies that recognition and detailed evaluation of managers' function, admiration, and rewarding in reference to their competency would increase the managers' sense of belonging to the organization and improve their responsibility. In addition, it is recommended that organizations can create and arrange a suitable system of evaluation and advance the performance indicators. Also, organizations by focusing on managers' performance can give promotion to managers and encourage them which will result in their satisfaction.

The existence of an evaluation system about the performance management in training centers and having information about the results of operations and evaluation is required by employees and university students. Taking into account the evaluation of function, it is suggested to provide managers with accurate feedback and to find out tips for showing feedback without harassment and offensive behaviors, criticism, or changing the features of group. Being a member of a group, it is better to choose a particular section of evaluation such as communicating or the way of dealing with problem and ask people to provide their ideas about better performance.

One of the main determinants of managers' empowerment tends to be access to resources which is a powerful system. In fact, in such systems people have legitimate authority for approved budget apportionment. Human resources supports, administrative and technical, and financial resources support are among factors that people need. Besides, having adequate space and essential equipment are of importance for them. They need to have a reasonable allowance for resource allocation and a schedule for managing these resources. Managers should have freedom in deciding at the time of administration of these affairs and they must possess authority in making independent decisions. Controlling, direct supervision, and ordering are factors which must be avoided to the extent possible. About their performance and feedback, a written report should be generated and their weaknesses and strengths should be discussed. In brief, the presence of evaluation system of managers' performance by the staff and students is a requirement that help managers to become aware of the outcome and consequence of their actions and assessments. It is imperative to state that managers face limitations of time and resources and allocation of limited resources for unlimited human needs becomes possible in the light of proficiency and knowledge management.

The design of organization's goals should be developed in a way that to be predictable, measurable, and realistic for both staff and managers. Following this, goals should be in line

with the purposes of the organization and must be achieved by setting a predetermined deadline. People should put in great deal of effort in clarification of organizational objectives. In the same line of the argument, it is important to determine the objectives of universities and manager's duties; criteria and evaluation criteria of managers' work should be based on rules and managers should obtain the outcome of their evaluations; it is of great importance for managers to make considerable effort to create and improve positive atmosphere for deliberation and critical debate and they must be tolerant of opposing views and never act aggressively; and, they must reassure and encourage employees for developing plans and being creative. Then, the appearance of clear goals tends to be of great importance because they result in motivational enhancement. With this perception, managers need to be encouraged to have risk tolerance and to be risk-taking. In improving programs and creating opportunities for new experiences and coming up with new suggestions, it is recommended to make use of managers' ideas in developing programs.

Paying based on competencies such as knowledge, skills, and abilities which make employees valuable to an organization is suggested. This highlights that employees should be judged and rewarded based on things within their control and based on progress they make in their work. Since being creative is necessary in estimating values at work, rewarding should depend on having risk-taking behavior and getting involved in creative works. Reward plays an important role in the process of empowering employees and managers. In order to encourage individuals to use their potentiality for providing better performances, providing rewards, especially those associated with appreciation of top management is important. In addition, providing opportunities for performing hard work, inspiring for attaining success, introducing top managers as a model and rewarding them are closely related to managers' empowerment. Therefore, in order to increase satisfaction it is good to hold appreciation awards ceremony for appreciating and rewarding managers; sending notes for managers and their families would show appreciation for their work. Besides, providing welfare, resources, and facilities at work would be of importance. The consequence of rewarding would show that what behavior is rewarded and can significantly influence employees' behavior by sending the powerful messages regarding what is important for an organization.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Considering the nature of subject, it is recommended that universities purposefully take into account the factors that influence empowering managers. To this end, they should take

benefit of affective factors with reference to their influence, detect obstacles, and they must put in great deal of effort to handle the problems. The present study is not free from limitations. Regarding the goal of the study and the limitations, to some degree, the present study was responsive to the need of research in the field of empowerment.

Given the results and considering the essentiality of emerging concepts in this area, the followings are specific suggestions for further research. The current study focused exclusively on managers at universities. It is necessary to apply the research design to other organizations and assess employees in other educational centers. In order to increase the generalizability of the current study to other organizations and to verify the results, using bigger sample from various locations is needed.

Considering the purpose of the current study which was designing model of empowering managers and investigating the impact of organizational factors on empowerment, it is recommended to evaluate the relationship between different features of organization or to measure influence of on-the-job training on employees' empowerment. Inspecting and representing a local model of empowerment in different organizations can be used as the scope of other research. Seeking the impact of human resources empowerment on improving productivity of university employees can be of considerable importance in future research. The enhancement and development of information technology in organizations and its connection with empowerment and considering the impact of work psychology on empowerment of university employees or other organizations are suggestions for future research.

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