

## **A Comparative Study on Factors Affecting Employee Empowerment in Higher Educational Institutions in Tamil Nadu and Kerala**

**\* Mr. Antony George**

**\*\* Dr. P. Krishna Kumar**

**\*\*\* Dr. S. Franklin John**

\* PhD Scholar, Nehru College of Management, Coimbatore

\*\* Professor, Nehru College of Management, Coimbatore

\*\*\* Principal, Nehru College of Management, Coimbatore

### **Abstract:**

This paper acknowledges the concept of employee empowerment as an important area of research in field of higher education. Employees play a very vital role in the branding of Higher Educational Institutions. Institutions have to inspire and empower the employees to improve performance and ultimately to brand the institution from inside out. The objective of this research is to examine the effects of employee empowerment in higher educational institutions. This involves a pilot survey and structured schedules to collect data for the development of measurement scales. This study also focuses on how the empowerment among employees, leads to the establishment of brand values in the higher educational institutions ensuing employee branding. More than 2500 respondents from both the states have been contacted for the survey, but only 519 respondents were completed all the items in the instrument. So the sample constituted for the study is 519. The sample includes both male and female and their qualification ranges from Post Graduation to PhD. The collected survey data were processed and analyzed by using SPSS 20.0 (Statistical Package for Social Science) for Microsoft Windows. Conclusions and recommendations are also been provided at the end of the study.

**Key Terms:** Employee Empowerment, brand values, Employee Branding, Educational Institutions

### **I. Introduction**

As human resource is the most valuable asset of an institution, the employees are the repository of knowledge, skills and abilities that cannot be imitated by the competitors. However, generally, these Human Resources are the underutilized resource of an organization and that's the main reason which all organizations are running after employee empowerment. Empowerment gives the employees a degree of responsibility and authority. Empowerment encourages the employees to utilize their skills, abilities and creativity by accepting accountability for their work. It includes engagement and involvement of supervisors and employees working together to establish clear goals and expectations within agreed-upon limits. Employee empowerment is the process of motivating employees to change their behaviors and thinking in order to achieve organizational goals.

In the higher education scenario, academic staffs rather than non-academic staffs play a very crucial role in the success because an institution's brand is built on the experience people have with the teaching staff. Studies show that employees are highly influential in the representation of higher education institutions to the public.

With the growth of higher education sector in India, the importance of employees and their contribution towards building a successful brand image has been widely accepted.

Institutions spend generously for building the external brand but the same conscious effort is not accorded towards building the internal brand, the employees.

Employee empowerment will not happen naturally in organizations. Too many disempowering structures have been built into them over the years. Changing leadership alone will not engender an empowered organization nor will individuals learning about empowerment and taking responsibility for what they can in their given environment. Both the leadership component and the individual component will have an impact but they will not be as successful as they could be.

The beginnings of the concept of employee empowerment can be found in several places. The socio-technical approach (Lewin, 1951) combined two aspects of work in a systemic manner. The idea of job enrichment (Herzberg, Mausner *et al.*, 1959; Herzberg, 1968) was focused on increasing control and decision-making in one's work. The literature on job autonomy, (Herzberg, Mausner *et al.*, 1959; Herzberg, 1968; Hackman and Oldham, 1976; Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Menon, 1995) addresses another component of what is today referred to employee empowerment.

Job satisfaction is an earliest anticipated predictor of empowerment (Spreitzer, Kizilos & Nason, 2007). The psychological empowerment models developed by Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and Conger and Kanungo (1988) did not include or examine the outcome variables. However, Thomas and Tymon (1994) further extended the empowerment models and found that employees' level of job satisfaction were significant. The empirical research found that psychological empowerment is significant and positively associated with job satisfaction.

A key presumption of empowerment theory is that empowered individuals or groups should perform better than those relatively less empowered (Thomas and Velthouse 1990). Such a premise is implicit in work design theory, upon which the empowerment concept is deeply rooted. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) particularly opined that empowered individuals should exhibit proactive behaviors characterized by flexibility, initiation, resiliency and persistence. From this motivational perspective then, the link between empowerment and performance is axiomatic. The theoretical expectation that the empowerment of employees should lead to high performance therefore appears strong.

Even if the firms believe that they are defining themselves with the products and services they are offering, actually they are defined by the productivity, quality and service of their human capital, namely the performance of their employees. In today's organizations, the employees must know everything that the customers know about the company, much before customers know. Employees must therefore be treated like customers in order for them to believe in the company's brand. Employees need to be seen as the internal market within the organization as part of the larger relationship marketing plan.

This article focuses on the factors affecting employee empowerment in Higher Educational Institutions. This also includes the study on the employee branding initiatives taken up by the higher educational institutions. To understand the trends, leadership attitude, communication, work behavior, satisfaction and performance of the employees, etc., are compared.

The systematic research plan proposed in the current investigation includes the statement of the research problem, objective of the study, hypotheses of the study, data instrumentation, the sample and the statistical techniques used for analyzing data.

## II. Statement of the Research Problem

Over the period of time, teaching and research has evolved as prime most responsibilities of the faculties. The common perception is that faculties who were highly involved in teaching engages the students that results in better learning. But, there are very limited numbers of research on faculty empowerment and employee branding in the higher education sector.

While there are contributions in the areas of employee empowerment and its relationship to employee satisfaction and employee performance, relatively a very few studies attempt to relate this into a large relational flow between employee satisfaction, employee performance, employee empowerment, and employee branding. The examination of these relationships independently in the education sector appeared to be relevant and can have applications in other businesses. Therefore, this study intends to help bridge the gap by analyzing the effect of employee empowerment in creating employee brand ambassadors through a model integrating employee job satisfaction and employee performance.

The available literature had covered employee empowerment and employee branding in service industry. These studies are mainly focused on banking industry, hospitality industry and IT industry rather than on education sector, where the employees “should be seen as the knowledge workers and primary resource of an organization and need to be managed and accounted for with appropriate care and skill”. This has necessitated a study to clarify the relationships between employee empowerment activities in higher education institutions and the support for their institution’s brand on the part of academic staff.

## III. Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to investigate how job satisfaction and employee performance influences employee empowerment, which ultimately leads to the internal promotion of the brand (employee branding). Specifically, the researcher seeks to answer out the following.

1. The relationship between employee empowerment and the factors of Job satisfaction
2. The relationship between employee empowerment and the factors of employee performance

### 3.2 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are developed and tested in the study to provide answers to the research problems and research questions.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no relationship between employee empowerment and job satisfaction

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no relationship between employee empowerment and employee performance.

### 3.3 Research Design

Research design is the description of the overall structure of the intended research identifying the various element or components of research, the type of each element, and how these elements relate to each other. The research design refers to the overall strategy that you choose to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way. A research design will typically include how data are to be collected, what instruments will be employed, how the instruments will be used and the intended means for analyzing data collected. The researcher has adopted a descriptive design for the study as the research describes the opinion of respondents about their satisfaction and performance.

### 3.4 Instrumentation

A research instrument is what you use to collect the information in a qualitative field study or observation. It helps you to keep track of what you observe and how to report it. It must be both valid and precise. In this study, the questionnaire method was used for gathering data on different parameters of employee satisfaction, performance and empowerment.

The questionnaire has two parts. The first part consists of the details about the demographic variables like gender, age, educational qualifications, experience, monthly income, designation and location of employment.

The second part of the instrument includes fifteen sets of statements which are designed to obtain the opinion of the respondents on their insight about the variables. Here the respondents were asked to mark their opinions on a five point Likert Scale.

### 3.5 Scoring Procedure

For the convenience of the researcher, every data in the questionnaire has to be converted into quantitative data. As the first part of the questionnaire is consisted of all the demographic variables of the study, the nominal scale has been adopted by the researcher.

The second part of the questionnaire consists of fifteen sets of statements. Based on their agreement for the statements, they are measured in the following way as 1 - Strongly Agree, 2 - Agree, 3 - Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 - Disagree, 5 - Strongly Disagree

### 3.6 Administrative Procedure

The respondents were met at various higher educational institutions in the Palakkad and Coimbatore districts in the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Researcher explained the purpose of the study to the respondents and after getting their consensus to participate in the survey the questionnaires were administered to them. For the representation from other districts of these states the researcher sent the questionnaire through e-mail to the respondents. Partially filled questionnaires are not included in the research.

### 3.7 Sampling of the Study

Sampling is considered as the most important element in any research. For the purpose of this study, Higher Educational Institutions coming under self-financing sector from the States for Kerala and Tamil Nadu are considered. Based on the objectives of the study, faculties from higher educational institutions from these states who are designated as Associate Professors, Professors and Head of the Departments constitute the sample frame. For the convenience of the researcher, the respondents who can be contacted through e-mail alone were considered. The respondents were given adequate time for completing the questionnaire and the survey was open for forty-five days. More than 2500 respondents from both the states have been contacted for the survey, but only 519 respondents were completed all the items in the instrument. So the sample constituted for the study is 519. The sample includes both male and female and their qualification ranges from Post Graduation to PhD.

### 3.8 Data Analysis

The collected survey data are processed and analyzed by using SPSS 20.0 (Statistical Package for Social Science) for Microsoft Windows. Correlation is used to analyze the data.

**Analysis and Interpretation**

**1. To study the relationship between employee empowerment and the factors of Job satisfaction**

In Correlation it is convention that if the significant value is less than 0.05, then the correlation is considered to be significant. In this, since the significant value 0.000 is less than 0.05, we can say that there is significant value between employee empowerment and Job satisfaction.

**Correlations**

		empower	Satisfaction
Empower	Pearson Correlation	1	.314**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	519	519
satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.314**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	519	519

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In Pearson Correlation, the values range from -1 to +1 with negative numbers representing a negative correlation and positive numbers representing a positive correlation. The closer the value is to -1 to +1, the stronger the association is between the variables. Since the Pearson Correlation value is 0.314 hypothesis have a positive relationship between the employee empowerment and Job satisfaction.

**2. To study the relationship between employee empowerment and employee performance**

In Correlation, it is convention that if the significant value is less than 0.05, then the correlation is considered to be significant. In this, since the significant value 0.000 is less than 0.05, we can say that there is significant value between employee empowerment and employee performance.

**Correlations**

		empower	Performance
Empower	Pearson Correlation	1	.382**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	519	519
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.382**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	519	519

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In Pearson Correlation, the values range from -1 to +1 with negative numbers representing a negative correlation and positive numbers representing a positive correlation. The closer the value is to -1 to +1, the stronger the association is between the variables. Since the Pearson Correlation value is 0.382 hypothesis have a positive relationship between the employee empowerment and employee performance.

### **Conclusion**

People talk about empowerment in many different ways, but the basic theme remains give employees the means for making important decisions and making those decisions the right ones. The results when this process is done right are heightened productivity and better quality of work life. Employee empowerment is based on the concepts of job satisfaction and employee performance.

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