

Effects of Application of Bowen and Lawler's (1992) Employee Empowerment Model on Monitoring and Evaluations of Activities in the South African Public Healthcare System

Okanga Boniface¹

Department of Business Management; University of Johannesburg; Department of Management and Leadership; Milpark Business School; The South African Institute of Strategic Management and Business Research; Auckland Park, Johannesburg, South Africa;
E-Mail; Okangaboniface@Yahoo.com

Abstract

Basing on Bowen and Lawler's (1992) conceptualization of empowerment as a multi-dimensional management construct, this paper examines the influence of structural and psychological empowerment measures on monitoring and evaluations of activities in the South African public healthcare system. The findings revealed that structural empowerment enhances monitoring and evaluations of public sector activities by providing employees with authority and power to identify and resolve problems at the lowest possible levels. On the other hand, the paper noted that psychological empowerment induces employees' self-confidence, determination and competence to ensure that public sector activities are effectively accomplished according to prescribed standards and service delivery criteria. In effect, it was argued that the application of these two employee empowerment constructs result into improving monitoring and evaluations of public sector activities, and subsequently the achieving of outlined strategic public healthcare objectives and goals.

Keywords; Employee Empowerment; Structural Empowerment; Psychological Empowerment; Monitoring; Evaluations; Public Healthcare System.

1. INTRODUCTION

Robbins and Coulter (2003:498) postulate that monitoring and evaluation refers to the process of applying a set of techniques and processes to examine whether organizational activities are being accomplished in accordance with prescribed plans, strategies and standards. Through the application of such techniques and processes, Robbins and Coulter (2003:498) stated that managers are able to gain in-depth information on whether or not the outlined organizational goals and objectives are most likely to be achieved. Robbins and Coulter (2003:498) place significant emphasis on the existence of; planning, organizational structures, effective leadership, performances standards and application of appropriate techniques as some of the core prerequisites for enhancing effective monitoring and evaluating activities in modern public sector organizations. However, Honold (1997:202) pointed out that a thorough evaluation of modern public sector activities would indicate that employee empowerment is one of the key predictors for the successful monitoring and evaluating of modern public sector activities. Honold (1997:202) believes that effective employee empowerment results into improving employee motivation and enhances individual employee creativity on how organizations' plans and strategies must be successfully implemented. He based his arguments on the fact that employee empowerment's positive cumulative effects on employee motivation and creativity enhance individual employee's ability to immediately identify and correct deviations before they subsequently turn into major and costly organizational problems. Through these myriad benefits of empowerment, Honold (1997:202) argued that organizations are able to easily achieve desired outlined strategic objectives and goals. Honold's (1997:202) perceptions on positive effects of empowerment on organizational performance are echoed in views expressed by Spreitzer (2006:4) that the reasons for increasing adoption of employee empowerment in modern organizations are common across private and public sector organizations. Spreitzer (2006:4) pointed out that high and competitive demand for; lower costs, high performance, high quality, efficiency and effectiveness, means that public sector organizations must quickly respond by improving performance through improving employee commitment via employee empowerment. According to Spreitzer (2006), the successful empowering of employees significantly leads to reducing; worker dissatisfactions, costs of absenteeism, turnover, poor quality, sabotage, and alienation of managers from employees. On that basis, Spreitzer (2006:4) concurred with Honold (1997:202) that employee empowerment enhances individual employee's leadership over performance of the assigned tasks. In other words, Spreitzer (2006:4) construes that even in the absence of effective leadership and constant management supervision, employee empowerment can still significantly result into improving monitoring and evaluations of

¹ Okanga Boniface is a PhD Candidate at the Department of Business Management, Kingsway Campus, University of Johannesburg, South Africa. He is also a Senior Lecturer of Management and Leadership Programmes, and has extensive experience in teaching and tutoring the Research Methodology Module at the Milpark Business School in Johannesburg, South Africa. Okanga is also a Consultant at the Institute of Strategic Management and Business Research in Auckland Park, Johannesburg, South Africa.

organizational activities.

Despite these myriad benefits of employee empowerment, the World Bank Report (2011:45) reveals that there is only a little attempt to encourage the concept of employee empowerment in the modern South African public healthcare system. The World Bank Report (2011:45) notes that the South African public healthcare system is still characterized by; lack of consultation, employee resistance, lack of skills, interference from provincial governments, poor employee performance and lack of accompanying reward strategies. According to the World Bank Report (2011:45), these are evidence of lack of effective application of employee empowerment. The purpose of the White Paper for the Transformation of the Health Sector in South Africa (1997:1) was to decentralize and create appropriate structures that enhance monitoring and evaluations of public healthcare activities. However, the World Bank (2011) highlighted that decentralization in South Africa has degenerated to a mere kind of delegation, with limited devolution of responsibilities and resources to local levels. In other words, the World Bank Report (2011) implies that the South African's public healthcare system's approach to employee empowerment is inconsistent with Thomas and Velthouse's (1990:1) conceptualization that employee empowerment is not about creating empowering structures, but also a process of empowering employees psychologically. It is against that backdrop that this study is being conducted. The overriding hypothesis underpinning the study prescribe that that the use of the concept of employee empowerment would significantly result into improving monitoring and evaluations of activities in the South African public healthcare system. The paper is divided into four main parts; the first part examines the concept of employee empowerment and its effects on monitoring and evaluations of public sector activities. The second part provides a description of the methodology, and the third part discusses the findings as the fourth part examines recommendations of the measures that must be adopted to improve the use of employee empowerment during monitoring and evaluations of activities in the South African public healthcare system.

2. Conceptualization of Employee Empowerment Framework

Although many industry experts and authors construe empowerment to merely concern the process of delegating and sharing power (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2010:3), Bowen and Lawler (1992:32) pointed out that equating empowerment with delegating, sharing decision making authority, management by objectives, quality circles and employee involvement in strategic decision making process falls short of the requirements for achieving effective organizational employee empowerment. According to Bowen and Lawler (1992:32), effective employee empower involves application of a balanced combination of structural and psychological empowerment measures. They stated that structural empowerment concerns the process of delegating decision making powers by upper management to the lower management, and increasing access to information and resources among the individual employees in the lower organizational echelons. Bowen and Lawler (1992:32) believe that the effectiveness of structural employee empower is measured by the existence of variables encompassing; participative leadership, organizational structures, reward systems, access to information, organizational cultures, employee skills and traits, leader selection and assessment.

While concurring with Bowen and Lawler (1992:32) that employee empowerment concept is a multi-dimensional construct, Yukl and and Becker (2006:16) explained that the application of participative leadership induces a learning environment through which leaders are identified and developed. Yukl and and Becker (2006:16) noted that the creation of a pool of capable and competent leaders improves management and leadership of departments and units resulting from the established structures. They pointed out that information accessibility clears employees' doubts on standards and targets of performance expected of them. According to Yukl and Becker (2006:16), well informed employees are more easily able to detect deviations and apply remedial measures without management intervention. In other words, Yukl and and Becker (2006:16) further agree with Bowen and Lawler (1992:32) that structural empowerment results into significant costs and management's time savings, improving productivity and subsequently general organizational performance. However, Bowen and Lawler (1992:32) cautioned that the sole application of employee empowerment measures is unlikely to impact positively on improving employee and general organization. They attributed the basis of their arguments to the fact that the application of a combination of structural and psychological empowerment measures would enable the weaknesses of one set of measures to be outplayed by the strengths of the other, and vice-versa.

On the other hand, psychological empowerment is referred by Bowen and Lawler (1995) as the motivational construct manifested in cognitions reflecting the employee's orientation towards his or her work roles. In other words, they noted that it is the process of creating a conducive work environment in which employees perceive and believe that they are allowed to use their own initiatives and judgment in performing the allocated tasks. Conger and Kanungo (1998:3) tows Bowen and Lawler's (1995:5) that the concept of employee empowerment is not just about improving institutional abilities and internal entrepreneurship of employees, but also the process of enabling the perception of self-empowerment applications. They argued that empowerment must encourage employees to be result orientated, and become ambitious for success. This leads to the creating of a culture of high achievement motivated people. High achievement motivated people is defined by Epstein and Harackiewicz

(1992) to refer to the instinct that prompts people to effectively accomplish the assigned tasks. Nonetheless, Bowen and Lawler (1995:5) pointed out that variables measuring the effectiveness of psychological empowerment include; meaningfulness of the job, employee competence, extent of employee's self-determination, impact of individual employee performance on organizational performance and the existence of appropriate motivational strategies.

In other words, Bowen and Lawler (1995:5) construe that employees are most likely to feel psychologically empowered if they perceive the allocated tasks to be meaningful, and competent to perform such assigned tasks. They added that employees may also become psychologically satisfied and empowered if they are able to decide their own course of actions with less management influence and if the tasks performed are immediately followed with satisfactory application of corresponding rewards. Basing on a similar line of thought, Linden, Wayne and Sparrow (2000:22) stated that employee empowerment results in to increasing employee commitment, and sense of ownership of the allocated organizational activities. In terms of monitoring and evaluations, Linden et al. (2000:22) agreed with authors such as Mills and Ungson (2003:1) and Conger and Kanungo (1998:10) that there is a significant direct positive relationship between the application of employee empowerment concept and resulting improving monitoring and evaluations of organizational activities.

2.1 Effects of Employee Empowerment on M&E in the Public Sector

Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (2008:480) argue that effective monitoring and evaluations of organizational activities are predicted by application of appropriate standards, techniques and appropriate corrective and improvement actions. Stoner et al. (2008:480) posit that standards are guidelines which prescribe how activities in certain identified critical points must be accomplished, in order to render the achieving of the organisation's outlined strategic objectives and goals possible. In other words, Stoner et al. (2008:480) construe that the set organizational standards are the measuring rods which are used in determining not only how organizational activities must be accomplished, but also whether the ongoing accomplishment of activities are in accordance with prescribed criteria or guidelines. They noted that critical areas for standards' setting may encompass: physical standards, cost standards, capital standards, revenue standards, program standards, intangible standards and strategic plans as points for strategic controls. On the other hand, Koontz and Wehrich (2010:382) agreed with Stoner et al. (2008:480) that the existence of appropriate standards is unlikely to result into successful monitoring and evaluations of organizational performance, unless if it accompanied by a balanced application of feed forward, concurrent and feedback (post) management control techniques. According to Koontz and Wehrich (2010:382) and Stoner et al. (2008:480), applications of these techniques would enable managers to identify deviations and apply appropriate corrective measures.

Although McCracken and Wallace (2008:467) agrees that appropriate standards, techniques and appropriate corrective and improvement actions enhance monitoring and evaluations of organizational activities, they noted that since 100% of the organisation's activities are accomplished by its employees, it is unlikely that activities can be effectively monitored and evaluated unless if employees are empowered to do so. McCracken and Wallace (2008:467) argue that employee empowerment enables employees to access information and be conversant with existing standards, apply appropriate techniques and remedies in case of deviations. McCracken and Wallace's (2008:467) arguments are resonated in Conger and Kanungo's (1998:16) assertion that in employee empowered organization, individual employees are granted mandate to evaluate, detect deviations and take immediate corrective actions before deviations turn into serious costly problems. Conger and Kanungo's (1998:16) explained that whereas feed forward and feedback control techniques are applied once in a while, the applications of concurrent control techniques would require constant employee engagement and commitment for it to be successfully used in monitoring and evaluating activities. On the other hand, Mills and Ungson (2003:43) stated that structural empowerment increases employee responsibility and accountability to constantly ensure that activities are executed in accordance to processes and methods which enhance the organizational performance and achievement of the outlined strategic goals and objectives. Generally, Mills and Ungson (2003:43) agree with McCracken and Wallace's (2008:467) that the employee empowerment improving monitoring and evaluations of compliance with relevant standards, and the application of appropriate techniques and improvement actions.

3. METHODOLOGY

Basing on the above theories, it was hypothesized that the use of employee empowerment would result into improving monitoring and evaluations of activities in the South African public healthcare system. In other words, it is hypothesized that employee empowerment enhances monitoring and evaluations of compliance with the appropriate public healthcare standards, application of appropriate techniques, and corrective and improvement actions. In order to test these relationships, the study applies Standardized Regression Weights (Factor Loadings) and Square Multiple Correlation Coefficient (R^2) in order to determine whether employee empowerment is a predictor of effective compliance with existing public healthcare standards. The analysis also examined whether employee empowerment results into effective and successful application of appropriate techniques during monitoring and evaluations of public healthcare activities. Finally, Standardized Regression Weights (Factor

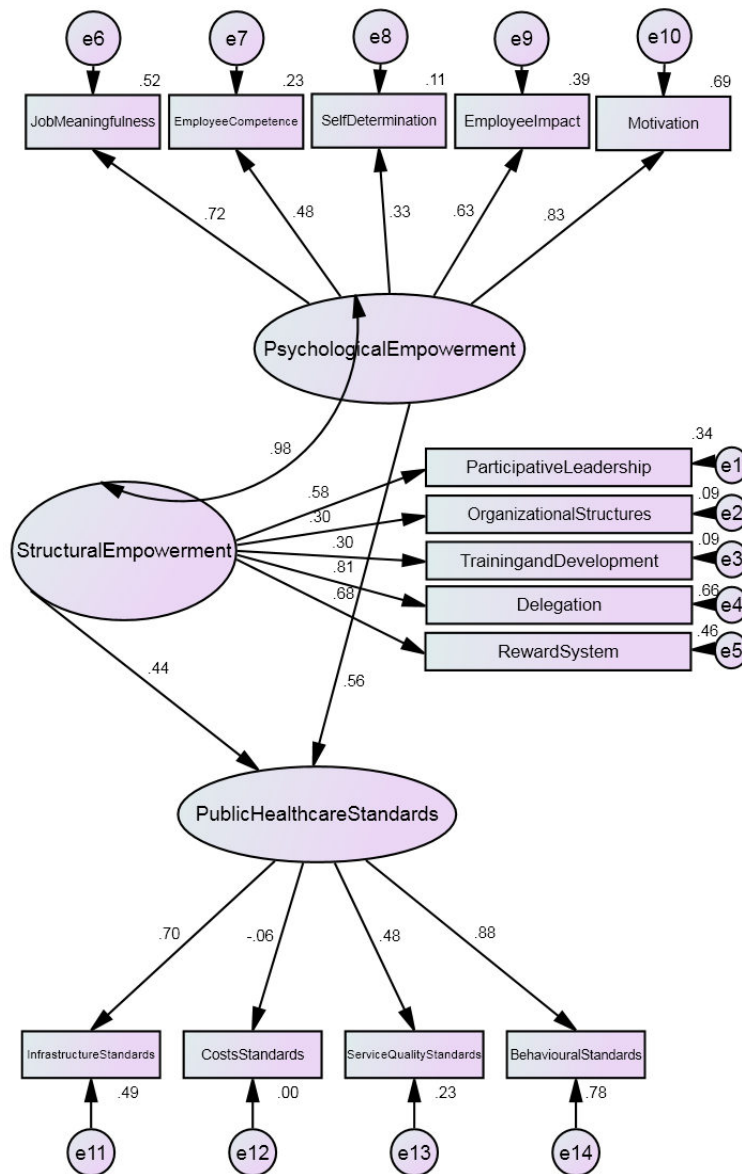
Loadings) and Square Multiple Correlation Coefficient (r^2) assessed the nexus between employee empowerment and application of corrective and improvement measures.

4776 public health hospitals and clinics combined were considered as the target population for the study. The application of cluster sampling resulted into the dividing of this target population according to the nine South African provinces; Eastern Cape (872 public health facilities), Free State (330), Gauteng (469), Kwa-Zulu Natal (700), Limpopo (707), Mpumalanga (419), Northern Cape (183), Northwest (507), Western Cape (589). Cochran (1963:75)'s formula ; $no = \frac{Z^2PQ}{e^2}$, was used for determining the appropriate and valid sample size for this population size (4, 776). Using; $no = \frac{Z^2PQ}{e^2}$, $Z = 1.96$ (as derived from the Z- Table; 95% confidence level), assume $q = .5$, $p = .5$ (maximum variability), and $e =$ is the level of precision which in this study is $\pm 7\%$. $no = \frac{(1.96)^2 (.5)(.5)}{(0.07)^2} = \frac{3.8416 \cdot 0.250}{0.0049} = 196$ Sample Respondents (But was rounded up for 200 respondents). After determining the valid sample size, simple random sampling was used to draw the 200 sample respondents into the study. A five point Likert (1932) Scale measurement instrument was used in the data collection process. A Cronbach Alpha's (1995) analysis using $\alpha = \frac{rk}{[1 + (k-1)r]}$ resulted into 0.9, and was construed to confirm the validity and reliability of the measuring instrument. The AMOS Version 20 of the SPSS (Statistical Programme for Social Sciences) was used in the data analysis and the findings were as presented and discussed in the next section.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

It is illustrated in Figure 4.1 that the results of Standardized Regression Weights (Factor Loadings) and Square Multiple Correlation Coefficient (r^2) indicate that employee empowerment significantly hence successful application of prescribed public healthcare standards in monitoring and evaluations of activities in the South African public healthcare system. This is demonstrated by the fact that it is indicated in Figure 1 that the relationship between structural empowerment and public healthcare standards is significant at .44. On the other hand, it is also noted that Figure 1 indicates that psychological empowerment also determines the successful applications of prescribed public healthcare standards on the basis of the fact that it is indicated in Figure 1 that public healthcare standards significantly loads at .56 onto the common factor (psychological empowerment). In other words, the findings echo Conger and Kanungo's (1998:16) assertions that employee empowerment results into improving employee satisfaction, motivation and commitment to ensure that the prescribed standards are individually complied with. However, the findings in Figure 1 seem to imply that such resulting positive effects of employee empowerment on improving application of prescribed standards, are predicted by the extent to which variables that determine successful employee empowerment are considered. In terms of structural empowerment, it is indicated that it is illustrated in Figure 1 that participative leadership is significant at .58, organizational structures (.30), training and development (.30), delegation (.80), and reward system (.68). Of all the measured variables, participative leadership, delegation and reward systems seem to be major predictors of effective structural empower as compared to organizational structures and training and developing which loaded quite lowly onto the common factor (structural empowerment).

Figure 1; The Effects of Employee Empowerment on Expected Public Healthcare Performance Standards

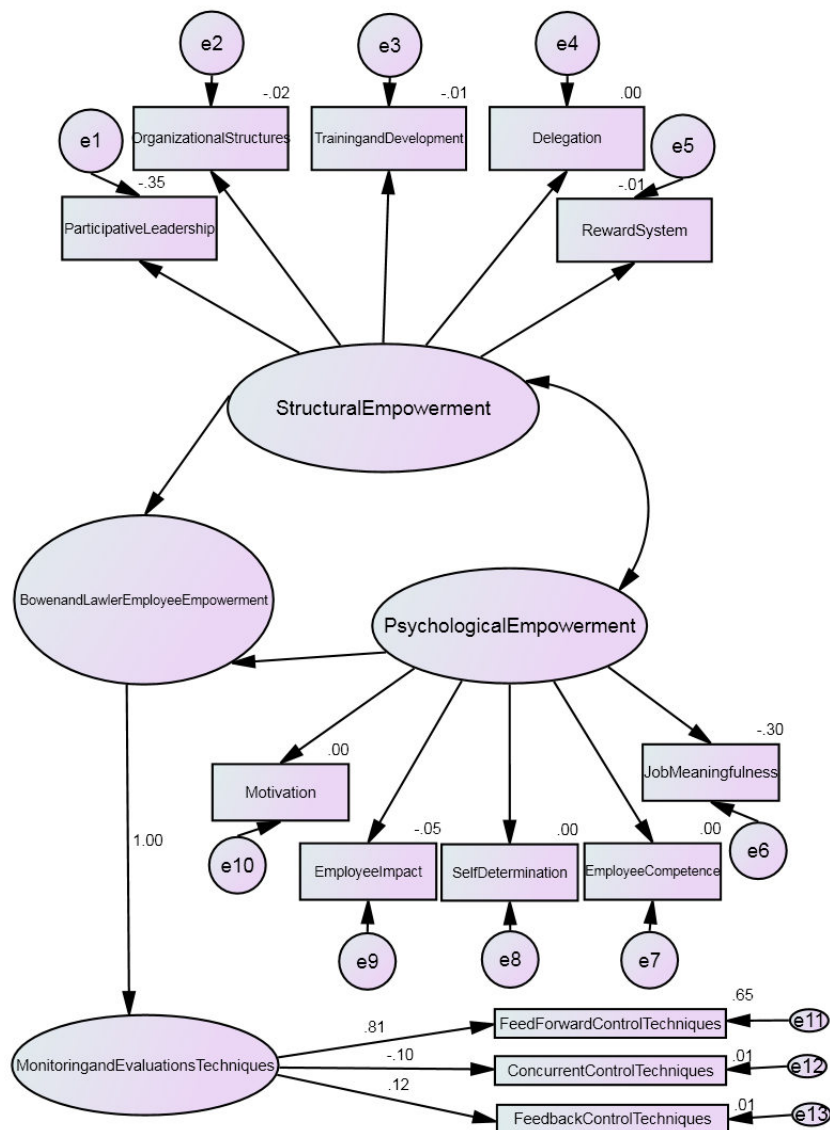


The less influence that organizational structures and training and development has on structural empowerment is further indicated in the fact that only 9% organizational structures and training and development explains the variance in the common factor (structural empowerment) respectively. On the other hand, it is indicated that participative leadership is explained by 34%, delegation (66%) and reward system (46%). This implies that structural empowerment significantly depends on how appropriate leadership styles, delegation and rewards systems are used.

Psychological empowerment, as Figure 1 further illustrates is measured by job meaningfulness (.72), employee competence (.48), self-determination (.33), impact of individual employee performance on organizational performance (.63) and motivation (.83). In other words, the findings in Figure 1 indicate that psychological employee empowerment is most likely to be achieved if organizations ensure that the tasks assigned are meaningful, employees feel that their performances are impacting positively on organizational performance and there are appropriate motivational strategies which are applied to further motivate high performers. Except for self-determination (11%), Figure 1 explains that the rest of the variables (job meaningfulness=52%, employee competence=23%, impact of individual employee performance on organizational performance= 39% and motivation=69%) explain the variance in the common factor (psychological empowerment). Generally Figure 1, imply that the application of a combination of structural and psychological empowerment results into improving monitoring and evaluations of activities in the South African public healthcare system. Such assertion finds basis in the fact that except for cost standards (-.06), infrastructural standard is significant at .70, service quality standards (.48) and behavioural standards (.88).

These demonstrate that employee empowerment induces employee commitment to ensure that public healthcare activities are not only accomplished within infrastructures of appropriate standards, but also all service quality and behavioural standards are complied with. Nonetheless, the findings also indicate that compliance with the appropriate public healthcare standards signify that employees are prepared to apply set of different techniques for monitoring and evaluating activities. This is demonstrated by the fact that it is indicated in Figure 2 that the relationship between employee empowerment and resulting effects on applications of monitoring and evaluation techniques is significant at 1. In other words, as Bowen and Lawler (1995:5) pointed out, effective structural employee empowerment requires training and developing employees on how to effectively accomplish the assigned tasks. It also enhances the developing of employees to ensure that they are capable of performing, detecting and correcting deviations with less management intervention or supervision. In this instance, Figure 2 indicate that effective application of monitoring and evaluations techniques is measured by effective applications of; feed forward (.81), concurrent (-.10) and feed back control techniques (.12). Generally, the findings imply employee empowerment enables employees to be trained not only on how to effectively accomplish the assigned tasks, but also on how to apply the available techniques in order to evaluate and monitor how activities are being accomplished. This would result into improving monitoring and evaluations of public healthcare activities and subsequently improving general performance of the South African public healthcare system.

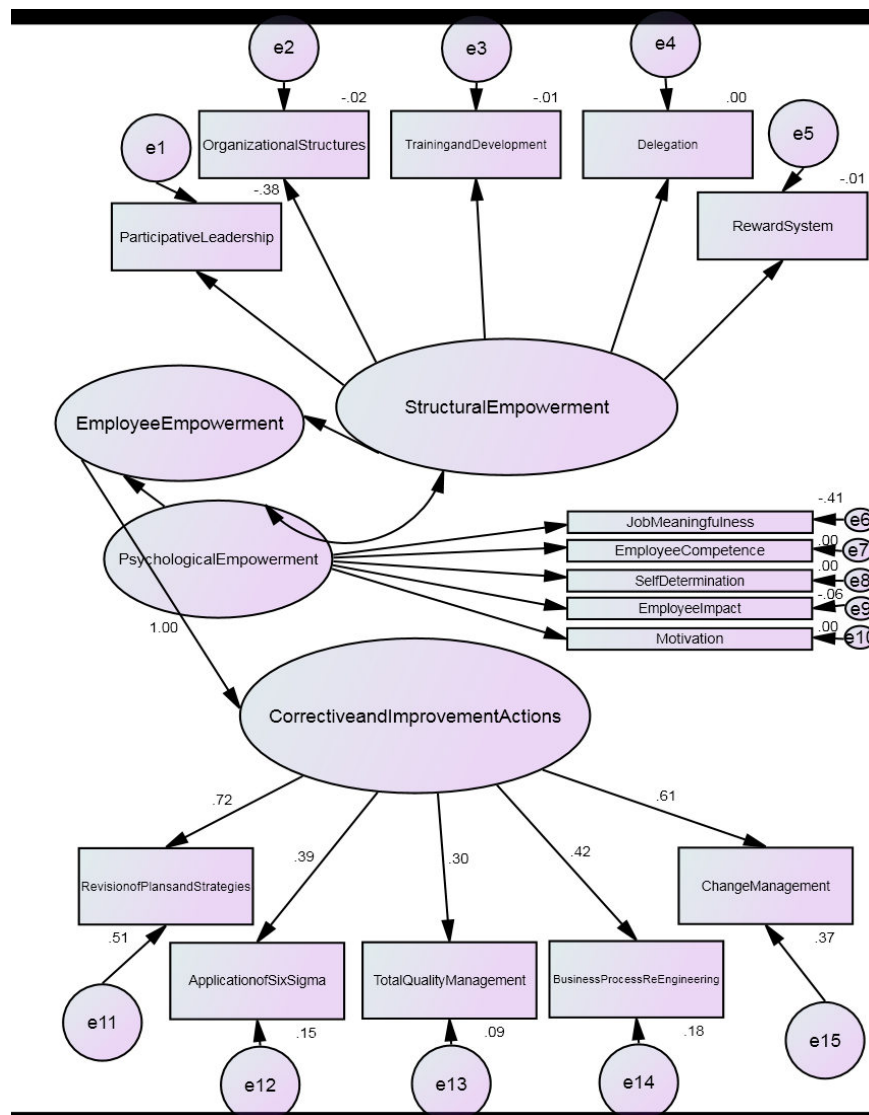
Figure 2; The Effects of Employee Empowerment on Successful Applications of Monitoring and Evaluation Techniques



However, as Figure 3 illustrates resulting positive effects of employee empowerment on improving performance of the South African public healthcare system will also be measured by the extent to which ordinary employees

are induced to apply measures and improvement actions towards remedying the identified deviations.

Figure 3; The Effects of Employee Empowerment on Applications of Corrective and Improvement Actions



This is because it is demonstrated in Figure 3 that the relationship between employee empowerment and effective application of corrective and improvement actions is significant at 1. In other words, the findings in Figure 3 illustrate that employee empowerment, not only induce employee commitment and motivation to comply with existing public healthcare standards by applying appropriate techniques, but also enhance the use of appropriate corrective and improvement measures. According to Figure 1, the effectiveness of the applied corrective and improvement measures is measured by; revision of public healthcare plans and strategies (.72), application of Six-Sigma (.39), Total Quality Management (.30), Business Process Re-Engineering (BPR) (.42), and Change Management Strategies (.61). Of all the corrective and improvement measures, revision of public healthcare plans and strategies (.72), Change Management Strategies (.61), and Business Process Re-Engineering (BPR) (.42) loaded quite highly onto the common factor. This implies that resulting improving performance of the South African public healthcare system can be significantly realized if the commonly undertaken corrective and improvement measures include; revision of public healthcare plans and strategies (.72), Change Management Strategies (.61), and Business Process Re-Engineering (BPR) (.42).

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The empirical research has revealed that in a number of instances, the notion of employee empowerment has been construed by a number of industry experts, managers and authors as the process of delegating and sharing power between managers and ordinary employees. Despite the fact that Bowen and Lawler (1992:32) agreed that the use of such structural approach enhances employee empowerment, they noted that structural approach alone

is insufficient for achieving improving employee and general organizational performance. Bowen and Lawler (1992:32) then suggested that the use of a combination of structural and psychological empowerment would improve general organizational performance. Under structural empowerment, Bowen and Lawler (1992:32) stated that organizations must consider measures encompassing; employee training and development, decentralization, application of appropriate reward strategies, and leadership. On the other hand, they noted that the use of psychological empowerment would involve ensuring that; the job design is meaningful, employees' competence, self-determination, impact and motive. Bowen and Lawler (1992:32) further argued that whereas structural empowerment creates the structures and frameworks which are essential for achieving employee empowerment, psychological empowerment helps in creating conditions which make employees feel empowered. Bowen and Lawler (1992:32) pointed out that the use of a combination of structural and psychological empowerment results into improving general organizational performance. This study shares the same view, but notes that Bowen and Lawler (1992:32) did not elaborate on how the use of structural and psychological empowerment would result into improving evaluations and monitoring of activities in the South African public healthcare system. Some rather less elaborated theories by other authors indicate that the use of empowerment results into improving monitoring and evaluations of organizational activities. It was also noted that although the South African public service recognizes the importance of employee empowerment, there has yet been no adoption of any empowerment framework which emphasizes the integrating of employee empowerment into the monitoring and evaluation framework. It was on that basis that this study hypothesized that the integrating of Bowen and Lawler's (1992:32) empowerment framework into monitoring and evaluations concepts would significantly result into improving monitoring and evaluations of activities in the South African public healthcare system. Using the results of confirmatory factor analysis, it was concluded that findings indicated that the hypothesized empowerment theory reproduces the observed sample data. On that basis, it is important that the South African public healthcare system adopts Bowen and Lawler's (1992:32) framework as the measure for ensuring the successful use of employee empowerment in facilitating the monitoring and evaluation of its activities. In order to accomplish these, the Bowen and Lawler (1992:32) must follow the steps explained below;

Establish Appropriate Structural Empowerment Framework; achieving this implies that the South African public healthcare system must train and develop their employees on matters which are essential for effective accomplishment of monitoring and evaluations. This implies that employees in the South African public healthcare system must be required to either short term or medium management education programmes at the Universities. Or accredited experts on management and monitoring and evaluations can be contracted to provide training programmes which are ingrained with provisions of practical applications of monitoring and evaluations in typical workplace settings. Training programmes must provide highlights on key monitoring and evaluation areas. These key areas encompass; the expected mission, goals and objectives which must be achieved, the standards which are in place, techniques and improvement measures which can be applied. This would enable ordinary employees to be empowered with what is expected of them, gain creativity, innovation and improve their roles in monitoring and evaluating public sector activities.

In other words, training must be conducted in conjunction with employee development programmes, so that each employee can be a manager of his or her own allocated tasks. This can be accomplished through undertaking horizontal and vertical job rotation to enable ordinary employees gain deeper understanding of how the entire South African public healthcare system works as a system. This would also facilitate the ordinary employee's understanding of how to relate deviations and the undertaking of corrective measures in one department with another. The implementation of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in one department without considering its implications on activities in another department can significantly affect the undertaking of effective monitoring and evaluations of general organizational activities.

Training and development must also be accompanied with the undertaking of decentralization to enhance the sharing of power and decision making authorities with ordinary employees. It would not result into much improving monitoring and evaluations, if employees are well trained and developed, but are not entrusted with the decision making powers. This would hinder their creativity and innovation to devise ways of detecting deviations and applying the appropriate improvement measures. Decentralization will only improve structural empowerment and monitoring and evaluations if does not resulted into creating isolated and uncoordinated silos. In other words, effective coordination of activities between departments and units must be encouraged by improving horizontal, vertical, lateral and diagonal communication mechanisms. This would help in the undertaking of a holistic approach to monitoring and evaluations. Improving coordination and communication of activities would also imply that the South African public healthcare system must be willing to invest a significant amount in its information technology. And finally, the government will have to encourage mainly the use of participative leadership style to influence how activities are monitored and evaluated.

Establish Appropriate Psychological Empowerment Framework; under psychological empowerment, the South African public healthcare system will have to ensure that jobs are designed in the way that provides meaning and importance to ordinary employees. For instance, jobs with lack of variety may affect the meaning that the employee attaches to the job, and subsequently declining satisfaction, moral, commitment and a feeling

of less empowerment. This may affect monitoring and evaluations of activities as ordinary employees will tend to be less concerned about what is going on. The training and development which are undertaken in step 1 must be used in step 2 to build on employee's competence and self-determination. This means that the South African public healthcare system must only provide guidelines and grant ordinary employees with enormous amount of autonomy to determine their work methods, processes and systems. Such approach would enhance the employee's understanding of their work, and subsequently enhancing the ordinary employee's constant evaluations and monitoring of whether activities are being accomplished according to prescribed standards and expectations. This subsequently impacts positively on organizational performance, and improving ability to achieve the desired strategic objectives and goals.

Examine the Effects of Employee Empowerment on Monitoring and Evaluations of its Activities; this can be achieved by assessing whether after empowerment, employees have a detailed understanding of how the organization's mission. Goals and objectives can be achieved. In addition, the South African public healthcare system will also have to examine whether after empowerment, all the employees understand how different standards and monitoring and evaluation techniques must be used. If the employees are capable of applying these and take appropriate improvement or corrective measures without the assistance from management, then a conclusion can be drawn that empowerment has resulted into improving involvement of ordinary employees in monitoring and evaluations of public sector activities. It is also important that the government department keep clear data and track on situations and frequencies of circumstances where ordinary employees have effectively monitored and evaluated public sector activities without management intervention. If there are more failures, the steps outlined in the above model must be reviewed and followed all over again.

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