# UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

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**Abstract**

Employee empowerment becomes more important in organizations as management styles have shifted to a focus on numerous leaders rather than supervisors within business world. It is a leader's responsibility to motivate and engage their followers in their work, and can accomplish this through empowering their employees. The topic of employee empowerment has been well explored, and has a clear impact on worker's performance. This research aims to examine how the empowerment an employee feels they have can affect how they view their leader. The results revealed a correlation in workers opinion of their leader and their perceived level of empowerment; except when it comes to the decision making process. In addition, an overwhelming amount of employees reported that communication with their leader is strained and that is something they would like to strengthen. These findings provide significant insight for leaders, emphasizing the importance of including employees in decision-making processes and establishing clear, honest and open communication with their followers.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Empowerment, Workplace, Communication, Decision-making Process, Job Satisfaction, and Commitment

**Introduction**

A recent change in management style has led to the empowerment of employees in the workplace.  This provides ground for new research regarding employee empowerment and its effects.  More specifically, we wish to examine the question does followers' perceived level of empowerment affect their opinion of their leader?  We chose this topic because as we build our leadership qualities we feel it is important to study the relationship between a leader and their followers. A leader cannot lead without any followers; therefore, understanding how to build a following and continue to keep them inspired is imperative. From what we have learned thus far, followers' perceptions of their leader can have an effect on their

personal performance towards the common goal. In an attempt to continuously encourage all followers to work diligently towards the common goal we would like to investigate how viewpoints of a leader can be affected by individuals perceived level of empowerment. Empowering followers is an assumed responsibility of all leaders and thought to be a motivational tactic; however, we would like to explore how the level of empowerment a person believes they have can influence the feelings they have about their leader's effectiveness. Studying this concept will shed light on the true important of empowering followers, what makes followers feel most empowered, and if the level of empowerment granted to followers correlates with their opinion of their leader. A negative view of one's leader has the possibility of hindering performance and compromising the ultimate vision; therefore, exploring the aspects that guide followers to develop a positive image of their leader establishes desirable outcomes.

## Literature Review
## Leadership, Empowerment and Public Organizations

When analyzing empowerment it is important to look into what variables cause managers to practice empowerment. A study titled "Leadership, Empowerment and Public Organizations" conducted by David Pitts sought to measure the common variables of leaders who choose to empower their employees over those who do not. The determinants he examined were as follows: the manager's gender, the ethnicity of the manager, the leaders education level, the organizational resources of the company, the task difficulty of the work at hand, and the environmental uncertainty. It was hypothesized that women were more likely to empower employees than men for numerous reasons. Pitts (2005) explains that "women seek to be empowered while men seek to have power over others" and "women have been more likely to take on a democratic leadership style …[and] prefer values of community to values of individualism". These theories lead us to believe that women indeed would be more likely to empower their subordinates; however, through his research Pitts found that this was not the case. The study revealed that the women interviewed were no more likely to practice empowerment than the women interviewed; this could be because women adapted to a more masculine role considering the job is dominated by males or that 89% of respondents were male while only 11% surveyed were females (Pitts, 2005). Furthermore, often it is theorized that managers that belong to a minority group are more likely to practice empowerment with their employees as well as leaders with roots in collectivist cultures. Pitts (2005) disproved this ideology by finding that there is not a significant difference in use of empowerment between the different ethnicities and that collectivist verse individualistic cultures also

have no effect. Consequently, this may be because all respondents were American managers who most likely have adopter the American individualistic style that is independent of their deep-rooted culture. Pitts (2005) however did hypothesize that education level would affect the practice of empowerment and it was found in his research that "managers with doctoral degrees are more likely to empower subordinates than are managers with only master's or bachelor's degrees". As for the following three organizational factors, this study revealed that organizational resources have no impact while difficult tasks and more structured environments often encourage more empowerment practices in managers (Pitts, 2005). This research provides us with both insights into specific variables of empowerment use, as well as laying down a framework for exploring more information on the types of factors that determine managers who will empower their subordinates.

**Understanding Empowerment from an Employee Perspective & Measuring Empowerment**
        The meaning of empowerment is abstract for many people, have different ways of defining it depending on various factors. One study conducted by Pardo del Val and Llyod (2002) titled "Measuring Empowerment" sought to build a model for measuring empowerment in various types of organizations through defining empowerment. Through their research they found they "defined empowerment as the managerial style where managers share with the members of the organization their influence in the decision making process" (Pardo del Val & Llyod, 2002). While this holds true, often one's definition of empowerment can additionally be impacted by one's level within the organizational structure and the level of delegation they deem appropriate to be considered empowerment. By looking at empowerment from the perspective of an employee, you will find that their explanation and the type of empowerment they desire differ from the thoughts of many managers. In the study titled "Understanding Empowerment from an Employee Perspective" conducted by Greasley, Bryman, Dainty, Price, Naismith and Soetanto (2008) 45 in-depth interviews were conducted with employees to comprehend their perceptions of empowerment and how they would like to feel empowered in their workplace. The findings revealed that "the general consensus is that employees typically want some empowerment in the form of control, authority and decision making but the level and form of the desired empowerment varies…and should this line be crossed then empowerment soon becomes exploitation" (Greasley, et.al, 2008). This illustrates that employees do indeed feel that they are empowered and would like to be presented with empowerment; however, these levels are different depending

on employee personality and employee's needs. In addition, if employees feel that they are not empowered enough they get a sense of being controlled by management; whereas, if employees feel that they have been granted with too much empowerment they believe they are being taken advantage of in performing jobs that they believe they shouldn't have to do. The results of this study help us to understand that empowerment must be dealt with strategically on the job and the use of empowerment must be harmonized with the organization and employees standing within the organization.

**Employee Perception of Empowerment**

　　Another study also measuring employees' perceptions titled "Employee Perception of Empowerment" by Bryman, Dainty, Price and Soetanto, Greasley, King (2004) revealed similar findings. To collect their data, the researchers conducted sixteen semi-structured interviews with four employees from four different companies; all employees surveyed were in non-managerial or supervisory roles. Through the interviews "the employees indicated that there are two main ways that empowerment can be achieved: through the demonstration of trust; and by allowing operatives to make their own decisions in relation to their work" (Bryman, et al., 2004). The respondents felt that they were indeed empowered as long as their supervisors granted them decision making powers and trusted in their decisions and work; however the levels of each were determined upon the situation and individual employee. This observation parallels the findings from the previous study whereas if a leader gives the employee too much decision-making power or trusts in them too much that they don't give them any direction then the employee feels as if the manager is not doing their job and they are being taken advantage of. Bryman, et al. (2004) explain that "the various perceptions of empowerment also seem to highlight the need for management to recognize employees a individuals who have different needs and wants and hence, the same action will not necessarily produce the same results". Therefore, the level of empowerment given to each employee cannot just be given out equally but instead must be cautiously determined by the manager and the interactions between the employee and their leader.

**The Organizational Empowerment Scale**

　　Much of the research on empowerment agrees that employee's perception is key. This is often known as psychological empowerment. Matthews, Diaz and Cole (2002) proved in their research titled "The Organizational Empowerment Scale" that "theorists and practitioners who hold to the psychological perspective of empowerment maintain that an employee will only be truly empowered when they, the employee, perceive that they are empowered". In their study they surveyed 134 undergraduate

students by asking them to rate scenarios using various empowerment scales. By evaluating the students' answers, the researchers were able to decipher the most valuable ways to provide empowerment to employees through perceptions. "It is proposed by the authors that the most cost-effective and efficient manner in which to increase an employee's perception of empowerment is to alter the environment in which that employee functions" (Matthew, et al., 2002). It was discovered that simply changing the atmosphere and tasks of an employee can make them feel as if they are more empowered, thus gaining the many positive consequences that come from empowered employees. Analysis of the responses also revealed that employees that felt empowered often are more committed to their work and organization, thus "empowering employees leads to the real goals: motivated employees and the associated profits" (Matthew, et al., 2002).

**Enhancing Commitment through Work Empowerment**

Employees who feel empowered in their workplace often feel as if they are valued at their job and by their leaders. That sense of value makes them feel as if they are both making an impact and are a vital part of the daily activities, being empowered gives them a sense of commitment to the organization. In a study entitled "Enhancing Commitment through Work Empowerment" by Liu, Chiu and Fellows (2007) they sought out to discover what types of organizational commitment are impacted by empowerment of employees. Through surveying 152 employees with a questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale the researchers investigated how empowerment can influence both affective and continuance commitment. It was proven that "feeling empowered in the work environment is conductive to the employees having a higher level of commitment towards their organizations" meaning the more empowered an employee felt, the more commitment they felt towards their organization (Liu, et al., 2007). When breaking down organizational commitment into the different factors, it was revealed that empowerment has no real affect of continuance commitment; however, is closely related to affective commitment. Those finding clearly explains why when employees feel more empowered they develop a positive emotional attachment with the organization and feel integrated. Empowered employees feel integrated with the organization and therefore commits because they "want to". Considering affective commitment leads to "increased performance and effectiveness", these positive aspects can be enhanced simply by increasing employee's empowerment perceptions (Liu, et al., 2007).

**The Path to Empowerment**
There are some principles that companies need to keep in mind in order to develop a coherent plan for employee empowerment. The first thing that employers should keep in mind is that the goal of empowerment is to achieve interdependence between employees and their place of work. The second point emphasized is creating an empowered culture that is both "evolutionary and revolutionary".  Companies should expect this process to occur overtime and in stages. It also states to keep in mind that some stages might upset employees. Another important aspect of employee empowerment is that every level of the organization must be involved with the change process. This relates to the next principle mentioned which explains that people have to work together in order for employee empowerment to work successfully. Another thing that employers should keep in mind while trying to create a work culture with employee empowerment is that change should be a public event. Everyone has to know what is meant to occur and also how it will happen. Finally, the progress toward employee empowerment is dependent on the presence of specific communication skills which include giving, listening and being able to receive feedback. Facilitating meetings, and using conflict within the organization creatively as a means of producing improvement is paramount.

**Empowerment: Myth or Reality?**
This article examines the concept of employee empowerment. At the beginning of this article, the author, Michele Darling, asks if employee empowerment is really the key to creating excitement, energy, and commitment in organizations. The goal here is to understand "the real story of empowerment". Darling believes that there isn't just one single "golden lever" that creates an empowered organization. She believes that empowerment is the result of aligning all of an organizations systems, processes, people and practices.

Darling then goes into an analysis of why choose employee empowerment. Her findings help conclude that creating an organizational based environment that encourages creativity, innovation, problem solving, and problem resolution within an appropriate control framework is beneficial towards many important aspects such as customer satisfaction.

Darling did research at her own place of business, a bank called CIBC (Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce). She asked customers what they wanted from tellers. The overall customer response was that they wanted tellers who were not only knowledgeable and committed to service but also had the knowledge and ability to make appropriate decisions on the spot. Darling goes on to say that the essence of empowerment was the transfer of decision making and ownership from managers to those

individuals who have the knowledge and the ability to most appropriately makes decisions. Darling concludes the article by saying that at her own place of business, she feels that CIBC moves empowerment closer to a reality every day.

## Worker Empowerment Works-Sometimes

This article exams employee empowerment as a concept that can potentially be a potent organizational performance enhancer; however there are factors that can cause it to not be a success. A factor that can hurt an organizations success when it comes to establishing employee empowerment is poor team player skills. The article then goes on to say that although poor team player skills hinder success, research indicates that teams are futile unless management is willing to pass on decision making powers down to workers.

Another thing that hinders the success of establishing employee empowerment is the inconsistency of an organization. Some companies will adopt teams and worker empowerment and then just abandon them.

The willingness of employees to work is another factor that can help or hinder the process. This article points out that some employees simply just do not want to do work. To solve this problem, organizations must focus on hiring capable and motivated employees from the start rather than attempting to turn lazy workers into productive ones.

## Employee Perceptions of Empowerment

This article describes a study that examined how employee empowerment is perceived by individuals who are employed to work on construction projects. The findings in this study indicated that although it has been proven that employee empowerment in the construction industry is a useful tool, many managers are resistant to empowerment because it can be seen as a relinquishing of power for managers.

The study discovered that the four dimensions that are important to empowerment are meaningfulness, competence, self-determination, and impact. When individuals feel a high sense of these things, they tend to feel a greater sense of empowerment.

Next the article examines the very crucially important aspect of the dynamic relationship between an employer and employees. It is essential that the leader recognizes the important efforts made by the employees.

The benefits of empowerment can be divided into two broad areas, benefits for the organization and benefits for the individual. However, there are certain barriers that can hinder this empowerment. These include the resistance of change by both management and employees. Managers are sometimes resistant to empowerment of employees because they view it as a

relinquishing of power. Employees are resistant because they do not always see the benefits as worth it.

## Understanding Empowerment from an Employee Perspective: What Does it Mean and Do They Want it?

This article examined the various meanings of empowerment for employees from their own perspective, the psychological dimension of empowerment and whether employees want to be empowered.

First this article defines the definition of employee empowerment as a perception that an employee holds. There are two distinct perspectives on empowerment that have evolved. Structural empowerment refers to organizational policies, practices and structures that grant employees greater latitude to make decisions and exert influence regarding their work. The psychological dimension of empowerment moves away from the traditional study of management practices and instead emphasizes employees' perceptions. Basically, employees' perceptions of the meaningfulness, competence, self determination and impact in their job environment influence their feelings of feeling empowered.

This article also goes into what employee empowerment means to employees. Research was conducted and employees that were asked about empowerment did not appear to have familiarity with the concept of empowerment.  The majority of participants did not recognize the term and stated that it had no meaning for them.

This article also indicates that the employees interviewed do want to be empowered to a certain extent and in a variety of ways. The employees polled for this article showed a willingness to be involved in the project they were currently engaged in. The general findings from this article were that employees do want to feel empowerment in the form of control, authority and decision making but the level and form of the desired empowerment varied. Most of the employees surveyed did not associate themselves with the term "power". It was concluded that the reason for this is that the employees did not recognize this in themselves or in their roles in the team.

## The Effects of Psychological Empowerment on Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction

In the Journal of Social Psychology, Fuller, Morrison, Jones, Bridger, and Brown study the relationship between transformational leadership and the positive effects it has on things such as job satisfaction. Transformational leadership is the "ability to bring about significant change in an organization's vision, strategy, and culture as well as promote innovation in products and technologies" (Daft 362). The article defines psychological empowerment as "the increased intrinsic task motivation manifested in

cognitions that reflect an individual's active orientation to his or her work role" (Fuller 389). The determinants of psychological empowerment included individual variables and social structural variables, like job design, work unit climate, and reward system (Fuller 380). The study was conducted amongst 230 nurses, ranging from nursing assistants to licensed nurses, at a medical facility in the southern United States. The scientists measured the transformational leadership through Bass's Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, each with the four dimensions: idealized influence, inspiration, intellectual simulation, and individualized consideration (Fuller 380). The results of the study indicated that empowerment "moderated the relationship between three and four dimensions of transformational leadership and job satisfaction" (Fuller 380).

**Empowering Leadership in Management Teams: Effects of Knowledge Sharing, Efficacy, and Performance.**

Abhishe Srivastav wrote a scholarly article pertaining to empowering leadership in management teams. It is discussed how empowering leadership is important for team performance (1239). Srivastav, Bartol, and Locke research the critical question is whether "it is enough for leaders to simply exhibit a certain number of behaviors to generate effective performance in teams" (1239). They also argue the relationship between the leader's behavior and team performance. They consider that two key mechanisms are important: the knowledge shared as a team process and team efficacy as a state of empowering leadership (1239). A study was conducted 102 hotel properties in the United States to examine the correlation of knowledge sharing and team efficacy in the relationship between empowering leadership and team performance. The results stated that empowering leadership did not affect team performance. However, empowering leadership was positively related to knowledge sharing and team efficacy. This shows that both were positively related to performance (1246).

**Empowerment, job satisfaction and organizational commitment:  A Comparative analysis of nurses working in Malaysia and England**

Ahmad and Oranye conducted a study in hopes to examine the relationships between nurse's empowerment, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. They have surveyed 556 registered nurses (RNs) in two teaching hospitals in England and Malaysia (582). After reading the article, we were able to summarize the different cultural backgrounds and results of two different countries and their views or empowerment, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment to their job. Ahmad and Oranye define empowerment in the past as "job enrichment through participation" and in the future as "energizing followers through

leadership" (583). They define empowerment as two concepts: structural and psychological empowerment. Job satisfaction is defined as the overall one's feelings or state of mind regarding their nature of work ("Job Satisfaction"). They can either be satisfied or dissatisfied with their job. Ahmad and Oranye define organizational commitment as "an individual's attitude and behavior towards an organization's goal" (584). The results of the surveys resulted in showing that England's nurses were older, more educated, and well rounded, which lead to Ahmad and Oranye's conclusion that these nurses were more flexible and had more freedom in their job as opposed to Malaysia's nurses. They were able to come to the conclusion that there was a positive relationship between empowerment, job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Ahmad 589). Ahmad stated that Malaysian nurses had greater empowerment and commitment compared to England nurses, however nurses in Malaysia were less satisfied with their job than those in England. The important factor that determined job satisfaction in Malaysia was interaction, while in England, pay level was the determining factor for job satisfaction.

## How to Empower Your Employees

Leaders and managers must understand the importance of empowering their employees and how it is helpful for their organization. Anthony Bradley and Mark McDonald research and indicate what is needed to empower your employees. The authors explain that the most important asset of an organization is how one empowers their employee. If a leader is not helping empower their employees, motivation and productivity of employees could be low in trying to achieve the overall organization's goal. The correlate that empowerment equals productive work (Bradley 1). Bradley explains that it is important to work in teams and groups in order to empower the employees. It is also important to provide them with the necessary tools and resources the employees would need in order to be successful at their job.

## Work empowerment in multidisciplinary teams during organizational change

Leading organizational change can be a highly challenging task. In general, employees tend to resist change in any form that directly affects them within the work place.  In order counter resistance, some managers choose to empower employees attempting to facilitate change within the organization.  This management decision prompted the research done by Sirkku Rankinen, Tarja Suominen and others.  Their research article entitled "Work empowerment in multidisciplinary teams during organizational change" examined the effects of empowerment on organizational change,

"This study set out to explore the associations between organizational change factors and perceived work empowerment in a setting where patients with chronic diseases are being cared for by multi-professional teams" (2009) The authors argue that communication is essential for smooth organizational change. As a result, clear communication to employees leads to a greater sense of empowerment, "Work empowerment is achieved better when the personnel have access to adequate information about the changes that lie ahead." (2009) Leaders who communicate empower their employees, which in turn create confidence in those leaders. This is proven by the author's research, in that, employees who perceived communication as "good" reported feeling higher levels of empowerment. In short, the research provides significant evidence that communication during organizational change leads to empowered employees which continues into confidence and trust in their leaders.

**New Graduate Burnout: The Impact of Professional Practice Environment, Workplace Civility, and Empowerment**

Firms that empower employees create an organizational atmosphere that results in several benefits. Studies have shown that empowered employees have higher levels of job satisfaction, decreased absenteeism, and stronger relationships with co-workers and supervisors, and are overall more productive. This applies for every industry, even in health care. Research conducted by Heather K. Spence Laschinger, Joan Finegan and Piotr Wilk show the effects of empowerment to newly graduated nurses in a hospital atmosphere. Their article entitled "New Graduate Burnout: The Impact of Professional Practice Environment, Workplace Civility, and Empowerment" discusses the positive effects of empowerment on nurses. They argue that "nurses who are empowered to provide care according to professional nursing standards experience greater satisfaction with their work" (2009). The study included a series of surveys to 247 nurses who had graduated within the past 2 years. The results concluded that only a small amount of nurses felt that their workplace was empowering. However, "graduates reported somewhat positive ratings of workplace civility in their work settings" (2009). Workplace civility includes feelings towards supervisor, which leads to believe that empowered employees have stronger relationships with their superiors than those of un-empowered workers. The study also showed lack of empowerment lead to higher rates of burnout, "The significant impact of these working conditions on new graduates' experiences of burnout suggest that managerial strategies that empower nurses for professional practice are needed to ensure nurses' health and wellbeing" (2009). The stresses related to the nursing field can be very harmful to the nurses and the patients they are caring for. Empowering the

nurses to take more responsibility for their tasks can lead to better care of the patients and have positive impact on the nurses and lead to stronger working relationships.

## Psychological empowerment, job satisfaction and performance among Filipino service workers

Research has shown many positive impacts empowerment has on the American worker.  However, do the same impacts exist in a different country with significant culture differences?   Empowerment focuses on the individual, giving them power over their job and providing them with knowledge to make decisions, although empowerment may not be as effective in a culture with high power distance.   Research by Regina Hechanova, Ramon Benedicto and Edna Franco titled "Psychological empowerment, job satisfaction and performance among Filipino service workers" examined the effects empowerment had on workers in a different cultural setting.  The purpose of their study was, "The present study looks into the relationship of empowerment on satisfaction and performance and the factors that may influence such relationships" (2006).  The authors argue that empowerment can be seen from two perspectives, a physical empowerment where employees make decisions regarding their work, change tasks etc.  The second approach is from a psychological perspective and focuses on the intrinsic rewards perceived by the employees as a result of empowerment.   These rewards include but are not limited to: job satisfaction, motivation, and self-efficacy. The authors argue that empowerment has an additional benefit and that is opening communication between workers and leaders, "Empowerment initiatives at these firms will focus more on soliciting suggestions from employees and generally improving the lines of communication between employees and management" (2006). Opening communication leads to better relationships between workers and supervisors. Research has also shown empowering employees leads to better communication.   The authors' primary research was conducted in a survey style format consisting of 954 participants in five different service industries.   From this research their findings proved somewhat successful, "We found support for our hypothesis that empowerment would be significantly correlated to both job satisfaction and performance" (2006) however insufficient evidence prevented the support of the second hypothesis, "The hypothesis had predicted that motivation would moderate the relationship of psychological empowerment with satisfaction and performance" (2006).   In summary, their research proves that empowerment has a positive impact on workers in cultures different to that of western society.  Empowered employees have stronger relationships with

supervisors and feel a greater sense of job satisfaction and self-efficacy even in eastern culture.

## The Effect of Empowerment on Job Knowledge: An Empirical Test Involving Operators of Complex Technology

Much research has been conducted to determine the benefits of having empowered employees.  Typical research has shown that employee empowerment has been proven to increase motivation, job satisfaction, and self-efficacy.   However, the question still remained; does empowering employees increase their level of work related knowledge?   One study conducted by Desmond Leach, Toby Wall, and Paul Jackson entitled "The effect of empowerment on job knowledge: An empirical test involving operators of complex technology" set out to examine this question.   The primary focus of this study was, "The purpose of this paper is to provide and initial test of the assumed link between empowerment and job knowledge among shop floor employees" (2003). The authors' definition of empowerment is two part, "empowerment encompasses such practices as job enrichment, self-managing teams" followed by "participation, empowerment, and job redesign" (2003). The study was conducted to test both definitions, the first to test the level of knowledge between expert employees and novice employees and the second part to examine the effects of empowerment on expert employees and novice employees.  The findings of the first study revealed the obvious that expert employees held more knowledge than that of the novice employees.  As a result, the second study sought to determine the amount of impact a recent change to empowerment affected employees knowledge in both the expert group and novice group. The results of the study did not support the hypothesis and failed to show that empowerment had an impact on employee knowledge among experts. However, there seemed to be an impact on novice employees' work related knowledge.   The authors suggest that empowerment helps information sharing and motivates novice employees to learn more.  In regards to experts, they already have the knowledge based on experience and empowerment had little to no effect on their day to day activities.

## A Multilevel Investigation of the Influences of Employees' Resistance to Empowerment

Recently a growing number of firms have begun to empower their employees given recent research that shows the benefits of employee empowerment.  However, this involves and organizational change which in almost all circumstances cause problems within a firm.  What problems, if any, exist that may prevent the change from classical management to employee empowerment might a firm encounter?  This was the purpose of a

study entitled "A Multilevel Investigation of the Influences of Employees' Resistance to Empowerment" written by Travis Maynard, John Mathieu, Wendy Marsh and Thomas Ruddy.  Their research set out to "examine the effects of employees' resistance to empowerment" (2007) at the individual and team level.  Researcher defined resistance to empowerment as "individuals' and collectives' shared orientation toward accepting or rejecting authority and responsibility associated with empowerment" (2007). This suggests that employees who are not empowered do not view their leaders in a positive way.  In order to test their research, a survey style method was used and administered to 637 customer service engineers within the same industry whose firms recently switched from a classical management style to an empowerment style.  The goals of the researchers were to examine the effects of employee resistance on three specific things: team/individual performance, customer satisfaction, and employee satisfaction.  The results of the surveys concluded that at the team level, empowerment had no significant impact of customer service, employee satisfaction, or team performance, "No evidence was provided for a significant relation between action or interpersonal team processes and customer satisfaction…exhibited only an indirect effect with team performance" (2007).  In summary, this suggests that even when employees resist the change to empowerment it has no significant effects on the three criteria.  However, at the individual level employees showed a negative relationship between resistance to empowerment and employee satisfaction, "This study provided support for prior research that indicates a significant negative relation between individual-level resistance to empowerment and employee satisfaction" (2007).  In short, switching to an empowerment climate may produce negative results, more specifically at the individual level.  However, as with all research every firm has a different culture and the change process will be different for every circumstance.  The resistance to empowerment found in the research may not have been resistance towards empowerment, instead, resistance to change in general.

**I.**
**Results and Discussion**
**Demographics**

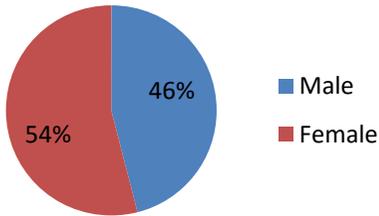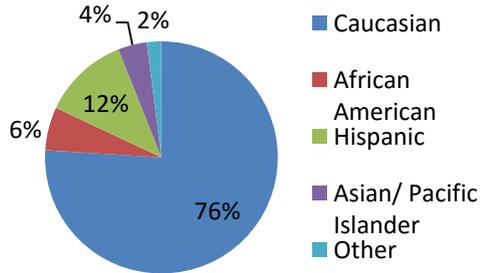Table 1                                                                        Table 2
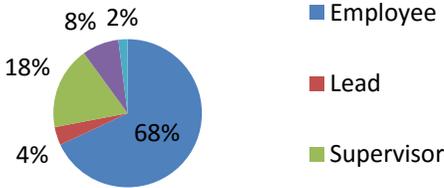
# Gender



# Ethnicity



Table 3                                    Table 3

# Company Position



# Marital Status
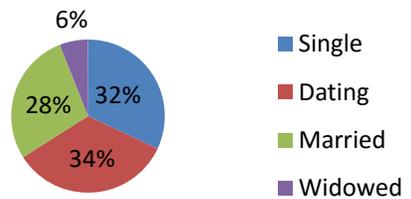


Table5                                     Table 4

# Age



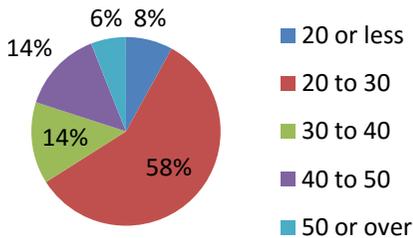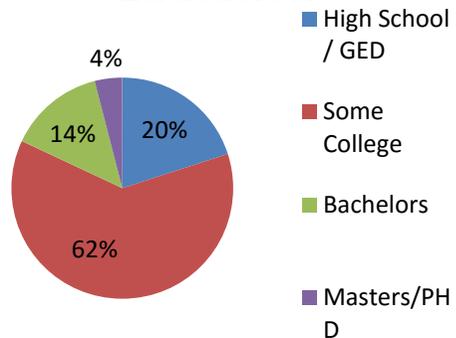# Education

## Descriptive Statistics
### *Freedom and Flexibility*

Table 1                                   Freedom and Flexibility in Workplace

|       |                          | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree        | 1         | 2       | 2             | 2                  |
|       | Disagree                 | 7         | 14      | 14            | 16                 |
|       | Neither Agree or Disagree| 6         | 12      | 12            | 28                 |
|       | Agree                    | 29        | 58      | 58            | 86                 |
|       | Strongly Agree           | 7         | 14      | 14            | 100                |
|       | Total                    | 50        | 100     | 100           |                    |

Table 2                                   Supervisor allows Freedom and Flexibility

|       |                          | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Disagree                 | 7         | 14      | 14            | 14                 |
|       | Neither Agree or Disagree| 7         | 14      | 14            | 28                 |
|       | Agree                    | 25        | 50      | 50            | 78                 |
|       | Strongly Agree           | 11        | 22      | 22            | 100                |
|       | Total                    | 50        | 100     | 100           |                    |

Graph 1 and 2
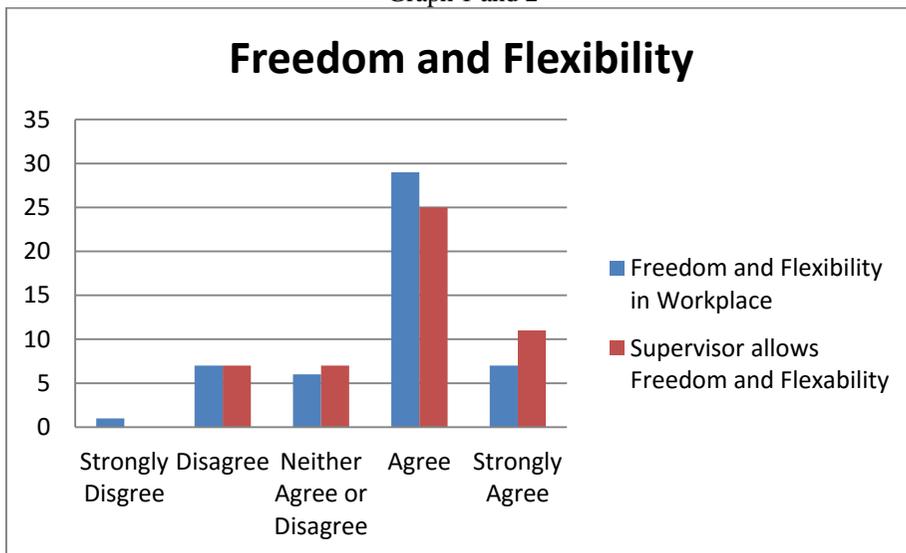


### *Knowledge and Information:*

Table 3                                   I Have Proper Knowledge to do my Job

|       |                          | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree        | 3         | 6       | 6             | 6                  |
|       | Disagree                 | 5         | 10      | 10            | 16                 |
|       | Neither Agree or Disagree| 4         | 8       | 8             | 24                 |
|       | Agree                    | 23        | 46      | 46            | 70                 |
|       | Strongly Agree           | 15        | 30      | 30            | 100                |
|       | Total                    | 50        | 100     | 100           |                    |

Table 4                               Supervisor provides Knowledge

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| | Disagree | 11 | 22 | 22 | 26 |
| | Neither Agree or Disagree | 2 | 4 | 4 | 30 |
| | Agree | 20 | 40 | 40 | 70 |
| | Strongly Agree | 15 | 30 | 30 | 100 |
| | Total | 50 | 100 | 100 | |

Graph 3-4



**Knowlege and Information**
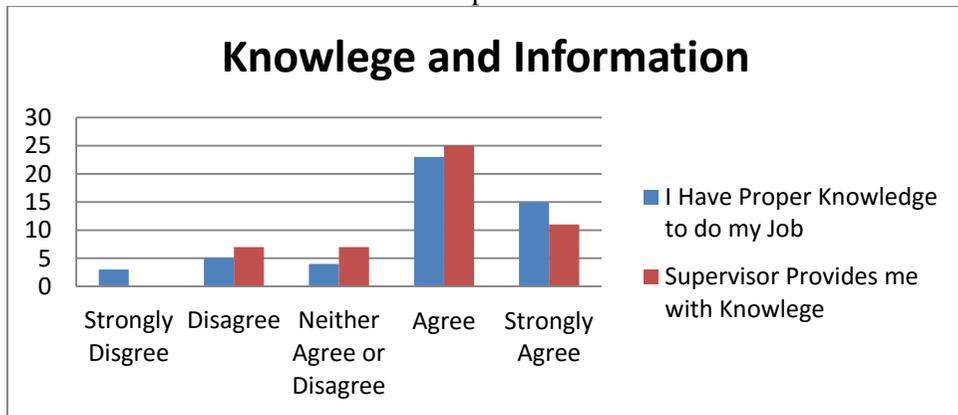
*Sharing Ideas*

Table 5                            Comfortable Sharing Ideas

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| | Disagree | 4 | 8 | 8 | 12 |
| | Neither Agree or Disagree | 6 | 12 | 12 | 24 |
| | Agree | 19 | 38 | 38 | 62 |
| | Strongly Agree | 19 | 38 | 38 | 100 |
| | Total | 50 | 100 | 100 | |

Table 6                            Supervisor Values Ideas

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 3 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | Disagree | 3 | 6 | 6 | 12 |
| | Neither Agree or Disagree | 13 | 26 | 26 | 38 |
| | Agree | 21 | 42 | 42 | 80 |
| | Strongly Agree | 10 | 20 | 20 | 100 |
| | Total | 50 | 100 | 100 | |

Graph 5-6
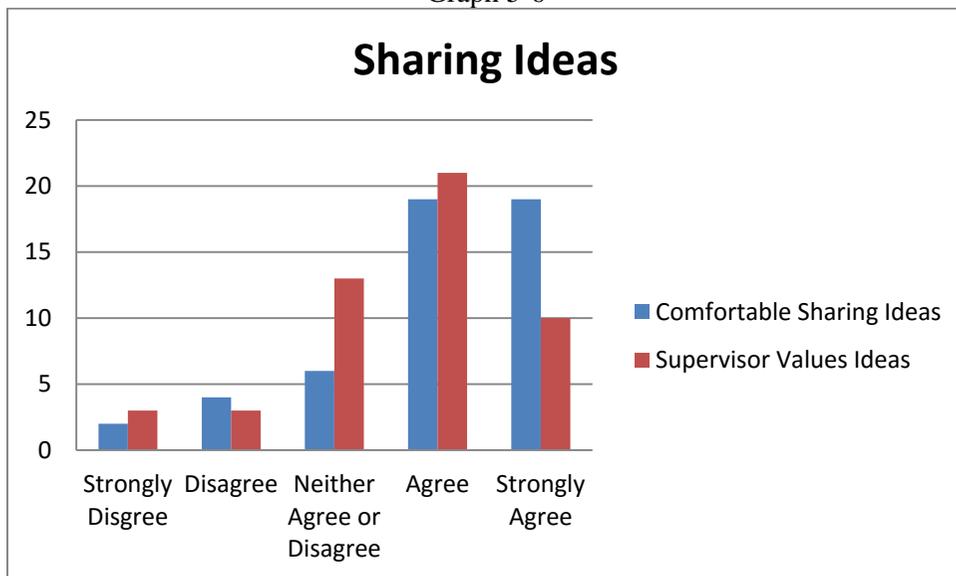


***The Decision Making Process***

Table 7              I Feel I Make Contributions to the Decision Making Process

|  |  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
|  | Disagree | 9 | 18 | 18 | 22 |
|  | Neither Agree or Disagree | 11 | 22 | 22 | 44 |
|  | Agree | 17 | 34 | 34 | 78 |
|  | Strongly Agree | 11 | 22 | 22 | 100 |
|  | Total | 50 | 100 | 100 |  |

Table 8              Supervisor Allows Involvement In Decision Making

|  |  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 9 | 18 | 18 | 18 |
|  | Disagree | 16 | 32 | 32 | 50 |
|  | Neither Agree or Disagree | 11 | 22 | 22 | 72 |
|  | Agree | 8 | 16 | 16 | 88 |
|  | Strongly Agree | 6 | 12 | 12 | 100 |
|  | Total | 50 | 100 | 100 |  |

Graph 7-8

## Decision Making Process



Legend:
- I Feel I Make Contributions to the Decision Making Process
- Supervisor Allows Involvement In Descion Making
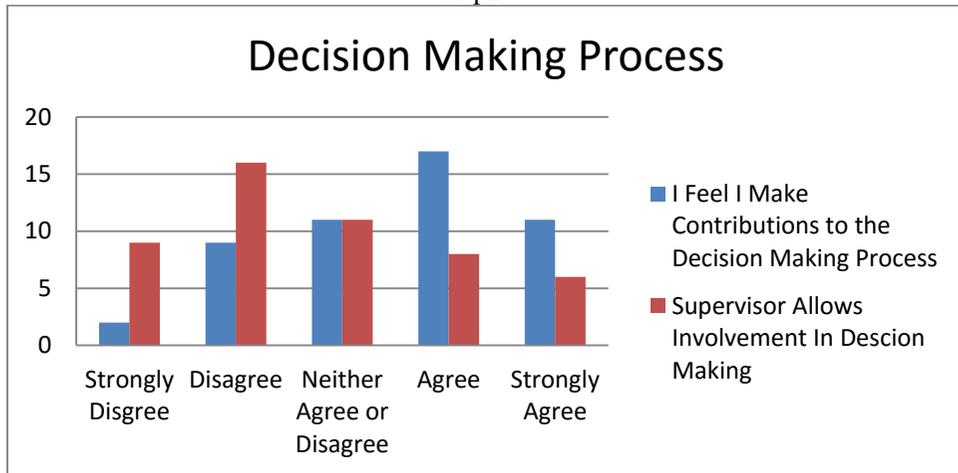
Table 9 — My Work is Challenging

|  |  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 5 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
|  | Disagree | 11 | 22 | 22 | 32 |
|  | Neither Agree or Disagree | 12 | 24 | 24 | 56 |
|  | Agree | 16 | 32 | 32 | 88 |
|  | Strongly Agree | 6 | 12 | 12 | 100 |
|  | Total | 50 | 100 | 100 |  |

Graph 9

## Work is Challenging
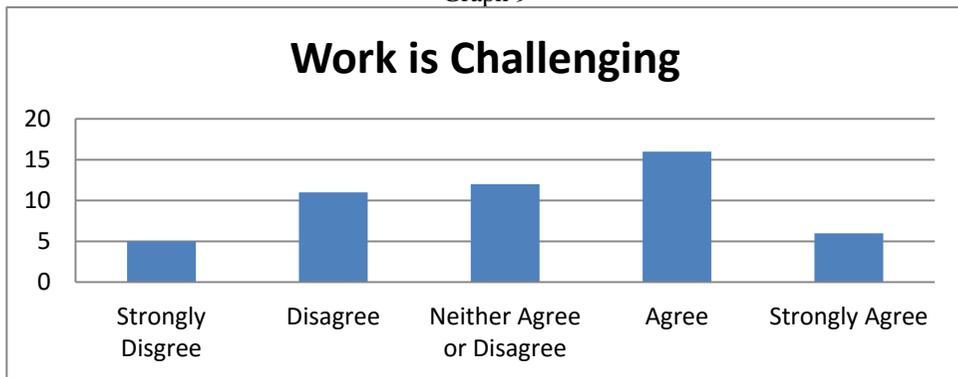


Table 10 — Supervisor Trust My Work

|  |  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
|  | Disagree | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
|  | Neither Agree or Disagree | 1 | 2 | 2 | 6 |
|  | Agree | 29 | 58 | 58 | 64 |
|  | Strongly Agree | 18 | 36 | 36 | 100 |
|  | Total | 50 | 100 | 100 |  |

Graph 10

## Supervisor Trust my Work

*(Bar chart with y-axis from 0 to 40 in increments of 10. Categories: Strongly Disgree = 0, Disagree ≈ 2, Neither Agree or Disagree ≈ 1, Agree ≈ 29, Strongly Agree ≈ 18)*
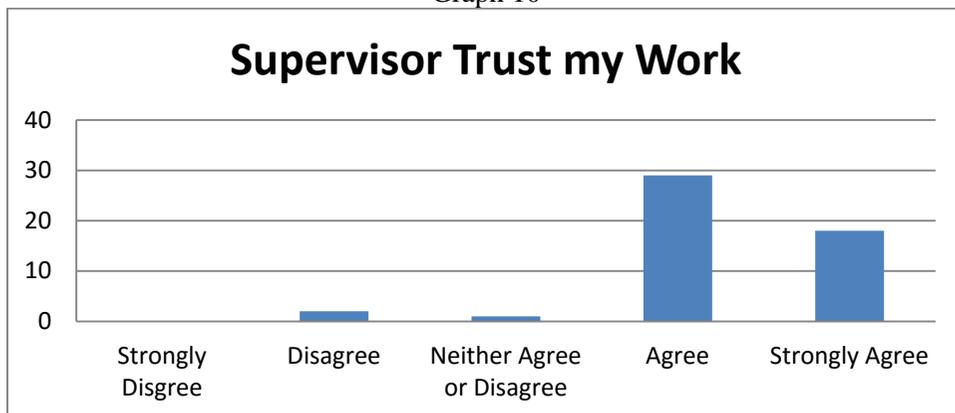
## Discussion
### 3.1.1   Demographics

The participants in our survey were diverse in gender. 45% of participants were female, while 46% of participants were male. This helps eliminate any gender bias from the study. An overwhelming majority of participants where Caucasian, with 76% of the participants. This result limits the diversity of responses that could have been available. The majority of participants were employees with few supervisors, leads and managers also participating in our research study. It was important that employees were more prevalent because it allows for more in-depth analysis of how they are affected on a company level, versus the relationships that they have with their superiors. It was acceptable that there were high ranking employees in this survey because they too have to answer to a higher authority and can also be affected the same way as the average desk level employee is affected by their superiors. The marital status of survey participants were almost equally distributed among single, dating and married, although age and education level were more concentrated on one area. 58% of the workforce was between the ages of 20 and 30. This leads our research to conclude that a larger percentage of younger people make up today's workforce than those over the age of 30 which combined together accounted for 32% of participants. The education level of participants in the research study heavily favored those who were either in college at the time, or those who had an associate degree. This can lead to questions such as are more companies hiring those with less education than a bachelor degree because those employees are inexpensive, or do a people with college degrees move up faster than those without one. There could be a correlation between those ages 20 to 30 and those who have some college experience.

### 3.1.2   Quantitative Results

When analyzing Graph 1-2, it was discovered that over 70% of those interviewed felt that they not only had freedom and flexibility in the workplace, but they also felt that their supervisors gave them that same freedom and flexibility. This is important considering that freedom and flexibilities is one of the major contributors to employee empowerment.

Over 70% of those interviewed felt that their company and supervisors provided them with the proper knowledge and information to do their jobs. 24% of participants still believed that their supervisors or managers did not provide them with enough information, while 12% felt the company did not provide them with enough information. Those who were neutral on whether they had enough information and knowledge from the company were more inclined to disagree when asked if their supervisor was the cause.

One interesting finding that was discovered was that when participants were asked whether they were comfortable sharing their Ideas in the workplace, and if their supervisors value their opinions, the frequency is skewed to the right on both counts.

The most important finding in the study revolved around decision making. When participants were asked if they had an impact in the decision making process in the organization, a majority of employees responded that they did have an impact. When they were asked if their supervisors allow them to participate in decision making processes, they responded exactly the opposite. This leads us to one of three conclusions. The first is that many employees help participate in company decisions without their supervisors knowledge. The second could be that employees get to participate in the decision making process, but the supervisor is the ultimate decider. The third possible conclusion is that employees may feel like they contribute to decisions, but they actually do not.

When asked whether participants felt that their work was challenging the result was very close to a normal distribution curb. Almost one third of participants were not challenged, one third felt neutral, and one third felt challenged by their jobs. This helps to stress the importance of providing employees with challenging work, because high performing employees who are not challenged will eventually look for a new position or company.

The last question we asked participants was if they felt that their supervisor trusted their work, which 94% of respondents agreed. Despite whether or now employees felt empowered, the end result was that they felt that their superiors trusted their work.

### 3.1.3 Qualitative Results

There were two open ended questions that were asked in the research study. The first was what you would change in your relationship with your supervisor. The reason that we asked this question was to gain some insight on what problems exist in today's organizations between upper management and floor level employees. An overwhelming majority of respondents answered this question with one word, 'Communication'. This proves that with all the progress we have made in society, technology, business, and globalization, managers and supervisors still have problems communicating with people. Communication is the foundation of any interpersonal relationship, and if managers cannot master that, then they are fighting a losing battle every day

The second question we asked participants was to explain their definition of employee empowerment. There were two common responses to this question. The first response that many of the participants used was respect. This result was a very interesting finding and leads our research to wonder if respect is the foundation of empowerment. If managers do not respect their employees, they damage moral and performance which can lead to employees feeling helpless which is the exact opposite of empowerment. The second response that was fairly common among participants was that empowerment meant freedom. Many organizations continue t you the hierarchical structure that has been in place for decades, with those at the top dictating to those on the bottom. In this type of organization, the people at the bottom would continue to do as they are told, and will not put forth any extra effort because they do not have the freedom or direction to change the system.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the researcher has created criteria of different relationship characteristics that developed between employees and upper management, and discovered that a majority of employees feel empowered in the workplace. There was evidence that most of the participants have freedom and flexibility, the prober knowledge and information to do their jobs, and feel comfortable sharing their ideas. There still are some problems that are evident between upper management and desk level employees, especially when it comes to getting employees involved in the decision making process. Whether supervisors and managers realize it or not, by not including employees in the decision making processes, especially those that impact employees it alienates them from feeling a sense of being a part of the company. That is one of the reasons that the questionnaire was structured with the preceding question measuring employee's response on a company level and the second question inquiring about the manager or supervisor.

When the employee can focus on the company as a whole, and their boss without the two conflicting, it can lead to uncovering the employee's deeper feelings towards the way they are treated in the company. Employees may love the company they work for, but the amount of productivity, and innovation that comes from them depend on how their bosses treat them.

The researcher would like to thank Laura Louie, Sam Flesta, Theo Christodoulou, Olga Spitsin and Jacob Graber in his class in helping to collect data for this research.

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