

Psychological Empowerment and Job Satisfaction in Jordanian Hospitals

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Abstract

In recent years, empowerment has become a component of business thinking. Hospitals are important assets in Jordan and are attempting to improve their competitiveness by improving employee job satisfaction. This study empirically tested the impact of psychological empowerment on job satisfaction in Jordanian private hospitals. It was hypothesized that the dimensions of psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination and impact) have a positive impact on employee satisfaction in Jordanian hospitals. The study was designed to be descriptive and quantitative. A questionnaire was designed and distributed to a sample of 554 participants, resulting in a response rate of 78%. The researchers analyzed the collected data using a group of statistical methods, including frequencies, descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, testing data validity and regression tests. Among the most important findings of this study is that employees in Jordanian private hospitals perceive themselves as highly empowered and experience a high level of satisfaction. In addition, the results indicated that 56% of the variation in employee satisfaction results from the implementation of psychological empowerment. The results also supported the proposition that psychological empowerment leads to higher satisfaction in Jordanian hospitals. The study recognizes the need to continue the implementation of psychological empowerment.

Keywords: psychological empowerment, satisfaction, employees, hospitals, Jordan

Introduction

Health care systems are experiencing fundamental changes all over the world, including in Jordan. Demographic changes, patient expectations and rights, reform, a health workforce shortage, high costs and the rise in demand for health services are some of the challenges affecting the Jordanian health sector (Ministry of Health, 2010). These changes can lead to difficulties in the work environment and a decline in staff satisfaction (Ahmad & Oranye, 2010), which often result in dissatisfaction among the Jordanian and Arab recipients of health services.

Jordan lacks natural resources and depends heavily on its labor force. This dependence makes it essential for Jordanian organizations to expend more effort to enhance the work environment and use modern management techniques to survive and increase their competitiveness. In Jordan, the hospital sector is important. This sector employs approximately 10.7% of the labor force and consumes approximately 70% of the health budget (Saif, 2013). Employees are considered the most vital and valuable resource of any health organization; their satisfaction plays a critical role in an organization's success and effectiveness. To improve aspects of hospital management, much attention has been given globally to the role that empowerment plays in improving job satisfaction and performance (Carless, 2004; Kahreh et al., 2011; Charalabidis et al., 2012). Many studies have indicated that the creation of an empowering work environment can improve employee outcomes (Akbar et al., 2010) and job satisfaction (Wang and Lee, 2009; Nasiripour and Siadati, 2011). Thus, these studies concluded that the human resource management strategy of empowerment is a significant factor in improving work situations and employee satisfaction (Cai & Zhou, 2009).

Most of the previous studies on empowering health care providers used psychological empowerment as a measure of organizational empowerment and addressed empowerment as a motivational concept that is an integral part of quality improvement and work effectiveness in the workplace. Several studies of employee empowerment in developed countries have been conducted. However, we are not aware of any previous study conducted on the relationship between organizational empowerment and job satisfaction among the health care providers in Jordan. Little information exists on this subject, making it difficult for managers at Jordanian hospitals to recognize, from an organizational perspective, how to enhance their employees' satisfaction by modifying regulations or interventions. The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of implementing psychological empowerment on employee satisfaction among health care providers in Jordan.

The study objectives are as follows

1. To determine the extent to which private Jordanian hospitals address the dimensions of psychological empowerment.
2. To determine the level of satisfaction among the employees of health care providers in Jordanian hospitals.
3. To examine the influence of the dimensions of psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination and impact) on employee satisfaction.

The hypotheses for this study are as follows

- H01: The dimensions of psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination and impact) have a positive impact on employee satisfaction in Jordanian hospitals.
- H02: Meaning has a positive impact on job satisfaction.
- H03: Competence has a positive impact on job satisfaction.
- H04: Self-determination has a positive impact on job satisfaction.
- H05: Impact has a positive impact on job satisfaction.

Literature Review

Empowerment

The concept of empowerment has been interpreted across a broad group of management areas such as health care and politics (Lincoln et al., 2002). The term "empowerment" was first observed in the modern English-language literature in approximately 1976. Empowerment is the act of providing decision-making authority to someone and is often associated with the redistribution of responsibility from managers to their subordinates (Webster's Online Dictionary, 2013). Empowerment is defined as providing the employees of an organization with the authority to resolve matters affecting their daily work (Huxtable, 1995), to control their daily activities at work and to share and distribute power. Empowerment also aims to train workers to manage their own affairs (Buchanan and Huczynski, 1997). Furthermore, empowerment strengthens employees and provides them with job enrichment, that is, a sense of possession, the ability to participate within an organization's borders and control over their business (Nelson and Quick, 2012).

The diverse definitions and descriptions of empowerment follow two streams of research (Harrim and Alkshali, 2008): structural empowerment and psychological empowerment. Structural empowerment is defined as a practice or set of practices offering access to information, resources and support opportunities for development and growth (Gantz, 2010). Psychological empowerment focuses on intrinsic motivation rather than on the managerial practices used to increase employees' levels of authority (Giacalone et al., 2005). Psychological empowerment refers to a set of psychological states that are essential for individuals to feel a sense of control over their work as a result of being empowered by a supervisor (Ambad and Bahron, 2012).

One of the earliest studies on psychological empowerment was conducted by Spreitzer (Spreitzer, 1995). Spreitzer defined psychological empowerment as a motivational construct manifested in four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Spreitzer employed his validated psychological empowerment measurement models to test the relationship among the four dimensions of psychological empowerment and employee satisfaction. Although job satisfaction was associated most powerfully with the meaning dimension, the self-determination and competence dimensions exhibited a marginal influence on job satisfaction, and the impact dimension had no effect on job satisfaction.

The four dimensions of psychological empowerment combine additively to create an overall construct of psychological empowerment. The lack of one of these dimensions will deflate but not completely eliminate the overall effect of the experience of empowerment. The four dimensions are as follows:

Meaning: Meaningfulness is an individual's belief that his or her work is important to him or her and his or her fondness for what he or she is doing. Spreitzer (1995) defined meaning cognition as a sense of purpose or personal connection to one's work goal: it is the value of a work goal and an individual's beliefs, judged in relation to that individual's ideals (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990).

Competence: Competence is an employee's ability to perform work activities with skill, and it refers to the degree to which a person can perform task activities skillfully when he or she attempts to do so. Employees must feel that they are competent to engage in the behaviors required by the environment (Kara, 2012).

Self-determination: Self-determination is an individual's control over the manner in which work is accomplished and is related to the choice cognition, as described by Kitayama and Cohen (2010). Such individuals feel that they have the independence to perform their responsibilities; they can make decisions about their work and have adequate authority over the manner, time and speed of their task performance (Hossein et al., 2012).

Impact: Impact is the degree to which an individual can influence strategic, administrative and operating outcomes at work. This assessment refers to the degree to which a behavior is viewed as making a difference in terms of accomplishing the purpose of the task, that is, producing the intended effects in one's task environment (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990)

A growing body of research supports the contention that psychological empowerment is related to individual performance and satisfaction (Seibert et al., 2004; He et al. 2010). Fisk et al. (2009) have noted that empowered employees are more satisfied with their jobs, have an increased sense of personal efficacy through participation in decision-making and are encouraged to utilize a wide set of skills and abilities to address different scenarios. Barling and Cooper (2008) found that competence and impact are most strongly related to managerial effectiveness, whereas meaning is the best predictor of job satisfaction, in support of H2. Fields and Tacking (2002) found that impact, meaningfulness and choice are each related to job satisfaction; their meaning and impact results support H2 and H5.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction results from an evaluation of the job's characteristics. Job satisfaction is defined as how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs (Hedge & Borman, 2012). Job satisfaction is the extent to which people like or dislike their jobs and the degree to which they feel positively or negatively about various aspects of their jobs. According to Salazar et al. (2006), the assumption behind this definition is that people are able to balance their specific satisfactions and dissatisfactions and arrive at a general degree of satisfaction with their jobs. Salazar et al. believed that specific individual and situational characteristics influence job satisfaction. Individual characteristics include personality, education, gender and family roles, whereas situational characteristics include job characteristics, organizational characteristics and promotion opportunities.

Since the late 1950s, several researchers have theorized about the nature of job satisfaction and have developed models in attempts to explain the differences in job satisfaction as detected in empirical studies. One of the better-known theories was developed by Herzberg et al. (1959). Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene theory contends that people are more satisfied by elements of the job itself than by the environment in which they work (Hollyforde and Whiddett, 2003). Herzberg postulated that the phenomenon of employee job satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction is a function of two classes of variables, which are termed motivators and hygiene factors. The motivators, or intrinsic satisfiers, are achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility and the possibility of growth and advancement. The presence of these motivators has the potential to create job satisfaction, whereas in the absence of motivators, dissatisfaction does not occur. In contrast, hygiene factors have the potential to cause dissatisfaction if they are absent, but their presence does not provoke a high level of satisfaction (Grigoroudis and Siskos, 2010). The dissatisfaction or extrinsic hygiene factors are supervision, working conditions, compensation, policies, job security and interpersonal relationships. Herzberg et al. emphasized that motivating factors, rather than hygiene factors, are of primary importance to an individual's achievement potential (Monica, 1983). A manager must be sure to provide sufficient hygiene factors while incorporating satisfiers or motivators into the employees' jobs.

Methods

Spreitzer (1995) developed the 12-item psychological empowerment scale, which is composed of four subscales: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Each component is measured using three items on a five-point Likert-type scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree). A higher score indicates a higher degree of psychological empowerment.

Meaning involves a fit between the requirements of a work role and a person's beliefs, values and behaviors. Competence refers to self-efficacy specific to work, that is, a belief in one's ability to perform work activities with skill, analogous to personal mastery. Self-determination reflects autonomy over initiating and continuing work processes and making decisions about work methods, space and effort. Impact is the degree to which a person can influence strategic, administrative or operational outcomes at work (Fields, 2002).

Job satisfaction is measured by three items that were developed by Cammann et al. (1983) as part of the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire to describe an employee's subjective response to working in his or her job and organization. This assessment is a global indication of worker satisfaction with a job.

Procedure

Data collection for this study occurred from 2011 through 2013. A total of 771 employees working in 21 Jordanian hospitals were randomly selected, and of this total, 554 employees responded by answering every question on the survey, for a response rate of 78%. All of the ethical requirements for conducting research were met; it was made clear to the participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time. All of the completed questionnaires were kept confidential and were examined only by the investigators.

SPSS version 13.0 was used to answer the study questions and to test the hypotheses. The statistical analysis included data classification, reliability analysis and descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. The statistical testing involved determining whether the average response was below, at or above the middle of the Likert scale response values. The responses were defined as "low" when the mean value plus the standard deviation was below the middle value, as "medium" when the mean plus or minus the standard deviation included the middle value and as "high" when the mean minus the standard deviation was above the middle value.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 displays the research respondent profile. Male respondents represented 63% of the total sample, 29.2% of the respondents were under 30 years old, 89.2% of the sample held at least a bachelor's degree, and 29.1% of respondents had fewer than five years of work experience.

Table 1: Respondent profile

Variable	Variable Categories	Frequency	%
Sex	Male	349	63.0
	Female	205	37.0
Age	Under 30	162	29.2
	31-40	150	27.1
	41-50	134	24.2
	Over 50	108	19.5
Qualifications	Diploma (2 years beyond high school)	60	10.8
	Bachelor's Degree	206	37.2
	Associate's Degree	134	24.2
	Master's Degree	122	22.0
	PhD Degree	32	5.8
Experience	Less than 5 years	161	29.1
	5-15 years	149	26.9
	16-25 years	126	22.7
	25+ years	118	21.3

Cronbach's alpha was used to test the reliability of each independent and dependent variable; Table 2 shows that in this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranged from $\alpha=0.69$ to $\alpha=0.89$.

Excepting for the self-determination alpha, which was very close to the cut-off, the alpha values were all above the 0.70 cut-off specified by Andrew et al. (2011). The self-determination scale was used for the analysis, but the results should be interpreted cautiously given that the alpha was below 0.70. In addition, Table 2 shows that the skewness and kurtosis values for all variables indicate that the data were normally distributed.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for the research constructs

Variables	Construct Type	Mean	St. Dev.	Cron. Alpha	Skewness	Kurtosis
Psychological Empowerment	Independent	3.63	.75	.89	.106	.434
Meaning	Independent	3.76	.89	.76	.380	.452
Competence	Independent	3.64	.94	.79	.225	.102
Self-determination	Independent	3.58	.89	.69	.062	.054
Impact	Independent	3.56	.91	.84	.332	.798
Job Satisfaction	Dependent	3.62	.90	.78	.492	.142

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations of the responses obtained from the research sample to independent and dependent variable statements. The mean of overall employee psychological empowerment was (M.=3.63, St. Dev.=0.89). This result indicates that the employees perceived themselves as highly empowered, confirming that few restrictions in the work environment exist to prevent workers from resolving matters affecting their daily work and that the management of Jordanian private hospitals provides a relatively high level of psychological empowerment.

Of the four dimensions of psychological empowerment, meaning had the highest mean (M.=3.76, St. Dev.=0.89). This result could indicate that employees in hospitals felt very proud of and happy with their work and believed that their work environment enabled them to perform their jobs in meaningful ways. The competence dimension ranked second (M.=3.64, St. Dev.=0.79), indicating that hospital staffers believed that they had adequate skills to accomplish their daily tasks. Self-determination came third (M.=3.58, St. Dev.=0.69). This finding leads us to believe that the state or condition of having independence and being able to function alone without management intervention in the work environment is close to average. Impact ranked fourth (M.=3.56, St. Dev.=0.84), which shows that hospital employees believed that they have some influence on what occurs in their hospitals and that they have an impact on the activities surrounding them. Additionally, the results in Table 2 show that overall employee job satisfaction reached a mean of 3.62 (M.=3.62, St. Dev.=0.90), indicating relatively high job satisfaction.

Results

The statistical results of the regression test, as shown in Table 3, indicate that the coefficient of determination R² was calculated as 0.56, which means that 56% of the variation in overall employee job satisfaction is explained by the variation in overall employee psychological empowerment. Because the calculated F was 702.7 at $p \leq 0.05$, the hypotheses are not rejected. Thus, the research model is accepted at a significance level of $p \leq 0.05$, and overall psychological empowerment had a significant effect on overall employee job satisfaction. The results can be justified because psychological empowerment is vital and important to the improvement of employee satisfaction. These results are consistent with those of Baker et al. (2012), who found that the majority of nurse educators are satisfied with their jobs and feel empowered in their workplaces.

Table 3: The influence of psychological empowerment on employee satisfaction

R	R ²	F	Sig.	B
0.748	0.560	702.7	0.000***	0.902

Note: +, *, ** and *** represent statistical significance at the 0.1, 0.05, 0.01 and 0.001 levels, respectively.

As indicated by the results of the regression test in Table 4, meaning, self-determination and impact had a significant effect on job satisfaction, but competence had no effect on job satisfaction. The Beta calculations showed that the highest variation was explained by impact (B=0.436), the next highest was explained by self-determination (B=0.322), and the lowest was explained by meaning (B=0.099). This finding indicates that there is still an opportunity to further empower workers by enhancing their confidence.

Table 4: The impact of psychological empowerment on job satisfaction

Construct	Beta	T-Value	Sig.
Meaning	0.099	2.57	0.011**,
Competence	0.064	1.66	0.098+
Self-determination	0.322	9.05	0.000***
Impact	0.436	12.40	0.000***

Note: +, *, ** and *** represent statistical significance at the 0.1, 0.05, 0.01 and 0.001 levels, respectively.

Discussion

The literature suggests that psychological empowerment has an expressive role in many service organizations, including hospitals. The present study examined the effect of employee psychological empowerment on job satisfaction in Jordanian private hospitals. Four dimensions were used to assess employee psychological empowerment: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Utilization of the findings of this study can aid managers in making sense of work changes that require an effective hospital environment that is responsive to employee and customer needs.

The demographic results showed that employees in Jordanian hospitals had high educational levels, which means that they had greater cognizance, experience and aptitude to address modern administrative methods, to encourage managers to delegate more power so that they could complete their daily tasks, to reduce stress and improve satisfaction and to assist in future business improvement initiatives. It was established that the management of Jordanian hospitals provided a comparatively acceptable level of psychological empowerment. Overall, employee job satisfaction scored at a reasonably acceptable level. Employees who are extremely satisfied with their jobs will engage in their work with greater and more intense interest and will provide quality care. The findings also indicated differences in the level of job satisfaction between Jordan, a developing country, and England, a developed country. Employees in English hospitals were more satisfied than employees in Jordanian hospitals (Ahmade et al., 2010).

The study indicated that empowerment has a significant impact on employee satisfaction. In the present study, psychological empowerment (meaning, self-determination and impact) had a significant effect on job satisfaction among employees. The findings were consistent with the findings of the studies conducted by Baker et al. (2012), Hossein et al. (2012), Ahmad et al. (2010) and Carless (2004). We observed that competence was not significant to the attainment of employee satisfaction. Employees who perceived themselves as empowered felt that they had an influence on their daily work, were independent, had autonomy with regard to the manner in which they performed their jobs and were proud of their jobs. As we have observed, the results suggest that psychological empowerment has a positive effect on employee satisfaction. Empowerment is a vital aspect of creating positive nursing work environments in Jordan, as it is in other developed countries.

Conclusions

The results of this study provide additional empirical support for Spreitzer's (1995) theoretical suggestion that psychological empowerment is related to job satisfaction. The results also provide new evidence of the importance of psychological empowerment because empowerment has a significant impact on the formulation of the organizational environment and job satisfaction. This observation reinforced the findings of previous studies on the effect of empowerment, such as the findings of Ahmad et al. (2010). The present study proposes that strategies for improving job empowerment may increase job satisfaction.

The majority of previous studies indicated that the empowerment of employees could lead to work effectiveness, satisfaction and reduced job-related strain. The management of Jordanian hospitals should maintain and reinforce the current levels of psychological empowerment implementation; moreover, they should continue to move steadily toward a higher level of implementation. Jordanian hospitals should do more to enhance psychological empowerment, as it could improve service quality without the expenditure of financial resources. Management should be aware that satisfaction has both a vital and a valuable impact on the hospital environment and performance.

Psychological empowerment is significant and vital to satisfaction. The management of private hospitals must further empower their employees. There remains an opportunity and obligation to further develop current empowerment practices. Special emphasis should be placed on competence and on each of the subscales of psychological empowerment. Moreover, hospital managers must fully understand the importance of empowerment and must be trained in the best method of applying empowerment in hospitals.

Various limitations in this study ought to be considered. The study did not consider the role of psychological empowerment in employee satisfaction in other health sectors in Jordan, such as the public sector. Moreover, the study did not consider the role of moderating variables, such as employee and hospital characteristics, in psychological empowerment's effect on job satisfaction. Additionally, there have been no other studies conducted within the domain of this study, the Jordanian health sector. Finally, only one method of data collection (a questionnaire) was used. These limitations may be considered opportunities for future research.

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