

# A Measure for Employee Empowerment in Indian Work Setting

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*The purpose of this study was to construct an employee empowerment scale in the Indian context. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the respondents belonging to public and private sector managers. Techniques like exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were used to validate the dimensions of employee empowerment. Four major dimensions viz. control, seamless communication, intrinsic motivation and support were derived from a 19-item scale. The results of the study emphasize on the importance of empowering employees which leads to better engagement, heightened motivation, increased commitment and less turnover intentions. Treasured employees who are the right ones to make value for the business and customers are the empowered employees.*

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## Introduction

Change is constant and to make this constant phenomenon visible, it is pertinent to make one of the most important stakeholders, viz., the employees empowered. Robbins (2001) mentioned that empowering employees is one of the major issues which the organization faces in day to day working. But empowering employees synchronizes with one of the principles given by Henry Fayol in “14 Principles of Management” which speaks of ‘authority and responsibility’. It means that if employees are given authority, they will feel more responsible and thereby, will lead to augmented involvement (Schreuder & Theron, 1997). The reason for thinking of empowering employees emerged from organizations witnessing the potential of this employee up scaling their performance by being encouraged to handle the uncertainty (Cooks, 1993; Lepree, 1995).

Success of any organization depends upon its manpower’s say, stay and strive. To make this happen, it is essential that the employees remain

motivated, contended and passionate towards their work. Be it Herzberg's maintenance factors or motivational factors, both have a decisive role in the accomplishment of an employee in particular and of organization in general. But, for employees it's very essential that they are empowered in their respective domain because empowerment motivates a person towards excellence. Lack of empowerment results in demotivation in terms of monetary discontentment or handcuffed in taking decisions. Empowerment in literal sense means authority to make decisions which may directly or indirectly affect their performance (Mills & Ungson, 2003).

Organizations and managers in today's extremely aggressive marketplace must ensure that they have various practices planned to provide employees the proficiency, competence and inspiration so as to create a win-win situation for both employees and the organization. Empowering employees for optimal performance and job contentment is one of the ways to attain this. "Employees should be empowered because it is through empowerment that an organization will develop a culture which reflects employee commitment in order to survive, grow, compete and face challenges posed by globalization with confidence" (Sahoo et al., 2010:50).

### **Understanding Empowerment**

Sinha (2005) defines the term empowerment as augmenting the participation of employees in organization related procedures and decision-making. In the

present competitive era, organizations which are able to bridge the gap between knowledge and ignorance are at the pinnacle of success (Abdollahi & Naveh Ibrahim, 2011). These organizations have left no stone unturned in channelizing the human resource in right direction. Transforming organizations towards excellence needs empowering employees to the maximum in terms of liberalizing them to take decisions (Robbins, 2001; Schreuder & Theron, 1997). The outcome of empowerment is engagement resulting in creativity and strengthening risk taking ability (Cooks, 1993; Lepree, 1995). If we speak of empowerment, it is entirely alien to the concept of "bureaucracy" which is an outlook of exceedingly restricted, barely concerned, rigid culture of rules and regulations. In order to take competitive advantage of the rich manpower, organizations are continuously striving to manage workforce in fruitful endeavors. Organization's philosophy in empowering employees can be clearly seen in the level of communication they provide, the opportunities for personal growth, encouraging and involving them in the decision making, recognizing the efforts by rewarding them and promoting them toward their career growth.

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Empowerment means allocation of authority and command (Burke, 1986); it can be considered as decentralization of

decision making (Kanter, 1983) and participative management (Likert, 1961; McGregor, 1960). Researchers have envisaged empowerment as a condition of heightened motivation (McClelland, 1975). Empowerment allows employees to exercise better control at work whilst benefitting from augmented autonomy by helping them assume diverse roles and responsibilities in the organization. Menon (2001:161) defined empowered state “as a cognitive condition characterized by perceived control, competence, and goal internalization”. Empowerment “enhances feelings of self-efficacy among organizational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal organizational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information” (Conger & Kanungo, 1988: 474).

### **Perspectives on Empowerment**

Empowerment literature, presents two diverse approaches to study employee empowerment (e.g., Koberg et al., 1999; Liden & Arad, 1996; Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Veltbouse, 1990): (a) “Structural or relational empowerment” and (b) “Psychological or motivational empowerment”. Structural empowerment focuses on “management practices” and the Psychological empowerment accentuates on an “employee’s psychological strengths”. Structural empowerment is defined as “redesigned structures or management practices wherein superiors distribute responsibility and information to their subordinates, as well as allow employees to participate in de-

cision-making processes” (Taejun & Faerman, 2010: 35). Employee empowerment can be linked with reinforcement theory by B F Skinner. Every organization wants maximum productivity which is possible by employees’ performance. An employee’s performance in turn depends upon their efficiency as well as motivation. If employees are given positive reinforcement (Catania, 2001) in terms of extrinsic rewards like salary, promotion, empowerment, they will feel more enthusiastic towards their work.

### **Empowerment in Indian Context**

Indian researchers like Pareek (2000), Diwedi (2000) and Pattanayak (2001) have found that “empowerment is yet to come off age in India”. Diwedi (1995; 1998) illustrates that the idea of empowerment is widely entrenched in Indian values and has been prevailing in both the scientific (from the 1940s) and industrial (from the 1950s) work conditions in India. Pareek (2000) developed a “power enhancement scale” based on “empowerment as a basis for power sharing”. According to Diwedi (2000) empowerment is a notion, an idea and an organizational program. As a notion, empowerment is bestowing the decision-making to employees; as an idea it means permitting the self managed teams and individuals to attain organizational and personal goals through the shared vision; as an organizational program it entails providing an outline and giving authorization to the employees so as to build up and develop their abilities and comprehension to their full potential. Singh and Bhandarkar (2002) point out that empow-

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erment is more than mentoring or coaching and it is more of self management. Bhatnagar (2012) found that psychological empowerment leads to engagement and innovation and lowers the turnover intention of employees. Choudhury and Giri (2013: 635) define empowerment “as a process which has evolved in response to a trend towards a greater responsibility and involvement amongst employees in running their organizations”. Most of the organizations have comprehended the significance of employee involvement and recognized the capability of their human resources to develop and augment business performance (Pattanayak, 2001).

### **The Present Empowerment Scale (ES)**

Although there were empowerment scales developed by previous researchers like Spreitzer’s (1995); Leslie et al., (1998)’ Worker Empowerment Scale; Menon’s (1999) Psychological Empowerment Scale and Cloete et al., (2002)’ Employee Empowerment Questionnaire but none of them were entirely addressing the Indian context. So, the present instrument taking clues from previous research on assessment scales describes four dimensions which can be used to compare individuals within groups, or

groups within organizations, to identify individual perceptions and areas for organizational intervention and development. It comprises 19 items with four dimensions viz, control, seamless communication, intrinsic motivation and support (see Annexure 1 for Empowerment Scale).

### **Methodology**

In order to collect information to answer the research question, and further in developing an instrument, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. As suggested by Ivankova (2006), the analysis is robust if both qualitative and quantitative approaches are taken for the study.

### **The Three Stages**

In stage 1, the researchers attempted to identify the attributes of empowerment with the help of Delphi technique and focus group interviews. First and foremost, the researchers identified the experts from the field of practitioners and academia and invited them to take part in the study. Attributes of empowerment were explored with the help of semi structured questions from 46 employees through personal interviews and focus group discussions. In stage 2, after developing a pool of 19 items (from the attributes identified in stage 1) for measuring empowerment, the researchers subjected to EFA (exploratory factor analysis) to explore the dimensions. Out of 199 respondents, 59.8% were males, 40.2% were females, 66.8% were married and rest unmarried. The average age of the

respondents was 39.8 varying from 21 years to 65 years. The average length of the service of the respondents was 10.2 years varying from 3 years to 30 years. In stage 3, in order to validate the scale on a new sample, CFA (confirmatory factor analysis) was carried out on 246 respondents belonging to different sectors. 45.5% of them were from public sector and the rest 54.5% from private sector organizations. 53.3% were males and 46.7% were females. Of the total respondents, 66% were married and the rest unmarried.

### Qualitative Analysis

The data was collected from 46 respondents through Delphi technique and focus group. Content analysis was used to analyze the data (Kerlinger, 1973). The first and foremost objective was to create ample no of items which can sufficiently tap the attributes of empowerment. Delphi technique and focus group identified approximately 58 items, most of which were overlapping. Hence, they were reduced to 24 items using content analysis. The unanimous and undisputed items related to empowerment were thus, figured out.

Table 1 highlights the important attributes that were derived from Delphi technique and focus group exercise. The participants felt that for them empower-

**The participants felt that for them empowerment means being aware of their job, getting the opportunity to do what they are best at, having a clearly defined role (s).**

ment means being aware of their job, getting the opportunity to do what they are best at, having a clearly defined role (s). Most of the experts in the focus groups supported the attributes that were extracted from Delphi technique. Being encouraged at work, fair treatment by management, and alignment of their job with the company's mission, open communication and work environment for skill development were some of the attributes which were supported during focus group interviews.

### Quantitative Analysis

There are number of statistical techniques for item reduction. One of the most widely used analytical techniques is Factor Analysis.

### Exploratory Factor Analysis

In order to explore the underlying factors, exploratory factor analysis was conducted. Four important factors related to empowerment viz. factor 1: Control, factor 2: Seamless Communication, factor 3: Intrinsic Motivation and factor 4: Support were extracted with the help of Eigen values and factor loading. A minimum of .40 factor loading was taken into account for the same. While doing the Exploratory Factor Analysis, out of 24 items, 5 items were removed due to less factor loading. These are: 1)I am being encouraged for my development at work; 2)Management treats me in a just way; 3) My colleagues are committed to do quality work; 4) People are happy when I do my work well; 5) I am encouraged to improve, learn, and grow every day

**Table 1 Attributes of Empowerment: Delphi Technique/Focus Group Interviews**

S. No.	Attributes of Empowerment	Frequency
1	Aware of what is expected from job	44
2	Easy access to the materials and requirement	42
3	Get the opportunity to do what I am best at	41
4	Feel enthusiastic about my work.	45
5	Work motivates me.	46
6	A clearly defined and frequently articulated role(s)	41
7	Get recognition for the work	46
8	Supervisor cares	42
9	Being encouraged for development at work	38
10	Being appreciated at work	32
11	Management tries to solve work related problems.	41
12	Management treats in a just way.	37
13	Job is important as it is aligned with the mission of the company	40
14	Colleagues are committed to do quality work	29
15	Colleagues support in the time of difficulties	34
16	People are happy when I do my work well.	37
17	Open avenues of communication across all levels	40
18	Made good friends at work	41
19	Supervisor regularly asks about progress at work	34
20	Receive lots of opportunities to learn and grow at work place	39
21	Work environment gives the opportunity to work on skills that prepare to achieve my future goals	29
22	Encouraged to improve, learn, and grow every day	35
23	Boss trusts enough to let me make important decisions	41
24	My opinion counts a lot in my workplace	44

when I come at the work place. Hence, 19 items were identified with four dimensions in order to understand the employee empowerment. The dimensions identified for the present scale do not resemble with the perception of empowerment instrument developed by Roller (1998) which measures three dimensions viz., autonomy, responsibility and participation. That the results of reliability range from .71 to .81 indicate the adequacy of scale selection (Nunnally, 1978).

Pearson correlation technique was used for correlation between the various dimensions. As per the results in Table 2, as all the dimensions reflected a posi-

tive and significant correlation amongst each other, it can be concluded that control, seamless communication, intrinsic motivation and support gauge the employee empowerment in Indian context.

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The inter-correlation among the dimensions was significant. Nunnally and Bernstein, (1994) opined that correlation with scales measuring the same construct is very important.

**Table 2 Mean, SD & Correlation of Factors (N=199)**

Items	Factor	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1	Control	36.9045	1.94519	1			
2	Seamless Communication	49.2362	2.47809	.267**	1		
3	Intrinsic Motivation	12.6884	1.01674	.728**	.167*	1	
4	Support	18.7136	1.11617	.420**	.299**	.349**	1

Note: \*\* significant at 0.01 level & \* 0.05 level respectively

**Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

Covariance matrix was used as the input for running CFA. The results from CFA showed that the four dimensions derived from exploratory factor analysis completely fitted the data. The model adequacy used the fit indices as suggested by Joreskog and Sorbon (1996). The estimates generated provided evidence of an adequate model fit ( $\chi^2=164.2$ ,  $p = .000$ ; GFI = .91, AGFI = .94, TLI=.93, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .046). Joreskog and Sorbons’ (1996) recommendation of the ratio of the chi square statistic over the degrees of freedom was used as a measure of overall goodness-

of-fit. TLI and CFI high value as well as GFI and AGFI (0.90 or greater, Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Baumgarten & Homburg, 1996) and the low value of the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA, less than 0.08, Browne & Cudeck, 1993) all indicate a reasonably good level of overall model fit.

It is also to be noted that the prevalence of all the four dimensions of empowerment did not vary for different demographic variables like age, gender, marital status, tenure and sector of the respondents while conducting Anova and t test.

**Table 3 Results of CFA of Employee Empowerment with Dimensions**

	Normed $\chi^2$	GFI	TLI	CFI	AGFI	RMSEA
Model Fit	164.2 <.000	.91	.93	.94	.94	.046

**Discussion & Conclusion**

The present study understood the importance of various dimensions of empowerment and its relationship with employee engagement in the Indian setting. The results derived from the present study emphasize on the importance of empowering employees which leads to better engagement and less turnover in-

tentions. Four important factors related to empowerment were extracted with the help of Eigen values and factor load-

**The results derived from the present study emphasize on the importance of empowering employees which leads to better engagement and less turnover intentions.**

ing. As per the results in Table 2, as all the dimensions reflected a positive and significant correlation amongst each other, it can be concluded that control, seamless communication, intrinsic motivation and support gauge the employee empowerment in Indian context. In order to cross validate the findings derived from EFA, CFA were carried out on 246 respondents belonging to different sectors. The results from CFA showed that the four dimensions derived from EFA completely fitted the data. Furthermore, all the four dimensions were prevailing for all the respondents as the mean difference for the demographic variables like age, gender, marital status, tenure and sector did not show any significant difference while conducting Anova and t tests. The elucidation of the four aspects of empowerment is as follows:

*Control:* To achieve organizational excellence, an empowering organization emphasizes autonomy, recognition, rewards, management support, proper information and employee participation. When employees have control on their work environment they are better equipped to decide “what to do when, and in what order”; they also feel that their actions make a difference. These facets of experienced control have been referred to as ‘choice’, ‘self-determination’ and ‘impact’ (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995), as well as ‘perceived control’ (Menon, 2001; Deci & Ryan, 1991; Spreitzer, 1995).

*Seamless Communication;* As noted by Treviño et al. (2006) regular communication amid employees and the

leader will have a positive consequence on their behavior in the organization. Zollers & Callahan (2003) validated that open communication is closely associated to worker empowerment and was found to be imperative to make certain the success of the contemporary organization. House and Rizo (1972) and Chen et al., (2006) illustrate that communication not only associates individuals and builds relationships but also lessens uncertainty. While implementing empowerment decisive facets are information sharing and its access (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995; Grill et al., 2011).

**While implementing empowerment decisive facets are information sharing and its access.**

*Intrinsic Motivation;* Thomas and Velthouse (1990: 666-7) defined empowerment “as increased intrinsic task motivation that comes from making a task meaningful, identifying with it and finding expressive value in it.” An employee will experience a heightened level of intrinsic task motivation if he/she makes positive assessments of the four aspects of the task i.e. sense of impact, competence, meaningfulness and choice and therefore will be empowered.

*Support;* Array of behaviors by which a supervisor demonstrates kindness, approval, supports and bothers for the desires and thoughts of subordinates is leadership support. Sparrowe (1994; 1995) established that those employees will experience feelings of meaningfulness at work, proficiency and vigor on

their jobs that have positive relationships with their supervisors. Sparrowe (1994) demonstrated that relationships between employees and their immediate supervisors is a noteworthy element increasing the feelings of empowerment.

### **Managerial Implications**

Ongori (2009:011) illustrated that employee empowerment is crucial for organization's endurance and accomplishment and "it gives employees a sense of feelings that they are the core assets to the organizational success, creates commitment and a sense of belonging, builds trust, promotes effective communication, and increases organizational effectiveness and employee wellbeing". Empowered employees experience augmented feelings of contentment, enthusiasm and trustworthiness towards their work and organizations (Mullins & Peacock, 1991). Kuo et al., (2009) validated that an empowered employee will probably not leave the organization as he/she is emotionally involved in his job and therefore experiences pride and a sense of belongingness to be in the organization, which is in conjunction with the results of the present research. Organizations and managers need to recognize that the keystone of empowerment lies on the trust between managers and their subordinates; if managers think empowerment reduces their power and lack confidence in their employees they cannot instill self-confidence in them. The spirit of empowerment lies in managers being committed to trust and augmenting the potential of employees.

Organizations need to make sure that managers shall assimilate facets of empowerment in their every day administration and control of employees they are responsible for at different levels across the organization. Empowerment forms a critical component of a manager's function. Organizations need to ensure that an efficient internal communication system is in place with practices such as downward, horizontal and upward communication. The responsibility lies with the managers to make sure that employees get imperative, well-timed, extremely treasured and pertinent information. Results of the present study claim that seamless communication is a vital dimension of empowerment. Organizations and managers ought to sanction employee involvement and contribution in the decision-making process. Feelings of empowerment can be improved by engaging employees in decision-making process and showing that they are valued by the organization. Transforming organizations towards excellence needs empowering employees to their maximum in terms of liberalizing them to take decisions (Robbins, 2001; Schreuder & Theron, 1997). Such feelings provide employees with another important empowerment dimension which is control as results revealed.

Another critical dimension of empowerment is support as depicted in the results. Manager's support, kindness, clarity of communication, empathetically listen in, equality and ease of access are valued by the employees. Employees feel disturbed, distraught and ineffective to manage their daily tasks if managers do not offer support them. Employees shall be allowed to

express their opinions in constructive discussion by the managers. Employees shall be guided by managers into tasks that augment their skills and develop enterprise. This becomes necessary as with augmented skills employees can make a task more meaningful and can identify with it, while paving the way for intrinsic motivation dimension of empowerment.

Organizations and managers must recognize that for attaining organizational excellence employee empowerment is an inevitable facet.

Organizations need to recognize that empowerment will fall short if employees cannot manage their new tasks. Organizations need to completely recognize the competence and vigor of individual employees before initiating any empowerment related activities. Through organization wide training by the way of coaching or mentoring any scantiness can be tackled. Organizations need to know that treasured employees are the right ones to make value for the business and customers are the empowered employees. Organizations and managers must recognize that for attaining organizational excellence employee empowerment is an inevitable facet.

### **Limitations & Future Research**

The present study provides deep insights and presents a comprehensible understanding of the vital and significant role of empowerment. Nevertheless, the findings have several limitations. First, the employees participating in focus group discussions might have been influenced

by their peer's viewpoints, which in turn may have affected the quality and precision of their responses. Second, the study was conducted in India and therefore, as often in such sort of research, there may be numerous problems associated with cross-national or cultural matters. Third, there may be concerns about generalizability of these findings. It might be valuable that future research shall get data from diverse organizations and industries to examine whether the results can be generalized. Fourth, future research shall also investigate the impact of different variables and their relationship with employee empowerment in Indian context, to confirm the predictive validity of the developed instrument of empowerment.

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**Annexure 1 Employee Empowerment Scale**

No.	Item	Factors
1	I get easy access to the materials and requirement	Control
2	I get the opportunity to do what I am best at	
3	My job is important as it is aligned with the mission of the company	
4	My Supervisor regularly asks about progress at work	
5	My Work environment gives the opportunity to work on skills	
6	My opinion counts a lot in my workplace	
7	I am aware of what is expected from job	Seamless Communication
8	My management tries to solve work related problems.	
9	I have a clearly defined and frequently articulated roles	
10	My Supervisor cares	
11	My Colleagues support in the time of difficulties	
12	I have open avenues of communication across all levels	
13	I receive lots of opportunities to learn and grow at work place	
14	My boss trusts enough to let me make important decisions	
15	I feel enthusiastic towards my work	Intrinsic Motivation
16	My work motivates me.	
17	I have made good friends at work	Support
18	I get recognition for the work	
19	I am being appreciated at work	