Benefits of workplace empowerment

A stressful workplace develops into a breeding ground for behavioural health problems. Most professional health care providers know at least one friend or colleague who has experienced some type of workplace stress. Workers are now more often faced with more demands and less security, both of which are likely to be stressful, thus, cases of psychological disorders caused work-related stress are on the rise (Tennant, 2001). Stress can develop from environmental events like; work overload, role problems, poor job control, work hours, interpersonal conflicts or lack of support from supervisor and co-workers. Or it can develop from the individual's reaction to these events, and these stressors may lead to negative psychological, physical and behavioural symptoms like; depression, irritability, burnout, sleeplessness, headaches, anxiousness, absenteeism, turnover or even violence (Simbula, Guglielmi, & Schaufeli, 2011). This can become a high cost for the employee and the employer. According to Health and Safety Executive (2018) stress cost the UK economy an approximated 6. 5bn annually. Stress-related absence is 10 times more costly than all industrial disputes combined. Moreover, 44% of the UK's 15. 4 million lost workdays between 2017 and 2018 are attributed to workplace stress illnesses (Burton & Cherry, 2018). This shows that stress in the workplace has become a universal concern to all managers and administrators in the health care sector. In terms of job and organizational problems, it has been estimated that approximately half of all absence is related to stress in the workplace (Kompier & Cooper, 1999). Some of the main issues is the job demands, which refers to the job conditions that interfere with the worker's performance abilities, such as workload and work responsibilities, this affects how the employee manage to balance work and personal life. Additionally, job satisfaction which refers to the gratification of

the employee's needs, and aspirations derived from employment and most important the employee's motivation and empowerment (Arrow *et al.* 1996).

When work-related stress becomes increasingly difficult to control, does this often leads to job dissatisfaction. Early research conducted on job satisfaction and productivity presents limited evidence to support a relationship between these two factors. Babakus, Yavas and Ashill, (2010) found that the relationship was at best illusory, trivial and mostly a management fad. However, more recent studies have found these findings to be incorrect. Harrison, Newman, and Roth (2006) noted that low job satisfaction is a strong predictor of absenteeism, reduced productivity, lateness, low morale and high staff turnover. These behaviors have profound impacts on other employees, and can be increasing throughout an organisation (Glicken & Robinson., 2013). A study by Judge and Watanabe (1994) also found that job dissatisfaction had a negatively impacted personal life, including a spillover effect that often resulting in increased levels of depression, stress, alcohol and drug use and minor illnesses. Although it is argued that spillover has more to do with personal traits of the worker, Wheaton (1990) found that the evidence shows that what employees experience at work has a clear spillover effect and, when the experience is bad, work may negatively affect mental health (Glicken & Robinson., 2013). Low levels of control over one's job and excessive workload seem to be a particularly important combination in enhancing work-related stress and increasing dissatisfaction at work. Karasek's' " job demand/control" hypothesis has been tested in several populations by applying a " job characteristics scoring system" based on responses to different national

surveys for employees. Karasek and colleagues' conditions of high demand and low control are called " high strain" situations, and this suggest a correlation between job control and job demand (Karasek, 1998).

Empowerment is explained in terms of allowing employees greater freedom, autonomy and self-control over their work, and responsibility for decision-making (Mulins, 2010). This is also a matter of confidence and trust. Wilkinson in Mullins (2010: 683) suggested that it is important to see empowerment in a wider context. There are two theoretical perceptions about what empowerment means; psychological and managerial. The psychological perspective considers empowerment to be a motivational construct akin to state of mind. Conger and Kanungo (1988) described psychological empowerment as a heightened belief in the ability to perform. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) also described psychological empowerment as a heightened level of intrinsic task motivation. The managerial perspective believes that empowerment is a relational construct that describe how those with power in organisations share their power, information, resources and rewards with those lacking them. It can be argued that if the managers provided employees with the four above mentioned powers, they can succeed in empowering the employee. Ravisha and Pakkerappa (2017) argued that empowerment is a continuous process, which focuses on the growth of employee performance in the organisation's operations. Ravisha and Pakkereppa (2017) carried out a study with 43 participants from the steel industry in Karnataka, and this study showed that empowered employees are more efficient problem solvers and generally performed better in the workplace. Thus, empowerment results in

empowerment results in continuous development of the employees, and it helps employees to attain a greater result and perform better. Yavas *et al* (2010) claimed there is a lack of ongoing and effective training programs in the hospitality industry, which leads to a pool of employees who do not obtain the necessary skills. Empowering employees without training programs would not produce the intended outcomes, nor would training employees without empowerment (Yavas *et al* ., 2010).

Next to empowering the employees is it equally important to focus on their motivation. Mullins (2010) suggested a three-fold classification for reviewing motivation to work by drawing together the different motivational theories. These included monetary rewards, intrinsic satisfaction and social relationships. Deci and Ryan (1985) distinguished between different types of motivation based on the different reasons or goals that give rise to action. In their Self-Determination Theory, they stated that most basic distinction was between the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, which often refers to doing something because it is interesting, enjoyable and doing something because it leads to a preferred outcome. Earlier studies of motivation have showed that extrinsic motivation such as monetary rewards was more effective in motivating employees (Mickel and Barron, 2008), however, more current studies (Gagne and Deci, 2005) have exposed a shift from extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation. Grant (2007) stated that employees would most value a job that has aspects that are important and meaningful to them rather than promotions, income and job security. The primary difference between the two types of motivation is extrinsic motivation arises from the outside of the individual whilst intrinsic motivation arises from within. Cherry

(2018) reported that offering excessive external rewards for an already internal rewarding behaviour can cause decrease in intrinsic motivation. Whilst intrinsic motivation is often perceived as the ideal, both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are imperative ways of driving behaviour. Monetary rewards encompass the pay and fringe benefits, which can satisfy a variety of need including basic needs for survival as well as a need for self-esteem and status (Armstrong, 2006). Monetary rewards have significant motivational power as they symbolise many intangible goals and the satisfaction of needs at different levels of the hierarchy (Torrington *et al.,* 2005). However, within the academic literature, there is controversy about the strength and effectiveness of money as a motivator (Henderson *et al* ., 2003). Abdi *et al* (2011) stated that money is the fundamental inducement, and no other incentive or motivational technique comes close to it with respect to its influential value, however, Turkyil *et al* (2011) said that the desire for promotion is generally strong amongst employees as it involves a change in job content, pay, responsibilities, independence and status. Other factors enhancing employees' motivation includes recognition. Kalimullah *et al* (2010) reported that reward and recognition were essential factors in enhancing job satisfaction and work motivation which is directly associated with organisational achievement (Jun *et al* ., 2006). As well as the above-mentioned factors that affect employee motivation at work, Pocock (2006) considered meaningful work as a very important factor within intrinsic employee motivation. Meaningful work is an emerging factor for valued outcomes of organisations. It is an important issue and is valuable for both the employee and the employer.

Delecta (2011) defined work-life balance as the individual's ability to meet work and family commitments, as well as other non-work responsibilities and activities. The Work Foundation defined work-life balance as a certain extent to which people can control the time, place and the way they work (The Work Foundation, 2016). Contrastingly, Mark and MacDermid (1969) suggested that the balance is a mixed character that contrasts individual state on their different life roles, and the co-called balance is a point where different roles coordinates with each other. Similarly, Kersley *et al.* (2013) defined the work-life balance as achieving work-life satisfaction with the minimum conflict of different roles, however, Collatz and Gudat (2011) argued that if employees are satisfied with every aspect of their lives, it could mean they have achieved a healthy balance of work and life. Capron (2014) suggests that once one area has no negative impact on another, the balance between work and life is realised. Lockwood (2003) reported that an employee's capability to balance stress, work and other responsibilities are directly associated to workplace issues such as motivation. White (2006) stated that additional work hours subtracted from home time, while high work intensity or work pressure may result in exhaustion, anxiety or other consequences that affect the quality of home and family life. Such job demands, coupled with insufficient job resources including low levels of training and supervisory support, low pay and lack of empowerment and rewards (Yavas *et al*., 2004) depleted employees' energy and mental resources and lead to emotional exhaustion. Wider research suggested that job demands and job resources, beside affecting emotional exhaustion, are closely related to employees' turnover intentions (REF). Combs *et al.* (2006) stated that a combined presence of training, empowerment and rewards

would create cooperation in the organisation, encourage employee engagement and lead to retention of employees in the hospitality industry (Wall and Wood, 2005).

Frank *et al.* (2004) stated that employee turnover is often used to describe the unplanned loss of workers who leave voluntarily and who employers would prefer to keep. Employee turnover in the hospitality industry has gained an increasing repetition as a critical issue that must be addressed and properly managed (Hinkin and Tracey, 2000). Branham (2005) suggested that there were seven main reason as to why employees leave a company; The workplace is not what they expected, a mismatch between the job and the individual, too little coaching and feedback, lack of growth and advancement opportunities, a feeling of being devalued and unrecognised, stress from overwork and lack of work-life balance and loss of trust and confidence in line managers. Stella (2008) reported that a motivated and qualified workforce is crucial to increase productivity and the quality of the organisational services in order to achieve organisational objectives. Motivation is significant because people with the required knowledge, skills and abilities may still perform poorly if they are not motivated to dedicate their time and effort to their work. Employees have needs in which a workplace must fulfil in order to avoid demotivation. CIPD (2016) suggested that flexible working can bring benefits to both organisation and individuals and can improve the work-life balance. Jolly *et al.* (2017) stated that manager support and organisational culture support can benefit in reducing an individuals' work-life conflict. Alongside this, Jyrkinen (2014) suggested that when organisations implemented "

family friendly" policies, it may arguable help work-life balance, which again

can improve employee's motivation and reduce work-related

stress. Inclusively, empowerment is an important intrinsic motivation that

compromise positively appreciated experiences for which an employee

develops directly from a task. Additionally, employees' motivation is crucial,

and there are arguable more factors than money, which an employee wants

to get out of a certain job. Njambi (2014) stated that the sense of

achievement, feeling of accomplishment and empowerment

were important factors to build motivation and reduce work-related stress.

All of the studies above suggest that appropriate target points for

interventions towards reducing work-related stress should focus on

empowering and motivating the employees, as well as make sure that the

employees work and personal life is in balance.

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