

The Impact of Employee Empowerment and Customer Orientation on Health Care Organisational Performance in Uae: Conceptual Framework

Thuraya Ali Salem Aldawilah Alhashmi¹

Faculty of Technology Management and Business, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of employee empowerment and customer orientation on the performance of healthcare organizations in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The healthcare sector is a critical domain in the UAE's vision for sustainable development, where organizational performance plays a pivotal role in meeting increasing demands for high-quality services. Employee empowerment, characterized by autonomy, decision-making authority, and skill development, is hypothesized to enhance employee motivation and job satisfaction, leading to improved service delivery. Customer orientation, focusing on understanding and addressing patients' needs, fosters stronger patient-provider relationships and enhances patient satisfaction. This paper presents a conceptual framework linking employee empowerment and customer orientation to organizational performance, emphasizing key mediators such as employee engagement, service innovation, and operational efficiency. The proposed framework provides a basis for empirical studies aimed at improving healthcare outcomes in the UAE and offers actionable insights for policymakers and healthcare administrators to enhance organizational effectiveness in a competitive and dynamic environment.

Keywords: Employee Empowerment, Health Care, United Arab Emirates, Conceptual Framework

Introduction

Organizations must adapt to evolving conditions and produce new ideas to survive in the business environment, which is characterized by change and severe competition. This can only be accomplished if businesses have a high level of organizational creativity (Celik, Iraz, Cakici & Celik, 2014). Employees are seen as organization's most valuable and important resource, and their contentment is crucial to the success and performance of the company (Saif & Saleh, 2013). That is why much emphasis has been placed on the relevance of empowerment in enhancing job satisfaction and performance around the world in order to enhance performance (Charalabidis et al., 2012; Saif & Saleh, 2013). In an age of fierce

competition, service providers recognize that customer satisfaction and loyalty are critical to their sustenance and growth (Hudson, González-Gómez, & Rychalski, 2017). In meeting the demands of the globalized world and open mindedness, which necessitates the application of new administrative techniques that respond to the instability and challenges presented by the work place, gaining a competitive advantage for business organizations of all types has now become a valuable and important goal that they strive for (Weidenstedt, 2020). As a result, interest in the concept of employee empowerment became a critical component of these firms' success (Ivanova and Scheve, 2020).

One of the critical success factors for running an organization is gaining a competitive advantage through people (Fridayanthie, 2016; Jabeen & Dari, 2020; Voo et al., 2018). The long hours, night and weekend working, inconvenient scheduling, irregular days off and low pay, together with highly seasonal demand and lack of stability, makes the healthcare jobs less attractive to many people. The same characteristics thus make managing the work force more challenging. Healthcare organisations are labour-intensive with relatively high employee turnover (Babakus et al., 2017; Osman et al., 2017). This creates problems in terms of service quality, consistency and team spirit among employees which may affect the performance of the organisation.

So many studies were conducted that test the relationships among employee empowerment, customer orientation, and organisational performance (Ahmad & Manzoor, 2017; Dahou & Hacini, 2018; Devi & Anjani, 2022; Govindarajan, Kopalle, & Danneels, 2011; Jiang, Chai, Shao, & Feng, 2018; Kim et al., 2017; Nekesa, 2020; Neneh, 2017; Pousa et al., 2018; Quratulain et al., 2021). However, there is no conclusive evidence on the nature of the relationships. For instance, while some studies found significant positive relationship among the variables, others find negative relationship, while some did not find any significant relationship between them (Kim et al., 2017; Neneh, 2017; Quratulain et al., 2021).

Therefore, this study proposed a new conceptual framework is to provide a structured approach to understanding how employee empowerment and customer orientation influence the overall performance of healthcare organizations in the UAE. The paper is organized into five sections: Introduction, Literature Review, Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development, Findings, and Conclusion.

Literature Review

Organizations must adapt to evolving conditions and produce new ideas to survive in the business environment, which is characterized by change and severe competition. This can only be accomplished if businesses have a high level of organizational creativity (Celik, Iraz, Cakici & Celik, 2014). Employees are seen as organization's most valuable and important resource, and their contentment is crucial to the success and performance of the company (Saif & Saleh, 2013). That is why much emphasis has been placed on the relevance of empowerment in enhancing job satisfaction and performance around the world in order to enhance performance (Charalabidis et al., 2012; Saif & Saleh, 2013). In an age of fierce competition, service providers recognize that customer satisfaction and loyalty are critical to their sustenance and growth (Hudson, González-Gómez, & Rychalski, 2017). In meeting the demands of the globalized world and open mindedness, which necessitates the application of new administrative techniques that respond to the instability and challenges presented by

the work place, gaining a competitive advantage for business organizations of all types has now become a valuable and important goal that they strive for (Weidenstedt, 2020). As a result, interest in the concept of employee empowerment became a critical component of these firms' success (Ivanova and Scheve, 2020).

The study reviewed literature under the following topics; The study reviewed literature under the following topics; UAE service industry and the need for employee empowerment, Employee empowerment in the UAE service industry, Employee empowerment, Benefits of employee empowerment, perspectives on employee empowerment, psychological perspective, Relational/Structural Perspective, employee empowerment dimensions, employee empowerment process strategies, customer orientation, benefits of customer orientation, antecedents of customer orientation, empirical review of customer orientation, Organisational support, Organisational performance, Theoretical underpinning, etc.

UAE Service Industry and the need for Employee Empowerment

It is critical to empower personnel in order to make prompt decisions, especially in times of service failure (Hewagama et al., 2019) as employers often expect their staff to operate at a high level of efficiency and productivity (Frey & Osborne 2017). To fulfill organizational goals, most businesses require productive and empowered employees (Raziq & Maulabakhsh 2015; Grayson & Hodges 2017). It's also thought that being able to keep employees happy at work can boost both employee and organizational productivity (Oswald et al. 2015). Unfortunately, many organizations in the UAE have top management that is disengaged from its employees. There is no connection outside the leader-follower relationship (Al Maktoum, 2015).

It has been discovered that employees in many organizations in the UAE are simply enforcers of senior management's choices and procedures (Lambin 2007). They lack the authority to make decisions that actually influence their areas of expertise. The scope of their operations is limited as a result of this predicament (Saxena & AlHashmi 2010). As such Suliman and Kathairi (2012) suggested that employee empowerment must be prioritized as the oil that fuels organizational success and competitiveness. Unlike in the past, when other assets such as technology and finance have been the most essential indicators of an organization's health, employee engagement is now the most crucial indicator. This is because any company that fails to consider its employees' well-being risks becoming irrelevant in its field (Al Maktoum, 2015).

However, employees will continue to play a vital role in delivering the best results as organizations in the UAE strive to attain competitiveness in an increasingly globalized and technologically advanced world. Employees are critical to innovation, brand identity, and client retention. To reach this goal, however, a company must seek to create a highly engaged and empowered workforce that can propel the company's activities, innovation, and competitiveness (Al Maktoum, 2015).

Using self-determination as a starting point, employees who feel empowered, according to Spreitzer (1995, 1996), demonstrate the ability to regulate their work environment and feel qualified to attain their objectives (Kruja, Ha, Drishti, & Oelfke, 2016; Meng & Han, 2014). Employees are critical to the successful implementation of an

organization's service performance strategy, and their empowerment is critical to establishing an adaptive service experience that meets the demands of individual customers (Erdogan, 2019; Martinaityte, Sacramento, & Aryee, 2019). If organizations in the UAE embrace employee empowerment, it will result in higher employee involvement and better organisational performance (Al Maktoum, 2015).

According to Safari *et al.* (2020), empowerment has a great positive impact on an organisational overall advantage by creating a sense of trust among both employees and management, and therefore motivating workers to achieve the desired goals. This is predicated on the idea that because of the trust that has been built between the organization and employees, workers must conform to the guidelines and basis of such a trust by raising the level of performance in their task, and thus motivating workers to achieve the desired goals (Gautam & Ghimire, 2017).

Dimensions of Employee Empowerment

Kinela defines empowerment as "the process of leaning toward continual enhancement of organizational performance achieved through strengthening and increasing authority of capable individuals and groups in most aspects, and that this, in turn, impacts the overall performance of the organization" (Poorafkari, Ghanbari, 2012). Cognitive empowerment is a way of internal employee motivation that combines cognitive perspectives; feeling of being efficient, being capable, feeling of importance and having a chance to make decision, according to Thomas and Volthouse (1990, as cited in Hashemy et al, 2016)). They were among the first to bring cognitive empowerment into management research. According to their approach, cognitive empowerment is a motivating concept consisting of four aspects: competency, autonomy, relevance, and attachment (Abbasi et al, 2012; Rafiei et al, 2015). Employee empowerment, according to Voten and Cameron, is assisting employees in reinforcing their self-confidence and overcoming their feelings of handicap. The authors added confidence to the four dimensions of Thomas, Volthouse, and Spritezer (trust). As a result, feelings of autonomy, competence, efficacy, significance, and trust are all part of cognitive empowerment (Zarei & Khademi, 2010, Gorji, 2010). Based on Table 1, shows the employee empowerment dimensions.

Table 2.1

Employee Empowerment Dimensions

Author(s)	Context	Dimensions
(Yusoff, Ariffin, & Zalli, 2020)	Education, Malaysia	Decision Making
		Professional Growth
		Status
		Self-Efficacy
		Autonomy
(Rajalingam, Jauhar, & Abdul Ghani, 2015)	Manufacturing Industry, Malaysia	Power
		Information
		Reward
		Knowledge
(Boudrias, Gaudreau, Savoie, & Morin, 2009)	Service Sector (health services, insurance, and communications), Canada	<i>Supervisors' empowerment management practices</i>
		Delegating or sharing power
		Fostering development of skills
		Communicating relevant job information
		Recognizing and rewarding performance
		Maintaining positive relations with the group
		<i>Psychological empowerment.</i>
		Meaning
		Competence
		Self-Determination
		Impact
		<i>Behavioural Empowerment</i>
		Efficacy in performing job tasks
		Improvement efforts in job tasks
		Effective collaboration
Effort for improvement in the work group		
Involvement at the organizational level		
(M. K. Khan & Tariq, 2014)	Telecom Sector, Pakistan	Meaningfulness
		Competence
		Self-determination (choice)
		Impact
(Cheasakul & Varma, 2016)	Education, Thailand	• Status
		• Self efficacy
		• Autonomy
		• Decision making
		• Professional growth

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact
(Ribich, 2013)	Manufacturing, US	Meaning
		Competence
		Self-Determination
		Impact
		Trust
		Action Behaviours
		Sharing information
		Development of knowledge
		Skills
		Abilities
		Sharing power
		Reward systems
(Aliakbari & Amoli, 2016)	Education, Iran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional growth
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self efficacy
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autonomy
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making
(Zaraket, Gariou, & Malek, 2018)	Banking Sector, Lebanon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact
		Power
		Autonomy
		Authority
		Delegation
		Knowledge
		Feedback
		Role clarity
		Motivation
		Information
		Training
		Counselling
		Appraisal
		Rewards
Compensation		
Job Enrichment		
Career Planning		
(Kariuki & Murimi, 2015)	Manufacturing, Kenya	Autonomy
		Decision making
		Information Sharing
		Training
(Spreitzer, Kizilos, & Nason, 1997)	Industrial Sector	Meaning
		Competence
		Self-Determination
		Impact
(Spreitzer, 1995)	Manufacturing, US	Meaning
		Competence
		Self-Determination

		Impact
(Thomas, Velthouse, & Thomas, 1990)		Meaning
		Competence
		Choice (Self-Determination)
		Impact
(Short & Rinehart, 1992)	Education	Decision making
		Professional growth
		Self-efficacy
		Autonomy
		Status
		Impact
(Bogler & Somech, 2004)	Education, Israel	Decision making
		Professional growth
		Self-efficacy
		Autonomy
		Status
		Impact
(Meningen, 2017)	SMEs	Meaning
		Competence
		Self-Determination
		Impact
		Work-Related
		Power
		Information
		Reward
		Knowledge
(Lei & Xu, 2022)	Education, China	Meaningfulness
		Self-Competence
		Autonomy
		Status
		Impact
(Marin-Garcia & Bonavia, 2021)	General worker, EU	Structural Empowerment
		Access to opportunity
		Access to information
		Access to support
		Access to resources
		Psychological Empowerment
		Meaning
		Competence
Self-Determination		

Theoretical Underpinning

Kanter's structural empowerment theory depicts a top-down power distribution process within a company (Kanter, 1993). The qualities of a setting, according to Kanter (1993), can either hinder or support optimal work performance, regardless of human preferences or predispositions. Power is described by Kanter (1993) as the "capacity to

mobilise resources to get things accomplished. Whenever workers are exposed to lines of communication, support, resources, and chances to learn and grow, they have power. When these 'links' or sources go down, power goes off, and productive work becomes impossible (Orgambdez-Ramos & Borrego-Alés, 2014).

Kanter's theory serves as a framework for investigating empowerment as well as a starting point for devising interventions to improve work settings so that they can eventually deliver more meaningful work (Regan & Rodriguez, 2011). Kanter's structural empowerment theory establishes a structure for comprehending enabling businesses and empowered employees on a basic level (Orgambdez-Ramos & Borrego-Alés, 2014). The theory of structural empowerment by Kanter (1993), put emphasis on empowerment using organizational qualities such as resource allocation to people because empowered people have the opportunity to control resources in order to successfully complete their jobs, they are more likely to achieve high levels of work performance (Hirzel, Leyer & Moormann, 2017).

There this study adapt the Kanter and Spreitzer theories of employee empowerment to conceptualise the employee empowerment in the study. While the Kanter's theory deals with Structural/work related empowerment, the Spreitzer theory deals with psychological empowerment (Echebiri, Amundsen, & Engen, 2020; Lundin, Silen, Stromberg, Engstrom, & Skytt, 2021; Travers, Schroeder, Norful, & Aliyu, 2020). The integrated theories are presented in Figure 1.

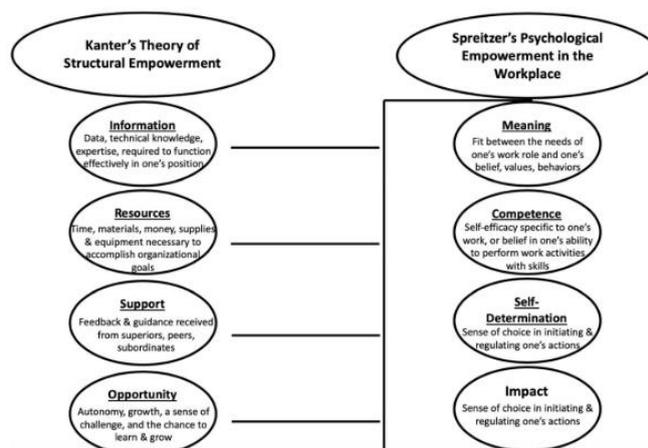


Figure 1: Kanter and Spreitzer Theories of Empowerment (Travers et al., 2020)

From Figure 1, the independent variables can be deduced. For the work/structural related empowerment, the major variables are information, resources, support, and opportunity. These are related and adduction of the variables used in the study which include power, information, reward and knowledge. While power is related to resources, reward is related to support and resources, and knowledge is related to knowledge (Laschinger, Gilbert, Smith, & Leslie, 2010; Lundin et al., 2021; Orgambídez-ramos, March-amegual, & Borrego-alés, 2017). The Kanter and Spreitzer theories both provided that the structure and psychological empowerment lead to improved work outcome such as organisational performance (Echebiri et al., 2020; Travers et al., 2020). Organisational performance therefore serves as the dependent variable of the study. Thus, this theory provided the basis for establishing and achieving research objective one and answering research question one of the study.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the review of literature presented and the underpinning theories, the conceptual framework of the study is presented in Figure 2 from which the hypotheses of the research are developed in the following subsections. The Kanter and Spreitzer theories of empowerment conceptualised employee empowerment based on structural/work related and psychological empowerment which has a tendency of affecting organisational performance. The social exchange theory on the other hand provides the basic for contextualising employee empowerment, customer orientation and organisational performance as the independent variable, mediator variable and dependent variable respectively. The conceptual framework of the study is presented in Figure 2.

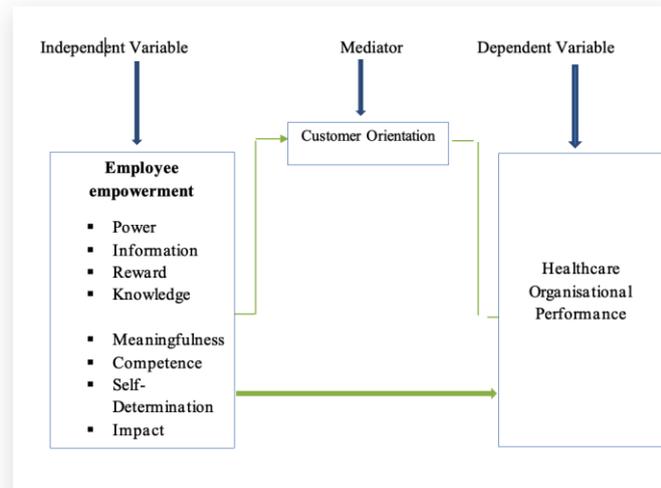


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presented in figure 2 shows that employee empowerment affects customer orientation which in turn leads to organisational performance. The framework is further elaborated in Figure 3.

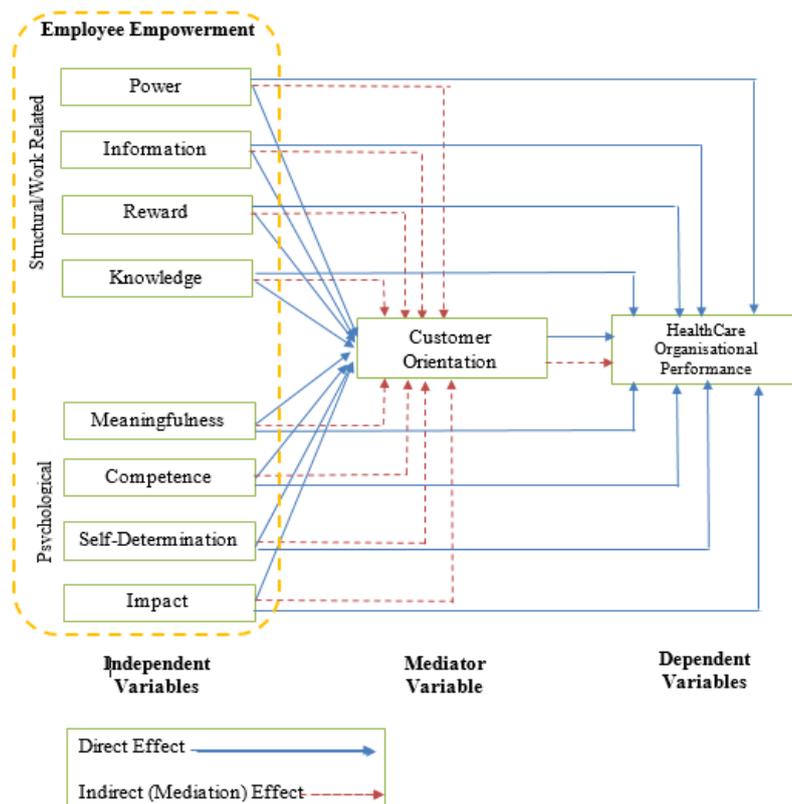


Figure 3: Elaborated Conceptual Framework

Research Hypothesis

Based on the conceptual framework deduced from the theories and literature review, the research hypotheses as well as their links to the research objectives and questions are summarised and mapped in Table 2.

Table 2

Summary of Research Hypotheses, Objectives and Questions

Research Objectives	Research Questions	Research Hypotheses
RO1: To determine the impact of employee empowerment (both structural/work related and the psychological) on organisational performance in UAE healthcare organisations.	RQ1: What are the impact of employee empowerment (both structural/work related and the psychological) on organisational performance in UAE healthcare organisations?	H1: Structural/work-related employee empowerment factors have a significant and direct effect on the healthcare organisational performance H2: Psychological employee empowerment factors have a significant and direct effect on the healthcare organisational performance
RO2: To investigate the impact of employee empowerment factors on customer orientation in UAE health organisations.	RQ2: what are the impact of employee empowerment factors on customer orientation in UAE health organisations?	H3: Structural/work-related employee empowerment factors have a significant and direct effect on customer orientation H4: Psychological employee empowerment factors have a significant and direct effect on customer orientation
RO2: To assess the impact of customer orientation on organisational performance in UAE healthcare organisations.	RQ3: What are impact of customer orientation on organisational performance in UAE healthcare organisations?	H5: Customer orientation has a significant and direct effect on the healthcare organisational performance
RO4: To develop a model of customer orientation mediation effect on the relationship between employee empowerment and organisational performance in the study area.	RQ4: How does customer orientation mediates the effect of the relationship between employee empowerment factors and health care organisational performance in UAE?	H6: Influential customer orientation factors have a substantial mediating effect between structural/work-related employee empowerment factors and the healthcare organisational performance in the UAE H7: Influential customer orientation factors have a substantial mediating effect between psychological employee empowerment factors and the healthcare organisational performance in the UAE

Conclusion

The proposed conceptual framework highlights the critical interplay between employee empowerment, customer orientation, and healthcare organizational performance in the UAE context. Employee empowerment, segmented into structural (e.g., power, information, reward, knowledge) and psychological dimensions (e.g., meaningfulness, competence, self-determination, impact), serves as the independent variable, directly influencing healthcare organizational performance. Additionally, customer orientation acts as

a mediator, further enhancing the relationship between employee empowerment and organizational performance.

The framework suggests that empowered employees are better equipped to address customer needs and foster a customer-centric culture, ultimately improving key performance indicators such as patient satisfaction, operational efficiency, and service quality. By delineating the direct and indirect effects, the model underscores the importance of integrating employee empowerment initiatives with customer orientation strategies to optimize healthcare outcomes.

This conceptual framework provides a solid foundation for empirical validation and offers actionable insights for healthcare organizations seeking to enhance their performance. Future research can apply this framework to explore the specific pathways through which empowerment and customer orientation contribute to sustainable improvements in healthcare services. This approach not only fills gaps in the existing literature but also addresses practical challenges in delivering high-quality healthcare in the UAE.

Future Works and Recommendation

Future studies should focus on empirically validating the proposed conceptual framework using quantitative methods. Data collection from healthcare organizations in the UAE would provide valuable insights into the relationships between employee empowerment, customer orientation, and organizational performance. Expanding the scope to include other sectors or regions could help establish the generalizability of findings, while comparative studies between public and private healthcare institutions in the UAE could uncover unique sector-specific dynamics. Additionally, longitudinal research would enable an exploration of how empowerment and customer orientation influence performance over time, shedding light on their sustainability and long-term effects. Future research could also incorporate external factors, such as government regulations, technological advancements, and cultural influences, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of performance determinants in the healthcare sector. Employing mixed-methods approaches that combine quantitative analysis with qualitative insights into employee and customer experiences could further enhance the robustness of future studies.

Healthcare organizations are encouraged to implement structured empowerment programs that address both structural and psychological dimensions. These programs should provide employees with access to resources, information, and decision-making authority while fostering a sense of competence and meaningfulness. Regular training programs on customer orientation can further equip employees with the necessary skills and mindset to deliver patient-centered care effectively. To ensure alignment, organizations should integrate empowerment and customer satisfaction metrics into their performance evaluation systems, linking them to overall organizational goals. Leadership plays a crucial role in this process, as management must foster an environment that values employee contributions, recognizes efforts, and promotes a customer-centric culture. Moreover, leveraging technology and innovation can enhance communication, streamline workflows, and improve patient experiences, complementing empowerment and customer orientation strategies.

Policymakers in the UAE can also benefit from these insights by designing initiatives and policies that incentivize healthcare organizations to invest in employee empowerment and customer orientation. Such efforts could enhance the overall quality of healthcare services in the UAE and contribute to achieving sustainable performance outcomes. By pursuing these recommendations and advancing research in this area, healthcare organizations can develop effective strategies to optimize performance and improve service delivery.

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