Modeling Leadership Communication and Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to describe the relationship between Leadership Communication and empowerment among the civil servants in Malaysia. Thus is to fill a gap in the management communication literature especially in the Malaysian perspective under the dynamic context of the recent civil servants empowerment practices in the government organizations. A face-to-face survey is taken from the five federal agency departments using random sampling technique. As well as being an important aspect of the literature contribution, some of the conclusions from the study evidence become an important insight to the Malaysian practitioners in the public sector management.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership communication has become very important component in the organizational in the era of globalization which the people of the world are unified into a single society and function together. Many studies are done on the leadership styles, empowerment, and job motivation (Hopkins 1995; Smith 1997; Burke et al. 2006). Nevertheless little research is given on the aspect of relationship between leadership communication and empowerment. For example a research by Abdul Halim Haji Busari (2003) on Agriculture Department, Malaysia, investigated the relationship between different styles of leadership on employee’s motivation. He found that there is a positive correlation between leadership styles and employees’ motivation. Hersey and Blanchard (1974), Locke et al. (1991) noted that leadership style is a way used by leaders to influence people while motivation refers to the willingness to exert high levels of effort to reach organizational goals, conditioned by the effort’s ability to satisfy some individual needs (Robbins et al. 2002). Abd Halim Haji Busari et al. (2003) claimed that in order to increase employees’ motivation and obtain better workers’ performances, leaders should show a good role to their followers by showing persistence and determination in the pursuit of organizational objectives, exhibit creative talents and strategies when facing challenges at work, having high standard of ethical and moral conduct and sacrificing self-gain for the benefits of others and encouraging workers to use their imagination in problem solving.

Empowerment is defined as a process which leads to enhanced perceptions of self-efficacy among followers by identifying conditions that foster a sense of powerlessness and removing them through both formal organizational practices and informal techniques (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spretzer, 1995, 1996). There are two aspects of empowerment that need to understand. The first is personal empowerment, refers to the individual responsible doing for them in order to feel empowered in their lives regardless of circumstances. The second is working with others to nurture their sense of self-esteem, autonomy and growth (Pastor J, 1996). In this study empowerment refers to given the responsibility and power handing to the employees in efforts to solve any work related problem within their job scope.

Kappelman et al. (1996), Smith, (1997) claimed that empowerment has a positive correlation with workers motivation and job satisfaction. Kappelman et al. (1996) also argued that giving workers the opportunity to schedule their own training, will resulted in large increases in employee motivation toward to the change and in their overall satisfaction.

The problems related to motivation among civil servants have become more apprehensive. A lot of complaints were heard from the general publics regarding their dissatisfaction towards the level of government services. This situation was strengthening by the YAB Prime Minister’s statement at Majlis Perdana Perkhidmatan Awam Keenam (MAPPA VI, 2005) who stressed that there were civil servants who were not well responsive, still unchanged and not showed high quality of work performance (Utusan Malaysia, 21 January 2005). It is stated that employees with low
motivation can give negative impacts towards organizations as it’s associated with the level of employees’ job satisfaction. Job dissatisfaction among employees can cause problems such as absenteeism, lateness, careless, long leave and many more which in turn can affect the quality of organization’s performance (Bruce & Blackburn, 1992; Gruneberg, 1979; Lawler, 1973; Vroom, 1982). Based on discussion of literature review and problem statement of the study, the following conclusion are found that the factors of leadership communication and empowerment are therefore need to be emphasized by government in order to ensure that motivation among civil servants can be remain in a good level.

This paper describes a research project that investigates the influence of leadership communication on empowerment among the civil servants. The objectives are;

1) to determine the relationship between leadership communication and empowerment.
2) to measure the contribution of leadership communication on empowerment among the civil servants.

**METHODLOGY**

Based on the previous literatures and the corresponding theoretical perspective, this study has proposed the theoretical model as shown in figure 1. Several variables have been identified which have been used as the hypothesis of the study. The research was conducted at federal agencies in Terengganu. The population of this study consisted of 351 employees in the department. According to Sekaran (2003) based on the given population, 90 samples size is the minimum requirement needed in the study. Questionnaire on leadership communication comprised of 50 questions; 20 questions for leadership communication, 20 questions for consideration leadership and 10 questions for communication orientation. Questions are designed based on the research by Ohio State University study on the leadership behavior. Respondent are asked on the questions/ statements based on scale of 1 to 5 with sequence of “Never”, “Seldom”, “Sometimes”, “Frequently” and “Always” respectively. Questionnaire on empowerment contained 15 questions used to measure empowerment practice. It has been modified by the researchers based on the original works of Short and Rhinehart (1992) to suit the usage in public agencies. Empowerment is measured by using three dimensions that are making decision (4 questions), professional development (5 questions) and status (6 questions). The scale used the measure of 1 to 5 represented “most disagreed”, “disagreed”, “neutral”, “agreed” and “most agreed”.

![Figure 1: Leadership Communication and Empowerment Conceptual Framework](image)

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

From the 118 distributed sets of questionnaire, 90 sets had been returned and is used for data analysis. This gave the returning rate of 76%. Among the respondents are 63.3% male workers (57 people) and 36.7% female workers (33 people). Majority of the respondents are in the middle age, where 40.0% (36 people) are within 36 to 45, 13.3% (12
people) are aged less than 25 years old, 13.3% (12 people) are aged between 26 to 30. Most respondents have a medium level of education. This is because almost 37 % (33 people) have MCE/SPM qualification, meanwhile the remaining respondents education level are LCE/SRP/PMR 10.0 % (9 people), STP/STPM 23.3% (21 people), Diploma 6.7% (6 people), Bachelor Degree of (20.0%) and Masters Degree (3.3%) with 3 respondents. In term of service group, they are from the support group II (30.0%) which are 43 people, while the rest 6.7% are from the support group I (18 people) and 63.3% from Professional and Management group (57 people). Majority of the respondents are married with percentage of 66.7% (60 people) and 30.0% (27 person) are single and the rest 2 person (3.3%) are widowed. The finding also showed that 16.7% (15 people) from the respondents has worked less than 3 years, while the remaining 15 people (16.7%) has worked at respective departments between 4 to 7 years. However, the highest numbers of the respondents worked for more than 16 years (40.0%). This situation showed that the respondents posses a wide job experience and knowledge that related to their profession.

**THE ASSESSMENT OF FITNESS FOR THE MODEL**

Structural equation modeling technique was use to estimate multiple and interrelated dependence relationships and used to represent the unobserved concept in these relationships and account for the measurement error in the estimation process (Hair, 1998). In this study the unobserved exogenous variables, is leadership communication and observed endogenous variable is empowerment. Amos version 6 was used to measure the model fit. Several measures of goodness of fit were evaluated for the structural model: Chi-square/degree of freedom, Goodness of fit index, Adjusted goodness of fit index (GFI), Normalized fit index(NFI), Comparative index (CFI) and Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good of fit model Index</th>
<th>Recommenden good fit value*</th>
<th>Propose Model</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square</td>
<td>160.755</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probability</td>
<td>&gt;.05</td>
<td>108</td>
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<tr>
<td>d.f</td>
<td>&lt; 2.00</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>GFI</td>
<td>&gt;.90</td>
<td>0.856</td>
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<tr>
<td>NFI</td>
<td>&gt;.90</td>
<td>.849</td>
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<tr>
<td>TLI</td>
<td>&gt;.90</td>
<td>0.943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFI</td>
<td>&lt;.08</td>
<td>0.068</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Criteria suggested by Hair, Anderson, Tatham, Black (1998) and Arbuckle & Wothke (1999)

The overall model fits is marginal with the values of GFI,NFI,CFI and RMSEA. The likelihood ratio chi-square value 160.75 with 108 degree of freedom is statistically at the 0.05 significant level. It may be concluded that significant differences exist between the proposed model and the recommended model. The GFI value 0.86 is at a marginally acceptable level, but the RMSEA has a value which falls inside the acceptable range of 0.08. The analysis illustrates that consideration had a positive significant relationship with empowerment towards federal civil servants. This finding supported the research done by Abdul Halim (2003) who claimed that there was a positive relationship between leadership communication with empowerment and motivation. Therefore to increase the level of motivation among employees, the management needs to give full support and practically perform empowerment in the organization.

The study also found that empowerment had a relationship with work motivation. The result was consistent with the previous studies done by Burke et al. (2006); Kappelman et al. (1996) who emphasized that empowerment indeed can increase employees’ motivation. Based on what have been discussed above, it can be concluded that leadership communication consist of (initiating structure, consideration, and orientation communication) had played an important role to increase empowerment among civil servants. Similar research conducted by Choi J. (2006) shows that the elements of envisioning empathy and empowerment in charismatic leadership were able to enhance employees’ motivation. These findings were also in line with the elements of charismatic leadership as suggested by previous studies (Bass. 1985; Burke. 1986; Conger & Kanungo. 1998).
CONCLUSION

This study has implications for managers. The study suggests that the management should concentrate on the empowerment which is significantly correlated with job motivation for the employees. Since the impact between empowerment and job motivation is significant it is recommended that the empowerment should be put in the place that will enhance the motivation amongst the employees.

REFERENCES


Ucapan Pada Majlis Perdana Kelima Perkhidmatan Awam 2005: (Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, MPPA V)