

Original Article (Qualitative)

# Presenting a policy model for empowering Payam Noor University employees

Abbas Atapour<sup>1</sup> , Alireza Manzari Tavakoli<sup>2</sup> , Sanjar Salajeghe<sup>3</sup> ,  
Zahra Anjom Shoaee<sup>3</sup> 

1- Ph.D student of Public Administration Department, Ke.C, Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran.

2- Department of Educational Management, Ke.C, Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran

3- Department of Public Management, Ke.C, Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran

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**Abstract**

The aim of this study is to present a model for policy-making for employee empowerment at Payam Noor University with a data-based approach. The present study is applicable-developmental in terms of the type of objective, descriptive in terms of data collection, and qualitative in terms of the nature of the data. The statistical population of the study includes specialists and experts familiar with the issues of policy-making for employee empowerment. Sampling in this study was of the snowball type. Based on the subject of the desired data, semi-structured interviews were collected and sampling continued until theoretical sufficiency and saturation. The information obtained was analyzed with Nvivo software. The results showed that the employee empowerment policy-making model with a data-based approach includes causal factors (leader competencies, human resource competencies, organizational competencies, and motivation of academic agents), contextual factors (university structure, university atmosphere, university technology), intervening factors (cultural conditions, economic conditions, social conditions, and political conditions), strategies (clarifying the vision, goals, and mission, empowering, optimizing, and facilitating processes, establishing a quality assurance system, establishing a meritocracy system, establishing an accountability system, creating motivation, and developing communications and interactions), and consequences (individual consequences, academic consequences).

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**Publisher:** Research Center of Resource Management Studies and Knowledge-Based Business

**Corresponding Author:** Alireza Manzari Tavakoli

**Email:** a.manzari@iauk.ac.ir



## Extended abstract

### Introduction

Human resources, as the most valuable organizational resource, are the center of organizational approaches and activities and play a fundamental role in achieving the goals and ideals of the organization (Alirezaei & Babaei Meybodi, 2020). A prerequisite for a developed society is to have developed organizations, and developed organizations gain their strength and success through empowered human resources. Empowerment makes employees feel more responsible for better performance in the organization (Greasley, et al., 2008). Empowering employees allows managers to benefit from the knowledge, experience, energy, skills, and motivation of the organization's people (Dickson and Lorence, 2019). Since empowerment is a strategy, its prerequisites must be provided and practical strategies and actions must be used to implement it in the organization. Therefore, paying attention to organizational intelligence capabilities and interpersonal relationships in improving employee empowerment is considered vital (Miidom, et al., 2022).

Despite the increasing interest in empowerment studies, there are still research gaps in the literature. First, given the dynamic nature of organizations and work groups, there is a need to understand what is happening and examine relationships from a dynamic and multi-level perspective. Second, the link between empowerment and the psychological contract, an implicit agreement exchange between an individual and an organization, is rarely understood; although empowerment has recently been used to explain the exchange of the employee-organization relationship. The last gap is the limited knowledge about the relationship between psychological empowerment and the quality of interpersonal interactions (Kanjanakan et al., 2023). Payam Noor University, as one of the largest higher education centers in the country, faces several challenges in the field of human resources. One of the most important of these challenges is the need to empower employees in order to increase productivity, improve the quality of services, and adapt to rapid changes in the field of education and technology. The absence of a comprehensive and integrated policy in the field of empowerment has led to the dispersion of efforts, the lack of alignment of programs, and ultimately, the failure to fully realize organizational goals. Payam Noor University lacks a comprehensive and localized model for empowering its employees, which leads to a lack of complete productivity, reduced job satisfaction, and a lack of compliance with the university's current needs. Paying attention to the specific structure of Payam Noor University (such as geographical dispersion and diversity of human resources), this research helps to increase productivity, improve the skills and motivation of employees, and ultimately achieve the university's goals. To achieve this goal, in the research process, using a qualitative method and also having the views of experts, an attempt is made to answer the question: What is the model of policy-making for empowering employees at Payam Noor University with a data-based approach?

### Theoretical foundations of the research

#### Empowerment

The history of the first definition of the term empowerment dates back to 1788, in which empowerment was understood as the delegation of authority in one's organizational role, which should be granted to the individual or seen in his organizational role. The word Empower in the Oxford Dictionary means "to strengthen, to authorize, to provide power, to be able to". In the specific sense, it means empowering and giving freedom of action to individuals to manage themselves, and in the organizational sense, it means changing the culture and courage in creating and leading an organizational environment. In other words, empowerment is the design and construction of the organization in such a way that

individuals, while controlling themselves, are also prepared to accept more responsibilities (Abbasgholizadeh, & Alirezaei, 2020). Although the term empowerment has been used very widely in the management literature, there is no clear meaning of it and researchers have not provided a common definition for it. Empowerment means designing a structure in such a way that individuals, while controlling themselves, achieve sufficient growth to accept greater responsibilities in the future (Mirmohammadi et al., 2016). In the empowerment process, the manager helps employees to acquire the necessary capabilities for career maturity and self-leadership (Hamszare et al., 2017). Human resource empowerment is a new approach to intrinsic job motivation that, by releasing the internal forces of employees, causes the flourishing of individuals' talents and competencies (Shahravi, 2021).

### **Research Background**

Sadeghi (2025) conducted a study to investigate the effect of organizational trust, employee empowerment, and organizational citizenship behavior on improving employee performance in Bandar Abbas Municipality. This study is descriptive-analytical and data were collected through a standard questionnaire. Confirmatory factor analysis-structural equation methods were used to analyze the data. The results of the study show that organizational trust and employee empowerment have a direct and significant effect on improving employee performance. However, organizational citizenship behavior did not show a significant effect on employee performance. The findings indicate that creating mutual trust between employees and managers and providing empowerment conditions can lead to increased productivity and better employee performance.

Tretiakov et al. (2023) conducted a study titled "Investigating Employee Empowerment and Human Resource Flexibility in Small and Medium-Sized Information Technology Companies." The results showed that employee empowerment has a significant impact on four dimensions of human resource flexibility (skill flexibility, communication flexibility, behavioral flexibility, and cognitive flexibility), and flexibility is an appropriate approach to responding to environmental uncertainty and is a capability to react or respond appropriately to environmental needs. Skill flexibility emphasizes the willingness and ability to adapt to changes, especially in how and when to do work. Communication and behavioral flexibility enable employees to manage and solve problems by understanding the differences between themselves and others. Cognitive flexibility causes a person to change their thinking from old situations to new situations, overcome common responses or thoughts, and adapt to new situations.

Zarei et al. (2025) conducted a study entitled "Designing a Manager Empowerment Model in Tehran Municipality". The results showed that the variables of participation, leadership, goal setting, planning, organization, allocation of resources and facilities, creativity, having team competence and adequacy, having a sense of empathy and communication, technical and specialized skills, knowledge and awareness have a significant relationship with the empowerment of managers in the southwest Tehran Municipality. Empowering managers is one of the effective tools for increasing employee productivity and optimal use of their individual and group capacities and abilities in line with organizational goals.

### **Research Methodology**

The present study is applicable-developmental in terms of the type of purpose, descriptive in terms of data collection, and qualitative in terms of the nature of the data. The statistical population of the study includes specialists and experts familiar with employee empowerment policy issues. Sampling in this study was snowball type. Based on the subject of the desired data through preliminary studies, semi-structured interviews were collected and sampled until



theoretical sufficiency and saturation were reached. After conducting 18 interviews, data analysis indicated that new data was not added to the previous data, because a high percentage of the data extracted from the last interviews was repetitive. Therefore, after conducting 18 interviews and reaching theoretical saturation, the interviews were ended and to ensure the transferability of the research findings, three experts outside the research were consulted.

### **Research findings**

In the qualitative part of the research, taking into account the opinions of experts and experts, compiling and extracting all interviews and using the grounded theory approach (open coding, axial coding and selective coding) and based on the paradigmatic model (causal conditions, axial phenomenon, background conditions, mediating conditions and strategies), a model for setting a line and policy for employee empowerment was designed using the Nvivo qualitative analysis software. The results showed that the employee empowerment policy-making model with a data-based approach includes causal factors (leader competencies, human resource competencies, organizational competencies, and motivation of academic agents), contextual factors (university structure, university atmosphere, university technology), intervening factors (cultural conditions, economic conditions, social conditions, and political conditions), strategies (clarifying the vision, goals, and mission, empowerment, optimizing and facilitating processes, establishing a quality assurance system, establishing a meritocracy system, establishing an accountability system, creating motivation, and developing communications and interactions), and consequences (individual consequences, academic consequences).

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to present a policy-making model for empowering employees at Payam Noor University. The results showed that the policy-making model for empowering employees with a data-based approach includes causal factors (leader competencies, human resource competencies, organizational competencies, and motivation of academic agents), contextual factors (university structure, university atmosphere, university technology), intervening factors (cultural conditions, economic conditions, social conditions, and political conditions), strategies (clarifying the vision, goals, and mission, empowerment, optimizing and facilitating processes, establishing a quality assurance system, establishing a meritocracy system, establishing an accountability system, creating motivation, and developing communications and interactions), and consequences (individual consequences, academic consequences). These findings are somewhat consistent with the results of Khalili Esnaki (2021) and confirm the results of this study.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended:

Focus on developing leadership competencies and creating a participatory organizational culture. Leaders should strengthen their leadership competencies and involve employees in decision-making by providing the necessary training and creating learning opportunities. Also, creating a fair and transparent reward and incentive system can increase employee motivation for progress and innovation. In addition, providing the necessary resources and facilities to perform tasks and providing career development opportunities helps employees improve their skills and work more effectively. Finally, creating open and transparent communications between employees and leaders helps build greater trust and cooperation and provides the basis for employee empowerment.