

Are Libraries Enjoying the Dimensions of Empowerment Climate in the Workplace? (A Study of the Viewpoints of Public Librarians in Mazandaran Province)

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Abstract

Purpose: Competent human resources are the most vital asset available to organizations and empowerment is possible through a set of procedures designed to develop the employees' capacity, so that they can direct the organization and the workforce towards productivity. Promoting librarians' empowerment is an effective means of increasing productivity, and enabling the efficient use of both individual and collective capabilities to achieve library purposes. This study aims to examine the viewpoints of Mazandaran's public librarians regarding whether a climate of empowerment in the workplace resulted in increased workplace enjoyment.

Methodology: In this study data was collected through the Modified Scott & Jaffe's climate empowerment questionnaire. This consists of 38 items within 9 dimensions (clarity of purpose, morale, fairness, recognition, team-work, participation, communication, healthy environment and education) using the Likert scale. The research population includes all librarians working in public libraries in Mazandaran province. Data analysis was conducted using the t-Test, ANOVA and Levene tests.

Findings Results showed that in terms of gender and discipline there was no significant difference between librarians' viewpoints regarding whether a climate of empowerment resulted in increased workplace enjoyment; however there was a significant difference between their viewpoints stemming from their employment experience, organization position, education level, and type of employment. Results indicate that dimensions of "recognition" and "participation" are significantly different in terms of work experience ($P < 0/01$). The lowest average for the "recognition" dimension comes from librarians with less than 5 years' work experience and for the dimension of "participation" the highest average comes from librarians with 5-15 years' work experience. The dimensions of "teamwork" and "education" have significant differences in terms of job position ($P < 0/01$) with the lowest average found in the "teamwork" dimension and the highest average in the "education" dimension; these figures were related to the deans of Mazandaran's local departments of Public Libraries Foundation. Finally, there are significant differences between the "fairness" and the "appreciation" dimensions according to educational level ($P < 0/01$) which for the "fairness" dimension, librarians with associate degree qualifications have the lowest average; for the "understanding and "appreciation" dimensions, librarians with bachelor degree qualifications have the highest average. Results also, showed that the level of empowerment within the public libraries of Mazandaran Province are considered to be moderate and that is necessary to pay attention to empowerment producing agents such as justice in payment, improvement of evaluation and reward systems, and meeting staff needs.

Originality/value: This study is a preliminary one to determine librarians' perceptions regarding the empowerment climate of the workplace. Results may help managers and librarians of public libraries to implement a climate of empowerment at their workplace and to gain a good understanding of the values of this.

Keywords: empowerment climate, librarians, workplace, public libraries, Mazandaran Province.