

EMPLOYEES' SHARING IN DECISION MAKING: A STUDY OF ARAB POTASH COMPANY IN JORDAN

Taher Al Kalaldeh, PhD in Human Resource Management

Faculty of Economics and Business, Jadara University, Jordan

Abstract

Aim: to assess the perception of employees towards sharing in decision making in one of the largest industrial company in Jordan.

Background: sharing employees in decision making is seen to promote cooperation, enhance employees' capabilities, and support productivity. Studies found that employees' sharing entails reduction in cost of both monitoring and supervising employees in addition; motivation is enhanced when performance is reinforced.

Method: the descriptive correlational design was used through seeking employees from different administrative levels. Employees participated in the study completed a pre-prepared self-administered questionnaire which consists of a number of aspects surrounding employees' sharing in decision making.

Findings: A total of 151 participants joined the study. The study showed low-to-moderate level of employees' sharing in managerial decisions. Employees perceived themselves competent to share in working decision. Employer's seriousness, time allowance, and presence of incentives were factors perceived to be impetus towards promoting employees' sharing.

Conclusion: management should not be reluctant to enhance sharing of employees that can promote best organizational performance.

Keywords: Decision making, employees sharing, Organizational performance

Introduction

Decision making is a difficult task in nature due to the need for selecting solutions from a range of alternatives ad variable advantages and disadvantages options (Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003; Anand, Gardner & Morris, 2007). The concept of employees' sharing in decision making is increasingly acknowledged in the field of the institutional management especially in the era of seeking employees' rights (Becerra-Fernandez &

Sabherwal, 2001; Bartol & Srivastava, 2002). The change in the philosophical perspective of employees' sharing becomes more emphasized in the industrial workplace where the dynamic production is dominant (Belk, 1988).

Arab Potash Company is one of the biggest industrial projects in Jordan which was established 1956 to produce the Potash using the minerals of the Dead Sea. The site is located 110 kilometers south of Amman (capital of Jordan) and 200 kilometers north of Aqaba (south coast of Red Sea). Potash production began commercially in 1983 with various schemes aimed at optimizing and expanding this production. The initial plant was built to a capacity of 1.2 million tonnes of product.

This study aimed to assess employees' sharing in decisions including the type of decision being allowed, administrative levels required to permit sharing, and other obstacles impeding employees' sharing.

Background

Sharing in decisions is a mental, intellectual, and emotional activity used to treat certain issue that require thinking, analysing, and brain storming (Bowen, & Lawler, 1992; Cohen, 1998). It is achieved when a leader call employees for a meeting to discuss certain issue regarding workplace. This act, in eventual, would create confidence between both parties leading to find expedient solutions (Collins, Smith, & Stevens, 2001). Sharing in decisions has many advantages such as enhancing employees' maturity and responsibility and making an efficient group of decision makers (Collins, & Smith, 2006). In addition, sharing in decisions aims to promote cooperation, enhance employees' potential capabilities, and support productivity in the company (Darroch & McNaughton, 2002; Cox, Zagelmeyer, & Marchington, 2006).

Decisions which are raised along with employees' sharing are often accompanied with robust evidence and proofs because of using different internalised perspectives. However, to maintain an effective sharing in decisions, employees have to possess many personal traits such as: sufficient field experience, personal readiness and willingness to share in decisions, and ability to control internal and external stressors (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Dittmar, 1992). Some studies suggest that sharing in decisions can be undertaken through different level of sharing, meaning that leader can use different strategy of sharing instead of adopting such model to facilitate sharing among employees. For instance, the managers can adopt indirect sharing through providing the suggestions box which is in fact voluntary and done by employees with or without declaring the identity (Graham, 1991; Grant, 1997; Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001). In contrast, direct sharing can be performed through group discussion, telephone calling,

establishing committees, or through face-to-face interviewing between manager and some specific subordinates (Hargadon, 1998; Hislop, 2003; Ibragimova, 2006).

Some studies argued that this manner of relationship between employees and their leaders does not necessarily produce risk but it enhances trust and respect between both parties. On the other hand, this kind of relationships may reduce the effect of external stressors on the working environment and improve staff satisfaction (Jones, 2002; Lepine, Erez, & Johnson, 2002; Ip, 2009). Manager's trust of employees' sharing is viewed as a key factor that reduces the risk of sensitivity and meaningfulness of employees sharing. When trust exists, manager facilitates the role of employees based on the belief of its effectiveness (Markus, 2001; Lin, 2007). This means that suggestions made by novice employees will not be taken into account without certain recognition made by managers about their positive impact (Masterson, & Stamper, 2003; Matzler, Renzl, Müller, et al., 2008). However, the challenge occurs in this situation is that the ability of managers to assess their employees' knowledge and skills which is acknowledged in the input of decision making (Mayhew, Ashkanasy, Bramble, et al., 2007).

It is acknowledged that managers' trust plays an important role in enhance sharing in decision making. Employees who receive trust from their managers are often able to manage their work effectively, able to use self-direction techniques compared to low echelon employees (O'Dell, & Grayson, 1998; Mooradian, Renzl, & Matzler, 2006). Although this evidence is still underestimated by a number of empirical studies, the value of managerial trust has an impact on motivating employees to share in decisions, enhancing creativity and professional development (Organ, & Ryan, 1995; Pierce, O'Driscoll, & Coghlan, 2004).

There is a concrete relationship between employees sharing in decision making and employees' and organizational performance. Enhancing employees' involvement in decisions may accompany with a cost reduction of monitoring and supervising employees (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, et al. 2000; Puranam, Singh, & Zollo, 2006). In addition, literature revealed that employees' sharing in decision making is strongly associated with arising cognitive and motivational performance of employees (Senge, 1990; Soliman, & Youssef, 2001). Managers may use incentives to encourage employees to share in decisions (Rousseau, & Shperling, 2003). Therefore, incentives can approximate employees' performance to the organizational goals (Tidd, 2000; Strauss, 2006). In eventual, employees would show positive attitudes towards adjusting their own values to their expected performance (Van Dyne, & Pierce, 2004; Usoro, Sharratt, Tsui, et al, 2007).

According to the above, it is evident that employees' sharing in decision making can influence managerial trust, individual performance, and

organizational performance (Von Krogh, 1998; Wilkinson, 1998; Warner, 2009). This theoretical construct can be an active strategy used to maintain the integrity of organization and increasing job satisfaction and job retention. In particular, employees sharing in decision making functions as accelerator for improving the organization performance.

Methods

This study aimed to assess the perception of employees' sharing in decision making in one of the largest industrial company in Jordan. The study used the descriptive approach through seeking employees from different administrative levels who working in the Arab potash company. The reason for selecting a kind of company like this is that because the relationship between employees sharing in decision making and organizational performance is more emphasized in the industrial companies than others. Also, because this is one of the biggest industrial projects in Jordan, employees' perspectives gained by this study would be representative and informative to reflect employees' sharing in other similar places.

Sample

Employees working in different administrative departments in the main company premises located in Amman were the accessible population. Field experience was required so participants should have at least one year experience. Sample was collected used the convenient sampling technique with no previous determination of age, gender, or academic qualifications. The overall number of employees who participated in the study was 151 employees.

Instrument and Data Collection

Data were collected using a pre-prepared self-administered questionnaire. This questionnaire was developed by other research papers that shared with this study the same objectives (Zahra & Nielsen, 2002; Yang, 2004). However, the researcher has introduced some additional items to reflect employees' perception toward sharing in decision making. The content of this questionnaire was translated into Arabic and re-validated through seeking a panel of experts in this field. Questionnaires were delivered to the participants directly after obtaining the verbal permission from each employee. Ethical approval for preserving participants' rights was obtained from authority of Arab Potash Company. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous and all collected questionnaires were kept with the researcher only.

At the beginning of the questionnaire an introduction about the study and its significance was introduced. The main parts were presented as

follow: the first section included a number of socio-demographic questions including age, gender, qualifications, and experience; the second section included questions related to the perception of different managerial levels in decision making; the third section included problems facing the process of decision making in groups; the fourth section assessed the perception of sharing in decision making; and the fifth section assessed the methods used for sharing in decisions. Rating system was based on four consecutive responses ranged from low to extreme.

Data Analysis

Firstly, data were entered to the SPSS software (version 17) and checked for outliers and missed data which has been treated using the approximate means. Descriptive statistics were used to describe demographic data and study variables using percentage, mean, and standard deviation (SD). Inferential statistics were used to assess the relationship between study variables using the correlation coefficient. Any relationships were statistically calculated based on a non-parametric statistics rather than parametric statistics.

Findings

One hundred and fifty one participants joined the study and completed the questionnaire. The sample shows roughly an equal male and female distribution. The majority of participants were aged between 36-45 years old. Approximately half of the participants holds the bachelor degree and 40% of them have worked for more than 20 years. Table 1 shows the participants demographics in relation to previous variables.

Table 1

Perception of Sharing in Decision Making

The majority of participants moderately believed in the role of the head of department, the head of unit, and the supervisors regarding their ability to share in decision making as shown in Table 2. Male workers scored higher in having the opportunity to share in decisions than female workers. Surprisingly, academic qualifications did not differ in term of sharing in decision as both undergraduate and graduate workers gained the same opportunity. However, employees with longer field experience and who aged over 30 gained higher chances to share in decisions than younger workers who have lesser experience (Table 2). The internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha test was measured for each group. As shown underneath each table, Cronbach's alpha tests scored values above 0.70; something is acknowledged in the literature.

Table 2

Regarding problems associated with impeding the opportunity to share in decisions, time restrictions and unwillingness of employees to share in decisions were ranked first as major factors impeding sharing. Employer's motivation and lack of field experience came in the second rank. Table 3 shows the other factors which have also been scored around the midpoint.

Table 3

In the line of sharing employees in decision making, participants recorded least scores in this domain as shown in Table 4. Employees appeared to be less articulated with the administrative decisions and other decisions due to lack of sufficient freedom offered by the employers. Despite the difference in means, participants were inconsistent in indication the role of sharing whether in routine or strategic decisions. However, it was evident that the participants believed in the efficiency of employees to participant in decision making (Table 4).

Table 4

Regarding the methods used to execute sharing, participants indicated that individual meetings were the most common way to share employees in decisions. Then, sharing within committees was scored secondly. However, using the formal and informal written suggestions and formal meetings with leaders, were unclearly addressed by participants as they appeared less used in their working place (Table 5).

Table 5

Based on the above, a number of susceptible factors correlated with each other to show their impact on employees' sharing in decisions. The intercorrelations between the susceptible factors that enhance sharing in decisions are appeared in Table 6. The correlation coefficient used to determine the relationship between these factors was based on the Sperman Rho test as the appropriate non-parametric statistics. As shown in Table 6, the correlation coefficient between each two pairs of factors indicated different level of associations. It was evident that the methods used for sharing positively correlated with the adequacy of time ($r = 0.80$ $P < 0.01$), meaning that the best opportunity for sharing in decisions requires sufficient space of time. Similarly, adequacy of time has positively correlated with the adequacy of expertise ($r = 0.73$ $P < 0.05$). Seriousness of management to enhance employees' sharing has positively correlated with rewards ($r = 0.68$ $P < 0.01$). There were other positive correlations between these factors showing many reasons that may influence or prohibit employees' sharing in decision making. Therefore, manipulating these factors may readjust

workers' perception towards the readiness of management to enhance sharing.

Table 6

Discussion

Although involving employees in decision making may produce risks to the manager in the working place, certain factors may enhance sharing of employees by increasing the willingness of managers to do so (Darroch, & McNaughton, 2002; Cox *et al*, 2006). This study aimed to assess the perception of employees working in Arab Potash Company toward sharing employees in decision making. Many features were used to assess their perception. It is assumed that organizational performance is influenced by sharing employees in decision making (Eisenberger *et al*, 1990). The study generally has shown lower scores in questions related to perception toward sharing in decision making. Although there is an increase in the awareness toward this issue, managers still appeared reluctant to join their employees in decision making and therefore limit their capacity to produce and innovate.

Enhancing employees to share in decisions may require concerted efforts leading to increase the readability of leaders to be more convinced in employees sharing. These efforts are no longer to achieve without considering several factors which have been illuminated in this study. However, studies have no consensus of why managers have no greater tendency to allow employees sharing in decisions (Hislop, 2003; Ibragimova, 2006). Different point of views claimed that managers' vulnerability increased when employees interference with organizational performance is increased (Jones, S. 2002; Lepine *et al*, 2002).

Participants showed poor adherence to the managerial activities and decision making due to the lack of sufficient time, lack of expertise, and doubts around employees' willingness to share in decisions. It is acknowledged that giving such duty to someone should be accompanied with high level of responsibility and sufficient time allowance. As participants claimed lack of time to participate with decision making, time restrictions correlate negatively with employees' productivity, job satisfaction, and willingness to share (Lin, 2007). On the other hand, field experience was viewed a strong factor forcing managers to select the most competent and proficient workers to join the process of making decisions. As long as field experience is manifested, sharing in decisions and increasing the ability to capture working missions would become more efficient. Regarding employees' willingness to share in decisions, it seems to be associated with a number of factors such as level of satisfaction, work overload, the hierarchal structure of the firm, lack of incentives, and responsibilities giving to subordinates (Hargadon, 1998; Masterson, & Stamper, 2003; Mooradian *et*

al, 2006) There are some possible factors that may influenced the participants their negative views towards willingness to share in decisions. Other research work may be required to assess the relationships between job satisfaction, intention to stay, methods of facilitating sharing on the level of employees' participation (Organ & Ryan, 1995; O'Dell & Grayson, 1998).

The study suggested three alternative mechanisms inducing employees' sharing in decisions. In particular, these mechanisms are leaders' readiness to let employees sharing in making decisions, time allowance, and rewarding and incentives system. Based on the correlation matrix generated by this study, these factors have at least an impetus that formulate the stepping point forward approaching employees' sharing in decisions. These findings are consistent with other research works which confirmed the relationship between these factors (Rousseau & Shperling, 2003; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). Furthermore, some other previous research found that managerial trust is considered as factor contributing to increase employees' sharing (Mooradian *et al*, 2006; Usoro *et al*, 2007). However, this study has indirectly assesses the managerial trust using employees' perspectives. Employees realized that their performance meets the organizational performance in which they feel themselves capable to share in the managerial decisions. On the contrary, managers were seen reluctant to join employees in this task as they show loss of confidence toward employees' capabilities.

The previous alternative mechanisms were anticipated by the employees to improve conditions associated with higher level of sharing in decisions. As mentioned, sharing in decision making is hypothesized to be associated with organizational performance (Strauss, 2006). In this way, employees' involvement in decision making act as a supportive element which in eventual manipulate employees' expectations to meet the organizational goals (Yang, 2004; Warner, 2009). However, further studies are needed to examine the mechanism of how managerial facilitation for sharing employees in decision making moderates the three mentioned factors to satisfy the organizational performance. It is substantial to understand the direct effect of each variable on the organizational performance as each variable may promote organizational performance more than others.

Conclusion

Sharing employees in decision making is approved as one of the approaches that accelerate reaching to the organizational goal, improve organizational performance, and shrink the gap between employees' expectations and organizational outcomes. This study showed that employees' adherence to sharing is still suboptimal, leaving the extent of employees' sharing in decision making under the domination of the

managerial team. However, a number of associated variables were found to improve employees' sharing in decisions such as time allowance, employers' readiness, and the presence of incentives and rewards systems. However, despite their high association, these factors need further assessment within the context of the organizational performance.

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Table 1: Participants' Demographics		
	Frequency	Percent %
Sex		
Male	87	57.7%
Female	64	42.3%
Total	151	100%
Age		
<25	15	10%
26-35	35	23.3%
36-45	60	40%
>46	41	26.7%
Total	151	100%
Education level		
High school	20	13.3%
Diploma	25	16.7%
Bachelor	70	46.7%
Graduate studies	36	23.3%
Total	151	100%
Experience in years		
< 5 years	6	3.3%
5-10 years	35	23.3%
11-15 years	25	16.7%
16-21 years	25	16.7%
> 21 years	60	40%
Total	151	100%

How do you perceive the participation of the following categories in decision making?	Low %	Medium %	High %	Extreme %	Mean (SD)
A. Head of departments.	30	46.7	23.3	0	1.8 (0.77)
B. Head of units.	20	63.3	16.7	0	1.9 (0.61)
C. Supervisors.	40	50	10	0	1.7 (0.65)
D. Male workers.	30	16.7	53.3	0	2.2 (0.65)
E. Female workers.	26.7	56.7	16.6	0	1.9 (0.66)
F. Graduates level holders.	40	43.4	16.7	0	1.8 (0.73)
G. Undergraduates level holders.	60	20	20	0	1.7 (0.64)
H. Employees with 10 years experience and more.	13.3	50	36.7	0	2.0 (0.68)
I. Employees with experience less than 10. years	36.7	33.3	30	0	1.8 (0.83)
J. Employees under 30 years old.	60	26.7	13.3	0	1.9 (0.63)
K. Employees over 30 years old.	20	30	46.7	3.3	2.3 (0.80)
Cronbach's alpha= 0.87					

To which extent you believe the following problems impede decisions making?	Low %	Medium %	High %	Extreme %	Mean (SD)
A. Rules and regulations exist in the company.	40	43.3	16.7	0	1.7 (0.73)
B. Time restrictions.	16.7	55.6	27.7	0	2.1 (0.66)
C. lack of sufficient experience.	21	35	25	19	1.8 (0.73)
D. Unwillingness employees to share in decisions.	26.7	40	33.3	0	2.1 (0.78)
E. Unwillingness of bosses to share employees in decision making.	36.7	46.6	10	6.7	1.9 (0.86)
F. Insufficiency in information required to build decisions.	40	36.7	23.3	0	1.8 (0.79)
G. Ineffective methods used for making decisions.	40	40	10	10	1.8 (0.76)
Cronbach's alpha= 0.82					

To which extend do you believe in:	Low %	Medium %	High %	Extreme %	Mean (SD)
A. participating employees in making the administrative decisions?	40	30	10	20	1.6 (0.71)

B. participating leaders in making the routine decisions?	40	46.7	10	3.3	1.7 (0.66)
C. participating leaders in making the strategic decisions?	26.7	46.7	13.3	13.3	1.9 (0.75)
D. the level of freedom offered by leaders for employees to make decisions?	33.3	43.3	20	3.4	1.9 (0.74)
E. the level of employees' participation in decision making?	33.3	42	13.3	11.4	1.8 (0.68)
F. the accuracy of decisions made by employees?	33.3	46.7	16.7	3.3	1.8 (0.71)
G. sharing your employees to make decisions?	20	44	13.3	22.7	1.9 (0.59)
H. employees' efficiency to make decisions?	26.7	45.7	23.3	4.3	2.0 (0.73)
Cronbach's alpha= 0.77					

Table 5: Methods of Sharing in Decisions					
To which extent do you use the following methods for sharing in decision making?	Low %	Medium %	High %	Extreme %	Mean (SD)
A. Formal meetings.	30	45.7	20	4.3	1.8 (0.72)
B. Committees.	33.3	50	13.3	13.4	2.1 (0.67)
C. Formal and informal suggestions.	23.3	40	36.7	0	2.0 (0.73)
D. Individual meetings.	30	45	33	22	2.4 (0.67)
Cronbach's alpha= 0.83					

Table 6: Intercorrelations Among Factors that Enhance Sharing in Decisions						
	Seriousness of management	Rewards	Method of sharing	Availability of information.	Adequacy of time	Adequacy of expertise
A. Seriousness of management	1					
B. Rewards.	.68**	1				
C. Method of sharing	.65*	.66**	1			
E. Availability of information.	.45	.73	.56*	1		
F. Adequacy of time.	.67*	.72	.80**	.43	1	
G. Adequacy of expertise	.45**	.21*	.56*	0.66**	.73*	1
* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, two-tailed test.						