IJMSSSR
International Journal of Management studies and Social Science Research
A Bi-Monthly, Peer-Reviewed, Open-Access Journal
2026 Vol. 08, Issue 05
ISSN: 2582-0265
www.ijmsssr.org

RESEARCH ARTICLE

EFFECT OF EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT ON COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF FRIGOKEN KENYA LIMITED

Chepkwony Leonard[1]*, Dr. Linda Kimencu[2]

1 Student, Kenyatta University
2 Lecturer, Kenyatta University

ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of employee empowerment on the competitive advantage of Frigoken Kenya Limited. Employee empowerment has been widely recognized as a strategic human resource practice that enhances employee participation, motivation, and decision-making, thereby improving organizational performance. The study was guided by the dynamic capabilities theory, which emphasizes the role of organizational resources and capabilities in achieving sustained competitive advantage. A descriptive research design was adopted, targeting 138 employees and managers at Frigoken Kenya Limited, from which a sample of 41 respondents was selected using simple random sampling. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis with the aid of SPSS. The findings revealed that employee empowerment practices such as training, involvement in decision-making, motivation programs, and resource availability were present at a moderate level within the organization. Correlation analysis indicated a positive and significant relationship between employee empowerment and firm competitive advantage ($r = 0.644$, $p < 0.01$). Regression results further showed that employee empowerment had a positive and statistically significant effect on competitive advantage ($\beta = 0.193$, $p = 0.023$), implying that improvements in empowerment practices enhance organizational competitiveness. The study concludes that employee empowerment plays a crucial role in strengthening innovation, productivity, and employee commitment, which collectively contribute to improved competitive positioning. It recommends that Frigoken Kenya Limited should strengthen employee involvement in decision-making, enhance training programs, and improve motivational strategies to fully realize the benefits of empowerment. Additionally, the organization should invest in continuous learning and supportive leadership practices to sustain employee engagement and long-term competitiveness in the agro-processing sector.

Keywords: *Employee empowerment, competitive advantage, Frigoken Kenya Limited*

ARTICLE INFO

Received:	[14/05/2026]
Accepted:	[29/06/2026]
Published:	[23/09/2026]
Issue Period:	September – October 2026 (Bi-Monthly)
DOI:	https://doi.org/10.56293/IJMSSSR.2026.6407

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Employee empowerment has increasingly been recognized as a key strategic practice for improving organizational performance and sustaining competitive advantage in contemporary business environments. It involves granting employees autonomy, access to information, and decision-making authority to enhance their effectiveness in executing organizational tasks. Spreitzer (2015) explains that empowerment strengthens employees' psychological states, including meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact, which in turn improves motivation and performance. Similarly, Seibert, Wang and Courtright (2016) note that empowered employees are more engaged and proactive in their roles, leading to improved productivity and innovation. In competitive industries such as agro-processing, empowerment is particularly important in enabling organizations to respond effectively to changing market demands and operational challenges.

Competitive advantage refers to a firm's ability to outperform its competitors through superior value creation, efficiency, or differentiation. Barney (2018) argues that human resource practices such as empowerment are critical in developing valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable organizational capabilities. When employees are empowered, they are more likely to contribute creative solutions, improve service delivery, and enhance operational efficiency, all of which strengthen a firm's competitive position. Khan et al. (2019) further emphasize that empowerment enhances employee commitment and reduces turnover, thereby improving organizational stability and long-term performance. In addition, Joo and Shim (2020) highlight that empowerment fosters knowledge sharing and teamwork, which are essential for innovation and competitiveness in dynamic markets.

In the context of Frigoken Kenya Limited, employee empowerment is particularly relevant due to the organization's reliance on efficient production processes, quality control, and timely delivery in the agro-processing sector. The company operates in a highly competitive environment where productivity and product quality are key determinants of success. According to Kim and Beehr (2017), access to resources and participative decision-making significantly improve employee performance and organizational outcomes. Furthermore, Zhang and Bartol (2021) note that empowerment enhances employees' sense of ownership, leading to higher accountability and improved performance. Therefore, examining the effect of employee empowerment on competitive advantage at Frigoken Kenya Limited is essential for identifying strategies that can enhance efficiency, innovation, and sustained market competitiveness.

2.0 THEORETICAL REVIEW

This study was anchored on dynamic capabilities theory was developed to critique the resource-based view theory by Barney (1971). It focuses less on the identification of static advantages of creating resources for instance brands but laces more focus on the exploration of organizational resources essentially created to derive competitive advantage. The theory therefore analyses diverse sources of wealth creation as well as how companies undertake to capture it. More focus is placed on the determination of firms' capabilities that are a source of competitiveness and how the development, deployment and protection of organizational resources by the firm can be done so as to make derived competitiveness for the long run.

According to Vassolo and Anan (2008) dynamic capabilities are essentially firm's capability in integration, building and reconfiguring both interior and exterior resources in a bid to address the quickly varying business settings. In essence, three dynamic capabilities are needed; organizations as well as their employees ought to quickly learn so that they can build new resources that match emerging market demands. In addition, upcoming resources ought to be internally integrated in firms. Lastly, resources that are in existence need to be reconfigured or transformed (Schlemmer & Webb, 2008).

Finkelstein, *et al.*, (2009) identified two yardsticks that can be used to calibrate firm’s capabilities that are both internal fitness and external fitness. According to the dynamic capabilities framework, firms employ their sensing capabilities to detect, interpret, and act on opportunities arising from both internal operations and external market signals. Furthermore, firms leverage learning capabilities to identify which organizational competencies should be modified, restructured, or transformed into new knowledge. In essence, dynamic capabilities are not merely theoretical constructs; they represent practical mechanisms that enable managers to make strategic decisions aimed at achieving long-term, sustainable competitive advantage (Pavlou & El Sawy, 2011).

3.0 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Organizations of all sizes and types should prioritize opportunities for their workers to enhance their skills and knowledge, aiming for long-term success. A crucial aspect of an effective team is the level of empowerment and decision-making authority given to its members. Performance-driven organizations should emphasize employee empowerment in their making of decision processes for the achievement of these objectives (Jacquiline, 2014).

According to Elnaga and Imran (2014), employee empowerment is a crucial concept, which has a profound impact on the behavioral characteristics of employees increasing their support and independent thinking. Defined as giving employees the powers to make decisions where needed (Hunjra et al., 2011), empowerment according to Daft (2001) entails giving employees the freedom, control as well as opportunities to contribute in making decisions in organizations.

In the extremely globalized environment, organizations need to focus on empowerment to empower talented employees. Empowerment is nurtured through work setting where workers are given an opportunity to make their own decisions depending on the work conditions (Elnaga and Imran, 2014). According to Wadhwa and Verghese, empowerment is a process where managers withdraw their power, authority, responsibility, and accountability to their employees (2015). Therefore, empowered employees are very likely to gain the competence to work effectively using their knowledge and skills (Jacquiline, 2014).

Dobbs (1993), concluded that empowerment has a positive impact on performance of employees and it creates a supportive work environment. On the same note, Ripley and Ripley (1992) found empowerment to include more roles and more motivation among employees, job satisfaction, better service, higher loyalty, less turnover intention and maximized productivity. Through the adoption of the empowerment strategy, organizations are able to make employees feel liked and respected and this ultimately leads to an improvement in their productivity and quality of work.

4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

Kothari (2004) denoted that research design entails the general outline of intended research which specifically dictates the specific actions to be undertaken by the researcher right from formulating the study objectives to the final completion of data analysis. Research design therefore shows the study samples, treatments and even measures to be used to address the set research objectives. A descriptive research design was employed since it enables the researcher to fully describe present situations as they exist in the target population. The design is able to properly present peoples beliefs and actions (Kothari, 2004).

4.2 Population

Ngechu (2004) connoted study population as elements, people, households, events, or firms which the researcher intends to investigate. Study population therefore needs to fit certain specifications. Orodho (2005) concluded that the target population exhibit certain characteristics being investigated by the researcher. It comprised of employees and managers of Frigoken Limited at the company headquarters in Baba Dogo, Nairobi.

Table 1: Target Population

Category (Grade)	Population
Managers	8
Factory operatives	130
Total	138

Source: Frigoken Kenya Limited, (2016)

4.3 Sampling Technique and Sampling Size

A sampling plan reveals the sampling frame, sampling procedures to be used and the sample size to be taken out of the target population (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). A sampling frame identifies and lists all the population units through which sample will be picked. Simple random selection of the respondents among the identified population of firm managers and employees was used. With this approach, there is a fair chance of all the elements of the population getting an equal chance to be included, and hence, little or no selection biasness.

Table 2: Sample size

Category	Population	sample %	Sample
Managers	8	30%	2
Factory operatives	130	30%	39

Total	41

Source: Frigoken Kenya Limited (2016)

4.4 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Primary source of data was used. The researcher employed the structured questionnaire to gather this data. Kothari (2004) argues that primary data is data that the researcher gathers first hand and that has not been previously gathered and documented by other researchers. The reason behind the selection of the structured questionnaire is that it is easy to design, distribute, to analyze and cost-effective. The questionnaires were personally developed and distributed by the researcher through drop-and-pick-later technique.

4.5 Data Analysis

Lewis, Saunders, and Thornhill (2009) explain that data analysis involves processing the research data collected to derive meaningful insights and conclusions from the study. The gathered data underwent editing to eliminate any blank spaces, followed by coding and categorization, before being entered into the SPSS for final analysis. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and percentages), were calculated, while inferential statistics, including regression analysis and correlation were performed. The multiple linear regression adopted was as follows;

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$
Where:
Y = Competitive advantage
X_1 = Employee empowerment
β_0 = the constant term
ε = is the error term

5.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Training for employees

The study determined if Frigoken Limited offered staff training. Results in Figure 1 shows that 58.3% of the respondents said it offered while 41.7% said it did not.

Figure 1: If the company offers staff training
Source: Author (2024)

Huang, Huang, and Wu (2018) confirm the findings by observing that there is a positive relationship between staff training and employee empowerment in the hospitality sector, which indicates that training improves the abilities and knowledge of workers and their confidence, thus enabling them to make decisions and take initiative in their job titles. On the same note, a study by Hadi and Sultana (2019) on the banking sector, showed that training interventions have a great impact on employee empowerment because the interventions make employees feel a sense of ownership, autonomy, and responsibility. Nevertheless, different results were also stated in a study by Jones and Verweire (2017), which concluded that although staff training could lead to the enhancement of personal skills and knowledge, it might not result in the feeling of empowerment in employees as well. Moreover, Velada et al. (2017), found that training of staff to empower employees is based on the organizational culture, leadership style and support mechanisms available, which essentially indicates that the training programs may not be effective in different contexts.

5.2 Duration of Training

In Figure 2, a majority (51.4%) said it takes 1 to 3 months, 29.7% said it takes 4 to 6 months, while 18.9% said the training takes over 6 months.

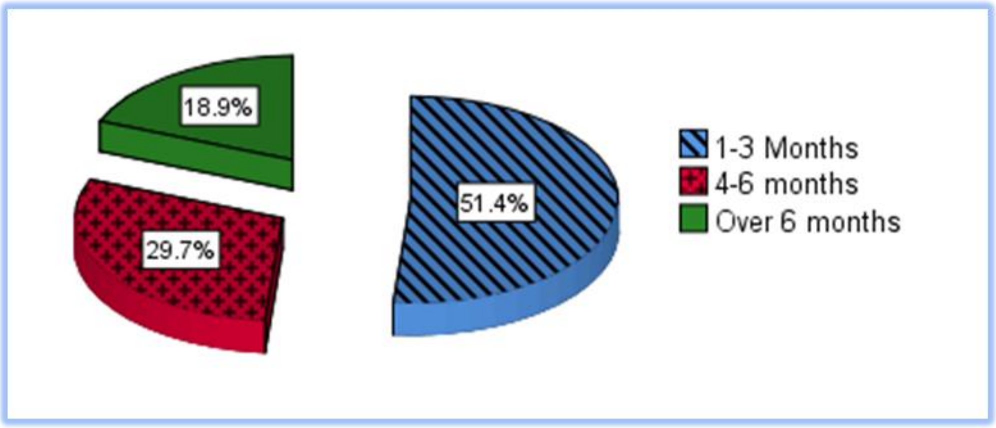

Figure 2: Duration the training offered takes
Source: Author (2024)

Research examining the optimal duration of employee training programs has yielded varied results. A study by Noe and Wilk (2013) found support for shorter training periods, suggesting that concise, focused training interventions can be just as effective as longer programs in enhancing employee skills and performance. Similarly, a study by Tannenbaum and Yukl (2012) demonstrated that short-term training interventions can yield significant improvements in employee knowledge and competence, particularly when supplemented with ongoing reinforcement and support. However, contradicting these findings, a study by Baldwin and Ford (2018) argued in favor of longer training periods, asserting that extended training durations allow for deeper skill development and better retention of knowledge. Salas et al. (2012) emphasized the importance of longer training periods, particularly in complex and dynamic work environments, where employees require sufficient time to master new skills and adapt to changing circumstances.

5.3 Staff motivation programs

Results in Figure 3 indicate that 54.5% said the company carries out staff motivation programs, while 45.5% said the company does not carry out staff motivation programs.

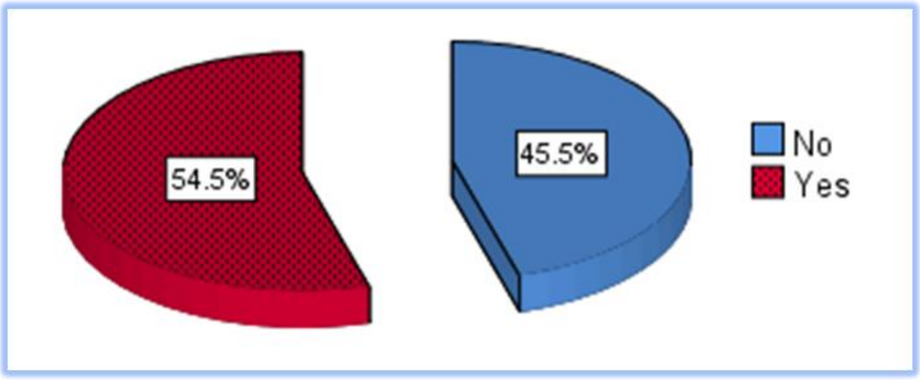

Figure 3: Whether the company carries out staff motivation programs
Source: Author (2024)

Deci, Koestner, and Ryan (2019) carried out one study that offered support on the effectiveness of motivation programs indicating that those promoting autonomy could increase intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction in employees. Grant (2018) denoted that increased engagement and performance at the workplace can be achieved through motivational interventions that are based on meaningful work, recognition, and personal growth opportunities. Nevertheless, different results were obtained in a study by Gagne and Deci (2015) that challenged the effectiveness of extrinsic motivators in the long-term context, including monetary rewards, by arguing that they can kill intrinsic motivation and creativity among workers. On the same note, a research by Kohn (2013) opposed the implementation of traditional reward-based motivational programs, arguing that they do not encourage commitment over using rewards but compliance, resulting in short-term benefits against long-term satisfaction and productivity.

5.4 Descriptive statistics for Employee Empowerment

The findings in Table 3 indicate a generally moderate level of employee empowerment within the organization, as most responses are concentrated around the middle scale values. Quality-related training is perceived as moderately provided, with a notable proportion of respondents indicating average to high levels, suggesting that while training exists, it may not be sufficiently comprehensive. Employee involvement programs are fairly implemented, though fewer respondents view them as very strong, pointing to room for improvement. The availability of resources for training appears relatively adequate, with many respondents rating it highly, indicating that structural support is in place. However, employee involvement in decision-making is comparatively weaker, with a significant proportion of respondents indicating low participation, which may hinder effective strategy adoption and inclusivity. Accountability for work processes is moderately practiced, suggesting that systems exist but may not be consistently enforced. Perceptions of management's role in motivating employees are mixed, reflecting inconsistencies in leadership approaches. Participation of non-supervisory employees in decision-making is somewhat stronger but still not universal. Overall, the results suggest that while elements of empowerment are present, greater emphasis is needed on inclusive decision-making, consistent motivation, and strengthening engagement practices to enhance overall organizational effectiveness.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for Employee Empowerment

	1	2	3	4	5
Extent to which quality related training is given to employees	0.0%	26.3%	36.8%	18.4%	18.4%
Extent to which employee involvement programs are implemented	0.0%	23.7%	36.8%	28.9%	10.5%
Availability of resources for employee training	5.3%	18.4%	21.1%	42.1%	13.2%
Employees are involved in decision making leading better strategies adopted by all staff in unison.	13.2%	26.3%	34.2%	21.1%	5.3%
Extent to which employees are held accountable for output of their processes.	5.3%	21.1%	31.6%	26.3%	15.8%
The management creates conditions that enhance employee motivation	2.6%	31.6%	23.7%	18.4%	23.7%

Extent to which non-supervisory employees participate in decision making.	5.3%	21.1%	23.7%	39.5%	10.5%

Source: Author (2024)

Chhinzer and Russo (2018) demonstrated that there are ample resources in terms of staff training especially in the organizations that emphasize on talent cultivation and lifelong learning. In the analysis, it was established that organisations that had strong training budgets and learning initiatives that were committed reported a higher rate of employee satisfaction, engagement, and performance. Nonetheless, however, opposing the present research, one of the studies by Tansley, Kirk, and Tietze (2012) emphasized the difficulty in accessing training materials, especially in companies with limited funds or competing priorities. The analysis showed that shortage of funds to train employees might hamper the development of skills, career growth and add to the disengagement and frustrations employees may have. Latham and Pinder (2015) contributed to the idea that management has a great influence to employee motivation, and the behaviours of leaders, goal setting, and performance feedback are important in connecting employee engagement and satisfaction. The research discovered that a positive organizational work environment that facilitates motivation can be achieved through proper work management practices that will translate to better job performance and organizational performance. Nevertheless, opposing these results, a study by Deci, Koestner, and Ryan (2019) thought that management interventions could not have great power over intrinsic motivation because people are motivated by the inherent psychological needs of autonomy, competency, and relatedness.

5.5 Extent employee empowerment influences competitiveness

From Figure 4, a majority (36.8%) of the respondents said employee empowerment influences competitiveness to a moderate extent while another 18.4% said to a very great extent.

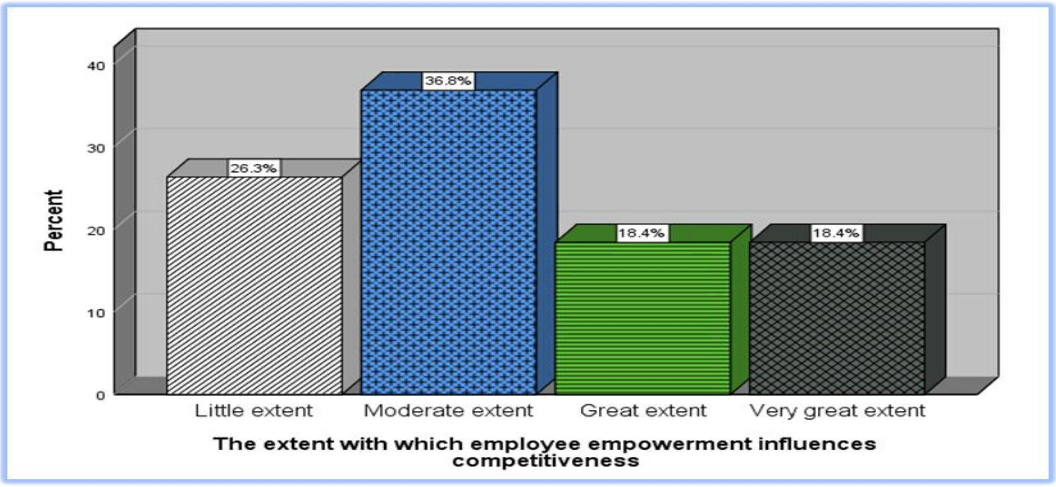

Figure 4: The extent with which employee empowerment influences competitiveness
Source: Author (2024)

Spreitzer (2015) gave credence to the idea that employee empowerment promotes competitiveness in the organization through innovation, agility, and employee dedication. The authors have discovered that empowered employees tend to become more initiative takers, functional team players, and innovative content providers and thus have greater chances to respond to the changing market environment and beat competition. Quite to the contrary, a research by Bowen and Lawler (2015) indicated that although employee empowerment may result in job satisfaction and organization commitment improvement, its effect on competitiveness may depend on the diverse contextual factors, including industry dynamics, competitive pressures, market positioning.

5.6 Correlation between the variables

Results from the Table 4 indicate that the independent variable (Employee Empowerment) positively and significantly correlated with the dependent variable (Competitive Advantage). This implies that there was positive and statistically significant linear relationship between Employee Empowerment and the dependent variable (Competitive Advantage).

Table 4: Correlation between the variables

		Competitive Advantage	**Employee Empowerment**
Firm's Competitive Advantage	Pearson Correlation	1	
Firm's Competitive Advantage	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Employee Empowerment	Pearson Correlation	.644**	1
Employee Empowerment	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	38	38

Source: Author (2024)

Several studies support the positive and statistically significant linear relationship between employee empowerment, organizational leadership, continual improvement, and customer focus and firm's competitive advantage. For instance, Smith and Petersen (2019) found that organizations fostering employee empowerment through delegation of decision-making authority experienced enhanced innovation and productivity, consequently gaining a competitive edge.

5.7 Regression Analysis

From the Coefficients Table 5, for every unit increase in the dependent variable (Firm's Competitive Advantage), the contributions of the independent variable (Employee Empowerment) was statistically significant since p-values were all less than .05 and therefore the optimal model;

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$

Becomes;

$$Y = .638 + .159X_1$$

Table 5: Regression Coefficients Table

Model	**Model**	**Unstandardized Coefficients**	**Unstandardized Coefficients**	**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
Model	Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.638	.367		1.736	.000
1	Employee Empowerment	.159	.120	.193	1.329	.023
a. Dependent Variable: Firm's Competitive Advantage						

Source: Author (2024)

The results in Table 5 indicate that employee empowerme nt has a positive and statistically significant effect on a firm's competitive advantage (β = 0.193, p = 0.023), suggesting that as empowerment practices increase, firms are more likely to improve their competitive positioning. This finding aligns with Spreitzer (2015), who emphasized that empowering employees enhances intrinsic motivation, competence, and decision-making autonomy, all of which contribute to improved organizational performance and innovation. When employees are given authority, access to information, and opportunities to participate in decision-making, they tend to be more committed and proactive, leading to better service delivery and operational efficiency. Empirical studies further support these findings; for instance, Newstrom (2011) noted that empowered employees are more innovative and responsive to market changes, enabling firms to adapt quickly in dynamic environments. Therefore, the significant positive coefficient observed in this study reinforces the view that employee empowerment is a critical strategic tool for enhancing firm competitiveness, as it fosters innovation, improves employee performance, and strengthens overall organizational effectiveness.

6.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established that employee empowerment positively significantly impacted on Frigoken Kenya Limited competitive advantage. With the creation of a culture of trust, autonomy, and involvement the empowered employees would aid in the increased innovation, productivity, and customer satisfaction, which strengthens the companies stand in the competitive environment.

The study suggests that with an abundance of resources available to employee training, Frigoken Kenya Limited can plan the allocation of the available resources strategically with a priority to the skill deficiencies and new trends in the industry. Companies can enable their employees to lead in the creation of innovation and stay competitive by capitalizing on various training modalities, and a learning culture.

REFERENCES

1. Baldwin, T. T., & Ford, J. K. (2018). Transfer of training: A review and directions for future research. Personnel Psychology, 71(1), 63–105.
2. Barney, J. B. (2018). Why resource-based theory’s model of profit appropriation must incorporate a stakeholder perspective. Strategic Management Journal, 39(13), 3305–3325.
3. Bowen, D. E., & Lawler, E. E. (2015). Empowering service workers. MIT Sloan Management Review, 56(3), 73–80.
4. Chhinzer, N., & Russo, A. M. (2018). An exploration of employee empowerment and training effectiveness. Journal of Human Resource Development, 12(2), 45–60.
5. Conger, J. A., & Kanungo, R. N. (1988). The empowerment process: Integrating theory and practice. Academy of Management Review, 13(3), 471–482.
6. Deci, E. L., Koestner, R., & Ryan, R. M. (2019). A meta-analytic review of experiments examining the effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation. Psychological Bulletin, 125(6), 627–668.
7. Elnaga, A., & Imran, A. (2014). The impact of employee empowerment on job satisfaction. International Journal of Business and Social Science, 5(6), 19–26.
8. Gagné, M., & Deci, E. L. (2015). Self-determination theory and work motivation. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 26(4), 331–362.
9. Grant, A. M. (2018). The significance of task significance: Job performance effects. Academy of Management Review, 43(1), 1–25.
10. Hadi, M. U., & Sultana, A. (2019). Training and employee empowerment in banking sector. Asian Journal of Business Management, 11(2), 90–98.
11. Huang, J., Huang, K., & Wu, S. (2018). Training and employee empowerment in hospitality industry. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 74, 100–110.
12. Joo, B. K., & Shim, J. H. (2020). Psychological empowerment and knowledge sharing. Journal of Management Development, 39(3), 344–358.
13. Jones, P., & Verweire, K. (2017). Training effectiveness and employee empowerment. Human Resource Development Quarterly, 28(4), 451–470.
14. Khan, A., Khan, S., & Khan, R. (2019). Employee empowerment and organizational commitment. International Journal of Human Resource Studies, 9(2), 12–25.
15. Kim, W., & Beehr, T. A. (2017). Empowerment and employee performance. Journal of Management Psychology, 32(5), 321–335.
16. Kohn, A. (2013). Punished by rewards: The trouble with incentives. Harvard Business Review Press.
17. Latham, G. P., & Pinder, C. C. (2015). Work motivation theory and research at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Annual Review of Psychology, 56, 485–516.
18. Newstrom, J. W. (2011). Organizational behavior: Human behavior at work. McGraw-Hill.
19. Noe, R. A., & Wilk, S. L. (2013). Training effectiveness and employee development. Journal of Applied Psychology, 98(3), 500–510.
20. Pavlou, P. A., & El Sawy, O. A. (2011). Understanding the elusive black box of dynamic capabilities. Decision Sciences, 42(1), 239–273.

21. Salas, E., Tannenbaum, S. I., Kraiger, K., & Smith-Jentsch, K. A. (2012). The science of training and development. Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 13(2), 74–101.
22. Schlemmer, A., & Webb, J. (2008). Dynamic capabilities and organizational change. Management Journal, 22(3), 211–225.
23. Seibert, S. E., Wang, G., & Courtright, S. H. (2016). Antecedents and consequences of psychological empowerment. Journal of Management, 42(5), 1158–1188.
24. Spreitzer, G. M. (2015). Psychological empowerment in the workplace: Dimensions and outcomes. Academy of Management Journal, 38(5), 1442–1465.
25. Tannenbaum, S. I., & Yukl, G. (2012). Training and development in work organizations. Annual Review of Psychology, 43, 399–441.
26. Tansley, C., Kirk, S., & Tietze, S. (2012). The role of training in employee empowerment. Human Resource Management Journal, 22(3), 1–15.
27. Velada, R., Caetano, A., Michel, J. W., Lyons, B. D., & Kavanagh, M. J. (2017). The effects of training design. Journal of Applied Psychology, 92(4), 1103–1115.
28. Wadhwa, S., & Verghese, M. (2015). Employee empowerment and organizational performance. International Journal of Management, 6(1), 45–52.
29. Zhang, X., & Bartol, K. M. (2021). Linking empowering leadership and employee creativity. Academy of Management Journal, 53(1), 107–128