

Studying and Identifying Affecting Factors on Employees' Empowerment (Case Study: Mellat Bank)

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ABSTRACT

Present paper aims to identify affecting factors on employees' empowerment in Mellat Bank and to determine the rate of the impact by each variable (organizational condition, managerial strategies and self – efficiency resources). This study is a correlation – type descriptive research. Its population includes Mellat Bank personnel and its sampling method is random – multistep. The method to collect data is questionnaire. The results of statistical analysis show that the ratio of managerial strategy variable with such indicators as group building, information sharing, independence, contributive climate and authorization impacts on empowerment is 75%. The ratio of organizational conditions with such indicators as goal setting, awarding, preparing the resources, organizational structure and performance appraisal impacts on empowerment is 89% and the ration of self – efficacy resources variable with such indicators as emotional stimulation, supporting and pattern setting impacts on empowerment is –8%. Hence, the best affecting variable is organizational condition and the worst one is self – efficacy resources. According to the ratio of affecting factors, banks can implement those plans that increase the capabilities, capacities and abilities of their personnel in order to empower them. Devising and executing such plan can help to improve the performance and to meet banking goals.

KEY WORDS: psychological empowerment, managerial strategies, organizational condition, self – efficacy resources

INTRODUCTION

The most important factor of productivity in organizations and in the society is human force. There is no doubt that the blossom of any society is in improving and growing human resources. In one hand, competitive environment and marvelous transformations in today world as well as the necessity to breed employees with self – management capabilities (Thomas and Welthous 1990) have all caused that managers assign most of their tasks to employees. So, most organizations have focused their attention on empowerment.

Word Study

The word empowerment by Oxford definition means giving power or the right of doing something to someone (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). Employees' empowerment is generally a contributive process applied to utilize all capacity of employees and to encourage them to increase their commitment to their job (Boudrias et al., 2010). Some people believe that empowerment is a type of decentralization which requires assigning basic decision making to subordinates. Also, empowerment provides decision – making powers and lets employees perform according to their desire. Therefore, it is an important management tool to provide service quality (Fock et al., 2011). In empowerment process, not only employees need authorities but also they need enough training, financial credit and sufficient information to respond their decisions (Yoon, 2001). So, enjoying managers with leadership skills is not enough and employees also need the training of self – leadership methods (Chua and Lyengar, 2006). Along with breeding the sense of self – sufficiency and creating a climate for employees' latitude (free acts), empowerment provides the personnel with an opportunity to improve their capabilities and skills and to grow their efficiency grounds (Koberg et al., 1999). In their book titled "*Reinventing government: how the entrepreneurial spirit is transforming the public sector*", Osborne and Geabler (1993) says about "*bankruptcy of bureaucracy*" (Osborne and Geabler, 1993). The most important strategy has highlighted in this book, which is the best way to reduce bureaucracy, is to emphasize on customer demands rather than management demand through employees' empowerment (Shelton, 2002).

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VIEW ON LITERATURE

The main origin of empowerment backs to a theory by McGregor and Douglas. McGregor believes that management in the form of commanding is not workable for all organizations since using other methods such as control, awarding, motivation, job security and so on will be more affecting in achieving individual and organizational aims (Hancer and George, 2003). Bowen and Lowler (1995) believe that affecting factors on empowerment include information, award, authority and knowledge (Bowen and Lowler: 1995). Conger and Kanungo (1988) defined self – confidence, contribution, decentralization, setting meaningful and inspiration goals as the affecting factors on empowerment (Conger and Kanungo, 1988) and according to Tubbs and Mose (2000), these factors are information, authority, training, access to resources and responsibility (Tubbs and Mose, 2000). Several additional cases in the literature on empowerment are considered. Some of them have followed in table 1:

Table 1. Background of literature

Researcher	Title	Year	Results
Kanter	<i>The change masters: Innovations for productivity in the American corporation</i>	1983	Information Authority Enrich by the experience clear objectives Resources Availability Reward manager Support Self – confidence
Scott & Jaffe	<i>Empowerment: building a committed work force</i>	1991	Participating management Organizational Structure Facilitating Leadership Group building Staff appreciation.
Spreitzer	<i>Psychological empowerment in the workplace: Dimensions, measurement, and validation</i>	1995	Information Rewarding Meaningful job
Korukonda et al	<i>Beyond teams and empowerment: A counterpoint to two common precepts in TQM</i>	1996	Authority Resources Availability Responsibility
Melhem	<i>The antecedents of customer-contact employees' empowerment</i>	2004	Knowledge Skills Trust Communications Motivation
Paktinat & FathiZadeh	<i>Empowering Employees: necessities and solutions</i>	2008	Delegating authority Encouragement Rewarding Participating management
Abesi & Kord	<i>Identification and explanation of the Employees empowerment in government agencies in Iran</i>	2009	Communications Training Adaptation Participation
Seydjavadin et al	<i>A study on employees empowerment in service sector(case study of banking system)</i>	2009	personal development Job design Work teams Leadership Style Formality and clarity Environment Decentralization
Va'ez & Sabzikaran	<i>The relationship between organizational structure and employee empowerment</i>	2010	Low formality Decentralization Flexible scheduling
Gorji	<i>Assessing the impact of Staff empowerment on performance</i>	2010	Delegating the authority Encouragement Rewarding Suggestions system

Research model

In a general summary, studies have examined two forms of empowerment. Studies that have examined the structural approach of the empowerment, note that managers should provide what tools and facilities to empower the staff by these tools or by creating the necessary physical environment. Another group of studies have looked more to the psychological and cognitive aspects of the empowerment. They have considered empowerment as an underlying factor in the improvement and development of activities in the organization. In this word, Empowerment is an internal factor in people

and it is directly related to their attitude, feeling and perception of the working environment (Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004). To the extent studied, the model provided by Abdollahi and Naveh Ebrahim is the fullest assessed model of the second aspect of studies on empowerment, which considers the variables of managerial strategies such as information, team building, independence, contributive climate and authorization and the variables of organizational conditions such as organizational structure, preparing the resources, awarding system, goal setting and self – efficacy resources as well as the variables of emotional stimulation, supporting and pattern setting as affecting factors on empowerment since it has studied affecting factors in a categorized manner while other models have linked other variables to empowerment separately. Figure 1 outlines research conceptual model:

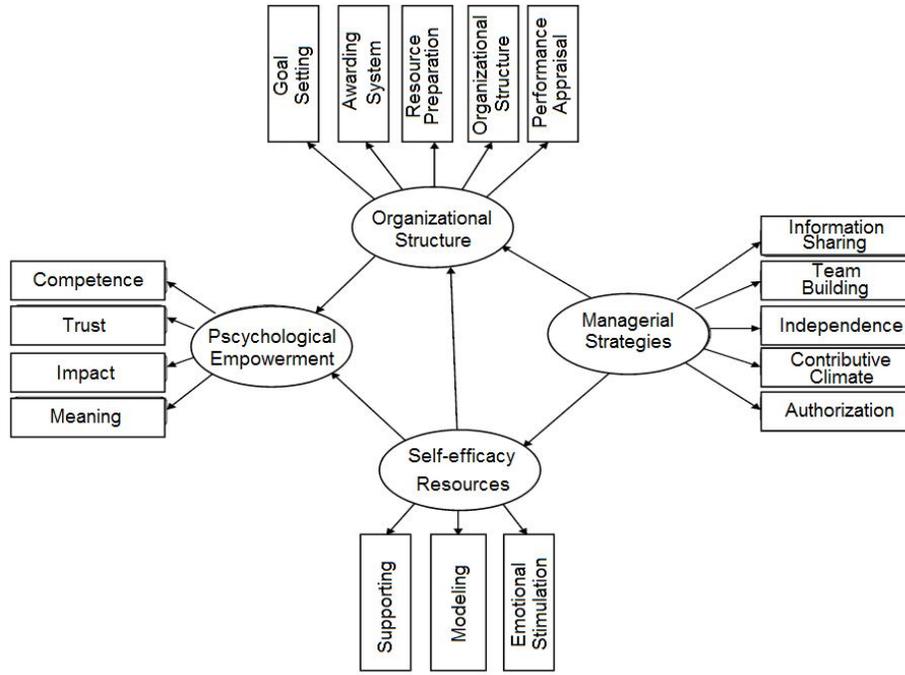


Figure 1: Research conceptual model

Based on the model, each affecting factor is explained along with its evaluated indicators in brief.

Empowerment: It means a set of systems, methods and initiatives utilized to improve and increase productivity, growing and blossom of the organization and human force according to organizational goals through the development of individuals’ capabilities and competencies (Robbins et al., 2002). Kinlaw defines empowerment as the process of achieving continuous improvement in organizational performance which is gained through expanding influence of individuals and teams with competence and authority in most of their tasks and work dimensions and this fact, by itself, influences the performance of the organization (Kinlaw, 1995).

- *Meaning:* It means an opportunity by which people feel that they are pursuing important and valuable job aims (Applbam and Hongger, 1998). Meaning means having valuable goals and internal interest of a person to his own job. Meaning points to a balance between job requirements, beliefs, values, and behaviors (Greasley et al., 2005).
- *Competence:* It means the belief that someone enjoys necessary skills and capabilities to do the jobs rightly (Thomas and Welthous 1990).
- *Impact:* When employees feel that they perceive their tasks well. In other words, employees believe that the impact of their job is greater that performing it (Ergeneli et al, 2006).
- *Trust:* It means that an individual or a group of individuals can rely upon someone’s words or promises. In fact, trust is an action which facilitates organizational behaviors (Rotter, 1967). Voton and Kameron Say that empowered people have the sense of trust and they are certain about being treated justly and honestly. In other words, trust means having a sense of personal security. (Whetten and Cameron, 1998).

Managerial strategies: A set of strategies and initiatives that paves the ground for performing organizational functions so that employees can do what they like with their inner motivation (Abdollahi and NavehEbrahim, 2007). According to this definition, indicators like information sharing, authorization, contributive climate, team building and independence are studied in present study as

managerial strategies.

Organizational conditions: It is a set of factors which pave the ground for employees' empowerment like goal setting, awarding system, resource preparing, organizational structure and performance appraisal (Abdollahi and NavehEbrahim, 2007).

Self – efficacy resources: It refers to individuals' beliefs and judgments on their abilities to perform the tasks and responsibilities. In other words, self – efficacy is the assessment of someone about his/her capabilities, organizing and implementing necessary behaviours to achieve given performance (KamaliZarch et al., 2006: 18). By considering above definition on self – efficacy resources, such indicators as emotional stimulation, supporting and pattern setting are provided to study and identify self – efficacy.

Questions and Hypotheses

According to mentioned points, paramount studies are conducted on empowerment in various organizations and agencies. Among which, current banking system is not exclusion and needs empowered employees to survive. The interaction of such system with various factors such as government, private sector, sponsors, other international banks and, more importantly, all social, economic, political and cultural factors have produced a turbulent ambience for this system. Therefore, banks should implement those plans that increase their capabilities, capacities and abilities in order to renew and to survive against changes as well as to empower their staff. In line with such aim, research framework is shaped by two questions and five hypotheses.

Questions:

1. What are affecting factors on human force empowerment in Iranian Mellat Bank?
2. To what extent is the impact of each factor?

Hypotheses:

1. Managerial strategies have a positive and significant impact on organizational conditions.
2. Managerial strategies have a positive and significant impact on self – efficacy resources.
3. Managerial strategies have a positive and significant impact on psychological empowerment.
4. Self – efficacy resources have a positive and significant impact on psychological empowerment.
5. Self – efficacy resources have a positive and significant impact on organizational conditions.

METHODOLOGY

Method recognition

In terms of research aims, this is an applied study. When it addresses to describe status quo, it is a descriptive – survey study by using structural equations. By using existing data, it studies the relations between psychological empowerment as dependent variable as well as organizational conditions and self – efficacy resources as mediator variables and managerial strategies as independent variable.

Statistical population and sample

Its population includes all Mellat Bank personnel (25,000) and its sampling method is random – multistep. Since statistical population was limited, sample volume is computed by below formula:

$$n = \frac{N \cdot Z_{\alpha}^2 \cdot (1-P)}{(N-1) \cdot \varepsilon^2 + Z_{\alpha}^2 \cdot P \cdot (1-P)} \quad \text{Equation 1. Formula of sample volume estimation}$$

Based on this formula, the sample volume is 380. Despite of on-going follow-ups, the authors were not able to gather all 380 questionnaires and the research was performed by 288 questionnaires. The traits of respondents include gender (64.7% male and 35.3% female), marital status (86.2% married and 13.8% single), age (20 – 30 (23.5%), 31 – 40 (56.1%), 41 – 50 (19.6%), over 51 (7%)), education (under diploma (1%), diploma (11.5%), associate of arts (3.08%), undergraduate (60.1%), graduate (23.6%)), employment (official (97.6%), contractual (2.4%)) and job records (1 – 10 years (47.1%), 11 – 20 years (29.7%) and 21 – 30 (13.2%)).

Data collection tools

Questionnaire is used to collect research data. By using “employees' psychological empowerment” standard questionnaire devised by Abdollahi and NavehEbrahim which contains 50 items, 15 questions on managerial strategies, 14 questions on organizational conditions, 9 questions on self – efficacy and 12 questions on empowerment are studied. Opinions by guiding professors, advisor and scholars at Mellat Bank Research Center are used to assure research validity completely and By using SPSS software, the ratio of Chronbach's alpha is 98% which confirmed questionnaire's reliability.

FINDING

To analyze gathered data from questionnaires, SPSS and LISREL software were used. Initially, by using explorative factor analysis, the variables were confirmed and then the fitness of their models was discussed by confirmative factor analysis. In explorative factor analysis with KMO and Bartlett tests and clarified variance, gathered data from questionnaire enjoy necessary adequacy and confidence.

Table 2. Results of explorative analysis

Variable	KMO > 0.7	Bartlett Sig < 0.05	Clarified variance > 0.5
Managerial strategies	0.95	0.000	0.89
Organizational conditions	0.91	0.000	0.86
Self – efficacy resources	0.95	0.000	0.88
Empowerment	0.88	0.000	0.88

In confirmative factor analysis, hypotheses are simultaneously in the original model and model fitness by using structural equations.

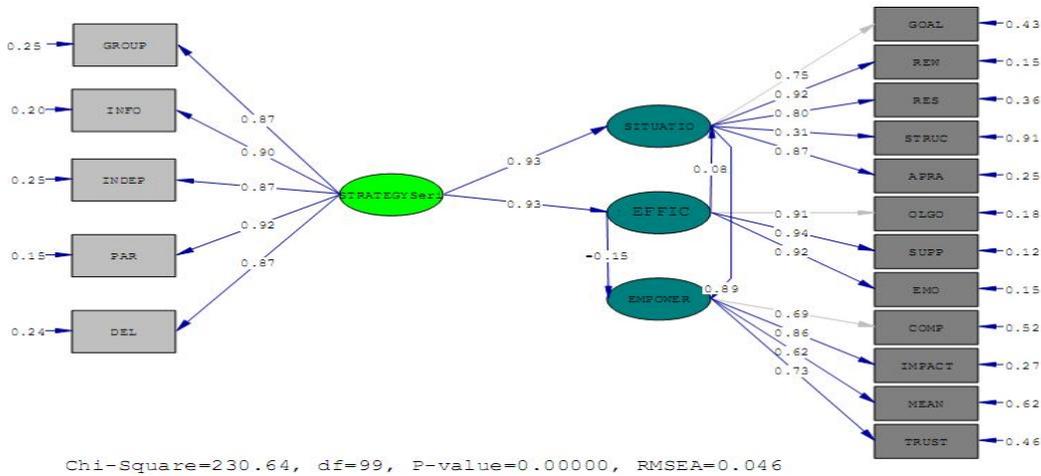


Figure 2. Model with standard estimation coefficients

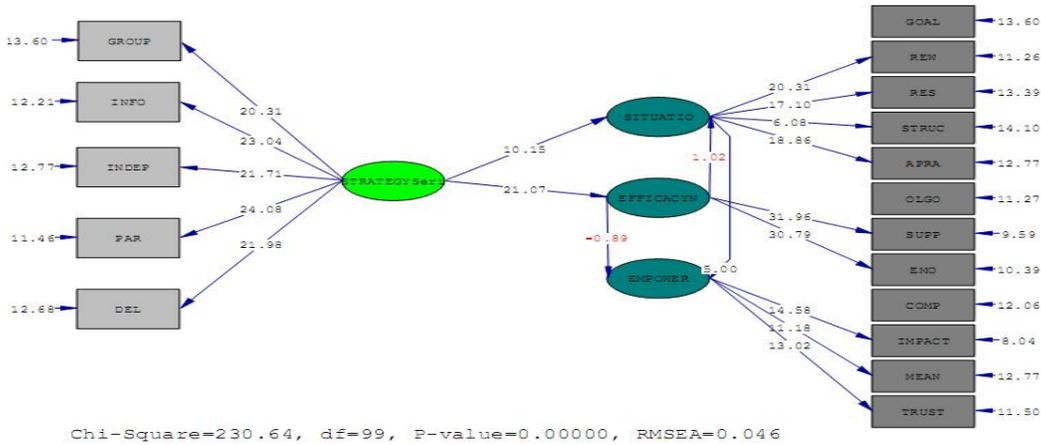


Figure 3. Model with significance coefficients

In testing research hypotheses using structural equations, the output of software shows that fitted structural model is suitable for testing hypotheses, because the proportion of χ^2 - in considered degree of freedom - is greater than 3. RMSEA=0.046 shows also that fitted structural model is suitable. This indicator is better when it is smaller. Good fitness indicator (GFI = 0.93) shows very high fitness when it is closer to 1. When the amended good fitness indicator (AGFI = 0.91) is closer to 1, it shows model's good fitness (Hooman, 2010).

The results on confirm or rejecting the hypotheses are outlined in table 3.

Table 3. Testing research hypotheses

Hypotheses	Impact	Significance	Result
1. Impact of managerial strategies on organizational conditions	0.93	10.15	Supported
2. Impact of managerial strategies on self – efficacy resources	0.93	21.07	Supported
3. Impact of organizational conditions on psychological empowerment	0.89	5.00	Supported
4. Impact of self – efficacy resources on psychological empowerment	-0.15	-0.89	Rejected
5. Impact of self – efficacy resources on organizational conditions	0.08	1.02	Rejected

When impact rate is between 0 and 1 (it is better when it is closer to 1) and the significance rate is greater than 1.96, hypotheses is confirmed; so, hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 with 93%, 93% and 89% as impact rates and respectively with 10.15, 21.7 and 5 as significance rates are confirmed and hypotheses 4 and 5 with impacts lower than 1 and significances lower than 1.96 are rejected. In below, indirect and total impacts among research variables are outlined in table 4.

Table 4. Indirect and total impacts of research variables

Impact of...	Indirect impact	Significance rate	Total impact	Significance rate
Managerial strategies on organizational conditions	0.07	1.02	1.00	17.06
Managerial strategies on psychological empowerment	0.75	12.03	0.75	12.03
Self – efficacy resources on organizational conditions	0.07	0.96	-0.08	0.052

Also, sub-hypotheses that show the relationship of variables with indices (according to figures 2 and 3), are discussed in table 5.

Table 5. Testing sub-hypotheses

Hypotheses	Impact	Significance	Result
1. Significant relationship between information sharing and managerial strategies	90%	23.04	Supported
2. Significant relationship between group building and managerial strategies	87%	20.33	Supported
3. Significant relationship between independence and managerial strategies	87%	21.15	Supported
4. Significant relationship between contributive climate and managerial strategies	92%	24.08	Supported
5. Significant relationship between authorization and managerial strategies	97%	21.98	Supported
6. Significant relationship between organizational structure and organizational conditions	31%	6.09	Supported
7. Significant relationship between preparing resources and organizational conditions	90%	17.10	Supported
8. Significant relationship between the rewarding system and organizational conditions	92%	20.31	Supported
9. Significant relationship between goal setting and organizational conditions	75%	...	Supported
10. Significant relationship between performance appraisal and organizational conditions	87%	19.86	Supported
11. Significant relationship between competence and empowerment	69%	...	Supported
12. Significant relationship between trust and empowerment	73%	13.02	Supported
13. Significant relationship between effectiveness and empowerment	86%	14.58	Supported
14. Significant relationship between Meaning and empowerment	62%	11.18	Supported
15. Significant relationship between supporting and self-efficacy resources	94%	31.96	Supported
16. Significant relationship between pattern selection and self-efficacy resources	91%	...	Supported
17. Significant relationship between emotional stimulation and self-efficacy resources	92%	30.79	Supported

Complementary tests

Since all questions are designed directly, in researchers' view, achieved average in 6 to 7 means strong situation, and in 4.5 to 6 means relatively strong. If it is 4.5, it means that variable status is medium. 3.5 - 4.5 is weak and 1 – 3.5 means very weak. Below, the results of one - sample T test among studied variables are outlined in table 6.

Table 6: Studying status of research variables

Research variables	Average	T	Status
Managerial strategies	4.37	-1.318	Weak, close to medium
Organizational conditions	4.5057	0.077	Medium
Self – efficacy resources	4.5689	0.733	Medium
Empowerment	5.2148	10.563	Relatively strong

Likewise, concerning the status of variable, ranking of variables' aspects was discussed by Freedman test. Based on this test, those constituents that have the lowest ranks have lower priority and they need more concentration. Among organizational conditions variable, goal setting aspect (rank 3.50), awarding (2.76), preparing the resources (2.91), organizational structure (2.73) and performance appraisal (3.10), organizational structure has the lowest rank and priority. Among managerial strategies, information sharing (3.03), team building (3.12), independence (3.26), contributive climate (3.03) and authorization (2.55), authorization has the lowest rank and priority. Among self – efficacy resources, pattern setting (2.13), supporting (2.05) and emotional stimulation (1.82), emotional stimulation has the lowest rank and priority. Among empowerment variables, competence (2.89), impact (2.18), Meaning (3.06) and trust (1.88), trust has the lowest rank and priority.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The main aim of this study is to investigate affecting factors on employees' empowerment in Mellat Bank system. By studying the status of employees' empowerment and identifying affecting factors, Mellat Bank can recognized its strengths and weaknesses and create a sustainable advantage via proper planning. According to research conceptual model, three factors (managerial strategies, organizational conditions and self – efficacy resources) impact on empowerment process. Research findings, fitness indicators and factor analysis show that hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 with 10.15, 21.07 and 5.00 significance rates are confirmed and hypotheses 4 and 5 with -0.89 and 1.02 significance rates are rejected. The confirmation of hypotheses 1 and 2 is adapted to the results of a study by Conger and Kanungo since managerial strategies define techniques and strategies adopted by top manager to identify, eliminate and promote the deficits of organizational conditions through providing guidelines. Top manager is obliged to utilize informal initiatives that enhance self – efficacy resources and eliminate disabler conditions (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). The confirmation of hypothesis 3 is compatible with the results of studies by Bandura who said that self – efficacy is extracted from social recognition theory derived from triple behavior, environment and individual model. Thus, the conditions of the bank as an environment would impact of self – efficacy (Bandura, 1997). According to Table 5, all the sub- hypotheses are confirmed and it shows meaningful relation of each variable with its indices. Overall, in responding research questions and in identifying affecting factors on psychological empowerment based on direct and indirect impacts, among organizational conditions (89%), management strategies (75%) and self–efficacy resources (15%), organizational conditions has the furthest impact. In other hand, according to one – sample T test results, it must be said that three affecting factors on empowerment have approximately similar status in Mellat Bank since their difference to average is not so high. Therefore, it seems that the bank should try to achieve higher levels of employees' empowerment through precise planning, because of sensitivity of each factor. Table 7 outlines the status of variables based on performance and sensitivity:

Table 7: Analyzing status of effective factors

		← Performance → (Average)			
		Very weak (1 – 3)	Weak (3 – 4.5)	Relatively strong (4.5 – 6)	Strong (6 – 7)
← Importance of variables →	Sensitive (0.6 – 1)		<i>Independence</i> <i>Performance appraisal</i> <i>Goal setting</i> <i>Pattern setting</i> <i>Supporting</i> <i>Competence</i> <i>Effectiveness</i> <i>Meaning</i> <i>Trust</i>	<i>Group building</i> <i>Information Sharing</i> <i>Contributive climate</i> <i>Authorization</i> <i>Rewarding</i> <i>Preparing resources</i> <i>Emotional stimulation</i>	
	Semi sensitive (0.3 – 0.6)			<i>Organizational structure</i>	
	insensitive (0 – 0.3)				

Based on the results of Table 7, among the indices of *managerial strategies*, group building, information Sharing, contributive climate and authorization are located in the weak and sensitive position and independence is in the relatively strong and sensitive position. In this regard, the organization must exert the strategies and effective initiatives such as:

- Increasing the authority of decision making
- Building of work-teams
- Increasing employees' self – control and reducing direct control
- Implementation programs to teaching employee's by necessary knowledge and skills

In *organizational conditions* variable, indices such as rewarding and preparing resources are in the weak and sensitive position and organizational structure is in the weak but semi–sensitive position, performance appraisal and goal setting are in the relatively strong and sensitive position. In this regard, effective solutions can be made such as:

- Balancing salary / bonuses and employees performance;
- Appropriate distribution of welfare facilities in the organization;
- Suitable job promotions in proportion to employee competencies;
- Preparing resources (financial, physical, physical space, etc.) for the organizational development.

For *self – efficacy resources* variable, emotional stimulation index is in weak and sensitive position. In this regard, the efforts to improve physical and mental conditions should be made by reducing conflicts, and tensions; because some factors such as fear, anxiety, stress and depression, derived from internal or external environment, can influence on the abilities of employees.

And about *empowerment* of employees all the indices are in sensitive and relatively strong position. Among the indices of empowerment, trust has the lowest rank, so it is first priority. Open channels of information and information sharing are among the important factors that can increase trust in the organization. With attention and respect to the views of employees, facilitated access of employees to management, and giving latitude to employees to make relevant plans, bank can strengthen the trust of employees to the organization and management.

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