

DOES PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT PRODUCE SATISFIED EMPLOYEES? EVIDENCE FROM THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

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Abstract

The effect of participative management on job satisfaction was examined in an automotive sales company in Macedonia. The information was collected from 150 employees. Three components of participatory management was analyzed in the research (1) participatory management style (2) participatory strategic planning process and (3) effective supervisory communication. Results showed that there was a positive relationship between all three components of participatory management and job satisfaction. The relationship between participatory management and job satisfaction was analyzed using statistical methods to determine the correlations and OLS regression model. The study highlights methodological developments in determining the effect of participatory management on job satisfaction in the automotive sales industry. The findings suggest that there is a positive relationship between both and it is therefore important to sustain these factors in order to maintain employees' motivation.

Keywords: employees satisfaction, participative management, automotive industry

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades the academic literature has become richer in research studies that have examined the effects of workplace innovations on firm performance

(Berg, 1999; Huselid, 1995). Employee empowerment has grabbed the attention of not just the academic but of the business community as well, since it was believed that sharing the power of decision making with employee can result in their increased

performance and job satisfaction. This idea of employee empowerment has originated from the early theories of participative management and employee involvement in the organizational strategic planning. The research in employee involvement in organizational decision making started in 1949 with Coch and French who suggested that there is a direct link between the employee participation in the workplace and the levels of job satisfaction and productivity. Later research suggested that it is a very complex process as different patterns of strategic decision making may appear in different organizations or within the same organization. *Strategic planning is the deliberate, disciplined approach to producing fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does and why* (Bryson, 2011). It is referred to as “the way of knowing” that helps managers and leader address major issues and challenges that their organization is confronting (Bryson, 2011). Evidence from the academic community suggests that workplace practices that have focused on job satisfaction have resulted in lower reported levels of absenteeism and turnover, low employee morale and job grievances, lower reported levels of job dissatisfaction, higher commitment and productivity (Iaffaldano & Muchinsky, 1985). In addition research findings suggest that employee involvement in strategic decision making can also have a positive influence on the workers well-being and mental health, intrinsic motivation and self-confidence (Spreitzer et al., 1997; Miller & Monge, 1986). This is because employees’ perception of their organization affects their perception of the organizational climate, which in return impacts the way relate to their job and see their future in the

organization, work adjustment, health and well-being (Wilson et al., 2004; Macky & Boxall, 2008). Thus by increasing the job satisfaction of their employees, companies can create a comparative advantage for themselves. In line with this recent research has indicated that employee involvement in strategic planning is one of the most widely used strategies for advancing motivation (Kim, 2002; Bryson, 2005; Brewer & Selden, 2000; Grawitch et al., 2006; Macky et al., 2008; Gordon, 2013). However, a small group of researchers argue that “the power” of participatory strategic planning should not be taken for granted, since data suggests that it may depend on individual, environmental and situational variables (Daniels & Guppy, 1994). Furthermore, Kim (2002) notes that there is limited scientific evidence on the relationship between employees’ perception on the level of their involvement in strategic planning processes and their job satisfaction. Based on all of the above, this study sets the following hypothesis:

H1: Employees who perceive that they is participatory strategic planning in their companies are more likely to report higher levels of job satisfaction.

According to Locke (1976) job satisfaction can be defined as a positive or pleasing emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job of job experience. For the purpose of this paper job satisfaction is defined as “the extent to which employees like their jobs” (Stamps, 1997). The intangible relationship between job satisfaction and productivity of employees has intrigued organizational researchers for more than five decades. This has resulted in a series of studies that have examined the

role and importance of participatory management on employee productivity and satisfaction (Cotton et al., 1988; Macy et al., 1989; Fisher, 1989; Daniels & Bailey, 1999). According to Wagner (1994) participation can be defined as the process in which the influence is shared among individuals who do not hold the same hierarchical position. Hence, participatory management aims to balance the involvement of managers and their employees in processes such as informing, decision making and problem solving. Spreitzer et al. (1997) argue that the anticipated outcome of practicing participatory management in companies is increased job satisfaction of employees. The positive impact of participatory management on job satisfaction is confirmed by other authors (Rooney, 1988; Hoerr, 1989; Bernstein, 1993; Daniels & Bailey, 1999; Kim, 2002), however others have found that it also has positive influence on productivity (Levitan & Werneke, 1984; Verma 1995), absenteeism (Eaton & Voos, 1989) and effective supervisor communication (Cooke, 1990). Therefore the goal of this study is to analyze the relationship between participatory management in the organization and employees job satisfaction:

H2: Employees who perceive that there is participatory management in their workplace are more likely to express higher levels of job satisfaction.

Another line of research was not interested only in the influence of participatory management on employees, but on what are the traits that characterize participatory managers. It is interesting to note that from the identified thirty nine characteristics of managers, the ability to communicate effectively with subordinates

was in the top ten most important managerial traits (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Emmert & Taher, 1992; Voon et al., 2011; Mokoena, 2012).

By being able to communicate effectively with their supervisor, employees are given the opportunity to articulate individual dissatisfaction, act as an idea source for the management and achieve long term feasibility for the organization as a whole (Marchington et al., 2005). On individual level employees have higher levels of job satisfaction, motivation and professional self confidence (Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991; Laschinger et al., 2004; Spreitzer et al., 1999; Johlke & Duhan, 2000).

H3: Employees who perceive that they have an effective communication with their supervisor are more likely to express higher levels of job satisfaction.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this research, a questionnaire was constructed based on previous relevant research done by Kim (2002). Some of the original questions were modified in accordance to the local culture. All questions were organized in five main sections. The first section collected information on the personal (age, ethnicity, education level and age) and job characteristics (tenure in the company, experience in teamwork at current job position and supervisory position) of the respondents. Experience in teamwork was measured by asking participants to indicate the number of times that they have participated in team activities in the past year. The possible six responses ranged from *none to more than four times*. The second

part of the questionnaire contained four questions that whether the manager used participative management style. The third section contained four questions that analyzed whether there was a participatory strategic planning process in the organizations, and the final part of the questionnaire contained three items that examined whether there was an effective communication between the employee and the manager. The dependent variable in the research is job satisfaction. In the questionnaire it was measure trough three questions (1) My current job provides me with better career opportunities compared to other places I could work; (2) Overall satisfaction with current job and (3) My current job provides me with a sense of accomplishment and (4) I receive appropriate recognition for the work I do.

To test the research hypotheses several variables were constructed for the purpose of

the study: *PMS* – consisted of three items that measured the participatory management style of the manager; *SP* – consisted of four items that assessed the strategic planning process in the organization; *EC* – consisted of three items that assessed the effectiveness of the communication between the manager and employee; *JS* – consisted of three items that measured employee job satisfaction.

The responses to each of the questions were measured on the five-point Likert-type (11 were measure on scale ranging from 1-strongly agree to 5-strongly disagree, while 3 on a scale ranging from 1-excellent to 5-poor). The performed factor analyses indicated that the items intended to measure the three independent variables and the dependent variable clearly loaded in three separate factors. Table 1 below presents the reliability results for each of the extracted factors.

Table 1. Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
My department manager has allowed me to improve the work process related to my job	0.73	0.10	0.16	0.23
The manager of my department has made a positive change in his/her management style	0.68	0.23	0.21	0.31
My department manager has improved his/her employee communication	0.77	0.21	0.22	0.18
My department manager makes efforts into including employees opinions in the strategic planning process	0.55	0.19	0.26	0.15
I am familiar with my departments mission	0.19	0.80	0.13	0.27
My opinion is considered in the department's strategic planning process	0.21	0.82	0.22	0.24
I have a clear understanding of my role in achieving the departments' strategic goals	0.16	0.69	0.18	0.17
I have a clear understanding of what my manager expects from me	0.09	0.14	0.84	0.13
My manager effectively communicates with employees about relevant topics	0.23	0.12	0.90	0.28
My manager is easily approachable for employees suggestions and ideas	0.3	0.12	0.59	0.23
My current job provides me with better career opportunities compared to other places I could work	0.12	0.17	0.31	0.79
Overall satisfaction with current job	0.32	0.22	0.14	0.82
My current job provides me with a sense of accomplishment	0.23	0.25	0.18	0.8
I receive appropriate recognition for the work I do	0.22	0.30	0.19	0.77
Eigen values	4.96	2.2	1.8	1.9
% of common variance	43.8	14.3	7.13	13.3

3. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The survey was administered among 149 employees. All respondents were working in Porsche Makedonija, the official importer of Volkswagen, Audi, Seat, Skoda and Porsche. Total of 149 questionnaires were returned completed to the researchers, resulting in an overall response rate of 100%. The survey was distributed in person among the employees. The survey was anonymous and no marks were printed on the questionnaires that could identify the respondent.

The company that was chosen for the survey it has received best employer awards and strives to employ HR practices for the purpose of employee development and empowerment.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

The majority of the surveyed population 87.2% (N=130) was male. 87.2% (N=130) were of Macedonian ethnicity, followed by 5.4% (N=8) Albanians. The majority of employees (55%, N=82) had high school education, followed by 41.6% (N=61) who had completed university studies. 53% (N=79) were aged between 31 and 40 years of age, followed by 32.2% (N=48) who belonged in the age group 20-30 years. 43% (N=64) worked in the company between 4-7 years, followed by 32.2% (N=48) who have been in the company less than three years. Regarding the managerial position, 88.6% (N=132) of the employees participating in the survey were on non-managerial position.

The descriptive analyses of participative

Table 2. Demographic profile of participants

Category		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	male	130	87.2	87.2	87.2
	female	19	12.8	12.8	100.0
Age	20-30 years	48	32.2	32.2	32.2
	31-40 years	79	53.0	53.0	85.2
	41-50 years	19	12.8	12.8	98.0
	over 50 years	3	2.0	2.0	100.0
Ethnicity	Macedonian	130	87.2	87.2	87.2
	Albanian	8	5.4	5.4	92.6
	Roma	4	2.7	2.7	95.3
	Bosnian	2	1.3	1.3	96.6
	Serbian	4	2.7	2.7	99.3
	6	1	.7	.7	100.0
Tenure	0-3 years	48	32.2	32.2	32.2
	4-7 years	64	43.0	43.0	75.2
	8-10 years	31	20.8	20.8	96.0
	over 10 years	6	4.0	4.0	100.0
Position	Managerial	17	11.4	11.4	11.4
	Nonmanagerial	132	88.6	88.6	100.0
Education	Secondary school	82	55.0	55.0	55.0
	College	1	.7	.7	55.7
	Diploma	62	41.6	41.6	97.3
	Master degree	3	2.0	2.0	99.3
	Doctoral degree	1	.7	.7	100.0

management data (Table 3) indicate that the mean score of the *participatory management scale* was $M=4.12$ with a standard deviation of $SD=\pm 0.772$. The overall mean score of the participative management scale was calculated on same way as the job satisfaction scale. The item with the highest score was “My department manager has allowed me to improve the work process related to my job” ($M=4.19$; $SD=\pm 0.873$), while the item with the lowest score was “My department manager has improved his/her employee communication” ($M=4.08$; $SD=\pm 0.912$). The mean score for the *participatory strategic planning scale* was $M=4.04$ with a standard deviation of $SD=\pm 0.765$. The item with the highest score was “I have a clear understanding of my role

in achieving the departments' strategic goals” ($M=4.33$; $SD=\pm 0.721$), while the item with the lowest score was “My opinion is considered in the department's strategic planning process” ($M=3.64$; $SD=\pm 1.1$). The mean score for the *effective supervisory communication scale* was $M=4.31$ with a standard deviation of $SD=\pm 0.66$. The item with the highest score was “My manager is easily approachable for employees suggestions and ideas” ($M=4.38$; $SD=\pm 0.827$), while the item with the lowest score was “y manager effectively communicates with employees about relevant topics” ($M=4.17$; $SD=\pm 0.95$).

The performed correlation analysis showed that the manager’s use of participatory management style is positively

Table 3. Descriptive analyses of participative management data

	Mean	Std. Deviation
PMS	4.12	.772
My department manager has allowed me to improve the work process related to my job	4.19	.873
The manager of my department has made a positive change in his/her management style	4.10	.899
My department manager has improved his/her employee communication	4.08	.912
SP	4.04	.765
My department manager makes efforts into including employees opinions in the strategic planning process	3.93	1.113
I am familiar with my departments mission	4.23	.757
My opinion is considered in the department's strategic planning process	3.64	1.139
I have a clear understanding of my role in achieving the departments' strategic goals	4.33	.721
EC	4.31	.660
I have a clear understanding of what my manager expects from me	4.37	.720
My manager effectively communicates with employees about relevant topics	4.17	.950
My manager is easily approachable for employees suggestions and ideas	4.38	.827
JS	4.17	.795
My current job provides me with better career opportunities compared to other places I could work	4.20	.958
My current job provides me with a sense of accomplishment	4.19	.817
I receive appropriate recognition for the work I do	4.11	1.112

correlated with job satisfaction ($r=0.671$, $p=0.000$), and the existence of a strategic participatory planning process ($r=0.778$, $p=0.000$). In addition, the effective communication with the supervisor is positively correlated with the employees' job satisfaction ($r=0.709$, $p=0.000$) and strategic participatory planning process ($r=0.786$, $p=0.000$) (Table 4).

There were no statistically significant differences between group means of job satisfaction and employees' age as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F=0.747$; $p=0.525$). No statistically significant

differences were found between group means of job satisfaction and employees' tenure in the company ($F=0.901$; $p=0.442$).

The results of the independent sample t-test analysis revealed that there is no statistically significant difference of employee gender and job satisfaction ($t=1.718$; $p=0.088$). This is line with findings from other research done in Macedonia (Tomoska-Misoska et al., 2014), although it differs from research done in other parts of the worlds where significant differences in levels of job satisfaction experienced by men and women was found (Ghazzawi, 2010).

Table 4. Results of two-tailed Pearson correlation

		Correlations							
		PMS	SP	EC	JS	tenure	teamwork	age	ethnicity
PMS	Pearson Correlation	1	.778**	.823**	.671**	.048	.074	.067	-.006
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.557	.369	.414	.941
	N	149	149	149	149	149	149	149	149
SP	Pearson Correlation	.778**	1	.786**	.658**	.028	.072	.103	.037
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.731	.381	.212	.655
	N	149	149	149	149	149	149	149	149
EC	Pearson Correlation	.823**	.786**	1	.709**	.060	.100	.087	-.045
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.468	.223	.289	.585
	N	149	149	149	149	149	149	149	149
JS	Pearson Correlation	.671**	.658**	.709**	1	-.059	.179*	.086	-.018
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.471	.029	.299	.829
	N	149	149	149	149	149	149	149	149
tenure	Pearson Correlation	.048	.028	.060	-.059	1	.122	.525**	.276**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.557	.731	.468	.471		.138	.000	.001
	N	149	149	149	149	149	149	149	149
teamwork	Pearson Correlation	.074	.072	.100	.179*	.122	1	.060	.083
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.369	.381	.223	.029	.138		.467	.315
	N	149	149	149	149	149	149	149	149
age	Pearson Correlation	.067	.103	.087	.086	.525**	.060	1	.208*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.414	.212	.289	.299	.000	.467		.011
	N	149	149	149	149	149	149	149	149
ethnicity	Pearson Correlation	-.006	.037	-.045	-.018	.276**	.083	.208*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.941	.655	.585	.829	.001	.315	.011	
	N	149	149	149	149	149	149	149	149

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5. Results of One way ANOVA

JS		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	Age	1.424	3	.475	.747	.525
	Tenure	1.711	3	.570	.901	.442
Within Groups	Age	92.048	145	.635		
	Tenure	91.761	145	.633		
Total	Age	93.472	148			
	Tenure	93.472	148			

Table 6. Results from the T-test analysis of JS and gender

Group Statistics						
gender		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
JS	male	130	4.21	.767	.067	
	female	19	3.88	.938	.215	

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
JS	Equal variances assumed	.544	.462	1.718	147	.088	.333	.194	-.050	.716
	Equal variances not assumed			1.478	###	.154	.333	.225	-.135	.801

The results of the OLS multiple regression analysis showed that 62% of the variance in the dependent variable job satisfaction was explained by the independent variables, thus the model provides a statistically significant prediction of the outcome variable ($F = 112.54$; $p < 0.01$). The results presented in Table 7, indicate that the use of participative management style by the manager is significantly associated with job satisfaction of employees ($\beta = 0.077$,

$p < 0.01$). Other researchers have also found that positive relationship between participatory management in an organization and the levels of job satisfaction of its employees (Kim, 2002; Wright & Kim, 2004; Bhatti & Qureshi, 2007; Bright, 2008). Therefore these results provide support to the already existing academic research and of hypothesis 1 of this research.

The results from the regression analysis also suggest that employees who perceive

that higher levels of job satisfaction is reported by employees who perceive that they are part of the strategic planning process in the company ($\beta=0.064$, $p<0.01$). These findings are in line with studies done in the field (Blackburn & Rosen, 1993; Oswald, 1997; Ugboro & Obeng, 2000; Judge et al., 2001; Hechanova et al., 2006). This provides support for hypothesis 2 of this research. Finally employees who perceived that they have an effective communication with their supervisor, report higher levels of job satisfaction ($\beta=0.023$, $p<0.01$). Other research findings have also supported this result (Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Kim, 2002; Johlke et al., 2002). This provides support for hypothesis 3 of this research. In addition age of the respondents ($\beta=0.001$, $p<0.01$), their managerial position ($\beta=0.003$, $p<0.01$) and their tenure in the department ($\beta=0.007$, $p<0.01$) showed significant relationship with job satisfaction. This means that employees who have longer tenure in the department are more satisfied compared to younger employees with shorter department tenure. Also the level of job satisfaction in the company tends to increase with the age of the employees. Finally, employees who attain a managerial position within the

company have higher levels of job satisfaction compared to those with non-managerial position.

5. DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The goal of this study was to investigate the relationship between participative management and job satisfaction among employees in the automotive industry in Macedonia. Participative management was analyzed through the existence of participatory strategic planning, effective supervisory communication and the use of participatory management style by the management, while accounting for their influence on employees' job satisfaction. The research results suggested that the use of participative management style, effective communication with supervisor and the existence of a participatory strategic planning process significantly predict job satisfaction of employees in the automotive industry in Macedonia. In other words, companies which have incorporated the philosophy of participative management and employee empowerment into their daily

Table 7. Results of OLS regression analysis

Model	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)		5.343	.000
Participative management style	.078	9.26	.000
Participatory strategic planning	.064	10.01	.000
Communication with supervisor	.023	8.01	.000
Age	.001	3.02	.000
Tenure	.007	4.31	.000
Managerial position	.003	1.63	.003
Teamwork	.006	2.68	.348
Gender	0.01	1.87	0.597

Dependent variable: Job satisfaction

practice were more likely to have satisfied and productive employees. The findings indicated that the communication between the manager and the employee plays a significant role in fostering job satisfaction. Employees who perceive that they have an effective communication with their management are more likely to report higher levels of job satisfaction. This findings are in line with other relevant research done in the field (Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Kim, 2002; Johlke et al., 2002; Laschinger et al., 2013). Interestingly the results of the study indicated that age of the respondents, their managerial position and their tenure in the department were significant predictors of job satisfaction. The relationship between age and job satisfaction was subject of interest to other research as well. One study found that there was a U-shaped relationship between age and job satisfaction (Clark et al., 1996). The lowest levels of job satisfaction in an individual's life were at age 31, afterwards increasing until the age of 60 years. Possible explanations for this relationship was that as the worker ages, he/she has less job alternatives compared to younger workers and is less interested in changing jobs. In addition the expectations of as the worker ages decline thus making him/her more likely to report higher levels of job satisfaction (Kacmar & Ferris, 1989; Clark et al., 1996).

The limitation of this study should be discussed. The first limitation is the risk of *social desirability bias*. Although the research implemented instruments that were previously validated among the same target group, there is still a risk that respondents may not have been completely honest and provided an honest answer. The second risk is the *self-selection bias*, since it is not known whether the respondents in the survey

are representative of the total population of public administration employees. The third limitation is the *demographic structure* of the respondents. This research only investigated the role of age, gender, education and ethnicity. Further studies should provide a more comprehensible analysis of such variables.

6. CONCLUSION

The research findings suggest that participatory management, supervisory communication and participative strategic planning may increase job satisfaction among automotive industry employees. The importance of employee empowerment remains undisputed – higher job satisfaction of employees' leads to less absenteeism and increasing motivation, productivity and self-esteem. The findings of this study have confirmed that companies should recognize the benefits from participative management in the workplace and use them as a tool for producing a more happy and productive workforce.

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