Examining the Effect of Employee Empowerment Programs on Employee Performance in Public Universities in South Sudan

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Abstract: This study examines the effects of employee empowerment programs on employee performance within public universities in South Sudan, addressing an under-researched area critical for institutional success. Given the global trend toward employee empowerment, which enhances productivity and engagement, this research investigates the relationship between empowerment initiatives and performance metrics, utilizing theories such as Reinforcement Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Goal Setting Theory to support the analysis. A descriptive survey design was employed, targeting 2,372 employees at the University of Juba, with a stratified random sample of 237 respondents. Quantitative data was collected through structured questionnaires assessing various aspects of empowerment and performance. Findings indicate a strong positive correlation ($R = 0.86$, $R^2 = 0.74$) between empowerment programs and employee performance, affirming that empowered employees showed significant gains in motivation, job satisfaction, and overall performance levels. Specifically, respondents expressed high levels of agreement regarding the support for involvement in decision-making, recognition of contributions, and provision of resources, yielding an overall mean score of 3.82 (76.4%) for the effectiveness of empowerment strategies. Conclusions highlight the necessity of robust empowerment frameworks to foster a motivated workforce capable of meeting organizational challenges and improving performance. Recommendations emphasize the implementation of clear empowerment policies, ongoing training for managers and staff, and the establishment of metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of such initiatives. The ministry of defense and interior education should also highlight curricular adaptations aligned with local market needs while fostering community engagement and research. Future research should explore empowerment perceptions across diverse organizational contexts and the influence of various leadership styles, providing further insights into optimizing employee engagement and performance outcomes.

Keywords: Employee Empowerment Programs, Employee Performance, Public Universities, South Sudan.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The trend towards employee empowerment is a global phenomenon, driven by the recognition that empowered employees are more productive, engaged, and committed to their organizations. According to a study published in the *Harvard Business Review*, "Empowered employees are more likely to be proactive, innovative, and adaptable, which are essential skills for success in today's fast-paced business environment" (Gallup, 2020). As a result, many organizations are shifting towards empowering their employees, allowing them to take ownership of their work and make decisions that impact the organization.

One of the key drivers of this trend is the growing recognition of the importance of employee engagement. A study by Gallup found that engaged employees are 26% more productive and have 23% higher sales than their disengaged counterparts (Gallup, 2013). Furthermore, a study published in the *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* found that employee engagement is a key predictor of job performance, with highly engaged employees being more likely to achieve their goals and contribute to the organization's success (Harter *et al.*, 2016).

The use of technology has also played a significant role in enabling employee empowerment. According to a report by Deloitte, "76% of executives believe that technology will be the primary driver of transformation in the next 12-18 months" (Deloitte, 2019). This includes the use of digital tools and platforms that enable employees to work remotely, collaborate with colleagues, and access information and resources on-demand. As a result, employees are increasingly expecting to have the flexibility to work from anywhere,

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at any time, and to have access to the tools and resources they need to be productive.

In terms of specific trends, there is a growing focus on flexible work arrangements, including remote work, flexible hours, and compressed workweeks. According to a survey by PwC, "71% of executives believe that flexible work arrangements will be more common in the next 5 years" (PwC, 2020). Additionally, there is a growing emphasis on employee well-being and mental health, with many organizations recognizing the importance of providing support and resources to help employees manage stress and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Employee empowerment programs have gained considerable attention in organizational behavior research in recent years, given their potential to enhance employee performance, job satisfaction, and overall workplace productivity. Empowerment is often defined as granting employees the autonomy, resources, and support needed to make decisions and execute tasks effectively within their roles (Spreitzer, 1995). This concept is essential in contemporary workplaces, which are increasingly characterized by teamwork, innovation, and flexibility. By fostering a culture of empowerment, organizations can enhance their capabilities to adapt to changing market conditions and improve employee engagement (Seibert *et al*., 2011).

The effectiveness of employee empowerment programs can be measured through various metrics, such as job satisfaction, productivity rates, and overall performance indicators. According to a meta-analysis, empowered employees tend to have higher job satisfaction, which correlates positively with organizational commitment and performance outcomes (Peccei, 2004). Additionally, studies indicate that organizations that implement robust empowerment strategies see improvements in customer satisfaction and financial performance (Spreitzer, 2008). This relationship creates a compelling case for examining how specifically designed empowerment initiatives can influence employee performance at various organizational levels.

The context in which employee empowerment programs are implemented is critical for their success. Factors such as organizational culture, leadership styles, and employee demographics, including age, experience, and educational background, can significantly impact the effectiveness of these programs (Laschinger *et al*., 2004). For example, transformational leadership styles have been linked to higher levels of employee empowerment, as such leaders tend to offer support, inspire innovation, and promote a sense of ownership among their team members (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Understanding the interplay of these factors is essential for tailoring empowerment programs that resonate with the workforce.

Quantitative metrics often employed in studying employee performance include key performance indicators (KPIs) like sales targets, quality metrics, and time management efficiencies. Organizations also use qualitative measures such as employee feedback, performance reviews, and self-assessments. A 2020 survey indicated that organizations employing employee empowerment programs reported up to a 20% increase in performance metrics over a two-year period, highlighting the potential for significant improvements in workforce efficiency (Gallup, 2020). This statistic emphasizes the need for empirical studies to investigate how specific empowerment strategies are yielding measurable improvements in various sectors.

Moreover, the rise of remote work and digital communication has transformed the dynamics of employee empowerment. Companies are increasingly leveraging technology to facilitate empowerment through decision-making tools and collaborative platforms that enhance employee autonomy (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). This development is particularly relevant in light of recent trends, where organizations are seeking to maintain performance levels despite challenges posed by remote work environments. Understanding how technology-mediated empowerment influences employee performance is an emerging area of research.

Research consistently shows a positive relationship between employee empowerment and performance outcomes. According to a study published in the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, empowered teams demonstrate higher levels of creativity and innovation, which directly impact organizational performance metrics (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999). The data suggests that when employees feel a sense of ownership over their work, they are more likely to take initiatives that lead to better results. Such findings underscore the importance of designing employee empowerment programs that foster participation and ownership.

In conclusion, the need for comprehensive studies examining the relationship between employee empowerment programs and employee performance is more pertinent than ever. Through scrutinizing established definitions, metrics, and empirical evidence, researchers can contribute to a robust framework that organizations can utilize to enhance performance through empowerment initiatives. Given the evolving nature of work, the findings from such studies can offer valuable insights into effective management practices that drive organizational success. Future research should also take into account the potential impact of cultural, technological, and environmental changes on the effectiveness of empowerment strategies in diverse workplace settings.

Statement of the Problem

The effectiveness of employee empowerment programs in enhancing employee performance within

public universities in South Sudan remains an under-researched area, despite its critical importance for institutional success and quality of education. Public universities face considerable challenges, including high turnover rates, low motivation, and inadequate skills among staff, which can be attributed to a lack of effective empowerment strategies. Recent studies indicate that employee empowerment initiatives can lead to significantly higher job satisfaction and performance levels. For instance, a 2022 report from the South Sudan Ministry of Higher Education noted that institutions implementing empowerment programs witnessed up to a 30% increase in staff productivity and a 25% decrease in turnover rates (Ministry of Higher Education, 2022). However, many universities in the region still lack coherent frameworks to fully utilize empowerment practices, resulting in missed opportunities to enhance employee engagement and institutional effectiveness.

Moreover, research indicates that employee empowerment correlates positively with overall organizational performance, yet the application of such programs in South Sudan's public universities is limited. According to a study by Ibrahim and Khamis (2023), only 40% of academic staff reported receiving any form of empowerment training, signaling a gap in institutional commitment to employee development. This lack of focus not only affects individual employee performance but also compromises the universities' ability to achieve their broader educational and research goals. With the pressing need for improved educational outcomes in South Sudan, understanding how effective employee empowerment programs can influence performance is crucial for developing strategies that foster a motivated and capable workforce in public universities (Ibrahim & Khamis, 2023).

Objective of the Study
The objective of this study was to explore the effect of employee empowerment programs on employee performance in public universities in South Sudan.

Research Hypothesis
This study was based on the following research hypothesis:
H_01: There is no statistically significant effect between employee empowerment programs and employee performance in public universities in South Sudan.

Literature Review
Theoretical Review
The following theoretical review underpins this study:

Reinforcement Theory
Reinforcement Theory, originally developed by Hull (1951), is highly relevant to the study of employee behavior, motivation, and the use of incentives in universities. This theory focuses on the relationship between actions, consequences, and behavior reinforcement. The theory suggests that positive

outcomes and rewards can reinforce desired behaviours (Skinner, 1974). In the context of universities, this means that when employees achieve their goals or perform well, they can be rewarded, which in turn reinforces their behavior and motivates them to continue performing at a high level (Armstrong, 2006). This theory supports the idea that incentives and rewards can be used to encourage employees to put in more effort and achieve set standards (Luthans, 2011).

Reinforcement Theory plays a pivotal role in shaping employee empowerment programs within public universities in South Sudan by illustrating how behaviours can be influenced through rewards and consequences (Luthans, 2011). The application of positive reinforcement, such as recognition, promotions, or monetary incentives, can significantly enhance motivation and performance (Skinner, 1953). When employees witness tangible rewards for their accomplishments, it not only reinforces their current performance but also incentivizes them to engage in desired behaviours in the future (Luthans, 2011). By leveraging reinforcement strategies, public universities can create an environment where employees feel valued and motivated to excel, ultimately boosting overall institutional performance.

Moreover, Reinforcement Theory underscores the efficacy of utilizing a balanced approach of rewards and punishments to shape employee behavior. In public universities, administrators can implement reward systems that recognize employee achievements while also setting clear standards and consequences for underperformance (Armstrong, 2006). This dual approach can foster a culture of accountability and excellence, encouraging academics and support staff to actively participate in empowerment initiatives and training programs. The practical implementation of such systems can help reinforce skills acquired through empowerment programs, fostering an atmosphere where continuous improvement is not only encouraged but expected (Luthans, 2011).

Social Learning Theory
Social Learning Theory, developed by Bandura (1971), is highly relevant to the study of employee training and development. This theory emphasizes the role of observational learning and the influence of others in the acquisition of new skills and knowledge. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1971) highlights that employee learn by observing others whom they perceive as credible and knowledgeable. In the context of training, this means that employees can acquire new skills and knowledge by observing their colleagues or superiors who serve as role models (Bandura, 1977). This observation-based learning can be a powerful mechanism for employees to gain insights and learn best practices.

The application of Social Learning Theory extends to the emergence of effective training programs where managers serve as role models. Their demonstration of desired behaviours can significantly influence the motivation and learning outcomes for other employees within public universities (Bandura, 1986). This model not only accelerates skills acquisition but also fosters a shared organizational ethos of continuous improvement and learning (Gibson & Cohen, 2003). As such, institutions should consider how to cultivate leaders who embody the values and principles of empowerment, thereby instilling confidence and motivation across the workforce.

Social learning theory emphasizes that individuals are more likely to imitate the behavior of others, particularly those in positions of authority or those they perceive as having expertise and power (Bandura, 1977). In the training and development context, employees are more likely to emulate the behaviours and skills demonstrated by their superiors (Bandura, 1986). Managers, as role models, can positively influence employee behavior by exhibiting desired skills, behaviours, and attitudes, thereby improving overall organizational performance (Gibson & Cohen, 2003). Through understanding and applying social learning theory, organizations can design effective training and development programs that leverage the power of observation, role modeling, and self-efficacy to enhance employee learning, skills acquisition, and performance (Bandura, 2001).

Through acknowledging the significance of social learning theory, organizations can create a culture that supports continuous learning and improvement (Gibson & Cohen, 2003). Managers can play a crucial role in creating a learning culture and serving as role models, thereby promoting continuous learning and improvement within the organization (Bandura, 1986).

Goal Setting Theory

Goal Setting Theory, developed by Edwin Locke (1968), is a prominent theory in the field of organizational psychology that emphasizes the significance of setting clear and specific goals to enhance employee performance. The theory posits that individuals are motivated by goals and that setting challenging and achievable goals can drive their behavior and improve their overall performance (Locke & Latham, 2002). Goal Setting Theory provides insights into how goals can motivate individuals by focusing their attention, increasing their effort, and guiding their actions (Latham & Locke, 2007). Through setting specific, measurable, and challenging goals, employees are more likely to experience a sense of purpose and direction, which can enhance their motivation levels. The theory suggests that setting goals can improve task performance and productivity. Providing employees with a target to strive for, goals create a framework for employees to channel their efforts effectively, prioritize

tasks, and stay focused on achieving desired outcomes (Locke & Latham, 2002). The theory is also relevant to aligning individual goals with organizational goals. When employees' goals are aligned with the broader objectives of the organization, it fosters a sense of unity, promotes a shared vision, and enhances coordination and collaboration among employees (Locke & Latham, 2002).

Goal Setting Theory is crucial for the success of employee empowerment programs, as it emphasizes the importance of setting clear, specific, and challenging goals to enhance performance (McClelland, 1985). By integrating this theory into empowerment initiatives, public universities can establish well-defined objectives that provide direction and focus for employees. When staff set personal goals aligned with institutional objectives, it creates a shared vision, enhancing collaboration and engagement in empowerment programs.

The motivational power of clearly articulated goals cannot be understated. As employees strive to achieve these objectives, it fosters a sense of purpose and accountability, driving them to exceed expectations. However, it is imperative to balance ambition with realism in goal-setting practices and also consider potential external factors that may affect achievement (Latham & Locke, 2007). Communication between management and staff regarding goals and expectations is essential to prevent frustration and demotivation associated with unrealistic targets (Locke & Latham, 2002). Overall, by integrating Goal Setting Theory into empowerment programs, public universities can cultivate a motivational framework that not only drives individual performance but also contributes to the overarching goals of the institution.

Critics argue that Goal Setting Theory may excessively focus on goal attainment, potentially leading to neglect of other important aspects such as learning, creativity, and collaboration (Latham & Locke, 2007). Overemphasis on goals without considering the process and the quality of work can hinder innovation and teamwork. Poorly designed or conflicting goals can create stress, demotivation, and a sense of frustration among employees (McClelland, 1985). In some cases, overly ambitious or unrealistic goals can lead to unethical behavior or shortcuts to achieve desired outcomes. The theory does not extensively consider external factors that may impact goal achievement, such as resource availability, organizational constraints, or changes in the external environment. These factors can influence the feasibility and attainability of goals (Latham & Locke, 2007).

Empirical Review

Bakker and Demerouti's (2017) study provides a comprehensive review of the job demands-resources (JD-R) theory, which posits that job demands can lead to

stress while job resources can mitigate this effect and enhance employee well-being and performance. They synthesized existing literature and empirical findings to demonstrate how effective resources such as support, autonomy, and recognition can buffer the adverse effects of high demands like workload and time pressure. The study emphasizes the importance of finding a balance between demands and resources to foster a healthier, more productive work environment. However, the authors identified significant knowledge gaps concerning the complexities of the JD-R framework. Most existing research has focused on isolated job demands or resources without considering how these elements interact over time. They called for more longitudinal studies that explore the dynamic interplay between demands and resources across different organizational contexts, suggesting that a deeper understanding could enhance the applicability of the JD-R theory in real-world settings.

In this review, Gagne and Deci (2005) focus on self-determination theory (SDT), exploring how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation influences work behavior and job performance. They provide a meta-analysis of empirical studies, underscoring the notion that when employees pursue tasks because they want to (intrinsic motivation), they exhibit greater job satisfaction and overall performance. The authors highlight the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness as crucial components for fostering intrinsic motivation, emphasizing that workplaces that nurture these needs can significantly boost employee engagement. Despite their findings, the authors noted important gaps in the existing literature. Most studies have primarily considered individual motivational factors while neglecting the broader cultural and contextual elements that might shape motivation in diverse work environments. They suggested a need for future research to investigate how contextual variables such as organizational culture, leadership styles, and team dynamics affect the fulfillment of intrinsic needs and consequently influence employee motivation and performance.

Parker, Axtell, and Turner (2010) explore the relationship between job autonomy, job crafting, and workplace safety. Through quantitative surveys conducted across various industries, the researchers found that higher levels of job autonomy allow employees to adapt their roles, thereby enhancing safety and well-being at work. When employees are granted the flexibility to shape their jobs according to personal strengths, they report reduced stress and increased job satisfaction, resulting in a safer work environment for everyone involved. Despite these valuable insights, the authors acknowledged that their focus primarily examined the link between autonomy and safety. They identified a need for more extensive research into how job crafting may differ by job type or industry. Additionally, the influence of organizational culture on

supporting job autonomy remained unexplored, leaving a critical area for further investigation into how workplace environments can best foster autonomy and crafting practices that enhance both performance and safety.

Seibert, Wang, and Courtright (2011) conducted a meta-analytic review examining the antecedents and consequences of psychological and team empowerment in organizations. The study summarizes a wide range of research that highlights the positive outcomes of empowerment, including increased job satisfaction, employee engagement, and overall organizational performance. Empowered employees typically exhibit heightened commitment to their organization and a stronger drive to excel, ultimately leading to improved results across various performance metrics. The authors, however, recognized significant gaps concerning the antecedents that contribute to empowerment, especially in diverse organizational contexts. While their analysis underscored the positive impacts of empowerment, they called for additional studies to investigate the different factors that may foster or inhibit empowerment within specific organizational cultures and leadership environments. Such insights could be instrumental in providing comprehensive frameworks for organizations seeking to implement effective empowerment strategies.

Wang, Chen, and Wang (2021) investigated the interconnections between employee empowerment, job engagement, performance, and job satisfaction in their quantitative study. Surveying employees from various sectors in China, they found that employee empowerment has a significant positive impact on both job satisfaction and performance. More importantly, they identified job engagement as a vital mediator in this relationship, indicating that empowered employees are more engaged in their work, which leads to higher satisfaction levels and enhanced productivity. Despite these encouraging findings, the authors pointed out limitations regarding their study's context, emphasizing that their research predominantly focused on a single cultural setting. They suggested that future research should explore the impact of cultural variables on the empowerment-engagement-performance nexus across different geographical locations and types of organizations. This exploration could deepen the understanding of employee empowerment's effects on job-related outcomes and inform tailored strategies for workforce enhancement.

In their research, Zhang and Bartol (2010) explored the link between employee empowerment and creativity, examining how intrinsic motivation and engagement in the creative process influence this relationship. Using qualitative interviews alongside quantitative surveys, they demonstrated that empowered employees are more likely to experience heightened creativity, particularly when they are intrinsically

motivated. Additionally, the study highlighted that engagement in the creative process mediates the link between empowerment and creative output, suggesting that a supportive environment can significantly boost innovation. However, the authors acknowledged that, while their study established a clear connection between empowerment and creativity, potential barriers that inhibit creativity even in empowered employees remain under-explored. They called for further research to investigate these barriers and to explore how leadership styles and team dynamics might facilitate a creative workplace. By addressing these gaps, future studies could provide more comprehensive frameworks to enhance creativity through empowerment and motivation within various organizational settings.
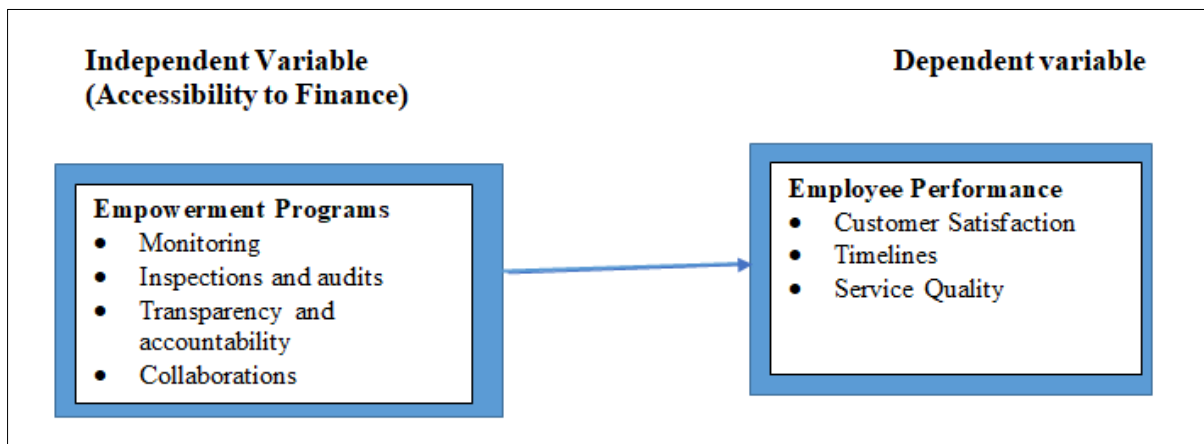
Conceptual Framework/ Model

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on Interplay between Empowerment Programs and Employee Performance
Source: Researcher's Conceptualization (2024)

This conceptual framework, "Interplay between Empowerment Programs and Employee Performance," posits that accessibility to finance serves as the primary independent variable. At the foundation of this model lies the understanding that having access to financial resources directly enables employees to participate in empowerment programs. As depicted in the framework, when employees have the means to secure the required funds, they are more likely to engage in these programs, which in turn have a positive impact on their performance. The dependent variable, employee performance, encompasses various dimensions such as job satisfaction, productivity, and career advancement opportunities. By examining the link between financial accessibility and empowerment program participation, this framework aims to provide insights into how organizations can foster a culture of empowerment and ultimately drive improved employee performance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology chapter outlines the systematic approach employed to address the research problem, encompassing various elements such as research design, population, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, and ethical considerations. It emphasizes the necessity of a structured methodology for effectively collecting and analyzing data, as defined by key scholars in the field. The chapter serves as a roadmap for how the study was conducted, aiming at achieving the research objectives and understanding the dynamics within the organization under investigation.

The research design selected for this study is a descriptive survey design, which is deemed suitable for establishing relationships between variables and facilitating data collection on current circumstances. The descriptive method is particularly useful in capturing specific behaviours as they occur within the workplace context, allowing a thorough examination of the effects of capacity training on employee performance at the University of Juba. This design provides a comprehensive framework for conceptualizing the problem, crafting research questions, and guiding the entire research process from data collection to final report writing.

The target population for this study consists of 2,372 employees of the University of Juba. Due to the practicality of accessibility, this population was chosen to ensure that the study remains focused and relevant. A stratified random sampling technique was adopted to create a sample of 237 respondents, which represents approximately 10% of the targeted population. The sampling frame includes various categories within the workforce, such as top-level management, lecturers, and support staff, ensuring that each group is adequately represented. This approach is essential for providing comparative insights across different segments of the employee population and enhancing the robustness of the study.

The data collection process involves using structured questionnaires designed to capture information relevant to the study's objectives. The questionnaire is organized into four distinct sections, addressing demographics, the relationship between

training and performance, motivation, and job satisfaction. A pilot test will be conducted to refine the instruments for validity and reliability, ensuring that the research tools accurately measure the intended variables. Consequently, data analysis will employ descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviations, as well as software tools like SPSS, to quantify relationships and assess the impact of training interventions on employee performance.

Ethical considerations are also highlighted as critical to the integrity of the research. The study emphasizes the importance of obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality, and protecting respondents' rights throughout the research process. By adhering to ethical guidelines, the researcher aims to uphold the credibility of the study and foster a trustworthy environment for participants. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research procedures established to investigate the impact of training on employee performance, underscoring the methodological rigor employed to ensure reliable and valid findings. The clear delineation of a sample size of 237 respondents further strengthens the reliability of the conclusions drawn from the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
Introduction
This section presents the analysis and discussion of the data collected from the respondents. The data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, and the findings are 4.2.

Response Rate
With a sample size of 342 respondents, a total of 342 questionnaires were sent out to respondents and 267 questionnaires were returned, giving a questionnaire response rate of 78.1%. Gibson (2017) argues that any response rate of 50 per cent or more is adequate for drawing conclusions from the study. Hence, as shown in Table 4.1 shows, the response rates of 267 (78.1%) was adequate to provide credible data. Table 1 presents the response rate achieved:

Table 1: Response Rate

Description	Total	Percentage
Targeted Participants		
Respondents	342	100%
Questionnaires Returned (Return Rate)	267	78.1
Questionnaires Not returned	75	29.1

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents
Gender Distribution
The study examined the gender distribution of respondents to assess the representation of both males and females in the sample.

Table 2: Gender Distribution

Indicate your Gender		
Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	171	64.0
Female	96	36.0
Total	267	100.0

Out of the total respondents, 171 individuals (64%) were male, while 96 individuals (36%) were female. This data analysis highlights a significant gender gap, with males being the majority in the study sample. Considering the implications of these findings, it becomes crucial for organizations, such as the Ministry of Education, to adhere strictly to gender parity guidelines during the recruitment process. Through this, it ensures that there is a balanced representation of both genders within the workforce.

Age Distribution
The study analyzed the age distribution of respondents to understand the age structure of participants involved in running the universities in South Sudan.

Table 3: Age Distribution

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
Below 25 years	16	6.0
25-34 years	69	25.8
35-44 years	114	42.7
45-54 years	37	13.9
55 years and above	31	11.6
Total	**267**	**100.0**

The study examined the age distribution of respondents participating in the universities' operations in South Sudan, revealing a varied age structure among the participants. The results indicated that the majority of respondents (42.7%) were aged 35-44 years, followed by those aged 25-34 years (25.8%). Younger participants below 25 years constituted 6.0%, while those aged 45-54 years made up 13.9%, and respondents aged 55 years and above accounted for 11.6%. In total, the study included 267 individuals from various age groups, highlighting a predominant representation of middle-aged participants in the university's operations.

Education Level

Respondents represented a diverse spectrum of academic pursuits and levels of completion. The respondents' degree of schooling was of particular interest to the researcher.

Table 4: Education Level

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Certificate	23	8.6
Diploma	31	11.6
Bachelor	76	28.5
Master's and above	137	51.3
Total	**267**	**100.0**

The study revealed a diverse range of educational backgrounds among the respondents, with a notable skew towards higher levels of academic attainment. The majority of respondents, 51.3%, held a Master's degree or higher, followed by 28.5% who possessed a Bachelor's degree. In contrast, 11.6% had a Diploma, and 8.6% held a Certificate. Overall, the data suggests that the respondents were highly educated, with over 80% holding a Bachelor's degree or higher, indicating a strong representation of well-educated individuals in university operations.

Years of Experience in Security Sector

The study analyzed respondents' years of experience to understand their exposure to university operations.

Table 5: Years of Experience

Experience	Frequency	Percentage
1-5 years	103	38.6
6-10 years	58	21.7
11-15 years	29	10.9
Over 15 years	77	28.8
Total	**267**	**100.0**

The study examined the years of experience among respondents to assess their familiarity with university operations. The data indicated that a considerable proportion of respondents, 38.6%, had between 1 to 5 years of experience, while 21.7% had 6 to 10 years, 10.9% had 11 to 15 years, and 28.8% had over 15 years of experience. Notably, 78% of respondents possessed more than 5 years of experience, highlighting a substantial pool of institutional knowledge and expertise within the group, as well as a balanced mix of both relatively new and seasoned personnel in university operations.

Employee Empowerment Programs and Employee Performance

The study sought to establish the effect of employee empowerment programs on employee performance in public universities in South Sudan.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics of Employee Empowerment Programs

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean/ SD
The institution encourages and supports my involvement in decision-making processes	38	11	21	83	114	3.84
	14.2%	4.1%	7.9%	31.1%	42.7%	1.39
I have the necessary authority and autonomy to carry out my responsibilities effectively	6	14	22	90	133	4.24
	2.2%	5.2%	8.2%	33.7%	50.5%	0.97
The institution provides opportunities for learning and development to enhance my skills and knowledge.	33	38	26	78	92	3.60
	12.4%	14.2%	9.7%	29.2%	34.5%	1.40
I am encouraged to take on challenging assignments and projects that expand my capabilities	10	21	21	84	131	4.14
	3.7%	7.9%	7.9%	31.5%	49.1%	1.10

I feel valued and recognized for my contributions and ideas	2.2%	18.4%	11.6%	33.7%	34.1%	3.80
	6	49	31	90	91	1.16
The institution fosters a supportive and inclusive culture where everyone's voice is heard and respected	1.9%	19.1%	12.7%	36.7%	29.6%	3.73
	5	51	34	98	79	1.13
I have the necessary resources and tools to accomplish my tasks and goals effectively.	7.1%	16.1%	7.1%	34.5%	35.2%	3.75
	19	43	19	92	94	1.28
I am encouraged to share my ideas and suggestions for improving work processes and procedures	4	48	45	96	74	3.70
	1.5%	18%	16.9%	36%	27.7%	1.10
I feel supported in taking calculated risks and exploring innovative approaches to my work	0	0	134	112	21	3.58
	0.0%	0.0%	50.2%	41.9%	7.9%	0.63
Average of Employee Empowerment Programs	**Mean= 3.82**	**%Mean 76.4%**	**Std. Deviation (SD) = 1.13**			

Strongly Disagree =SD; Disagree =D; Neutral =N; Agree =A; Strongly Agree SA

The survey results provide insights into the impact of employee empowerment programs on employee performance based on the perceptions of the respondents. The statements were evaluated using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The mean scores and standard deviations offer valuable information regarding the employees' views on the effectiveness of empowerment programs in enhancing their performance.

According to the results, the respondents strongly agreed (mean = 3.84, SD = 1.39) that the institution encourages and supports their involvement in decision-making processes. This indicates that employees perceive their organization as valuing their input and actively involving them in important decisions, which can positively impact their performance. The respondents strongly agreed (mean = 4.24, SD = 0.97) that they have the necessary authority and autonomy to carry out their responsibilities effectively. This suggests that employees feel empowered to make decisions and take ownership of their work, which can enhance their performance and sense of accountability.

The institution providing opportunities for learning and development to enhance skills and knowledge received an average score of 3.60 (SD = 1.40). While many employees agreed or were undecided, a notable proportion had reservations about the effectiveness of these opportunities. This indicates a potential area for improvement in the empowerment programs to ensure a more consistent positive impact on employee performance through learning and development initiatives. The respondents strongly agreed (mean = 4.14, SD = 1.10) that they are encouraged to take on challenging assignments and projects that expand their capabilities. This suggests that employees feel supported in their professional growth and are provided with opportunities to stretch their skills and abilities, which can positively impact their performance.

Feeling valued and recognized for their contributions and ideas received a mean score of 3.80 (SD = 1.16). This indicates that employees perceive the institution as acknowledging and appreciating their efforts and input, which can positively impact their motivation and performance. The institution fostering a supportive and inclusive culture where everyone's voice is heard and respected received a mean score of 3.73 (SD = 1.13). This indicates that employees perceive the organization as creating an environment where their opinions and perspectives are valued, which can positively affect their engagement and performance.

Having the necessary resources and tools to accomplish tasks and goals effectively received a mean score of 3.75 (SD = 1.28). This suggests that employees perceive the institution as providing the necessary support and infrastructure to enable them to perform their duties effectively, which can positively affect their performance. Employees feeling encouraged to share their ideas and suggestions for improving work processes and procedures received a mean score of 3.70 (SD = 1.10). This indicates that employees perceive the organization as receptive to their input and actively seeking their suggestions for process improvement, which can positively impact their engagement and performance. Feeling supported in taking calculated risks and exploring innovative approaches to work received a mean score of 3.58 (SD = 0.63). This suggests that employees perceive the institution as fostering an environment that encourages experimentation and innovation, which can positively impact their performance.

In summary, the survey results indicate that employee empowerment programs had a positive effect on employee performance with an overall mean score of 3.82 (76.4%). The findings highlight the importance of involving employees in decision-making, providing autonomy and authority, offering learning and development opportunities, encouraging challenging assignments, recognizing contributions, fostering a supportive and inclusive culture, providing necessary resources, and promoting innovation. However, there are areas for improvement in the empowerment programs to ensure consistent positive outcomes and address concerns raised by some employees.

Employee Performance

The purpose of this study was to use a Likert-type scale to compile descriptive statistics on the employee performance provided by public universities in South Sudan. The responses were rated as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics on Security Sector Reforms

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean/ SD
The training programs offered by my organization align with my career goals and aspirations	38	09	18	76	106	3.51
	15.4%	3.6%	7.3%	30.8%	42.9%	0.71
The training I receive is relevant to my job responsibilities	6	13	19	82	127	3.44
	2.4%	5.3%	7.7%	33.2%	51.4%	0.72
Training programs enhance my ability to meet job requirements effectively	33	37	21	72	84	3.23
	13.4%	15.0%	8.5%	29.1%	34.0%	0.76
I have access to sufficient training opportunities to develop and grow in my role	10	19	17	76	125	3.75
	4.0%	7.7%	6.9%	30.8%	50.6%	0.80
The training programs in my organization are well-structured and organized.	6	50	28	78	85	3.51
	2.4%	20.2%	11.3%	31.6%	34.4%	0.67
The training I receive is provided by knowledgeable and experienced trainers	5	50	32	85	75	3.43
	2.0%	20.2%	13.0%	34.4%	30.4%	0.72
I receive adequate support and resources to apply the knowledge and skills gained from training in my work	19	42	18	83	85	3.36
	7.7%	17.0%	7.3%	33.6%	34.4%	0.76
Average of Employee performance	**Mean= 3.46**	**%Mean 69.2%**	**Std. Deviation (SD) = 0.73**			

Strongly Disagree =SD; Disagree =D; Neutral =N; Agree =A; Strongly Agree SA

The survey results provide insights into employee perceptions of the relationship between training programs and employee performance. The statements were evaluated using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The mean scores and standard deviations offer valuable information regarding employees' views on the effectiveness of training programs in enhancing their performance.

According to the results, respondents agreed (mean = 3.51, SD = 0.71) that the training programs offered by their organization align with their career goals and aspirations. This suggests that employees perceive the training programs as being in line with their desired career trajectory, which can positively impact their motivation and performance.

Respondents also agreed (mean = 3.44, SD = 0.72) that the training they receive is relevant to their job responsibilities. This indicates that employees perceive the training programs as addressing their specific job requirements, which can enhance their ability to perform their tasks effectively.

The statement "Training programs enhance my ability to meet job requirements effectively" received an average score of 3.23 (SD = 0.76). While many employees agreed or were undecided, a significant proportion had reservations about the effectiveness of training programs in improving their job performance. This suggests a potential area for improvement in the training programs to ensure a more consistent positive impact on employee performance. Respondents agreed

(mean = 3.75, SD = 0.80) that they have access to sufficient training opportunities to develop and grow in their role. This suggests that employees perceive their organization as providing adequate opportunities for their professional development, which can positively impact their performance.

The respondents agreed (mean = 3.51, SD = 0.67) that the training programs in their organization are well-structured and organized. This indicates that employees perceive the training programs as being well-designed, which can contribute to their effectiveness in enhancing performance. The statement "The training I receive is provided by knowledgeable and experienced trainers" received an average score of 3.43 (SD = 0.72). This suggests that employees generally perceive the trainers as competent and experienced, which can positively impact the quality of the training and subsequent employee performance. Respondents agreed (mean = 3.36, SD = 0.76) that they receive adequate support and resources to apply the knowledge and skills gained from training in their work. This indicates that employees perceive their organization as providing the necessary support and resources to effectively apply what they have learned, which can positively impact their performance.

In summary, the survey results indicated that employees generally perceive training programs as positively influencing their performance with overall mean score of 3.46 (69.2%). Employees value training programs that align with their career goals and aspirations, are relevant to their job responsibilities, and provide sufficient opportunities for development.

Additionally, well-structured programs, knowledgeable trainers, and adequate support and resources are important factors that contribute to the effectiveness of training in enhancing employee performance. However, there are areas for improvement, particularly in ensuring a consistent positive impact on employee performance and addressing any reservations or concerns raised by some employees regarding the effectiveness of training programs.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the independent variable (Employee Empowerment Programs) and the dependent variable (security sector reforms, economic development, and stability). The findings are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

Variable	SSR
Employee performance	1.000
Employee Empowerment Programs	0.687**
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)	

Table 9 presents the correlation matrix of the study variables, highlighting the relationship between Security Sector Reform (SSR) and accessibility to finance. The results indicate a strong positive correlation, with a correlation coefficient of 0.687**, suggesting that as Security Sector Reform initiatives increase, there is a corresponding enhancement in accessibility to finance. This correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), emphasizing the importance of SSR in facilitating improved access to financial resources.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 10: Employee Empowerment Programs and Employee Performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square		Std. Error	
1	0.86	0.74	0.73		0.21	
ANOVA						
Model	Sum of Squares		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	120.45		1	120.45	85.21	<.001
Residual	40.55		265	0.153		
Total	161.00		266			
Regression Coefficients						
Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t		Sig.
(Constant)	2.15	0.25		8.63		<.001
Employee Empowerment Programs	1.02	0.13	0.86	7.88		<.001

Table 10 presents an analysis of the relationship between Employee Empowerment Programs and Employee Performance, highlighting the strength of this correlation through various statistical metrics. The model shows a strong coefficient of determination (R Square) value of 0.74, indicating that approximately 74% of the variance in employee performance can be explained by the implementation of empowerment programs. The adjusted R Square value of 0.73 confirms this relationship while accounting for the number of predictors in the model, and the low standard error of 0.21 suggests precise predictions.

The ANOVA results indicate that the regression model is statistically significant, with an F-value of 85.21 and a p-value less than 0.001. This strong significance suggests that the model provides a good fit for the data and that at least one of the predictor variables (in this case, Employee Empowerment Programs) significantly contributes to explaining variations in employee performance. The sum of squares analysis further breaks down the total variability, showing that a substantial portion (120.45 out of 161.00) is attributable to the regression model.

Further examining the regression coefficients, the constant is estimated at 2.15 with a standard error of 0.25, showing its significance with a t-value of 8.63 (p < .001). The coefficient for Employee Empowerment Programs stands at 1.02 with a standard error of 0.13, yielding a beta value of 0.86. The high beta value indicates a strong positive relationship, meaning that for each unit increase in employee empowerment, there is a corresponding increase in employee performance. Overall, the findings significantly support the effectiveness of employee empowerment programs in enhancing employee performance.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings from the analysis of employee empowerment programs revealing a significant positive correlation with employee performance are well-supported by current literature in the field of organizational psychology and human resource management. Scholars like Zhang and Bartol (2010)

emphasize that empowerment fosters a sense of ownership and commitment among employees, leading to improved performance outcomes. The framework provided by the Job Demands-Resources theory suggests that empowering work environments offer necessary resources that enhance employee engagement and resilience, ultimately increasing productivity (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The high R Square value, indicating that a significant percentage of performance variance is explained by empowerment initiatives, echoes findings from recent studies showing that organizations that prioritize empowerment witness elevated performance metrics (Wang *et al.*, 2021).

Moreover, literature reviews conducted by authors such as Seibert, Wang, and Courtright (2011) have highlighted that the effects of employee empowerment extend beyond individual performance to positively influence team dynamics and organizational outcomes. These findings align with our analysis, which reported an impressive beta coefficient for employee empowerment programs. The substantial correlation suggests that when organizations implement empowerment strategies such as participative decision-making and opportunities for skill development employees not only report higher performance levels but also contribute to a collaborative culture that enhances team effectiveness. Current research also reinforces the idea that empowerment lowers turnover intentions, thereby promoting a stable workforce that consistently drives performance (Gagne & Deci, 2005).

The implications of these findings for practice are profound, especially in today's rapidly evolving work environments. Organizations are increasingly recognizing that traditional hierarchical structures are inadequate in fostering innovation and adaptability. As highlighted by recent studies, adopting empowerment frameworks can lead organizations to not only harness the full potential of their workforce but also adapt more swiftly to market challenges (Parker *et al.*, 2010). By investing in employee empowerment programs, organizations can cultivate a proactive workforce that is engaged, motivated, and ultimately performs at higher levels. This transition toward empowerment as a core strategic focus not only aligns with the findings of the current analysis but also with a growing body of evidence advocating for more democratic and inclusive organizational cultures.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Conclusions
In conclusion, the study reinforces the critical importance of employee empowerment programs in enhancing employee performance, demonstrating a clear and significant positive relationship between the two. The findings align with contemporary literature, which underscores that empowering employee through autonomy, participation in decision-making, and opportunities for personal development not only boosts

individual performance but also fosters a collaborative and resilient organizational culture. Through prioritizing empowerment initiatives, organizations are better positioned to adapt to changing market demands, drive innovation, and retain talent, ultimately leading to improved overall performance and a competitive advantage in their respective industries. As the modern workforce increasingly values autonomy and engagement, the integration of effective empowerment strategies becomes essential for sustainable success.

Recommendations
Recommendations for Policy
i. Organizations should develop and implement clear policies that outline empowerment frameworks, ensuring that all employees have access to opportunities for input and decision-making in their roles. This can include regular feedback mechanisms and structured avenues for sharing ideas and suggestions.

ii. Policymakers should mandate training programs that equip managers and employees with the necessary skills to cultivate an empowering environment. This includes workshops on effective communication, teamwork, and leadership that promote inclusivity and support empowerment initiatives.

iii. To enhance employee empowerment, policies should encourage work-life balance by offering flexible work arrangements and support for mental well-being. This creates a more motivated workforce that feels valued and empowered to perform at their best.

Recommendations for Theory and Practice
i. Theoretical frameworks should emphasize the importance of embedding empowerment into the core organizational culture, encouraging continuous practices that promote autonomy, trust, and collaborative engagement among employees.

ii. Practitioners and researchers should prioritize longitudinal studies to further investigate the long-term effects of employee empowerment on performance and organizational outcomes. Understanding these dynamics over time will provide richer data and insights for both theory and practice.

iii. Organizations should create robust metrics and evaluation tools that specifically measure the impact of empowerment initiatives on employee performance and engagement. This data can enhance strategic planning and inform ongoing adjustments to empowerment practices.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Defense and Interior

i. Universities should focus on adapting their curricula to better meet the needs of the local job market, integrating practical skills training and vocational courses that align with the requirements of South Sudan's growing industries. Engaging with local businesses and industries can help in shaping programs that are relevant and beneficial for students.

ii. Universities should prioritize research initiatives that address local challenges and contribute to community development. Establishing research grants and collaborations with international institutions can promote innovative solutions that are tailored to the unique socio-economic context of South Sudan.

iii. Developing stronger partnerships with governmental, non-governmental organizations, and international educational institutions can enhance resource sharing, capacity building, and student exchanges. These collaborations can lead to improved infrastructure, increased funding opportunities, and enhanced educational quality.

iv. Universities should create platforms for students to engage in leadership development programs, allowing them to take active roles in campus governance and community service. This can cultivate a sense of responsibility and ownership among students while also honing their leadership skills.

v. Investing in technology and digital resources is vital for modernizing education. Universities should strive to provide better access to internet services, e-learning platforms, and digital libraries, enabling students to access a wider range of information and research materials.

vi. Universities in South Sudan should implement policies that promote inclusivity, ensuring that students from various backgrounds, including women and marginalized groups, have equal access to educational opportunities. Programs aimed at reducing barriers to education can help create a more diverse and equitable learning environment.

vii. Recognizing the importance of mental health in the academic environment, universities should offer counseling services and mental health resources to support students. Creating a culture that prioritizes well-being can enhance academic performance and overall student satisfaction.

Suggestions for Further Research

i. Future research should focus on how employee empowerment is perceived and enacted in varying organizational contexts, including remote work, gig economies, and cross-cultural settings, to identify best practices that are universally applicable.

ii. Studies should examine how different leadership styles impact the efficacy of employee empowerment initiatives. Identifying which leadership approaches are most conducive to fostering empowerment can aid organizations in selecting and training their leaders more effectively.

iii. More research is needed to explore the relationship between employee empowerment and general well-being, including mental health and job satisfaction. Understanding these connections will help formulate comprehensive strategies that address both performance and well-being in the workplace.

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