

## **A STUDY ON THE INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AND TRUST ON LEADERS TOWARDS EMPLOYEES' JOB SATISFACTION IN MALAYSIAN HOTELS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study paper aims to investigate the influence of psychological empowerment and trust towards leaders on employee job satisfaction. Employees currently working in 5 star hotels in the Klang valley participated in this study. The population of this study was the operational staff of the 5 star hotels in Kuala Lumpur. A total of 181 questionnaires were collected via snowball sampling method. Printed questionnaires and online questionnaires were both used for data collection purposes. The questionnaires consist of four sections covering areas of psychological empowerment, trust towards leaders and job satisfaction. Regression analysis was used to analyse the data. The results show partial support for the notion that psychological empowerment influences job satisfaction. Also the study shows that trust towards leadership significantly affects job satisfaction of hotel staff. This study provided managerial contribution to various hotels in the hospitality industry in improving their employees' job satisfaction level. By ascertaining the relationship between leadership styles and job satisfaction in the hotel industry, hotel managers and Human Resources will know the right leadership styles to be used in improving employees' job satisfaction.*

**Keywords:** *Leadership, job satisfaction, employee trust.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Past researches indicated that job satisfaction can be influenced by psychological empowerment (Liden et. al, 2000; Laschinger et. al, 2004). Job satisfaction is also founded to be influenced by job empowerment (Hechanova, Alampay and Franco, 2006; Dickson and Lorenz, 2009; Wang and Lee, 2009). However, there are still several gaps in literature on the matter of psychological empowerment and employees' job satisfaction.

Overall job satisfaction can be influenced by more than one factor at any given time. Studies revealed that trust towards leaders also significantly influences job satisfaction (Ali Mohammad Mosadegh Rad and Mohammad Hossein Yarmohammadian, 2006; Liu, Siu and Shi, 2010).

While there are past studies based on the government service sector as well as the medical sector, there is very little literature on how each of these leadership components contributes to the job satisfaction level in the hospitality sector. Hence it would be beneficiary for the hotel management especially the Human Resource Department as well as employees of various management levels to look into the possible relationship between psychological empowerment, trust towards leaders and employees' job satisfaction in the hotel industry.

Besides that, many studies had been conducted in other Western countries as well as some Asian countries apart from Malaysia. The study on relationship between psychological empowerment and employees' job satisfaction or between trust towards leaders and job satisfaction is relatively new in the Malaysian context.

This research can help to identify the right leadership styles to be applied by the managers and the Human Resources department in efforts to improve job satisfaction of the hotel employees in the Malaysian context.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Psychological Empowerment**

The definition of empowerment can be defined as an increased intrinsic task motivation displayed in a set of four elements reflecting on an individual's overall performance towards their work. The four elements are meaning, competence, self-determination and impact (Spreitzer, 1995 cited by Zhu et al., 2012).

Various studies have proven that physiological empowerment could result in a higher overall employees' job satisfaction (Liden et. al, 2000; Laschinger et. al, 2004). Liden et al. (2000) in their research concluded that empowerment of individuals will increase the overall job satisfaction, job performance and organizational commitment of the employees. Laschinger et al. (2004) on a study on workplace empowerment towards work satisfaction targeting 185 nurses concluded that an improved perception towards empowerment has positive effects on employees.

Additional published results from various fields of studies shown that employee job empowerment has a positive relationship with employees' job satisfaction (Hechanova, Alampay and Franco, 2006; Dickson and Lorenz, 2009; Wang and Lee, 2009). All these studies show that not all elements of psychological empowerment have the same positive impact towards job satisfaction.

Hechanova, Alampay and Franco (2006) in their research found that the impact of psychological empowerment toward job satisfaction is higher in the banking, food, and hotel sectors while in airlines and call centres, the impact is relatively lower. It can be derived that the relationship between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction varies in different industries and working environment.

Dickson and Lorenz (2009) in their studies ascertained that employees' job satisfaction is not always affected by all four aspects of the psychological empowerment. In a study on impact of empowerment towards job satisfaction for part-time workers, it is

mentioned that meaning and impact does have as strong and positive relationship towards the job satisfaction. On the same paper it is also reported that self-determination and competency does not show significant contributions towards the job satisfaction of the employees.

### **Trust towards Leaders**

Nyhan (2000) mentioned that trust is the level of confidence that a person has in another's competence and their willingness to act in a just, ethical, and constant manner. It was mentioned that there are various dimensions of trust in which some of them includes interpersonal trust, inter-organizational trust, political or societal trust, peer trust in the workplace, trust between superiors and organizational trust (Joseph and Winston, 2005). Only one dimension of trust that will be studied in this research which is the trust between superiors and subordinates also referred to as trust towards leaders.

Past research has been conducted to study the various effects of trust towards leaders in an organisation (Ali Mohammad Mosadegh Rad and Mohammad Hossein Yarmohammadian, 2006; Liu, Siu and Shi, 2010). Ali Mohammad Mosadegh Rad and Mohammad Hossein Yarmohammadian (2006) found that there is a positive relationship between trust towards leaders and employee satisfaction towards the leader. Liu, Siu and Shi (2010) concluded that trust is a positive mediator between transformational leadership and the well-being of the employee.

A research has been conducted in Australia to study the mediating effects of trust towards leaders towards employee satisfaction in customer service centre (Bartram and Casimir, 2007). Findings did not support the hypothesis of trust in leaders will have significant effect on employee satisfaction.

The relationship between trust towards leaders and employees' job satisfaction was however supported by a research conducted in Taiwan (Yang, 2014). The research shows positive relationship between trust in leaders and employees' job satisfaction in insurance companies in Taiwan (Yang, 2014). The findings of the study supports that trust towards leaders is a major mediator as well as moderator towards job satisfaction.

### **Employees' Job Satisfaction**

Susskind et al. (2000) clarified that job satisfaction speaks of the working environment and workers' view of their job. Then Cranny, Smith, and Stone (1992) characterized job satisfaction as whether workers find their employment sufficiently satisfactory to proceed in it, either for all time or until they have arranged for more prominent obligations. Work fulfilment can be anticipated by workers' assessment of the work atmosphere, levels of organizational backing and the job circumstance. Locke (1976) characterized job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive passionate state coming about because of the evaluation of one's employment or occupation encounters. Edward and Scullion (1982) recognized the importance of job satisfaction as the generally speaking estimation of working mentality of the gathering, satisfaction, and joy in the employment.

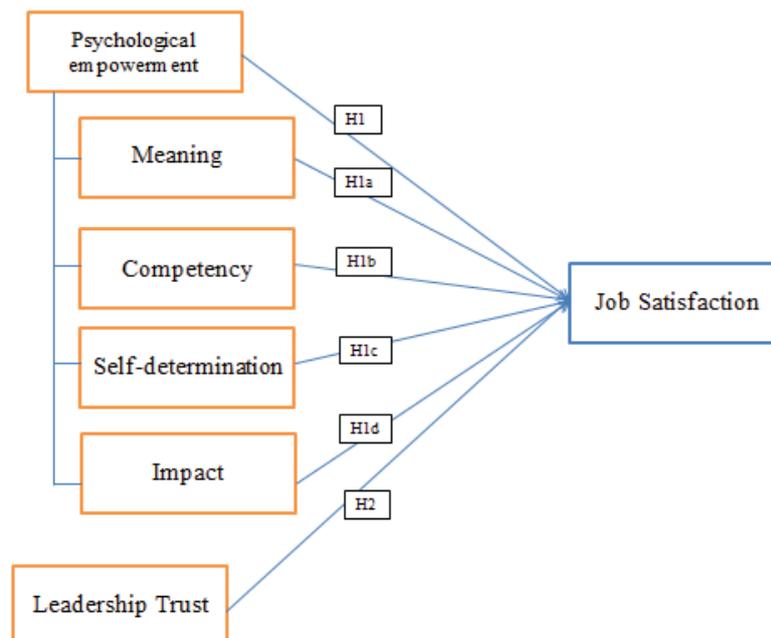
Factors that influence employees' job satisfaction can be categorized into organizational factor, behavioural factor as well as the working environment (Wadhwa, Vergheze and Wadhwa, 2011). Example of variables that will influence employees' job satisfaction includes training, leadership styles, job empowerment, organization behaviour and trust towards leaders (Chang, Chiu and Chen, 2010; Aydin, Sarier and Uysal, 2013; Dickson and Lorenz, 2009; Tsai, 2011; Yang, 2014). Chang, Chiu and Chen (2010) found that employee will feel more committed to the organization and have higher employees' job satisfaction if effective training is provided. Aydin, Sarier and Uysal (2013) in a study conducted in the educational sector found that principles' leadership styles have positive relationship with the job satisfaction of the teachers.

Dickson and Lorenz (2009) in their research mentioned that job satisfaction is important for any organization as there is a strong positive relationship between job satisfaction and working performance as well as customer satisfaction.

As employees' job satisfaction can be affected by both internal and external factors, both factors must be closely monitored as job satisfactions are closely related to the intention to quit. Wei (2009) found that there is a negative relationship between job satisfaction and employees' turnover intention, indicating that the higher is the job satisfaction, the lower is the employee turnover intention.

## CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The constructs used in the proposed conceptual model are essentially based on the work of several established literature on the area of trust towards leaders, psychological empowerment and employee job satisfaction.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Planning Strategy and Business Growth (SME sector in Malaysia)**

Based upon pertinent literature and the conceptual model above the following hypotheses are developed.

- H<sub>1</sub>: Psychological empowerment significantly influences overall job satisfaction.**
- H<sub>1a</sub>: The employee psychological empowerment dimension of meaningfulness significantly influences overall job satisfaction.**
- H<sub>1b</sub>: The employee psychological empowerment dimension of competence significantly influences overall job satisfaction.**
- H<sub>1c</sub>: The employee psychological empowerment dimension of self-determination significantly influences overall job satisfaction.**
- H<sub>1d</sub>: The employee psychological empowerment dimension of impact significantly influences overall job satisfaction.**
- H<sub>2</sub>: Trust towards leaders significantly influences overall job satisfaction.**

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

Quantitative research method was used for data collection to investigate the relationship between leadership styles and the employees' job satisfaction level in the 5 star hotels in the Kuala Lumpur. Babbie (2004) describe quantitative analysis as the numerical representation and manipulation of observations with the end goal of portraying and clarifying the phenomena that those observations reflect. It was also mention that quantitative research enables conversion of social science data into numerical data that can be processed and manipulated by the computer.

### **Sampling Method**

Snowballing method was used as the sampling method for this research. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling method that is a subset of purposeful sampling. Bouma (2000) mentioned that snowball sampling is utilized when you have to get access to specific sorts of individuals or groups who fit the classification and there are no exposure accessible posting. Babbie (2004) supported that this method is proper when the individuals from a specific populace are hard to find. A total of 181 participants being 5 star hotel operational staffs were engaged in this study.

### **Research Instrument**

Data for the study were obtained by distributing the set of questionnaires to the target sample group Self-administered questionnaire were used to conduct the study. It consists of four sections.

Section A of the questionnaire refers to questions about the demographic information of the respondents. Section B of the questionnaire consists of 12 questions regarding to the psychological empowerment at the workplace. The questions were adopted from Nurdan Özarallı (2015). Section C of the questionnaire was adopted from Bartram and Casimir (2007) which consist of 4 questions, used to measure trust. Section D of the

questionnaire consists of 12 questions to gain the overall job satisfaction of the employees. Questions were adopted from Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2000).

### Data Analysis Plan

The data collected from the questionnaires were analysed and a series of statistical test were also done. The data collected were analysed using the Microsoft Excel software. Based on the answer given on Section A, question 5 of the questionnaire, respondents that worked in 4 star hotels were excluded from data analysis.

A regression analysis was conducted to test correlation value and investigate the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable of the study. Under regression analysis, the coefficient of determination, R square ( $R^2$ ) value was identified. It is mentioned that  $R^2$  value, helps explain the regression model and its goodness of fit. A  $R^2$  value which is nearer to 1 will have most of its variation of the dependent variable explained by the regression model in oppose to a model with a  $R^2$  value closer to 0. An  $R^2$  value that is closer to 1 also indicates that the regression model fits the data well (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010).

To identify the possible relationship between the individual variable and the dependent variable, the p-value generated using regression analysis was observed. A p-value of  $>0.05$  will allow the researcher to deduce that there is no significant relationship between the established independent variable (IV) and dependent variable (DV). The beta values ( $\beta$ ) of standardized coefficient will help indicate which independent variable has the highest influence on the independent variable.

## RESULTS

**Table 1: ANOVA**

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	5.000	25.457	5.091	63.485	0.000
Residual	167.000	13.393	0.080		
Total	172.000	38.851			

**Table 2: Regression Statistics**

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0.809
<b>R Square</b>	<b>0.655</b>
Adjusted R Square	0.645
Standard Error	0.283
Observations	173.000

**Table 3: Regression Coefficients**

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>	<i>Lower 95.0%</i>	<i>Upper 95.0%</i>
Intercept	0.469	0.152	3.095	<b>0.002</b>	0.170	0.769	0.170	0.769
MEA	0.094	0.050	1.883	<b>0.061</b>	-0.005	0.193	-0.005	0.193
COM	0.039	0.052	0.756	<b>0.451</b>	-0.063	0.142	-0.063	0.142
SD	0.146	0.054	2.726	<b>0.007</b>	0.040	0.252	0.040	0.252
IMP	0.247	0.036	6.938	<b>0.000</b>	0.177	0.317	0.177	0.317
TRS	0.311	0.040	7.815	<b>0.000</b>	0.232	0.389	0.232	0.389

Sekaran and Bougie (2010) wrote that the coefficient of determination, R square ( $R^2$ ) value, is the variation in the dependent variable (DV) that is explained by the percentage of variance in the independent variable (IV). It is also mentioned that  $R^2$  value, helps explain the regression model and its goodness of fit. A  $R^2$  value which is nearer to 1 will have most of its variation of the dependent variable explained by the regression model in oppose to a model with a  $R^2$  value closer to 0. An  $R^2$  value that is closer to 1 also indicates that the regression model fits the data well (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010).

The  $R^2$  value as shown in Table 2 is 0.655. With this it can be deduced that 65.5% of the variance in the dependent variable - job satisfaction (SAT). It can be explained by the variance of the dependent variables which is psychological empowerment and trust towards leaders (TRS). 34.5% of the data cannot be justified by the regression model.

To test the effect of psychological empowerment and trust towards leaders in the relationship with overall job satisfaction, regression analysis is being used to test the direct effect between dependent and the independent variable. The independent variable (IV) in this regression analysis is Job Satisfaction (SAT) while there are 5 dependent variables (DV) which are: Meaning (MEA), Competency (COM), Self-Determination (SD), Impact (IMP) and Trust towards leaders (TRS).

From the results available on the Table 3, shows that Variable 1: Meaning (MEA) has a p-value of 0.061 and coefficient value ( $\beta$ ) of 0.094. Given that the p-value 0.061 is

bigger than 0.05, thus it can be deduced that there is no significant relationship between meaning (MEA) and Job Satisfaction (SAT).

Variable 2: Competency (COM) with a p-value of 0.451 and coefficient value ( $\beta$ ) of 0.039 can also be deduced that it does not have a significant impact towards the independent variable (IV).

Variable 3: Self-Determination (SD) has a p-value of 0.007 and coefficient value ( $\beta$ ) of 0.146. Since its p-value is less than 0.05, it can be deduced that there is a significant relationship between self-determination (SD) and job satisfaction (SAT).

Variable 4: Impact (IMP) is also deduced to have a significant impact toward job satisfaction (SAT). The variable - Impact (IMP), has a p-value of 0.000 and coefficient value ( $\beta$ ) of 0.247 which its p-value is smaller than 0.05. Thus the relationship between IMP and SAT is supported.

Variable 5: Trust towards leaders (TRS) has a p-value of 0.000 and coefficient value ( $\beta$ ) of 0.311. Given that its p-value is smaller than 0.05, it can be deduced that TRS has a significant relationship with SAT.

By comparing the coefficient values ( $\beta$ ) of each variable, it is indicated in Table 3 that trust towards leaders (TRS) has the highest level of influence towards job satisfaction (SAT). At 0.311, the coefficient value ( $\beta$ ) of trust towards leaders is the highest among the 5 variables studied, thus it is concluded that trust towards leaders (TRS) has the highest impact towards (SAT).

**Table 4: Deduction of significant of relationship**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Deduction</i>
Meaning (MEA)	0.061	> 0.05	There is no significant relationship between meaning (MEA) and job satisfaction (SAT).
Competency (COM)	0.451	> 0.05	There is no significant relationship between Competency (COM) and job satisfaction (SAT).
Self-determination (SD)	0.007	< 0.05	There is a significant relationship between Self-Determination (SD) and job satisfaction (SAT).
Impact (IMP)	0.000	< 0.05	There is a significant relationship between Impact (IMP) and job satisfaction (SAT).
Trust towards leaders (TRS)	0.000	< 0.05	There is a significant relationship between Trust towards leaders (TRS) and job satisfaction (SAT).

As shown in Table 4, there is no significant relationship between meaning (MEA) and job satisfaction (SAT). Thus H1a is not supported. This finding contradicts with the findings of Dickson and Lorenz (2009) and Liden et al. (2000) whereby meaning has a significant relationship with job satisfaction.

Table 4 also indicates that H1b is not supported and that there is no significant relationship between competency (COM) and job satisfaction (SAT). Kraimer et al. (1999) supports this theory for in their research, they found that self-determination and impact display a significant relationship but not meaning and competency. Possible explanation for this result is that psychological empowerment was not well executed. Cunningham and Hyman (1996) pointed out that psychological empowerment among the non-management staffs, may create problems such as decrease of commitment, low morale and increasing of job stress because inadequate of training, refuse to empowerment and less authority awareness.

Both self-determination (SD) and Impact (IMP) shows significant influence over job satisfaction (SAT). Thus, H1c and H1d are supported. The findings are similar with past researches conducted (Liden et. al, 2000; Laschinger et. al, 2004; Hechanova, Alampay and Franco, 2006). It is to be concluded that hoteliers in Kuala Lumpur in general appreciates the freedom of finishing and completing their task at hand. Proper recognition from the employer will also increase their job satisfaction level as they will feel that their impact in the department or work in important.

With only 2 out of the 4 elements of empowerment supported by the results of this research, it is concluded that the relationship between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction is partially supported. Thus H1 is partially supported. This results is similar with the results of past researchers whereby not all elements in psychological empowerment has the same level of impact towards job satisfaction and the impact of each elements may vary due to other external factors (Dickson and Lorenz, 2009; Wang and Lee, 2009; Liden et al., 2000; Kraimer et al., 1999).

There is also a significant relationship between trust towards leaders (TRS) and job satisfaction (SAT) as indicated in Table 4.8. Therefore H2 is also supported by the results of this research. The result of this research is incline with the findings of previous researchers whereby trust towards leaders have a significant influence over job satisfaction of employees (Hussami, 2008; Yang, 2014) It can also be concluded that a high level of trust towards leaders are indeed favourable as supported by past finding in this field of research (Rad and Yarmohammadian, 2006; Liu, Siu and Shi, 2010).

## **IMPLICATIONS OF STUDY**

Despite the finding of this research show that there is no significant relationship between meaning and competency towards job satisfaction, this does not indicate that hoteliers and managers should exclude these two elements in their daily managerial practices. Studies shown that the lacking of any single element in psychological empowerment will reflect on the perception of the employee whereby they will feel less empowered. Managers and superiors should adopt a better leadership style and organizational culture whereby employees will feel that they are indeed given empowerment in the organization. Employees need to perceive that they are empowered to be more committed in both their job and the company.

Next, trust towards leaders will help increase morale of the department and efficiency of the working processes. Managers and hotels should investigate and review

their daily operating procedures and organization culture to help incorporate a higher level of trust towards leaders in the organization.

Findings of this research indicate that trust towards leaders has the strongest impact towards job satisfaction compared to the other four elements of psychological empowerment. Leaders and management of the hotel industry should pay attention to this matter and identify possible methods to further enhance trust towards leaders in the organization. It was suggested by both Ellis and Shockley-Zalabak (2001) and Nikandrou et al. (2000) that frequent communication between superiors and subordinates and efficient transferring of information within a department will indeed help improve trust levels towards leaders. Recommendations are where leaders in the organization or departments should adopt a better communication system within the organization to promote effective communications. It is also advisable for superiors to be more willing in communicate and bond with their subordinates as it will also increase trust towards leaders in the organization (Hussami, 2008).

## **LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH**

One of the limitations of this study is the usage of snowball sampling technique. While discussing about the snowball sampling technique, Biernacki and Waldorf (1981), mentioned that verification of eligibility of the participant of the research will be increasingly difficult and complicated as sources used for start the referral chains will be seemingly more distant and sources will become less personal. As such, the validity of the data obtained might be affected.

Besides that, while using snowball method sampling the researcher faced the problem of gaining sufficient data to represent the entire desired population, as such the data of this research may not be generalized. Biernacki, P., & Waldorf, D. (1981) mentioned that once the initial contacts of the researcher is exhausted, initiating new referral chains will be challenging.

Due to time constraint, data collected at the given timeframe was comparatively limited. In addition, the researcher faced the problem of refusal of many 5 start hotels to willingly participate in this study due to the nature of the study and the hotels' policies. As such the findings of the study might be compromised and cannot be generalized.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Pelit et al. (2011) mentioned that there are many other factors affecting job satisfaction besides psychological empowerment. It was listed that factors such employment status of the employees, duration of employment, nature of the work and organizational culture will also affect job satisfaction of employees. It was also added that, demographic differences such as gender, age marital status, and level of education may also have an impact on the job satisfaction of the employees. Future researchers can also look into the possible differences in all these demographic factors and underline the impact of each demographical factor when investigating the relationship between psychological empowerment, trust towards leaders and job satisfaction.

Cunningham and Hyman (1996) in their research concluded that psychological empowerment among managerial and non-managerial employees will have different effect towards job satisfaction of the respective groups. It was mentioned that empowerment among non-management staffs, might lead to increase in stress and lower job satisfaction due to reasons such as lack of adequate training, and refusal to empowerment. Future researcher can separate their respondents into managerial and non-managerial respondents, to further investigate the possible difference or contra that exists when empowerment is implied to non-managerial employees and managerial employees.

This study only focuses on one element of empowerment which is psychological empowerment. Pelit et al. (2011) reveals that both elements of empowerment have indeed a positive impact towards employee satisfaction. The two elements are behavioural empowerment and psychological empowerment. Future research can include the influence of behavioural empowerment in the job satisfaction thus comparing the relationship between the two different elements of empowerment towards job satisfaction.

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