
Investigating the Effects of Employee Empowerment on Job Satisfaction and Performance: A Case Study of Front Office Employees in Egyptian Hotels

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Abstract:

Several elements could affect human performance in hospitality organizations; one of these elements is empowerment. Empowerment is the process of enabling employees in many forms and ways including delegating, training and development, job rotation, and fair promotion opportunities. Hospitality organizations need to empower their employees to go extra miles to meet customer expectations. Using data gathered from front office employees in three-star and five-star hotels, this study investigated the effects of employee empowerment on employee job satisfaction and employee performance. The study employed a self-administered questionnaire consisted of 29 items. The items divided into five groups as job involvement (JI), organizational commitment (OC), psychological empowerment (PE), job satisfaction (JS), and job performance (JP). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and Structural equation modeling (SEM) were conducted to test a hypothesized model. Findings revealed that empowerment through involvement, empowerment through commitment and psychological empowerment significantly impact employee job satisfaction, in the five-star hotels. However, only empowerment through commitment and psychological empowerment significantly impact employee job satisfaction, in the three-star hotels. Moreover, results showed that employee job satisfaction has positive effects on employee performance, in both the three-star and five-star hotels.

Keywords: employee empowerment, job involvement, organizational commitment, psychological empowerment, job satisfaction, employee job performance.

INTRODUCTION

Many hotels such as Marriott have embraced the concept of employee empowerment as a human resource management strategy that is critical for defining their service and as a core competitive advantage (He et al., 2010). These hotels are encouraged to consider employee performance, as a means to gain competitive advantage (Karatepe and Kilic, 2007). Subsequently, many scholars (e.g., Logan and Ganster, 2007; Davidson et al., 2010) have investigated workplace issues that may have impact on employee performance, in order to develop strategies to improve both individual and organizational performance. One of these issues includes the tacit acceptance that employee empowerment is quite appropriate and an accepted element of life within the industry (Davidson et al., 2010). Empowerment is defined as “encouraging people to become more involved in the decisions and activities that affect their jobs and providing them with the opportunity to show that they can come up with good ideas and that they have the skills to put these ideas into practice” (Smith 1996, p. 9).

The concept of employee empowerment has been emphasized as a key to closing the emergent power gaps, to reduce the growing powerlessness in workplace settings and thereby stimulates the performance of employees. Incidentally, the lack of empowerment of employees has particularly been cited as a problematic issue in successful partnering and other collaborative practices been advocated (Ng et al., 2002). It is argued that empowered employees produce better service and are more satisfied with their jobs (Boudrias et al., 2009). Most of the existing empowerment studies have been conducted in the service industry (Honold, 1997). And most of these studies have been conducted in developed countries. There is a lack of research on employee empowerment in the hospitality industry in developing countries (Logan and Ganster, 2007; Ayupp and Chung, 2010; Raub and Robert, 2012). Therefore, this study attempts to add to that literature by examining the effects of employee empowerment on employee job satisfaction and employee performance using data collected from front-office employees in three-star and five-star hotels in Egypt.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empowerment

Empowerment can be defined as a collection of practices that combine information sharing, delegation of authority, and increased employee autonomy with an increased reliance on teams or as method of delegation which enables work decisions to be taken as near as possible to the operating units and their customers.(Ayupp and Chung, 2010; Raub and Robert, 2012).Various researchers have considered the dimensions of empowerment through different perspectives such as involvement, participation, decision-making authority, and delegation. Wilkinson (1998) stated that the empowerment term is generally used to refer to a form of employee involvement initiative and participation.From the decision-making perspective, empowerment is defined as “a philosophy of giving more responsibility and decision-making authority to more junior people in the organization (Shackleton, 1995, p.130). From the delegation perspective, Seibert et al. (2004) considered empowerment as increasing individual motivation at work through the delegation of authority to the lowest level in an organization where a competent decision can be made.

In the hospitality establishments,empowerment is used to describe several practices. For instance, in the Hilton hotels, empowerment has been used to describe employee involvement in developing departmental service standards. In McDonald’s restaurants, empowerment has been used to describe suggestion schemes. In Harvester restaurants, empowerment has been used to describe independent work groups and removal of levels of management (Ayupp and Chung, 2010).Generally, the idea of empowerment depends on a high degree of flexibility and acting freely to make decisions in the workplaces. Most definitions of empowerment focused on giving employees more authority, freedom, and discretion in some tasks which related to the one’s work.

The notion of empowerment has come from creating a competitive environment in organizations in order to increase efficiency(Leach et al., 2003), service quality (Melhem, 2004; Spreitzer, 2007; He et al., 2010), employee satisfaction (Gazzoli et al., 2010; He et al., 2010), leadership

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(Arnold et al., 2000), profitability (Raub and Robert, 2012), productivity and innovation (Boudrias et al., 2009), and organizational effectiveness (Logan and Ganster, 2007). Employee empowerment became a managerial interest in the various hospitality establishments to gain a competitive advantage through improvements in service quality. In today's competitive environment, hospitality organizations need to allocate more authority to their frontline employees, who face a greater uncertainty from increasingly demanding consumers. Empowered frontline employees can respond promptly to the individual customer's needs and do whatever it takes to delight the customer (Lashley, 2001).

Frontline employees' empowerment is necessary because they are considered as the direct contact for guests and as such need to have freedom to act with guests' concerns effectively. Using empowerment can boost employees' self-efficacy to decide the best way to carry out a given task. Empowerment helps employees to be more knowledgeable and adaptive (Ayupp and Chung, 2010). In addition, employee empowerment in frontline is a central theme of many industrial and academic comments about service quality.

Forms of Empowerment

Different forms of empowerment were applied in practice in hospitality establishments such as empowerment through involvement, empowerment through commitment, and psychological empowerment (Lashely, 1995, 1999, and 2001).

Empowerment through involvement is the first form of empowerment. O'Creevy (2001) suggested that such employee involvement practices are simply a means by which employers can defuse attempts to provide workers with any real control. Employers introduce involvement as a way of appearing to share some degree of control in the face of threats to their authority from workers' organizations. Furthermore, he defined Employee involvement as the exercise, by employees, of influence over how their work is organized and carried out. Zopiatis et al. (2014) hypothesized that job involvement provides the opportunity for individuals to make decisions, the foundation for strengthening their job involvement. In the hospitality establishments, Lashely (2001) organized some ways to

empower employees via involvement. For instance, the quality circles that focused on increasing employee involvement and gaining improvements in service quality, indeed, this way was applied in Accor Group. Second, team briefings in Hilton Hotels and TGI Fridays provided a mechanism for managers and employees to meet on a regular basis to discuss operational issues. Finally, suggestion schemes in McDonald's. All these ways are attempts to include the ideas and experiences of employees in managerial decision-making processes.

Empowerment through commitment is the second form of empowerment. Chiang and Jang (2008) indicated that organizational commitment refers to an individual's attachment to, loyalty to, and identification with the organization. Steers (1977) defined organizational commitment as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (p.46). Robbins and Judge (2007) determined three dimensions of organizational commitment, they proceeded to define each dimension beginning with affective commitment as "the degree to which an employee identifies with a particular organization and its goals and wishes to maintain membership in the organization" (p.81). For example, employees remain at their current workplace because they want to. The second is continuance commitment defined as "the perceived economic value of remaining with an organization compared to leaving it" (p.81). For instance, they remain because they need to, while the last dimension is normative commitment, it described as "an obligation to remain with the organization for moral or ethical reasons" (p.81). For example, employees feel as though they should remain in the organization because they "owe it" to their current employer.

Psychological empowerment is the third form of empowerment and it includes participative decision making that considered one of the most effective dimensions of psychological empowerment. Psychological climate reflects a judgment by the employees about the degree to which the work environment is beneficial to their sense of well-being (Carless, 2004). Spreitzer et al. (1997) described psychological empowerment as a group of psychological states essential for a person to feel that he or she can control the relationship to his or her own work. Thomas and Velthouse (1990, p.672) identified four psychological dimensions of empowerment: impact, competence, meaningfulness, and choice. Impact

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is “the degree to which behavior is seen as making a difference in terms of accomplishing the purpose of the task”. Competence is “the degree to which a person can perform task activities skillfully when he or she tries”. Meaningfulness involves “the individual's intrinsic caring about a given task”. Choice/self-determination involves “causal responsibility for a person’s actions”.

Hypotheses

In hospitality establishments, frontline employees have direct interaction with customers. Customer perception, satisfaction and loyalty are developed during such interactions. Frontline employees should be satisfied in order to deliver quality service and satisfaction to customers (Spinelli and Canavos, 2000). Efraty and Sirgy (1990) described job satisfaction as “one’s effective appraisal of various job dimensions”. Salaries, wages, relationship with coworkers and supervisors, promotion policies, empowerment and work itself are important indicators of job satisfaction (Gallardo et al. 2010; Lee and Way, 2010). In particular, previous researches (e.g., Joo and Park, 2009) showed positive relationships between the different forms of empowerment and employee job satisfaction. Employees felt satisfied if they were involved in decision making processes, gained appropriate job training and employee benefits, and had an effective manager (Spinelli and Canavos, 2000). Therefore, this study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 1: Job involvement positively impacts employee job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Organizational commitment positively impacts employee job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: Psychological empowerment positively impacts employee job satisfaction.

Moving to employee performance, a positive causal relationship between employee job satisfaction and performance has been found (Kelly, 1992; Sigler and Pearson, 2000). Employees who have the skills necessary to do their jobs and the freedom to choose how to complete their tasks should

have higher levels of performance. Moreover, employees who feel their job has meaning and have perceptions of competence and perceptions of influence have also shown indications of higher performance levels (Sigler and Pearson, 2000). Hence, this study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 4: Employee job satisfaction positively impacts employee performance.

Besides, employee gender, age, experience, and hotel category might affect employee performance. In particular, previous researches (e.g., Tuuli and Rowlinson, 2009; Awamleh, 2013) showed that male, younger, and experienced employees showed better performance than their counterparts. Moreover, employees in luxury hotels showed better performance than employees in budget hotels (Rathore and Rathore, 2015). Therefore, this study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 5: Male employees show higher levels of performance than female employees.

Hypothesis 6: Younger employees show higher levels of performance than elder employees.

Hypothesis 7: More experienced employees show higher levels of performance than less experienced employees.

Hypothesis 8: Employees working in five-star hotels show higher levels of performance than employees working in three-star hotels.

The given hypotheses are expressed in the the proposed research model shown in Figure 1.

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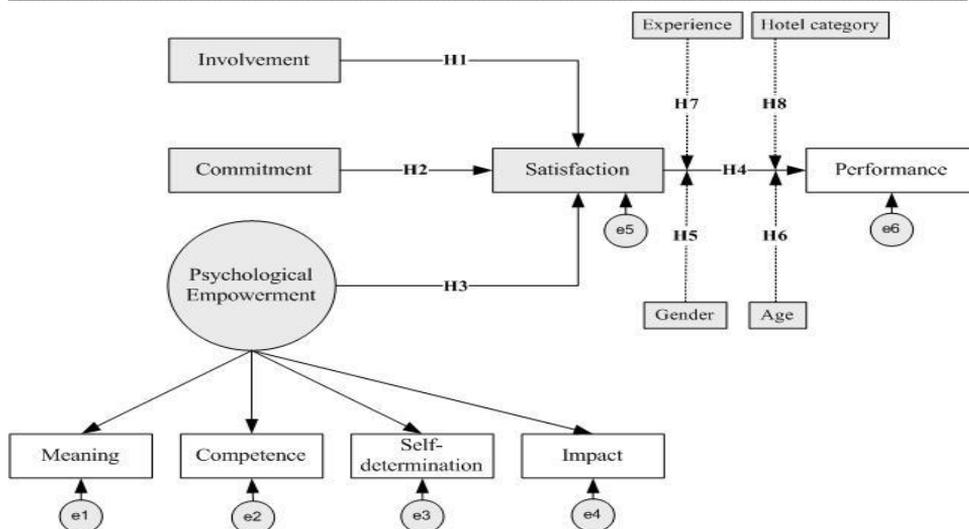


Figure 1: The proposed research model

METHODOLOGY

To test the hypotheses against the proposed model, a survey was conducted. Data were collected via a self-administrated questionnaire. The target population for this study was all front-office employees in three-star and five-star hotels in Greater Cairo. A convenience sample of fifteen three-star hotels out of forty hotels and nine five-star hotels out of thirty-three hotels was selected for this study (Egyptian Hotel Association, 2013). A number of 266 questionnaires were distributed to a convenience sample of front-office employees. A total of 184 questionnaires were completed and valid for analysis, thus achieving a response rate of 69.17%.

Survey Instrument

To measure the constructs in the proposed model, a questionnaire was adapted from validated from previous research studies. The final questionnaire items are listed in Table 1 along with their sources. The questionnaire is divided into two sections. In the first section, employees were asked to rate 29 items on a five-point Likert type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The 29 items are divided into five variables: job involvement (5 items), organizational commitment (3

items), psychological empowerment (12 items), job satisfaction (3 items), and job performance (6 items).The second section asked employees for profiling information (e.g., gender, age, and years of experience).

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Table 1: Construct measurement and sources

Construct	Source	Item's label	Items	3-star hotels		5-star hotels	
				Mean	Std dev.	Mean	Std dev.
Job Involvement	Zopiatis et al. (2014)	J11	I like to be absorbed in my job most of the time.	3.45	.893	3.60	1.068
		J12	I consider my job to be very important to my existence.	4.09	.734	3.91	1.187
		J13	Most of my personal life goals are job oriented.	3.52	1.14	3.73	1.136
		J14	Most of interests are centred on my job.	3.00	.976	3.56	1.071
		J15	Overall, I am very much personally involved in my job.	3.19	1.10	3.73	1.114
Organizational Commitment	Chiang and Jang (2008)	OC1	I feel myself to be part of this hotel.	3.53	1.10	3.76	1.196
		OC2	I am willing to achieve this hotel's goals and values.	4.09	1.01	3.91	1.070
		OC3	Overall, I am willing to continue work at this hotel.	3.73	1.09	3.73	1.189
Psychological Empowerment	Spreitzer (1995)	PE1	The work I do is very important to me.	4.00	1.17	4.00	.948
		PE2	My job activities are personally meaningful to me.	4.13	1.02	3.97	.940
		PE3	The work I do is meaningful to me.	4.12	.981	4.02	.969
		PE4	I am confident about my ability to do my job.	4.47	.717	4.13	.986
		PE5	I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my	4.53	.733	4.11	1.019
		PE6	I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.	4.44	.715	4.04	1.059
		PE7	I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job.	3.78	.822	3.54	1.150
		PE8	I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work.	3.13	.686	3.49	1.212
		PE9	I have opportunity for independence in how I do my job.	3.89	.887	3.48	1.224
		PE10	My impact on what happens in my department is large.	3.98	.831	3.78	1.011
		PE11	I have a great deal of control over what happens in my	3.87	.961	3.85	1.034
		PE12	I have significant influence over what happens in my department.	3.88	.944	3.74	1.184
Job Satisfaction	Chiang and Jang (2008)	JS1	I am satisfied with my job.	3.60	1.29	3.89	1.120
		JS2	I am satisfied with the empowerment of my job.	3.71	.872	3.77	1.177
		JS3	Overall, I am happy for working at this hotel.	3.50	1.17	3.90	.979
Job Performance	Tuuli and Rowlinson (2009)	JP1	I adequately complete assigned duties.	4.00	.744	4.04	.941
		JP2	I fulfill responsibilities specified in my job description.	4.01	.720	4.04	1.039
		JP3	I perform tasks that are expected of me.	3.94	.766	4.06	.982
		JP4	I meet the formal performance requirements of my job.	3.85	.720	4.01	1.015
		JP5	I do things that will directly affect my performance appraisal.	4.40	.730	3.71	1.175
		JP6	I neglect aspects of the job I am obliged to perform.	3.15	1.16	2.41	1.384

Data Analysis

AMOS version 20 was used for data analysis. A two-step approach for structural equation modeling (SEM) was used. In the first step, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to test the measurement models. In the second step, maximum likelihood was used to estimate the structural models and to explore the causal relationship among all variables. Composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's α for each latent variable were used to test the construct reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE) was used to test the construct convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2010). Furthermore, the Mann-Whitney U test was used in this study to compare the scores of employees' gender in three-star and five-star hotels, and to compare the scores of the two hotel categories. The Kruskal-Wallis test was also used in this study.

RESULTS

Profile of the Sample

Table 2 presents the profile of the sample of front-office employees in the investigated hotels. Particularly, 85 employees were selected from three-star hotels, while 99 employees were selected from five-star hotels. While the employees comprised of 89.4% females and 10.6% males in three-star hotel, they comprised 69.7% females and 30.3% males in five-star hotels. Most of the employees of the three-star (55.3 %) and five-star (63.6 %) hotels aged less than 30 years old. The majority of employees of the three-star (87.1 %) and five-star (81.1 %) hotels had a university degree. With regards to experience in the hotel industry, almost half of the three-star hotel employees (49.4 %) had experience from 5 to 10 years. While, almost half of the employees of the five-star hotels (54.5 %) had work experience less than 5 years. The majority of the employees of the three-star (70.6 %) and five-star (68.7 %) hotels had work experience in the current hotel less than 5 years. The majority of the investigated three-star hotels (94 %) were less than 100 rooms. However, most of the five-star hotels (64.6 %) were higher than 400 rooms. Regarding the management type, all the three-star hotels were managed independently, while, approximately (90 %) of five-star hotels were international chains, and (10 %) of them were managed independently.

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Structural Equation Modeling

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

In the current study, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to test the scales reliability of the data collected from the front-office employees in the three-star and five-star hotels. To ensure a good reliability level, only scales with composite reliability and Cronbach's α over the value of 0.7 were remained (Hair et al., 2010). Accordingly, self-determination measure of the psychological empowerment was removed ($\alpha < 0.7$). On the other hand, to ensure good convergent validity, all values of average variance extracted (AVE) of scales should exceed the value of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010) as shown in Table 3. Furthermore, to ensure good discriminant validity, the AVE value of each scale should be greater than the squared correlation for each pair of scales (Hair et al., 2010) as shown in Table 4.

In addition, CFA was used to measure the structure fit of the hypothesized model for three-star and five-star hotels (i.e., Figure 1). In this regards, some goodness-of-fit measures were utilized to assess the structural fit. Previous researchers (e.g., Bentler and Bonett, 1980) suggested that model fit should be acceptable if the chi-square (χ^2) is not significant. However, this rule is very sensitive to the sample size (Arbuckle, 2011). In this research, both (χ^2) values of the three-star and five-star hotels were significant. In particular, the three-star hotels model yielded a (χ^2) value of 46.471 with 18 degrees of freedom ($p = 0.000$). As well, the five-star hotels model yielded a (χ^2) value of 41.133 with 18 degrees of freedom ($p = 0.000$). In order to overcome the sample size limitation, other researchers (e.g., Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007; Arbuckle, 2011) suggested that the ratio of the χ^2 statistic to the degrees of freedom should be less than 3. In this research, this rule has been attained. In particular, the ratios of the three-star and five-star hotels models were $46.471/18 = 2.58$ and $41.133/18 = 2.26$, respectively indicating an acceptable model fit. Finally, t-values of the scale items were all statistically significant at the 0.01 percent level.

Table 2: Profile of respondents (N=184)

Variables	Three-star hotels (N=85)		Five-star hotels (N=99)	
	Frequency	percentage	Frequency	percentage
Gender				
Female	76	89.4	69	69.7
Male	9	10.6	30	30.3
Age				
Less than 30	47	55.3	63	63.6
30 up to 40	35	41.2	24	24.3
40 up to 50	1	1.2	11	11.1
50 or older	2	2.3	1	1.0
Education				
Secondary school	4	4.7	6	6.1
University degree	74	87.1	81	81.8
Postgraduate (MBA, MSc, PhD)	7	8.2	12	12.1
Experience in hotel industry				
Less than 5 years	40	47.1	54	54.5
5 up to 10 years	42	49.4	34	34.3
10 up to 15 years	1	1.2	3	3.1
15 or more	2	2.3	8	8.1
Experience in current hotel				
Less than 5 years	60	70.6	68	68.7
5 up to 10 years	22	25.9	23	23.2
10 up to 15 years	2	2.3	1	1.0
15 or more	1	1.2	7	7.1
Respondents' hotel size				
Less than 100 rooms	80	94.1	0	0
101 to 200 rooms	5	5.9	11	11.1
201 to 300 rooms	0	0	0	0
301 to 400 rooms	0	0	24	24.3
401 to 500 rooms	0	0	31	31.3
More than 500 rooms	0	0	33	33.3
Respondents' management type				
Independent Property	85	100	10	10
Local chain management	0	0	0	0
International chain	0	0	89	90

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Table 3: Factor loadings, validity analysis, and reliability test of the measurement models

Latent/Measured variables	Three-star hotels				Five-star hotels			
	Factor loading	CR	AVE	α	Factor loading	CR	AVE	A
Job Involvement		0.88	0.61	0.87		0.90	0.64	0.89
J11	1.00				1.00			
J12	0.89				1.03			
J13	1.01				1.05			
J14	0.96				1.00			
J15	0.94				1.04			
Organizational Commitment		0.87	0.70	0.86		0.89	0.74	0.88
OC1	1.00				1.00			
OC2	0.97				0.94			
OC3	0.91				0.99			
Psychological Empowerment		0.94	0.82	0.94		0.98	0.85	0.97
PE1	1.00				1.00			
PE2	0.92				0.99			
PE3	0.88				1.03			
PE4	1.00				1.00			
PE5	0.94				1.04			
PE6	0.98				1.03			
PE7	1.00				1.00			
PE8	0.98				0.97			
PE9	1.01				1.08			
Job Satisfaction		0.85	0.66	0.84		0.87	0.70	0.86
JS1	1.00				1.00			
JS2	0.93				1.06			
JS3	0.89				0.87			
Job Performance		0.93	0.86	0.92		0.96	0.87	0.95
JP1	1.00				1.00			
JP2	1.02				1.07			
JP3	0.96				1.01			
JP4	0.94				1.02			

Note: All factor loadings were significant at $\leq .001$; CR = Composite reliability; α = Alpha reliability

Table 4: Discriminant validity of the measurement models of the three-star and five-star hotels

Construct	Three-star hotels					Five-star hotels				
	JI	OC	PE	JS	JP	JI	OC	PE	JS	JP
JI	0.61					0.64				
OC	0.44	0.70				0.40	0.74			
PE	0.14	0.38	0.82			0.24	0.62	0.85		
JS	0.32	0.24	0.49	0.66		0.24	0.38	0.40	0.70	
JP	0.12	0.35	0.51	0.12	0.86	0.18	0.25	0.56	0.28	0.87

Note: The bold values along the diagonal line are the AVE values for the constructs, and the other values are the squared correlations for each pair of constructs; JI = Job involvement; OC = Organizational commitment; PE = Psychological empowerment; JS = Job satisfaction; JP = Job Performance.

Structural Models and Hypotheses Testing

For the three-star and five-star hotels, standardized path coefficients (β) and the significance of the hypothesized relationships were utilized to test the proposed hypotheses in a causal diagrammatic form (see figure 2). The data presented in table 5 shows that the findings of the three-star hotels suggest that no significant association was revealed pertaining to H1 ($\beta = -0.068$, $p > 0.05$) which assumed a positive association between employees' job involvement and employees' job satisfaction. The rest of the hypotheses (i.e., H2, H3, and H4) can be supported since positive association were revealed between employees' commitment and employees' job satisfaction (H2) ($\beta = 0.145$, $p < 0.001$), employees' psychological empowerment and employees' job satisfaction (H3) ($\beta = 0.713$, $p < 0.001$), and employees' job satisfaction and employees' job performance ($\beta = 0.522$, $p < 0.001$). In contrast, in the five-star hotels, all hypotheses (i.e., H1, H2, H3, and H4) can be supported since positive association were revealed between employees' job involvement and employees' job satisfaction (H1) ($\beta = 0.189$, $p < 0.001$), employees' commitment and employees' job satisfaction (H2) ($\beta = 0.446$, $p < 0.001$), employees' psychological empowerment and employees' job satisfaction (H3) ($\beta = 0.218$, $p < 0.001$), and employees' job satisfaction and employees' job performance ($\beta = 0.487$, $p < 0.001$).

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Table 5: Summary of the structural models for the three-star and five-star hotels

Hypotheses	Path	Three-star hotels			Five-star hotels		
		β	t-value	Results	β	t-value	Results
H1	JI \rightarrow JS	-0.068	-0.949	Not supported	0.189	2.191*	Supported
H2	OC \rightarrow JS	0.145	2.041*	Supported	0.446	5.172**	Supported
H3	PE \rightarrow JS	0.713	5.308**	Supported	0.218	2.203*	Supported
H4	JS \rightarrow JP	0.522	5.573**	Supported	0.487	5.518**	Supported

JI = Job involvement; OC = Organizational commitment; PE = Psychological empowerment; JS = Job satisfaction; JP = Job Performance; β = Standardized path coefficient; * Absolute t-value > 1.96, $p < 0.05$; ** Absolute t-value > 3.29, $p < 0.001$.

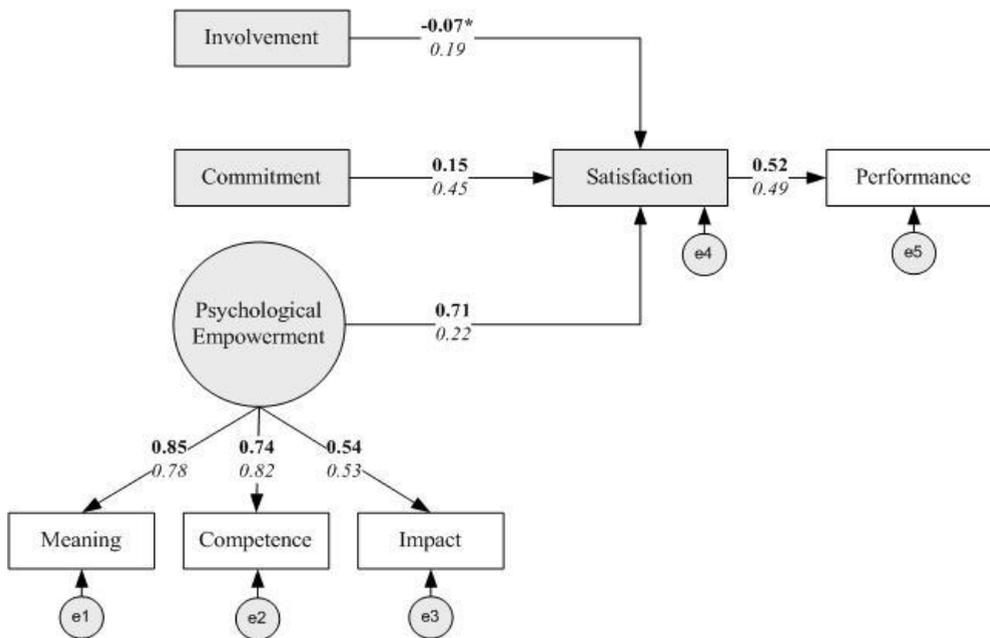


Figure 2: Final structure equation model (Key: bold denotes path coefficients for the three-star hotels; italic denotes path coefficients for the five-star hotels; * denotes non-significant paths)

Analysis of Variance

The Mann-Whitney test showed no statistically difference on the job performance between male and female employees of both three-star ($P=0.66$) and five star ($P=0.36$) hotels. Therefore, Hypothesis five (H5) was rejected. Similarly, the Kruskal-Wallis test showed no statistically difference on the job performance between younger and elder employees of both three-star ($P=0.62$) and five star ($P=0.19$) hotels. Hence, Hypothesis six (H6) was rejected. In the same line, the Kruskal-Wallis test showed no statistically difference on the job performance between more experienced and less experienced employees of both three-star ($P=0.94$) and five star ($P=0.31$) hotels. Therefore, Hypothesis seven (H7) was rejected. However, a Mann-Whitney test showed statistically difference on the job performance between three-star and five-star employees. More specifically, the job performance was significantly greater for employees of five-star hotels ($M=98.84$) than employees of three-star hotels ($M=83.94$), $U= 3481$, $P=0.05$. Therefore, Hypothesis eight (H8) was accepted.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The current study revealed that empowerment is a very significant tool in promoting employee job satisfaction and performance thus improving overall organizational performance. The current study tested whether empowerment through involvement has any impact on employee job satisfaction in three-star and five-star hotels in Egypt. In prior studies (e.g., Joo and Park, 2009; Gallardo et al. 2010; Lee and Way, 2010), empowerment through involvement was an important indicator of job satisfaction. Consistent with these studies, the current study revealed that, in five-star hotels, involving employees in the decision making has a positive impact on their job satisfaction. However, involving employees in the decision making in the three-star hotels has no significant impact on their job satisfaction. A possible explanation for these differences is that all investigated three-star hotels were managed independently. In addition, most of these hotels were small hotels (i.e., less than 100 rooms) which employing few numbers of employees. Accordingly, most decisions in these hotels are taken by owners. Therefore, managers, especially in three-star hotels, should include the ideas and experiences of their employees in managerial decision-making processes. For instance, managers should adopt quality circles that focused on increasing employee involvement and gaining improvements in performance. Team briefing is another way to empower employees via involvement. Team briefing is a mechanism for managers and employees to meet on a regular basis to discuss operational issues.

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Furthermore, the current study tested whether empowerment through commitment impacts employee job satisfaction. The results showed that empowerment through commitment, in the three-star and five-star hotels, had significant effect on employee job satisfaction. These findings are consistent with prior research (e.g., Chiang and Jang, 2008; Joo and Park, 2009; Gallardo et al. 2010; Lee and Way, 2010). Nevertheless, empowerment through commitment contributed more to employee job satisfaction in the five-star hotels ($\beta = 0.45$) than in the three-star hotels ($\beta = 0.15$). A possible explanation is that most five-star hotels are employing loyalty programmes in order to retain their employees, compared to three-star hotels. Therefore, hotels, especially three-star hotels, should adopt effective incentive programmes to increase their employees' job satisfaction which in turn increases their loyalty and attachment to the hotel. For example, Developing/designing training programmes that help employees to take the responsibility of authority that will improve their leadership skills and promote their empowerment.

In addition, the current study tested whether psychological empowerment (i.e., empowerment through participation) impacts employee job satisfaction. The results revealed that, in the three-star and five-star hotels, three dimensions of psychological empowerment (i.e., impact, competence, and meaning) had positive impacts on employee job satisfaction. These findings are consistent with previous studies (e.g., Carless, 2004; Joo and Park, 2009; Gallardo et al. 2010; Lee and Way, 2010). However, psychological climate contributed more to employee job satisfaction in the three-star hotels ($\beta = 0.71$) than in the five-star hotels ($\beta = 0.22$). Possible explanations might be that usually budget hotels are characterized by the family-working environment, as compared to luxury hotels which are characterized by the high-competition working environment. As well, employees working at the budget hotels have opportunity for independence in how they do their jobs, as compared to the luxury hotels where employees are very restricted to the operation standard manual. In order to enforce empowerment through participation, hotels, especially five-star hotels, should empower their employees to have a great deal of control over how to do their jobs. Managers should restructure organizational culture and structure to create empowerment friendly environment. Job enrichment is a good way to enrich employee empowerment through participation. It involves a detailed training programme that encourages front-office employees to understand and empathize with customer experience. Distribution of responsibilities and delegation of power are other good examples for empowering employees through participation.

Consistent with prior studies (e.g., Kelly, 1992; Sigler and Pearson, 2000), the results of the current study showed that employee job satisfaction had a positive impact on employee job performance. Employees, in the three-star and five-star hotels, who were satisfied with their job empowerment showed higher levels of job performance. Therefore, hotel managers should adopt different forms of empowerment in order to increase their employee job satisfaction which in turns increases their job performance. However, inconsistent with previous research studies (e.g., Tuuli and Rowlinson, 2009; Awamleh, 2013), the results showed no statistically differences on the job performance between male and female employees; younger and elder employees; more experienced and less experienced employees in both hotel categories.

In addition, the current study showed statistically difference on the job performance between the three-star and five-star employees. More specifically, the job performance was significantly greater for employees of the five-star hotels than of the employees of three-star hotels. This is consistent with Rathore and Rathore's (2015) findings. Possible explanations may be that luxury hotels only are select skilled employees, and provide detailed training programmes to their employees, compared to budget hotels. Accordingly, employees of luxury hotels might show higher levels of performance compared to employees of budget hotels. Therefore, managers of budget hotels should organize and carry out more academic and practical activities to promote the awareness of empowerment concept, importance, and tools of effective application in hotels. As well as managers of budget hotels should re-allocate organizational resources and power (access and utilization) to make fair and balanced empowerment throughout the hierarchy of each department.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study has some limitations; it explained the effects of empowerment on front-office employees satisfaction and performance in Egyptian hotels. In that sense, it is worthwhile to focus on further studies in different departments such as food and beverage department, housekeeping department, and sales and marketing department. Furthermore, this study investigated the empowerment using a sample of three-star and five-star hotels in Greater Cairo, Egypt. Thus, in the further studies, it worthwhile to focus on investigating empowerment in other governorates such as Sharm El-Sheikh, Hurghada, or Luxor. In addition, the current study investigated the empowerment from the perspectives of employees only, and it did not go further to explore the empowerment from the perspectives of managers and customers. One of

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the methodological limitations in this study was the use of self-administrated questionnaires. Future studies using qualitative methods, including interviews, should provide a broader understanding of the empowerment impacts. Furthermore, this study investigated the relationship between the forms of empowerment and job satisfaction and performance ignoring other aspects such as empowering leadership. But despite these limitations, this study has useful implications both for scholars and practitioners.

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