

**THE EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL EMPOWERMENT ON
CUSTOMER-ORIENTED BEHAVIOR: A CASE OF HOTEL
INDUSTRY IN PAKISTAN**

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the relationship of organizational empowerment and customer-oriented behavior with a particular focus on the mediating effects of job satisfaction, affective commitment and psychological empowerment for the said relationship. The study is based on primary data collected through a self-administered questionnaire from 169 front-desk employees working in four and five star hotels in Pakistan. Correlation and regression analyses were applied to test the hypotheses by using SPSS. Baron and Kenny, and Sobel tests were used to analyze the mediating effects of the variables. Results show positive relationships of organizational empowerment with job satisfaction, affective commitment and psychological empowerment. The study also proves the mediating role of job satisfaction, affective commitment and psychological empowerment for the relationship between organizational empowerment and customer-oriented behavior.

Introduction

In today's modern world, highly talented and competitive marketplaces exist. Organizations of these marketplaces are extremely dynamic. These organizations want to maintain, attract, control and retain advance skilled people at workplace. As the marketplace rate of change accelerates, the organizations try to help and enhance the capabilities of their employees to keep pace in the marketplace.

Organizational empowerment enables the organizations to develop talent and modify their cultural behavior as per need in the marketplace. Empowerment is found to be the process of delegating authority and decentralization of decision making power (Lee & Koh, 2001). Employee empowerment is represented as an auspicious approach to enhance work performance and employees' positive attitudes (Hempel, Zhang, & Han, 2012; Salazar, Pfaffenberg, & Salazar, 2006), service quality (Wilkinson, Hill, & Gollan, 2001; Hewagama, Boxall, Cheung, & Hutchison, 2019), customer satisfaction (Sumpter, Gibson, & Porath, 2017) and organizational performance (Biron & Bamberger, 2010; Tzabbar, Tzafir, & Baruch, 2017).

The concept of empowerment is considered to be very important for customer-oriented behavior. Therefore, empowerment is significant for hospitality and services where extremely demanding customers and high service quality standards need empowered employees (Jauhari, Singh, & Kumar, 2017; Kim, Lee, Murrmann, & George, 2011; Namasivayam, Guchait, & Lei, 2014; Ogbeide, Böser, Harrinton, & Ottenbacher, 2017). Liden, Wayne, and Sparrowe (2000) argued about the impact dimension of empowerment that when employees have the feeling that their work outcomes may influence the overall organization, they are inclined to feel more engaged to the job, so that it leads toward job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction leads employees towards organizational commitment which is the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). And job satisfaction and organizational commitment have also been shown to be important outcomes of empowerment (Liden et al., 2000). Psychological empowerment is related to the motivational approach of empowerment (Menon, 2001) and the motivational aspect of the empowerment best explains the concept of empowerment (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

Several studies signify the importance of empowerment as a motivational tool for employees within the organizations (Klidas, 2003; Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian, & Wilk, 2004; Seibert, Silver, & Randolph, 2004), especially in hospitality industry where employees have a direct contact with customers (Kim et al., 2011; Lin, Wu, & Ling, 2017; Namasivayam et al., 2014). Empowerment seems much beneficial in-service sector as it gives rise to the outcomes for instance responsive and motivated employees, less turnover, low cost, greater productivity, higher quality of service and larger profits (Burke, 2016; Burke, Koyuncu, Wolpin, Yirik, & Koyuncu, 2015). Increased customer loyalty is also found to be an outcome of empowerment (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2016; Sok & O'Cass, 2015). Ultimately, this results in increased organizational effectiveness which is very crucial to any organization (Mishra, 2019).

Researchers remained focused on manufacturing sector (He, Sun, Lai, & Chen, 2015) food service industry (Choi & Joung, 2017), automobile industry (Menguc, Auh, Yeniaras, & Katsikeas, 2017), T service organization (Jauhari et al., 2017) and overall industry (Katou & Budhwar, 2006, 2007). Most of the studies that explored the relationship between HRM and performance of the firm have been conducted in the UK and the USA mostly. Few studies have been conducted in various parts of the world specifically in rising markets like

China (Ahlstrom, Foley, Young, & Chan, 2005; Deng, Menguc, & Benson, 2003) as well as transitional markets like Slovenia (Zupan & Kaše, 2005). Although it is not denied by any researcher that HRM is positively correlated to organizational performance but still more evidences is needed to support the HRM-performance link (Gerhart, 2005; Ali, Lei, & Wei, 2018) and a need of exploration in various contexts (Ericksen & Dyer, 2005; Wright, Gardner, Moynihan, & Allen, 2005).

The greater interest to study empowerment in service sector is allied with the belief that it has a potential for enhancing customer satisfaction (Chebat & Kollias, 2000). On the other hand it is also believed that the concept of empowerment is associated with gaining competitive advantage and its sustainability in the service sector (Gautam & Ghimire, 2017; Kidron et al., 2018). Competitive advantage in the hotel industry depends upon the amenity levels and physical property while sales and branding has now become difficult and narrow to compete with (Keating & Harrington, 2002). Therefore, major areas in which hotels may find an advantage of differentiation from competitors includes motivated and trained staff, reliable service delivery, and capable management (Haynes & Fryer, 2000). As customers have become more knowledgeable and demanding, they should be provided with various choices (Keating & Harrington, 2002). In this regard, the improvement in service quality might be considered as a basic success factor in the hotel industry (Davidson, 2003) which could be achieved through empowering the employees.

Kazlauskaite, Buciuuniene and Turauskas (2012) presented a model which indicates the positive effect of organizational empowerment as a human resource management practice on customer-oriented behavior. By following the same concept, this study examines the effect of organizational empowerment on customer-oriented behavior along with the mediating roles of job satisfaction, affective commitment and psychological empowerment in upscale hotel industry of Pakistan. The hotel industry makes a relevant and interesting research entity because as a global industry it has to deal with ever growing competition.

Literature Review

Organizational empowerment. The concept of empowerment is derived from two theories; self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977, 1982) and job characteristic theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, 1980). Basically, organizations are required to take some measures at macro level in order to influence the psychological empowerment of employees at micro level. Matthews, Diaz and Cole (2003) did an inclusive work in this field and reported the factors of organizational empowerment as (a) Dynamic structural framework that shows provision of modifiable and clear guidelines (b) Control of workplace decisions that includes employee involvement into all aspects of their professional career and (c) Fluidity in information sharing that is employees having access to all sorts of information regarding to the reorganization and making them to be encouraged so that they can easily express their ideas and complaints. Therefore, organizational empowerment can be considered as a set of HRM activities rather than referring it to independence and granting authority and control, providing guidance and giving information, and giving trainings to enhance necessary skills. Successful delivery of services together with basic competencies of operations and marketing functions are necessary along with HR-related competencies of customer contact personnel as a capability for establishing a strong bonding with customers and adapt services to customer's wants and expectations, that in turn requires organizational empowerment (Aung & Heeler, 2001).

Job satisfaction. Employees are an asset for the organizations and are considered to be a key and the leading factor that determines organizational success in very competitive environments. Job satisfaction is a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences (Locke & Latham, 1990). Thompson and Phua (2012) argue that job satisfaction enhances the feeling of employees about a job in a positive way that results from an assessment of the characteristics of the job. Factors of job satisfaction include the work itself, salary, rewards, promotion opportunities, co-workers and supervision (Kinicki, McKee-Ryan, Schriesheim, & Carson, 2002).

Satisfied workers give much better performance and are more committed to their organizations. So it is highly important for supervisors/employers to know the factors that affect job satisfaction of workers to improve overall performance of the organization. Additionally, committed employees lead an organization towards advantageous consequences if they are handled properly. These consequences include better performance, increased effectiveness, increased productivity and less absenteeism and turnover (Fiorito, Bozeman, Young, & Meurs, 2007) and improved performance of the organization (Mustafa, Mansilla, & Gibson, 2021).

Affective commitment. Organizational commitment is defined as employees' interest in, and connection to, an organization. It has three components – affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective commitment basically refers to a person who remains in the organization for his strong beliefs with the goals and values of the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Out of the three dimensions of organizational commitment, affective commitment is selected as it is the most powerful in determining the employee behavior and work outcomes. Affective commitment is an emotional connection that needs time to progress.

Organizations always remain in search of competent, motivated, sensible, responsible, committed and skillful workers and avoid careless, lethargic and unfaithful employees. Committed employees are more ready to make personal sacrifices for the organization in which they are working (Wright & Kehoe, 2008). Many studies verify that organizational commitment is an important variable that determines organizational citizenship, absenteeism, turnover and performance (Kim et al., 2011; Nawab & Bhatti, 2011; Wright & Kehoe, 2008). Research also reveals an inverse relationship of organizational commitment and intention to search for job alternatives and intention to quit the job (Colbert & Kwon, 2000).

Psychological empowerment. As followed by Kazlauskaite et al. (2012), organizational empowerment was taken as a bundle of HRM activities psychological empowerment as an employee work-related attitude. In literature, psychological empowerment is defined as the process of enhancing self-efficacy (Conger & Kanungo, 1988) and a state of increased intrinsic motivation (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Thomas and Velthouse (1990) defined psychological empowerment as intrinsic task motivation comprising of four cognitive components - impact, competence, meaningfulness, and choice. Psychological empowerment must also be measured as work related behaviors and attitudes as it consists of three features of an attitude – cognition, evaluation and behavior (Kazlauskaite et al., 2012; Namasivayam et al., 2014). Psychologically empowered employees are self-motivated, manage their careers with the intention of staying in the same organization (Yogalakshmi & Suganthi, 2020), show voice behavior (Frazier & Fainshmidt, 2012; Namasivayam et al., 2014) and have high customer service performance (Frazier & Fainshmidt, 2012).

Customer-oriented behavior. It is the extent of an employee involvement in continued service improvement and the exertion of effort in satisfying customer needs (Peccei & Rosenthal, 2001). Customer orientation is the importance paying attention towards customer needs and wants the whole time in the organization (Hennig-Thurau, Walsh, & Walsh, 2003; Groth et al., 2019). Researchers also described customer orientation as a belief or value of an employee which is related to the importance of satisfying customer demands and needs (Kennedy, Lassk, & Goolsby, 2002; Menguc et al., 2017; Wieseke, Ullrich, Christ, & Van Dick, 2007).

Development of Hypotheses

There is a positive effect of organizational empowerment on job satisfaction and performance of employees (Jha, 2011; Patrick & Laschinger, 2006; Vacharakiat, 2008). Empowerment is vital for job satisfaction as a worker would only get satisfaction from his work if he is involved in a meaningful job (Thompson & Phua, 2012). When employees have the feeling that their work outcomes may influence the overall organization, they will be inclined to feel more engaged to the job, so that it leads toward job satisfaction (Liden et al., 2000). Extant literature reveals a positive relationship between HRM practices and workers' attitude usually job satisfaction and commitment. Experiential studies prove that empowerment increases self-efficacy that in turn results in increased job satisfaction (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004; Kazlauskaite et al., 2012; Sumpter et al., 2017). A study conducted in hotel industry proves that organizational empowerment exerts positive effect on job satisfaction of employees (Kazlauskaite et al., 2012).

There are various factors that determine the levels of motivation, responsibility and commitment of employees. Some of the predictors of organizational commitment are job clarity, organizational environment, job satisfaction and at the most importantly employee empowerment (Nawab & Bhatti, 2011). In order to develop strong affective commitment among employees, managers must comprehend the factors that touch employee emotional feeling toward the organization (Rivaldo, 2021). The effectiveness and performance of the hotels was found dependent on their middle-managers' affective commitment to the organization (Mustafa, Mansilla, & Gibson, 2021). Organizational empowerment positively predicts commitment and performance of employees (Jha, 2011; Patrick & Laschinger, 2006; Vacharakiat, 2008). Empowerment may contribute to the commitment of workers by reciprocation process (Liden et al., 2000). Workers feel grateful when they are provided with the benefits of empowerment so that they endeavor to show more commitment to the organization in return. Organizations have to provide workers an environment in which employees remain empowered psychologically and also should be provided with a climate where workers feel satisfied with the working conditions and their job that leads employees towards organizational commitment (Madsen, Miller, & John, 2005). Kazlauskaite et al.'s (2012) work revealed a positive effect of organizational empowerment on organizational commitment of employees.

Organizational empowerment is considered as one of the important factors to enhance psychological empowerment of employees (Jha, 2011; Patrick & Laschinger, 2006; Vacharakiat, 2008). Supervisory social support involves lots of behaviors through which manager can have chance to show acceptance, consideration and apprehension for the needs and feelings of people, which is an important factor of organizational empowerment. Individuals who consider that they have high levels of socio political support from their immediate supervisor have higher levels of psychological empowerment in comparison to those who receive lesser support (Spreitzer, 1996). Participative climate - wherein the

creation, acknowledgement and freedom of employees is appreciated, and an importance is given to an individual's contribution and initiative - is another important factor of organizational empowerment that enhances the feelings of psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1996). Wallach and Mueller (2006) proved that if employees are given opportunity to take decisions at their jobs then they feel empowered. In this regard leader's empowering behavior positively affects psychological empowerment of employees in hospitality industry (Namasivayam et al., 2014). And Kazlauskaitė et al. (2012) concluded a positive effect of organizational empowerment on employees' psychological empowerment in up-scale hotel industry. On the basis of discussion made in the preceding paragraphs, following hypotheses were developed:

H₁: There is a positive effect of organizational empowerment on (H_{1a}) job satisfaction, (H_{1b}) affective commitment and (H_{1c}) psychological empowerment of front-desk employees in upscale hotel industry

Previous work on HRM in hotel sector reveals that HRM is carried out in an ad-hoc manner and still it resembles to an old fashioned personnel management instead of following modern HRM practices. Its incorporation with the overall strategy of the business is still not founded in certain cases (Lucas & Deery, 2004). For understanding of the concept that how employee empowerment plays a vital role in the development of employee attitudes and behavior, it is required to look into the HRM-performance linkage. Researchers tried to figure out how HRM practices make contribution to enhance workers' work-related behaviors and individual and organizational performance. Most comprehensively, this question is explained by 'ability, motivation and opportunity theory' where the performance of an individual is considered to be based on his capabilities to perform in a better way with full motivation and getting opportunity to perform effectively (Boxall & Purcell, 2011). This implies that workers must be provided with all the required/ important resources and guidelines to perform effectively. Therefore, it is an important function of HRM to develop ability in an employee's existing set of abilities for bringing out enviable attitudes like job satisfaction and organizational commitment by granting workers opportunity and motivation as well.

Customer oriented attitudes and beliefs might be considered as precursor of other related behaviors because the perspectives are inter-related (Hennig-Thurau & Thurau, 2003). Employee customer orientation has a significant positive influence on performance and satisfaction of employees and negative effect on intention to quit the job (Zablah, Franke, Brown, & Bartholomew, 2012). Customer oriented attitudes and behaviors both are affected by customer satisfaction but the link between behavior and satisfaction is stronger (Stock & Hoyer, 2005). Some of the organizational barriers like low empowerment might stop workers from behaving in a customer oriented way with the help of customer oriented attitudes (Hennig-Thurau & Thurau, 2003). In the same vein, Phuong and Ahn (2021) concluded that empowerment and satisfaction help to improve citizenship behavior of employees that enhance their customer service.

It is argued that various managerial behaviors and HR practices at work produce customer orientation. These variables - management behavior and HR practices - exert indirect effect on customer-oriented behavior and are mediated by the level of psychological empowerment of workers (Peccei & Rosenthal, 2001). In this vein, the adoption of progressive HR practices and management behaviors might have a positive effect on psychological empowerment of employees. And this sort of empowerment might significantly enhance the perceived management behaviors, customer-oriented behavior and

HR practices. They all are related to customer-oriented behavior, but indirectly by the effect on psychological empowerment (Peccei & Rosenthal, 2001).

Namasivayam et al.'s (2014) work proved that job satisfaction mediates the relationship of leader empowering behavior with customer satisfaction. Because when employees are satisfied with their job they have positive feelings about the job which motivates them to go for extra mile for the customers (Kim, Tavitiyaman, & Kim, 2009). Job satisfaction acts as a mediator between empowerment and employees' service behaviors toward customers (Kim et al., 2009). Juhari et al. (2017) proved full mediation of psychological empowerment and affective commitment for the positive link between transformational leadership and proactive customer service behavior of frontline service employees in India. A study conducted in hotel industry reveals that psychological empowerment and affective commitment of employees play a mediating role in the relationship of organizational empowerment and customer-oriented behavior (Kazlauskaitė et al., 2012). On the basis of previous discussion, the hypotheses developed are:

H₂: There is mediating role of (H_{2a}) job satisfaction, (H_{2b}) affective commitment and (H_{2c}) psychological empowerment for the relationship between organizational empowerment and customer-oriented behavior of front-desk employees in upscale hotel industry



Methodology

Sample. Population of the study consists of employees of hotel industry of Pakistan who have a direct interaction with customers. The target population of the study is four and five star hotels of Pakistan. There are 29 four and five star hotels located in major cities of Pakistan. Judgmental and Convenience sampling techniques were applied for the selection of the hotels. Out of the total 29 hotels, 12 five star and 6 four star hotels were selected for the study. In order to reduce the bias, equal numbers of questionnaires (15) were distributed to each hotel.

Data collection. Thus, officer level employees working in front-desk department of upscale of hotel industry of Pakistan were the participants of this study. A brief explanation pertaining to the questionnaire was provided to potential respondents in the form of personal discussions. To generate relevant data, a total of 270 questionnaires were distributed conveniently to respondents, out of which 169 completely filled questionnaires were returned (response rate of 63.6%). It is a cross-sectional study and it is anticipated that

all of the respondents have responded honestly and filled questionnaire correctly on the basis of briefings provided to them.

Measures. To assess the variables of the study, standardized measures/scales were taken from relevant literature. ‘Organizational empowerment’ along with its three components - dynamic structural framework, control of workplace decisions, and fluidity in information sharing - was measured through a shortened 17-items scale developed by Matthews et al. (2003). ‘Psychological empowerment’ was measured by Spreitzer's (1995) 12-item scale. This instrument measures four dimensions of psychological empowerment - meaningfulness, competence, impact, and self-determination. ‘Affective commitment’ was measured with the help of Allen and Meyer's (1990) five-items instrument. ‘Job satisfaction’ was assessed through Taylor and Bowers’ seven-item scale (as cited in Fields, 2002). ‘Customer-oriented behavior’ was measured by a six-item scale developed by Peccei and Rosenthal (2001) which measures overall customer-oriented behavior. All the variables were measured against a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

Statistical techniques. The proposed model of this study was analyzed on the basis various tests like Correlation and Regression in SPSS. Mediating effects were analyzed by applying Baron and Kenny method and its significance was verified by Sobel Test.

Results and Discussion

To find out the reliability of the scales and to investigate the relationships between research variables, various statistical tools and techniques were applied. Results show that average age of participants is 29 years and mean value for length of experience at current position is about 4 years and total length experience is 6 years. Table 1 describes the gender, job nature, marital status and education of the respondents.

Table 1. Demographics of the participants

No.	Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent
1	Gender	Male	125	74.0
		Female	44	26.0
2	Job Nature	Permanent	90	53.3
		Contract	73	43.2
		Not Reported	6	3.6
3	Marital Status	Single	121	71.6
		Married	48	28.4
4	Education	Masters	92	54.4
		Bachelors	53	31.4
		Intermediated	17	10.1
		Not reported	7	4.1

The Table shows that 74% respondents are male, 53% have permanent job, 71% are single and 54% have attained their master degrees. The reason for low percentage of females is

that proportion of female employees in workforce is low in Pakistan. Table 2 shows correlation matrix, mean, standard deviation and alpha scores for the variables of the study.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

	1	2	3	4	5
Organizational Empowerment (OE)	1				
Psychological Empowerment (PE)	.684**	1			
Affective Commitment (AC)	.687**	.762**	1		
Job Satisfaction (JS)	.508**	.639**	.662**	1	
Customer-oriented Behavior (CB)	.461**	.726**	.688**	.583**	1
Mean	3.3936	3.9743	3.9787	4.0056	4.2991
SD	.48705	.52899	.73161	.70786	.58064
Cronbach's Alpha	0.741	0.836	0.791	0.849	0.817

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

Reliability of the variables was assessed with the help of Cronbach's alpha test (see Table 2). Cronbach's alpha values range from .741 for organizational empowerment to .849 for job satisfaction which shows that internal consistency reliability scores for all the variables are quite acceptable for research in social sciences.

Hypothesis testing. To measure the relationships between independent and dependent variables, correlation analysis was performed. Table 2 shows the relationships between all the dependent and independent variables. Results reveal that organizational empowerment as an independent variable has significant ($p < .01$) and moderate positive relationships with all of three dependent variables - job satisfaction (.508), affective commitment (.687) and psychological empowerment (.684). This supports hypotheses H_{1a}, H_{1b} and H_{1c}. Thus the study proves that the higher is the organizational empowerment the higher will be job satisfaction, affective commitment and psychological empowerment of front-desk employees in upscale hotels. Previous work also supported the positive association of organizational empowerment with job satisfaction (Kazlauskaite et al., 2012; Namasivayam et al., 2014), affective commitment (Bhatnagar, 2007; Kazlauskaite et al., 2012; Yogalakshmi & Suganthi, 2020) and psychological empowerment (Kazlauskaite et al., 2012; Namasivayam et al., 2014) of employees in similar work settings.

Regression. Keeping the hypotheses in view, multiple linear regression analyses were performed to test the impact of control variables (age, gender, tenure and work nature) and the dimensions of organizational empowerment – structure dynamics, control of workplace decisions, and fluidity in information sharing - on dependent variables (see Table 3). Model 1, 3 and 5 show that age, gender, tenure, and work nature have no significant effect on any of the employee attitude or behavior. Model 2 illustrates the regression analysis to test the effect of the dimensions of organizational empowerment on job satisfaction. It shows that structure dynamics and control of workplace decisions as the factors of organizational empowerment exert significant positive effects on job satisfaction. Overall Model 2 is significant ($F=13.4^{**}$) and R square value of .397 says that 39.7% changes in job satisfaction could be explained with the corresponding changes in the control variables and the dimensions of organizational empowerment – structure dynamics, control of workplace decisions and fluidity in information sharing.

Table 3. Multiple linear regression analyses

Dependent Variable / Independent Variables	Job Satisfaction (JS)		Affective Commitment (AC)		Psychological Empowerment (PE)	
	Mode 1 1	Model 2	Mode 1 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Age	.003	.002	.009	.000	.005	.001
Gender	-.155	-.152	-.085	-.082	-.076	-.086
Tenure	-.014	-.025	-.014	-.015	-.003	-.007
Work Nature	.000	-.041	-.068	-.096	-.044	.070
Structure Dynamics		.65**		.29**		.37**
Control of Workplace Decisions		.267*		.461**		.228**
Fluidity in Information Sharing		.161		.461**		.284**
R2	.013	.397	.007	.557	.008	.527
Adjusted R2	-.014	.367	-.020	.537	-.019	.504
F	.466	13.4* *	.257	25.7**	.304	22.7**

Model 4 depicts the effects of the dimensions of organizational empowerment on affective commitment. Result shows significant positive effects of structure dynamics, control of workplace decisions, and fluidity in information sharing on affective commitment. Overall Model 4 is significant ($F=25.7^{**}$) and R square value of .557 indicates that 55.7% changes in affective commitment could be explained by the corresponding changes in control variables and the components of organizational empowerment.

Model 6 shows the effects of the components of organizational empowerment on psychological empowerment. Results depict significant positive effects of structure dynamics, control of workplace decisions, and fluidity in information sharing on psychological empowerment. Overall Model 6 is significant ($F=22.7^{**}$) and R square value of .527 indicates that 52.7% changes in psychological empowerment could be explained by the combined changes in control variables and the components of organizational empowerment. Thus regression analyses also prove the Hypotheses H_{1a}, H_{1b} and H_{1c} of the study.

To test H₂ which proposes that job satisfaction, affective commitment and psychological empowerment mediate the relationship between organizational empowerment and customer-oriented behavior. Baron and Kenny (1986) procedure to test mediation was used. According to which four conditions have to be met (1) a significant relationship between dependent and independent variable (2) a significant relationship of independent variable with mediator (3) a significant effect of mediating variable on dependent variable. Fourth, the significant relationship between the dependent and the independent variables should become insignificant when the mediator is entered into the regression model. If the relationship becomes insignificant then there is a full mediation and if the relationship remains significant but its beta value is decreased, then there is partial mediation. The mediation results for the three mediators are presented in Table 4, 5 and 6 to show a clearer picture for Baron and Kenny approach. Furthermore, Sobel test has been employed to test the significance of mediation analyses.

Table 4. Job Satisfaction as a mediator of organizational empowerment and customer-oriented behavior

Regression	IV	DV	B	SE	Sobel test
1	OE	CB	.734**	.082	.000
2	OE	JS	.910**	.100	
3	JS	CB	.487**	.052	
4	OE	CB	.461**	.093	
	JS		.310**	.059	

Table 4 shows that regression coefficient value for the effect of organizational empowerment on customer-oriented behavior is significant (.734* in Regression 1). But, when job satisfaction is also included in the regression model; the effect of organizational empowerment on customer-oriented behavior though remains significant but reduces (.461* in Regression 4). Moreover, Sobel test (.000) substantiates the presence of a mediation effect. Thus, it proves that job satisfaction partially mediate the relationship between organizational empowerment and customer-oriented behavior. This partially supports H_{2a} of the study. The result is consistent with a study conducted with hotel employees by Kim et al. (2009). It reveals that job satisfaction serves as a mediator between management service initiatives – rewards, empowerment and training – and service behavior of employees. However, Kazlauskaite et al.’s (2012) work could not find a mediation of job satisfaction for the relationship between organizational empowerment and customer-oriented behavior.

Table 5. Affective commitment as a mediator of organizational empowerment and customer-oriented behavior

Regression	IV	DV	B	SE	Sobel test
1	OE	CB	.734**	.082	.000
2	OE	AC	.546**	.045	
3	AC	CB	.443**	.033	
4	OE	CB	.205	.105	
	AC		.455**	.064	

Table 5 shows that the effect of organizational empowerment on customer-oriented behavior becomes insignificant (.205) when affective commitment is also entered into regression model (Regression 4). The finding proves that affective commitment fully mediates the relationship between organizational empowerment and customer-oriented behavior. Thus, H_{2b} is supported. In a similar study, Kazlauskaite et al. (2012) also proves the mediating role of affective commitment for the effect of organizational empowerment on customer-oriented behavior of front-desk employees in hotel industry.

Table 6. Psychological empowerment as a mediator of organizational empowerment and customer-oriented behavior

Regression	IV	DV	B	SE	Sobel test
1	OE	CB	.734**	.082	.000
2	OE	PE	.875**	.061	
3	PE	CB	.796**	.058	
4	OE	CB	.103	.103	
	PE		.732**	.087	

Table 6 reveals that regression coefficient value for the effect of organizational empowerment and customer-oriented behavior becomes insignificant (.103) when psychological empowerment was also entered into the regression model (Regression 4). The finding proves that psychological empowerment fully mediates the relationship between organizational empowerment and customer-oriented behavior. This supports H_{2c} of the study. The result is consistent with available research. Kazlauskaitė et al. (2012) also reported mediating role of psychological empowerment for the relationship between organizational empowerment and customer-oriented behavior of front-desk employees in hotel industry. Raub and Robert's (2010) work revealed a full mediation of psychological empowerment for the link between empowering leader behaviors and service improvement of hotel employees. Similarly, Frazier and Fainshmidt (2012) proved full mediation of psychological empowerment for the relationship between voice climate and customer service performance.

Conclusion

This study examines the effect of organizational empowerment as a bundle of HRM practices on customer-oriented behavior of front-desk employees working in upscale hotel industry in Pakistan. It also investigates the mediating roles of job satisfaction, affective commitment and psychological empowerment for the said relationship.

Efficient customer service remains the first demand of the consumers in the highly competition marketplaces. Organizational empowerment has been found to be an important component in service industries especially in hotel industry. It is generally linked with the decentralization of decision making authority in the management processes to trigger motivational and psychological aspects of the workers. This study proves moderate positive relationships of organizational empowerment with job satisfaction, affective commitment and psychological empowerment of front-desk employees working in upscale hotel industry in Pakistan. The positive effect of organizational empowerment on psychological empowerment is explicable because when employees are more empowered within organizations - have decision making rights, fully informed, say in changing policies, supervisory social support - they have higher level of psychological empowerment (Bordin, Bartram, & Casimir, 2006). Organizational empowerment factors such as information to reward system, reinforcing personal competencies and elevated motivation levels enhance psychological empowerment of employees (Burke et al., 2015).

Current study also establishes the effect of the dimensions of organizational empowerment on job satisfaction, affective commitment and psychological empowerment of front-desk employees in upscale hotels. Out of the three dimensions, structure dynamics and control of workplace decisions were found to exert significant positive effects on all the three mediating variables. And fluidity in information sharing was found to significantly influence affective commitment and psychological empowerment of employees.

The study also proves full mediation of affective commitment and psychological empowerment and partial mediation of job satisfaction for the relationship between organizational empowerment and customer-oriented behavior of front-desk employees working in upscale hotel industry. In the high empowering work environment of front-desk offices of four and five star hotels in Pakistan, employees will be more satisfied with their jobs, show higher level of affective commitment with the organization and feel psychologically more empowered. Consequently, all these factors exert positive impact on customer-oriented behavior of the front-desk employees. Herein, Peccei and Rosenthal's

(2001) work supports the idea that the adoption of progressive human resource practices and management behaviors positively affect psychological empowerment of employees and these feelings of empowerment ultimately enhance their customer-oriented behavior. The study also supports the previous work that empowerment affects employee attitudes which in turn affect behavior of front-desk employees towards customers.

Implications

In the upscale hotel industry, where employee turnover intentions seem high and quality maintenance is critical, organizational empowerment plays a vital role in increasing employee job satisfaction, commitment and psychological empowerment. The proposed model of current study may help managers in service industries that by improving organizational empowerment they can enhance customer-oriented behaviors of workers through mediating effects of job satisfaction, affective commitment and psychological empowerment. By establishing the effects of the dimensions of organizational empowerment, this study also helps managers in determining how to increase organizational empowerment within their organizations. Similarly, Kim et al. (2011) argued that empowerment has a positive effect on employees' evaluation of management and therefore suggested it as an antidote to the hospitality industry's high turnover.

By studying organizational empowerment and psychological empowerment concurrently, the study draws a distinction between the two forms of empowerment. Organizational empowerment was taken as a multi-activity HRM practice while psychological empowerment as a work-related attitude of employees (Kazlauskaite et al., 2012).

Limitations and Recommendations

Extremely specific research population is the major limitation of this study therefore generalization of the results is limited. Only the hotel industry is taken as population and the sample is further limited to the front-desk employees, so the findings may not be generalized to other industries like manufacturing, education, food and the like. Future researchers may employ the same research model to other sectors and industries. Second limitation may be the research design - survey based on cross sectional data of the participants - that prohibits the inference of causality. Further research could be conducted through some quasi-experimental designs to establish cause and effect and mediation effects. Third limitation may be the self-reported data provided by the employees. In future, research could be conducted by collecting data with the help of some ability based measures. Fourth limitation may be the statistical technique – Baron and Kenny method - used to establish mediation role of the intervening variables. Future studies may employ some advanced statistical tools and techniques to establish the mediation effect like structural equation modeling.

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