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Assessing the Effects of Empowerment and Emotions on Job Satisfaction in Hotel Service Environments

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ABSTRACT

While empowerment has been encouraged in the hotel industry, a basic understanding on the possible relationship between empowerment and positive and negative emotions has yet to emerge. Evidence on the effects of empowerment and positive and negative emotions on job satisfaction is also limited. Therefore, the objectives of the study are threefold: to empirically investigate the relationship of empowerment on both positive and negative emotions and job satisfaction, to test whether the positive and negative emotions impose effect on employee's job satisfaction and to examine the effect of individual empowerment components (task meaningfulness and freedom to perform) on job satisfaction. The approach of the study is based on questionnaires distributed to the frontline hotel employees in Malaysia. It was found that empowerment has a significant positive relationship with positive emotions and a negative relationship with negative emotions. The results also indicate that both empowerment and positive emotions have a significant influence on employee's job satisfaction. Moreover, as hypothesized, the results support the negative relationship between negative emotions and job satisfaction. Another noteworthy finding was that, the effect of task meaningfulness on job satisfaction was significantly higher than freedom to perform. It is significant that managers should consider employing different forms of empowerment in order to maximize employee's potential. The management must play an important role in monitoring employee's emotions at work.

Keywords: Empowerment, positive and negative emotions, job satisfaction, hotel industry, services management

INTRODUCTION

Employee empowerment has been touted as one of the most popular management strategies in the organization, especially for

the one who serves the customer directly. In the mainstream management literature, empowerment is regarded as an important process of power delegation in decision making process (Conger & Kanungo, 1988), and experience psychological state or set of cognition (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Customer contact employees, or always known as front line employees, are the key contacts who are constantly required to display sincerity, responsiveness, and appropriate sets of emotion during service delivery.

Employee empowerment is receiving increased attention in services management and services marketing literature. Some previous studies have concentrated on the general concept of empowerment (Brymer, 1991; Klidas *et al.,* 2007), relationship of empowerment with job satisfaction (Snipes *et al.,* 2005; Spreitzer *et al.,* 1997; Gazzoli *et al.,* 2010; Pelit *et al*., 2011), influence of employee customer orientation and organizational supporting factors on perceived empowerment (Ro & Chen, 2011), and service quality (Snipes *et al.,* 2005; Gazzoli *et al*., 2010). In addition to empowerment, emotion management is also becoming important in the workplace, particularly in the service industry. A number of studies in recent years had examined the role of emotions in the workplace (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996; Arvey *et al.,* 1998; Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000; Brief & Weiss, 2002). In particular, research into emotions has focused on one specific area namely emotional labour, which dubbed by Hochschild (1983) as management of emotions as part of work

role. Following a number of emotional labour studies, a central focus of its research however concentrates on how individuals achieve the desired emotional displays (Diefendorff *et al.,* 2005). Thus, this leaves a gap in terms of research of the actual emotions felt by the service providers. While empowerment has been encouraged in the service industry especially in the hotel industry, and reasonably researched by past researchers (Brymer, 1991; Parsons, 1995; Hales & Klidas, 1998; Gazzoli *et al.,* 2010), a basic understanding on the possible relationship between empowerment and positive and negative emotions has yet to emerge. Evidence on the effect of empowerment and positive and negative emotions on job satisfaction is also limited. In addition, although the relationship between empowerment and its effect on job satisfaction has been established (see Gazzoli *et al.'s* work*,* 2010), their study did not specifically investigate the effect of individual empowerment dimensions on job satisfaction. This leaves a gap in the empowerment literature as different empowerment component may yield different influence on job satisfaction.

This article builds on the prior conceptualization of Weiss and Cropanzano's (1996) theory on Affective Event Theory (AET). AET proposes that specific features of work (such as autonomy, participation, and employee welfare) have influence on the arousal of emotions and mood at work which eventually leads to job satisfaction of employees. In this study, empowerment construct is treated as one

important features of work, which may have significant influence on job satisfaction and positive and negative emotions as suggested by AET. Against this backdrop, the current study chose AET theory as a guiding background in examining the relationship of empowerment, positive and negative emotions and job satisfaction. Ideally, AET theory presents a suitable background for the current study since the framework looks into the association between emotions, mood and satisfaction. In addition to this, the current study also examined the role of empowerment and its linkages with the construct identified in AET.

Therefore, the objectives of the study are threefold: to empirically investigate the relationship of empowerment on both positive and negative emotions and job satisfaction, to test whether the positive and negative emotions impose effect on employee's job satisfaction and to examine the effects of individual empowerment component; namely, task meaningfulness and freedom to perform on job satisfaction.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Empowerment

A dynamic business environment has been forcing service organizations to modify their traditional management techniques (Hancer & George, 2003). Empowerment interventions have become very popular, where 1990s have been hailed as the "empowerment era" (Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998). Employee empowerment has been seen as one of the significant

management techniques in dealing with the modern global business management (Foy, 1994), and often discussed as a new managerial approach among business leaders (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Kanter, 1983).

The central meaning of empowerment denotes enabling people to do things that they would otherwise, be unable to do. Literally, it is to remove the restrictions-artificial or otherwise that prevent people from doing the things that it is within their ability to achieve (Jenkins, 1996, p. 37). Empowerment is, in essence, the transfer of power within organisations from top management to middle management and so on, all the way to the front-line employees (Clutterbuck, 1994, p. 12). The term 'empowerment' has been used interchangeably with delegation and employee participation (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Conger and Kanungo's (1988) most cited definition of empowerment defines it as: "a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organizational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal organizational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information" (p. 471).

Empowerment has been distinguished into two separate concepts, which are relational and motivational. Empowerment as a relational concept is concerned with management style and employee participation; for example, it becomes the process by which a leader or a manager shares his or her

power with the subordinates (Conger & Kanungo, 1998), whereas empowerment as a motivational concept considers power and control as motivational and/or expectancy belief states that are internal to individuals (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). Furthermore, power in this motivational sense refers to an intrinsic need for self-determination (Deci, 1975) or a belief in personal self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). Thus, motivational construct is more towards individual and personal, and therefore, more concerned about discretion, autonomy, power and control. Spreitzer (1995) came up with a model and defined empowerment as increased intrinsic motivation manifested in four cognitive dimensions: meaning (value of work goal or purpose), competence (self-efficacy), self-determination (autonomy in initiation and continuation of work behaviours) and influence (influence on work outcomes). Thus, the above meaning which is often referred to as 'psychological empowerment' denotes employee's feelings of empowerment as reflected in: competence or confidence in their ability to perform task well; feel impact or influence in their work role; perceived self-determination or freedom to choose how they carry out their tasks; and a sense of meaning or feeling that their work is personally important (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995). Spreitzer's conceptualisation is considered as motivational concept

because the perspective is a bottom-up processing which take into consideration the employee's perception (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). From this perspective, empowerment is seen as an experiential construct, and "an enabling, rather than a delegating, process" (Conger & Kanungo, 1988, p. 474). Accordingly, for the purpose of this research, empowerment is viewed as a motivational concept since it involves the performance of service providers at work.

While a large amount of studies have been written on the subject of empowerment, its application in the service area is still considered underdeveloped. Furthermore, empowerment tends to be discussed at the cognitive level than realized in practice (Lin, 2002). As noted earlier, multidimensional measure of psychological empowerment in the workplace has been developed by Spreitzer (1995). In similar vein, Koberg et al. (1999) examined the correlates and consequences of psychological empowerment. The study found that empowerment perception increased with organizational rank and with leader approachability, group effectiveness, and worth of group. Fulford and Enz (1995) assessed the effects of perceived empowerment on attitudes of employees in several service-based organizations. The results showed that satisfaction, performance, loyalty, and service delivery were explained by the three

dimensions of empowerment namely meaning, competence and influence. Thus, the findings confirmed that empowerment leads to increased levels of employee and customer's satisfaction and loyalty. Despite the established three dimensions found in previous study (Fulford & Enz, 1995; Spreitzer, 1992), this study conceptualized empowerment into two dimensions; namely, task meaningfulness and freedom to perform. This is in line with the study conducted by Gazolli *et al.* (2010), in which they found that empowerment was measured into two constructs, which were later named as 'task meaningfulness' and 'freedom to perform'.

In general, most of the studies draw the links between empowerment and its outcomes, for example customer satisfaction (Sparrow, 1994; Moore, Hopkins, & Hopkins, 1998; Fulford & Enz, 1995) and job satisfaction (Fulford & Enz, 1995; Lin, 2002; Hocutt & Stone, 1998; Chebat & Kollias, 2000; Koberg *et al.,* 1999; Melhem, 2003; Kirkman & Rosen 1999; Sparrowe, 1994). According to Pelit *et al.* (2011), "empowerment is thought to enhance job satisfaction". Interestingly, many researches on empowerment also concentrate on the effect of empowerment on service quality (Goodale, Koerner & Roney, 1997; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996; Gazzoli *et al.,* 2010).

Emotions

As the concept of employee empowerment grows in practice, many areas for research are opened. Presently, more theories and research have focused on the role of emotion in organisational life. Emotional labour is one of the emerging research areas in emotions that has received significant attention among researchers. The role of emotion displayed by employees is important for the customers of service organisations who often interact with one or two boundary-spanning employees during a given visit (Bowen & Schneider, 1985). Thus, the role of emotion is crucial for service organisation and is relevant to the empowerment of employee, as Lashley (2001, p. 172) puts it:

> *One of the rarely expressed, but clearly present aspirations for empowerment is that it will enable organisational members, whether workers or managers, to manage their emotions in a way that ultimately enhances organisational effectiveness*

Lashley (2001) further argued that service organisations require employees to engage customers in a way that builds a perception of genuine delight in meeting their service needs. Therefore, it is hoped that empowerment will enable employees to generate feelings of loyalty and a sense of personal worth within the organisation. Accordingly, empowerment becomes an initiative that attempts to create an emotional bond between an individual and an organisation. However, there is a dearth of research which looks at the relationship between the role of employee empowerment and their emotions, in

particular, positive and negative emotions. Individual employees must still display and regulate the right emotions at work although they are empowered at work. Thus, there is a need for a research that examines the relationship between empowerment and employees' positive and negative emotion, especially among the front-line employees. Accordingly, as noted above, the primary focus of this paper is on determining the relationship between empowerment and positive and negative emotions. In addition, this study also seeks to examine the relationship between empowerment and job satisfaction, as well as examining the effect of empowerment dimensions with job satisfaction. The results of this study will not only increase the understanding of the empowerment-employee relationship and empowerment-employee satisfaction relationship; instead they offer organizations an alternative way of responding to and meeting the changing needs and expectations of their customers.

According to Lashley (2001), empowerment has something to offer in developing positive feelings about the organisations. Lashley (2001) posited that several techniques be introduced in an organisation such as flatten structures, involving employees in decision making and thereby, communicating employees' importance to the organisation, improving the flow information. Accordingly, by this reducing fear of the unknown, and meet employees' security needs by providing employees training and long-term employment, many of the negative

and destructive aspects of emotions in organisations can be removed. Thus, when front-line employees have greater freedom in deciding for example when to smile, how to smile, or even if to smile, then eventually, emotional labour will be less harmful consequences for staff. Significantly, Lashley (2001) suggested that empowerment has the potential to create positive emotional responses to working in an organization.

Frontline employees in service industries are frequently dealt with a huge amount of service work that requires them to make decisions immediately and display a set of appropriate emotions when serving the customers. The display of the right emotions (according to organisation's wish) is widely termed as "display rules" (Ekman, 1973) that provide a certain standard in expressing appropriate emotions by giving emphasis on public display rather than the actual feeling of employees (Ashforth & Humprey, 1993). These 'emotional word demands', as termed by Mann (1990), require front liner to express and suppress certain emotions (Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000; Wharton & Erickson, 1995). The emotional display rules stipulate the required behaviour for effective job performance (Diefendorff & Richard, 2003). Accordingly, to deliver job effectively, some flexibility at work, certain amount of power, and meaningful job would be an important ingredient to help employees deliver suitable emotions during the service transaction. Although there is strong theoretical and empirical support for the requirement of display rules at work, it

might be argued that 'felt emotions' have significant effect as compared to displayed rules. For instance, individuals who are high in negative emotions may perceive more demands in displaying positive emotions (Gosserand & Diefendorff, 2005) rather than the one who displays felt emotions. Hence, the current paper argues that empowerment could be an important strategy to help this employee to deliver the service well while managing their emotions at the workplace. Empowerment is, therefore, expected to assist employees in regulating positive emotions and is expected to reduce the negative emotions faced by them. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1a: Perceived empowerment is positively related to positive emotions

Hypothesis 1b: Perceived empowerment is negatively related to negative emotions

Empowerment and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction or employee satisfaction has been defined as "the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job value" (Locke, 1969, p. 316). According to several authors (Fulford & Enz, 1995; Spreitzer, 1995), perceptions of empowerment can enhance the value of work for individuals, increase job satisfaction and contribute to work productivity and success. Moreover, empowerment of front liners may lead to attitudinal and behavioural change. Rafiq and Ahmed (1998) claimed that an increased in job satisfaction is one

of the results of attitudinal change due to empowerment. Accordingly, it is predicted that job satisfaction and perceived work productivity/effectiveness could be the consequence or outcome of employee empowerment (Koberg *et al.*, 1999). Spreitzer *et al.* (1997) argued the notion of empowerment is derived from the theories of participative management and employee involvement. According to these authors, the basic assumption of participative management is that sharing managers' decision-making power with employees will enhance performance and work satisfaction. They supported that the main issues of the quality-of-life movement are enhancing employee satisfaction, improving intrinsic motivation and helping employees to feel good about their work and jobs. Therefore, employee satisfaction was one of the earliest anticipated outcomes of empowerment. An increase in job satisfaction may result in greater enthusiasm for the job (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1988). Previous empirical research has suggested a positive relationship between empowerment and job satisfaction (see Fulford & Enz, 1995; Ugboro & Obeng, 2000) and those employees who are empowered reported higher job satisfaction at work (McDonald & Siegall, 1993; Snipes *et al.,* 2005). Aligned with these concepts, this study develops the following hypotheses to be tested:

Hypothesis 2: Perceived empowerment is positively related to employee's job satisfaction

Emotions and Job Satisfactions

Research on emotions has only begun to examine the role of emotions and its effect in the workplace (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996; Brief & Weiss, 2002), despite its pervasiveness and inseparability in the human experience and organizational life (Glomb & Tews, 2004). The role of emotion in the workplace, for example, has gained some attention in the last decade (Hochschild, 1983; James, 1989; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987, 1989, 1991; Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989; Wharton, 1993) and has been studied from various professions, such as flight attendant (Hochschild, 1993), supermarket clerk (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1993), theme park ride operator (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989), and many others. The outcome from these studies suggests that the way an individual displays feelings has 'a strong influence on the quality of the service transaction, the attractiveness of the interpersonal climate and the experience of emotion itself' (Ashforth & Humprey, 1993, p. 88).

One particular area that has received the most attention in emotions studies is emotional labour, which is regarded by Hochschild (1983) as a study of emotion regulation at the workplace. According to the emotional labour theories (Hochshild, 1983; Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993), there are two main strategies involved during these emotion regulations, which are, surface acting and deep acting. These strategies are normally experienced by the employees in order to follow display rules of the organization. The basic purpose of display rules is to dictate the emotions that employee express (Diefendorff & Gosserand, 2003). Surface acting refers to regulating expressions, or "faking" the emotion. In other words, the individual simply "puts on a mask" and displays the correct emotion, regardless of what that person may actually be feeling (Grandey, 2000). Deep acting, on the other hand, takes place when the individual consciously tries to modify his or her feelings so that they are consistent with the desired emotional expression (Grandey, 2000). Service employees in particular, are expected to follow display rules by displaying positive emotions and hiding negative emotions (Grandey & Brauburger, 2002; Diefendorff & Richard, 2003).

Although the notion of emotional labour is considered as one of the most important research topics in emotion management studies, and there is reasonable evidence provided by past research on the validity of surface acting and deep acting, it might be argued that these variables are influenced by dispositional affect and that any relationship between them are spurious (Gosserand & Diefendorff, 2005). Hence, the current paper argued that felt emotions or affect-based personality traits (Gosserand & Diefendorff, 2005) such as positive affectivity and negative affectivity are more relevant and genuine in delivering the service at work. Thus, this study is built primarily on the theoretical conceptualization, namely, 'Affective Event theory' (AET) as its underpinning theory. The affective events theory was developed

by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) and has received considerable attention where it explicitly states that characteristics of the job make the occurrence of certain types of work events more likely than others. AET conceptualization claimed that affective reactions may have immediate impact on work actions (affect-driven behaviours) and may influence work attitudes and cognitive-driven behaviours over time. This is in line with motivational theories, where work environment influence the effective and evaluative response of the employee (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

The theory has identified that emotions and moods may influence job performance and job satisfaction. These affective reactions (i.e. emotions) at work are thought to lead to instant, affect-driven behaviours (for example, smiling, crying, jumping and screaming) and also to contribute to work attitude (such as job satisfaction, frustration and burn-out). Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) conceptualized the construct of effect into two major categories that include mood and emotions. However, the current study is only interested to look at emotions, which are divided into positive emotions and negative emotions.

AET suggest that affective reactions are believed to be the direct antecedents of work attitudes and affect driven behaviours. Previous research (Weiss *et al.,* 1999) found that the average level of pleasant mood at work over 16 days predicted ratings of overall job satisfaction, which suggests that job satisfaction is directly influenced by felt emotions (state affect) at work.

Individual employees who pose positive emotions are likely to report higher satisfaction. As noted previously, suitable emotional display prescribes employee behaviour where positive emotions could be useful in giving job satisfaction at work. A study conducted by Sharma and Black (2001) on beauty therapist revealed that although they engaged in deep acting; a situation where they have to 'mask' their own feelings, they were reasonably free to perform their work according to their wish. Moreover, Sharma and Black (2001) concurred that emotional work may bring both stress and satisfaction. Hence, this suggest that positive emotions may have potential in contributing to employee's job satisfaction as they are free to perform their work , as part of autonomy given to them. This autonomy is regarded by Wharton (1993) as a situation where emotional aspects of their work as a source of satisfaction rather than exploitation. Nevertheless, to date, not much research has been conducted in relation the role of emotions and its influence on the employee's job satisfaction except for some work done by Wegge *et al.* (2006), where they found positive emotions, negative emotions and general job satisfaction are related but clearly separable constructs. Based on this idea, this paper argues that the display of employees' felt emotion may have some relationship on their satisfaction at work. Accordingly, in the present investigation, positive emotions are expected to have positive relationship with employee's job

satisfaction and negative emotions are on the other side. Thus:

Hypothesis 3a: Positive emotion is positively related to employee's job satisfaction

Hypothesis3b: Negative emotion is negatively related to employee's job satisfaction

METHODS

Participants and Procedure

Empirical research using survey was carried out to examine the proposed hypotheses. The constructs used were measured using established close-ended questions. Majority of the questions demonstrate sufficient cronbach alpha. The questionnaires were conveniently distributed to three-, four- and five-star hotel employees. A convenience sample of 325 employees was selected from hotels located throughout Peninsular Malaysia. Data were collected via a face-to-face–administered questionnaire. Table I summarizes the demographic profile of respondents. The majority of the respondents were male (51.7%), Malay (75.1%), and between 25 and 34 years old (39.1%). Most respondents worked in a front office department (34.5%) or in the food and beverage department (26.2%). The average tenure of the employee was 0-2 years (53.2%). A majority of the hotels were five-star hotels (48.9%), of Malaysian origin (62.8%), and are centrally located (48.3%) in Peninsular Malaysia, with either one to less than 4 years' tenure (26.4%) or 4 to less than 8 years' tenure (21.8%).

Measures

Empowerment

This scale consists of ten items adapted from Aziz (2007), was initially developed by Fulford and Enz (1995) and Spreitzer's (1992), and employed in this study. The measure includes items such as "My work is important to me" and "I have freedom in determining how to do my job" and have scale anchors ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

TABLE 1
Demographic Profile of the Respondents and hotel characteristics

Demographics	Sample N= 325 Percentage
Gender	
Male	51.7
Female	48.3
Age	
Under 20	6.8
20-24	31.4
25-34	39.1
35-44	18.2
45-64	4.6
Ethnicity	
Malay	75.1
Chinese	10.5
Indian	7.4
Others	7.1
Hotel Star Rating	
3 Stars	14.5
4 Stars	36.6
5 Stars	48.9
Country of Hotel Origin	
Malaysia	62.8
Asian	23.4
International	13.8

TABLE 1 (continue)

Location of Hotel	
(Regional)	48.3
Central	34.8
North	3.4
South	13.5
East Coast	
Department	
Front Office	34.5
Food & Beverages	26.2
Housekeeping	15.4
Spa/Leisure/Gym	1.8
Public Area	2.8
Other Department	19.4
Years of Experience	
0-2 years	53.2
1-5 years	16.0
1-10 years	19.1
> 10 years	11.7

Positive and Negative Affectivity (PANAS)

PANAS was measured with Watson, Clark and Telegen (1988) which consist of 10 positive and 10 negative emotions-relevant words. Respondents were asked to rate their feelings towards the scale ranging from 1= very slightly to 5=extremely.

Job Satisfaction

The job satisfaction scales used in this study were adapted from Aziz (2007), based on the work of by Hackman and Oldham (1975). The original construct derived from the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) was measured by a five-item scale; however, the current study used only three-item scale due to the low loading found in Aziz's study on two-items (the low loading items are: "I frequently think of quitting this job" and "People on this job often think of quitting". A sample of used items was, "I am satisfied with the kind of work I do in this job" and "Most people on this job are very satisfied with their jobs". The respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with each statement, where 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Descriptive statistics, reliabilities and correlations using SPSS 17 were computed for each construct to obtain the results and to identify the relationships. Meanwhile, a reliability test using SPSS was conducted to examine the internal dependability of the constructs. The Cronbach's alpha of the constructs varies from .673 (job satisfaction) to .836 (positive emotions) which suggests the reliability of the study's constructs (see Table 2).

Table 2 presents cronbach-alpha and inter-constructs correlation. As depicted in Table 2, it was found that all hypotheses are supported as they provide evidence on the influence of empowerment on emotions and job satisfactions. In particular, empowerment was found to be significantly related with both positive emotions (.419) and job satisfaction (.399). On the contrary, empowerment was found to be negatively related to negative emotions although the correlation strength is not strong. As expected, positive emotions are positively related with job satisfaction and negative emotions are negatively related with job satisfaction.

Regression analysis results showed that empowerment dimensions; namely, 'task meaningfulness' were found to have stronger effect on job satisfaction as compared to the dimension of 'freedom to perform'. As shown in Table 3, the T value of task meaningfulness dimension was reasonably higher than freedom to perform dimension.

DISCUSSIONS

The overall purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between empowerment with a set of emotions, i.e. positive and negative emotions, and its influence on job satisfaction. This study primarily built on the conceptual developments of Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) as its theoretical background. The linkages among the tested constructs provide support to AET conceptualisation. The present study offers new insights into the role of empowerment plays in the relationship between emotions and job satisfactions. Strong empirical support was found in all the hypothesized relationships. Consistent with Lashley's (2001) suggestion, our results indicate that the more committed employee were to empowerment, the stronger the relationships of empowerment with positive emotions. Likewise, the least committed employee was to empowerment, the stronger the negative relationships of empowerment with negative emotions. That is, perceiving high level of empowerment was associated with both felt positive emotions and negative emotions. The results suggest that frontline employees reported their commitment through the empowerment given to them by displaying

TABLE 2
Cronbach Alpha and Correlations among the Constructs

N=325	Cronbach Alpha	Empowerment	Positive Emotions	Negative Emotions	Job Satisfaction
Empowerment	.789	1			
Positive Emotions	.836	.419**	1		
Negative Emotions	.821	-1.04*	-1.66**	1	
Job Satisfaction	.673	.453**	.416**	-.211**	1

** Correlations are significant at 0.01 levels (two tailed)
* Correlations are significant at 0.05 levels (one tailed)

TABLE 3
Regression of Empowerment Component- Task meaningfulness and freedom to perform

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable Job Satisfaction		
	Beta	T	Sig
Empowerment			
Task Meaningfulness	1.105	5.036	.000
Freedom to Perform	.686	4.330	.000

the right felt emotion which brings their own satisfaction at work. Past research has ignored the role of empowerment in emotion management work. The results of the present study suggest that empowerment plays an important role in engaging the felt emotions displayed by the employees. Our results also confirm that apparent existence of display rules will not guarantee in emotion regulation as individuals must be personally committed to the display rules in order for them to affect behaviour (Gosserand & Diefendorff, 2005). However, as this study has proposed, felt emotions that are genuinely displayed by individual's employees empirically validate its linkages with empowerment due to genuine feeling expressed. Thus, the organization does not have to strive to ensure that their employees are committed to display rules (Gosserand & Diefendorff, 2005).

In addition, it was also found that empowerment is positively related to job satisfaction, and this finding is consistent with some previous studies by Fulford and Enz (1995), McDonald and Siegall (1993), Snipes *et al.* (2005), and Gazzolli *et al.* (2010). The results of this study confirm the notion that empowerment is a motivational concept which considers power and control as useful in contributing to the job satisfaction at the workplace. In line with past studies, the results validate the concept of 'psychological empowerment' which suggests that employee's feeling of empowerment is experienced when they are competence in their ability to perform task well and they have a sense of meaning

or feeling that their work is personally important (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995).

Another notable finding is that both positive emotions and negative emotions were significantly related to job satisfaction. This result confirms parts of the AET theory, suggesting that specific emotions or affective reactions have influence in shaping employees' work attitude and behaviour (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). The result is also consistent with a study done by Wegge *et al.* (2006). Since employees displayed their felt emotions at work, what they feel is transmitted to their satisfaction at work. Their positive state of emotions helps them to deliver the service well, and with the assistance of empowerment given, the situation has been translated into satisfaction. Thus, it appears that positive emotions, in particular, play an important role on employees' satisfaction at work.

One of the aims of the study was to examine the effect of individual empowerment component, i.e. task meaningfulness and freedom to perform on job satisfaction. The result on the effect of both construct is interesting. It was found that task meaningfulness has higher effect on job satisfaction as compared to the freedom to perform. Both correlations (p< 0.01) and regression analysis (significant at $p = 0.00$) indicate that tasks meaningfulness is significantly higher than freedom to perform. Therefore, it can be stated that the effect of task meaningfulness resulted in higher job satisfaction in comparison with freedom to perform. In other words,

employees who have a sense of care about the job and care with what they do at work (Meaningfulness) will likely be more satisfied at work as compared to those who have freedom and have a chance to use personal initiative at work. Hence, task meaningfulness was found to be much a stronger predictor of job satisfaction than freedom to perform. Accordingly, this finding suggests that freedom to perform poses less of an influence on job satisfaction. The result is exciting that meaningfulness emerged to engage employees more in esteeming their enjoyment and happiness at work. This is consistent with Spreitzer's (1995) idea whereby she claims that meaningfulness involves a complement between the needs of one's work role and one's values, beliefs, and behaviours. Thus, meaningful job and task can shape individual affective behaviour towards their work, which is in line with AET conceptualization that underpins the study. Past research has always publicized empowerment as the act of giving people the opportunity to make workplace decisions by expanding their autonomy in decision making (Vogt, 1997). Instead, the empirical findings of the current study have proved that employees who perceive their work as meaningful are more satisfied at work as compared to employee who have some power to make decision as well as having the chance to use their initiatives at work.

Based on the findings, it is concluded that empowerment has an important role in shaping the right emotions of the employees, and it also acts as an important strategy in contributing to employee's satisfaction at work. Interestingly, the study also found that positive emotions have significant influence on employees' satisfaction at work.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Given the importance of empowerment in an organisation for both employees and customers, the specific relationships identified in the current study have provided meaningful implications for service management practice and theory. The study has provided results that can be used by academicians and practitioners, especially hotel managers, as a basis for making decision in managing suitable empowerment in the organization, while nurturing positive emotions in order for job satisfaction to be achieved.

Our research has contributed to research on empowerment and emotions in several ways. First of all, our study has shown that empowerment has influence in managing employees' emotion at work. The amount of empowerment given has provided a landscape for employees to deliver their job well with the right felt emotions. This in the end has been translated to employees' satisfaction at work. Our study has also provided evidence that empowerment is indeed a suitable solution to improve the performance of the employees which is later reported to job satisfaction. This study also contributes to the empowerment theory by providing evidence that task meaningfulness dimension is stronger predictor to job satisfaction relative to

freedom to perform dimension. Thus, it further suggests that management must re-structure the empowerment programme in the organization so that the employee will efficiently perform their task at work with the freedom and power given to them. Hotel management needs to develop suitable empowerment strategy that will lead to higher positive emotions which in turn increase employees' affective commitment (Kazlausskaite *et al.,* 2006) to the organization.

The relations between emotions and job satisfaction provide further evidence where positive emotions are positively related to job satisfaction and negative emotions are negatively related to job satisfactions. The research findings indicate that positive emotions are critical in shaping employee's satisfaction at work. Our findings suggest that expressing felt emotions is essential at work where it leads to employee's satisfaction. Therefore, management must play an important role in managing employees' emotions at work. Several strategies can be implemented to make sure that good working culture and healthy work environment is maintained in ensuring positive emotions among the workers. Among these strategies are ensuring that suitable empowerment programme is operated, employees' benefits and well-being are taken care of at the utmost, suitable training is provided on continual basis, and implementing performance related rewards.

Another practical implication is that hotel managers must be concerned with the initiative of empowerment given to the employees. As reported in the study, the freedom to perform dimension appear to be less significant in contributing to job satisfaction even though the disparity is marginal. It is significant that managers consider employing different forms of empowerment in order to maximize the potential in employees. Greater suggestion involvement and job involvement could be implemented in the organization (Lashley & McGoldrick, 1994) so that more allowance in task performance can be benefited while improving the 'culture of freedom to perform' by the employees. Besides the programme, managers also could apply empowerment zone (Berry, 1995; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1998) so that suitable empowerment strategy can be tailored to the right group of employees in an organization. For example, since freedom to perform dimension appears to be less important in bringing satisfaction at work, managers may channel the employees to green zone (safe zone) instead of amber (low risk) and red zone (high risk) so that employees are allowed and expected to make decision independently. This will encourage employees to have more freedom at work without worrying about the risks that they have to take. Having this said, hotel managers must consider re-structuring the empowerment strategy holistically and adopting suitable empowerment approach in order to maximize the benefit of empowerment. In general, right decision must be made by encompassing multifaceted and close integration of all aspects in empowerment antecedents such as managing

employee's emotions, suitable training, giving trust, creating suitable and right culture, knowledge distribution and many others. These antecedents should be treated as important ingredients in formulating suitable empowerment programme in the organization.

The findings provide a strong signal to the management of the hotel that the practice of empowerment at work is important in bringing satisfaction to the employees. Similarly, nurturing positive emotions among employees is imperative as it serves as an important strategy in improving employees' satisfaction. This means the management should give more attention in making sure that the empowerment practice takes its place in the organization and creates a suitable and healthy environment to foster positive emotions in order to enhance employee satisfaction as this situation has a very strong likelihood to bring high performance, which potentially contributes to the success of the organization.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Although this study has provided useful findings on the influence of empowerment, it has several limitations. One of the main limitations is that the current study is unable to provide evidence to suggest whether or not positive emotions mediate the relationship of empowerment with job satisfaction. Another limitation is associated with the generalization of the finding since the data is collected from one specific service industry. Hence, future studies should look into these

limitations by analyzing the data using advance statistical analysis such as structural equation modelling and replicate it in different service settings. A final limitation is based on the constructs used in the study. The current study chose empowerment as an individual construct to be examined. However based on AET conceptualisation, there were several features of work relevant to job satisfaction which may account for the whole relationship. The limitation is clear because other researchers may simply argue that a sound empirical test, which AET as a study background may want to consider other variables proposed. Thus, future research should consider adding other constructs so that the application of the AET theory can be more justified.

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