

Differences in Psychological Empowerment Perception of Female Employees Working in Hospitality Industry

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Abstract: In this investigation, differences in psychological empowerment perceptions of female employees working in hospitality industry are presented. Employee empowerment was measured using a 12 item scale developed by Spreitzer [1]. The questionnaire covered four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. A study applied to 373 female employees working 5 star hotels in Turkey. The data were solved using percent, frequency, mean, standard deviation, t-test, Anova and Tukey analysis. As a result of this analysis; it has been found that there is a statistical differences in psychological empowerment perceptions of female employees according to their age and length of time in this organization (except for self determination dimension), income level (except for competence and self-determination dimensions), marital status, education levels, length of time in tourism sector. In addition this results, it has been seen that there is no statistically significant difference according the type of work variable.

Key words: Psychological empowerment • Female employees • Hospitality industry

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry has become one of the most popular industries due to the dynamic nature of the industry [2]. Some researchers reported that hospitality sector is an important and its contributions undeniable to the national economy are numerous in providing employment opportunities, provision of alternative and added income for the rural population, supporting the growth of secondary activities such as material and equipment suppliers and the sector also complements the expansion of both domestic and inbound tourism [3]. It depends heavily on the ability of customer contact employees to properly deliver their services. The attitudes and behaviors of contact employees can significantly affect customers perceptions of the service because service delivery occurs during the interaction between employees and customers [4]. Therefore, they should invest in service skills training to enhance the ability of employees to meet the complex service demands of customers [5]. To accomplish this, employee empowerment is receiving increased attention with the consumer in services sector and more specifically the hospitality industry [6].

A primary objective of employee empowerment is to create a workforce that is energized by an enhanced ability to produce products or services that meet or exceed internal and external customers' expectations [7]. When employees believe that they have the necessary skills and possibilities to handle more challenging tasks and the value of their work goals is congruent with individual's own ideals, it is expected that they will get involved in extra-role behaviors towards an organization, such as offering ideas to improve the functioning of a firm or expressing loyalty towards the organization [8]. Managers must train employees and empower them to handle most guest incidents on the spot and with good judgment promptly, professionally and courteously in the hospitality industry. This will improve guest service and satisfaction, create a better working environment for the employees and free up more time for managers to focus on the tasks of being a manager [9]. Therefore, to obtain a competitive advantage and to differentiate a company from others, employees empowered by supportive managers are a key to success in a competitive world [10].

The majority of the researcher's efforts have focussed on the organizational practices and managerial

role in creating empowering conditions [11]. Although, there are so many researchs about the employee empowerment in the different sectors, there is no enough research about the employee empowerment in the hospitality industry. Moreover, researchers reported that employees' perspectives are crucial because empowerment is not a permanent, fixed reality that is shared by all, but rather is something that varies in how it is experienced from individual to individual [12]. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to provide informations about differences in psychological empowerment perceptions of female employees working in hospitality industry. This study can generate unique and timely insights into employee empowerment.

The Concept of the Psychological Empowerment:

Researchers have approached the definition of empowerment differently. Empowerment was classified as relational construct and motivational construct of employment. They have described empowerment with respect to motivational processes 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 [13]. Another definition was done as increased intrinsic task motivation and their model identifies four cognitions (task assessments) as the basis for worker empowerment: sense of impact, competence, meaningfulness and choice [14]. Empowerment was defined empowerment as the psychological state of a subordinate perceiving four dimensions of meaningfulness, competence self-determination and impact, which is affected by empowering behaviours of the supervisor [15]. Another definition of empowerment is a means to enable employees to make decisions and as a personal phenomenon where individuals take responsibility for their own actions [16]. Researchers reported that empowerment places some responsibility on the individual for creating his or her own conditions for growth and setting goals and targets. These are the following key values and assumptions central to the concept of empowerment [17]:

- Each person is unique and worthy of respect,
- Individuals are responsible for their own behaviour and actions,
- New situations contain opportunities for learning and growth,
- Mistakes are learning experiences, not failures,

- Only oneself can activate the potential for creativity and growth,
- All persons can do more than they are currently doing,
- One's own fear is the major limiter for personal growth and
- Growth and development never end.

It has been seen through related literature examination that empowerment is investigated in two dimensions: behavioral and psychological. Empowerment is studied by some writers [16, 18-20] in behavioral dimension which approaches in terms of responsibilities of high management and the tasks managers need to complete; while some other writers study it in psychological dimension [1, 13, 14, 21] which approaches in terms of not what high managers should do, but how do workers perceive the things done. Psychological empowerment is the perception by members that they have the opportunity to help determine work roles, accomplish meaningful work and influence important decisions [22]. Psychological empowerment was explained four cognitions as follows:

Meaning: This assessment concerns the value of the task goal or purpose, judged in relation to the individual's own ideals or standards. In other words, it involves the individual's intrinsic caring about a given task [14].

Competence: This assessment refers to the degree to which a person can perform task activities skillfully when he or she tries [14]. Employees must feel that they are competent to engage in the behaviors required by the environment [23].

Self-Determination: This assessment reflects autonomy in the initiation and continuation of work behaviors and processes; examples are making decisions about work method, pace and effort [10]. Employees must perceive the opportunity to make a choice [23]. Some researchers observed that perceived choice (self-determination) produces greater flexibility, creativity, initiative, resiliency and self-regulation. In contrast, the sense that a person is controlled by events leads to tension, a more negative emotional tone and decreased self-esteem [14].

Impact: This assessment is the degree to which an individual can influence strategy, administrative, or operating outcomes at work [10]. Employees must believe that their behavior will have some influence on what happens in this environment.

These components can be viewed as the essential prerequisites for the motivation to engage in empowered behaviors in the work environment [23]. The four dimensions are argued to combine additively to create an overall construct of psychological empowerment. In other words, the lack of any single dimension will deflate, though not completely eliminate, the overall degree of felt empowerment. Thus, the four dimensions specify “a nearly complete or sufficient set of cognitions” for understanding psychological empowerment” [10]. Empowerment contributes to the making of so-called learning organizations. Compared to their non-empowered counterparts, empowered employees are likely to be cognitively more active and are more likely to modify their own behaviors and attitudes toward customers in order to reach both personal and organizational goals. They internalize customer feedback into their personal conduct and analyze the effects of the different behaviors they develop regarding their outcomes. All this cognitive activity triggered by empowerment is likely to improve the organization’s adaptability [4].

Employees had a positive approach to empowerment although advantages and disadvantages. Some of the disadvantages for the employees are communication difficulties, unclear work practices, higher levels of pressure on staff and increased competition among employees. Advantages for the employees included higher levels of job satisfaction, better customer service, more rapid decision making and personal development. [16]. Psychological empowerment has a positive impact on job satisfaction for American restaurant employees and American hospitality workers, organizational commitment for Korean hotel restaurant employees and employee perceived service quality for American service workers [24].

Efficiency empowerment provides to the process of service production, one which is both produced and delivered simultaneously, an ultimate increase in the effectiveness of its delivery [25]. The study conducted by [26] has been used hotel employees and found that managers are more likely to empower their employees and use behavior-based evaluation. Namely, empowerment has an important effect on job satisfaction of employees. Moreover, another researcher [27] has shown through a research made on the service sector that, as a result of psychological empowerment, there is a positive relation between facing the customer needs and satisfaction.

Empowering employees contributes to the organizational effectiveness and guest satisfaction by

creating more job satisfaction and self-esteem for employees and engaging in discretionary behavior aiming at meeting or exceeding guests’ expectations in service encounters [28]. Empowered employees are likely to be more satisfied with and committed to their job and they support-based relationships in the organization might foster feelings of empowerment [29].

Method

Sample and Sampling: Data for this research were collected from 5-star female hotel employees in Turkey from June 2010 through September 2010. Respondents were 373 Turkish women. Since 5-star hotels tend to have a larger number of employees, these hotels were selected to populate the sample with “enough” female employees. The study used a proportional stratified random sampling based on the number of 5-star hotels and their total number of employees. 1500 questionnaires were sent to each hotel manager to distribute to their female employees. After a waiting 3 months, 373 usable questionnaires were filled out by female employees who worked in all departments of the hotels that were covered in the study. This sampling scheme also met the acceptable level of sample size that was suggested for the study.

There are questions about female employees’ characteristics such as age, marital status, monthly income level, education level, length of time in the organization and tourism sector and type of work in the first part of the questionnaires. The second part of the questionnaire included empowerment questions. Employee empowerment was measured using a 12-item scale developed by [1]. The questionnaire covered four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Five-Likert scale was used with the endpoints labeled with “I do not agree at all” [1] and “I agree completely” [5]. Four composite values of dimensions rather than 16 items were used for analysis. As detailed in the following sections, data analysis procedures include descriptive analysis, factor analysis, t-tests and multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA). The study utilized SPSS for data analysis.

RESULTS

In this research was conducted to determine if there is a statistical difference in psychological empowerment perceptions of female employees considering respondents’ some characteristics (ages, marital status, income level, education level, length of time in this organization and length of time in tourism sector) by using Variance

Table 1: Differences in Psychological Empowerment Perceptions of Female Employees According to Ages

Dimensions	Age	Mean	S	F	sd	P
Meaning	18 and less	3.9643	.79783	3.107	4-368	.016
	19-26	3.7371	.98764			
	27-34	3.5512	1.14157			
	35-42	3.2708	1.50611			
	43 ve üzeri	3.1296	1.24795			
Coppetence	18 and less	4.1786	.75622	2.608	4-368	.035
	19-26	3.7766	.89291			
	27-34	3.6898	1.23492			
	35-42	3.5312	1.45139			
	43 ve üzeri	3.2407	1.29254			
Self-Determination	18 and less	3.6786	.56278	.412	4-368	.800
	19-26	3.6392	.86998			
	27-34	3.5941	1.17341			
	35-42	3.5729	1.16470			
	43 ve üzeri	3.3519	.94608			
Impact	18 and less	2.6905	.86984	6.921	4-368	.000
	19-26	3.2027	.91625			
	27-34	3.5611	.99099			
	35-42	2.8542	.93494			
	43 ve üzeri	3.3333	.84017			

Table 2: Differences in Psychological Empowerment Perceptions of Female Employees According to Marital Status

Dimensions	Marital Status	Mean	S	F	Sd	p
Meaning	Married	3.2896	1.34550	14.229	2-370	.000
	Single	3.7911	.87589			
	Widow	4.4762	.44749			
Competence	Married	3.4080	1.33624	11.843	2-370	.000
	Single	3.8919	.84964			
	Widow	4.3810	.43080			
Self-Determination	Married	3.3682	1.15706	6.955	2-370	.001
	Single	3.7570	.84235			
	Widow	3.5714	.33150			
Impact	Married	3.2463	1.03726	3.180	2-370	.043
	Single	3.1941	.92709			
	Widow	3.9571	.42796			

Analysis test. In addition this analysis, t-test was performed to determine if there is a statistical difference in empowerment dimensions considering type of work. According to study results;

According to the Variance Analysis test results; there is a statistically significant difference between ages and three empowerment dimensions ($p < 0.05$). Afterwards, to determine the age group causing this difference; a research was made with Tukey HSD test which is one of Post Hoc tests. As a result of this research, it has been determined that there is not a statistically significant difference between answer averages of employees belonging between 21-30 and between 31-40 age groups; while dual differences between answer averages obtained from other age groups are statistically significant.

According to the Variance Analysis test results; there is a statistically significant difference between

marital status and four empowerment dimensions ($p < 0.05$). Afterwards, to determine the marital status group causing this difference; a research was made with Tukey HSD test which is one of Post Hoc tests. As a result of this research, it has been determined that there is a statistically significant difference between answer averages of employees belonging married-single and married-widow in meaning and competence dimensions, married- in self determination, single-widow in impact dimension, while dual differences between answer averages obtained from other marital status groups are not statistically significant.

According to the Variance Analysis test results; it has been determined that there is a statistically significant difference between employees' incomes and empowerment ($p < 0.05$). Afterwards, to determine the income group causing this difference; a research was made with Tukey HSD test which is one of Post Hoc tests.

Table 3: Differences in Psychological Empowerment Perceptions of Female Employees According to Income Level

Dimensions	Income L.	Mean.	S	F	sd	P
Meaning	1500 and less	3.6144	1.06184	3.534	3-369	.015
	1501-2500	3.7353	1.09205			
	2501-3500	3.8272	1.34409			
	3501 and over	2.0000	.00000			
Competence	1500 and less	3.7287	1.06322	.263	3-369	.852
	1501-2500	3.7549	1.15845			
	2501-3500	3.8272	1.03515			
	3501 and over	3.3333	.00000			
Self-Determination	1500 and less	3.5706	.94888	2.015	3-369	.111
	1501-2500	3.6176	1.10519			
	2501-3500	4.0370	.82862			
	3501 and over	3.3333	.00000			
Impact	1500 and less	3.1156	.94412	5.865	3-369	.001
	1501-2500	3.5882	1.09744			
	2501-3500	3.5802	.39864			
	3501 and over	3.3333	.00000			

Table 4: Differences in Psychological Empowerment Perceptions of Female Employees According to Education Level

Dimension	Education Level	Mean	S	F	sd	P
Meaning	Primary	2.0000	.77986	15.738	4-368	.000
	High School	3.7684	.99142			
	Associate	3.5062	.96640			
	College	3.8272	1.05096			
	Graduate	3.2456	1.24644			
Competence	Primary	2.3333	.91766	11.544	4-368	.000
	High School	3.8220	1.16915			
	Associate	3.6173	.88880			
	College	3.9177	.94724			
	Graduate	3.4737	.98329			
Self-Determination	Primary	2.6000	.73030	11.344	4-368	.000
	High School	3.4859	1.02545			
	Associate	3.7593	.78084			
	College	3.8436	.92520			
	Graduate	3.0351	.71918			
Impact	Primary	2.4667	.46390	11.021	4-368	.000
	High School	2.9435	1.03068			
	Associate	3.2716	.86408			
	College	3.4712	.91355			
	Graduate	3.7895	.51172			

As a result of this research, there is a statistically significant difference between answer averages of employees belonging 1500 and less/3501 and over, 1501-2500/3501 and over, 2501-3500/3501 and over income groups in meaning dimension; 1500 and less/1501-2500, 1501-2500/ 1500 and less income groups in impact dimension, while dual differences between answer averages obtained from other income are not statistically significant.

According to the Variance Analysis test results; there is a statistically significant difference between education levels and empowerment employees ($p < 0.05$). Afterwards, to determine the education level group causing this difference; a research was made with Tukey HSD test which is one of Post Hoc tests. As a result of

this research, it has been determined that there is a statistically significant difference between answer averages of employees belonging primary- high school, primary-associate, primary-college, primary-graduate in meaning and competence dimensions; primary- high school, primary-associate, primary-college, high school college, associate-graduate, graduate-college in self determination dimension; primary- associate, primary-college, primary-graduate, high school-college, high school- graduate in mimpact dimension; while dual differences between answer averages obtained from other education groups are not statistically significant.

According to the Variance Analysis test results; there is a statistically significant difference between length of time in the organization and empowerment of

Table 5: Differences in Psychological Empowerment Perceptions of Female Employees According to Length of time in this organization

Dimensions	Length of time in this org.	Mean	S	F	Sd	p
Meaning	Less than 1 year	3.6212	.71903	3.341	3-369	.019
	1-5 year	3.8061	1.17889			
	5-10 year	3.3867	1.31866			
	11 and over	3.1795	1.51911			
Competence	Less than 1 year	3.7121	.86764	4.118	3-369	.007
	1-5 year	3.9281	.97628			
	5-10 year	3.4667	1.36999			
	11 and over	3.2821	1.60927			
Self-Determination	Less than 1 year	3.5278	.82068	1.994	3-369	.114
	1-5 year	3.7538	.90948			
	5-10 year	3.4667	1.20808			
	11 and over	3.5897	1.40207			
Impact	Less than 1 year	3.0303	.90840	3.855	3-369	.010
	1-5 year	3.3203	.94967			
	5-10 year	3.3556	.96847			
	11 and over	3.6923	1.25064			

Table 6: Differences in Psychological Empowerment Perceptions of Female Employees According to Length of Time in Tourism Sector

Dimensions	Length of time in tourism sector	Mean	S	F	sd	p
Meaning	Less than 1 year	3.1415	1.13431	11.821	3-369	.000
	1-5 year	3.7143	1.13429			
	5-10 year	3.9394	.80441			
	11 and over	3.9206	1.08902			
Competence	Less than 1 year	3.5094	1.05028	3.386	3-369	.018
	1-5 year	3.7011	1.17895			
	5-10 year	3.9529	.88321			
	11 and over	3.9048	1.10256			
Self-Determination	Less than 1 year	3.3491	.87696	7.480	3-369	.000
	1-5 year	3.5582	1.09693			
	5-10 year	3.7407	.77013			
	11 and over	4.1190	1.00896			
Impact	Less than 1 year	3.0252	.86397	3.114	3-369	.026
	1-5 year	3.2354	1.00317			
	5-10 year	3.4040	.92615			
	11 and over	3.3889	1.07173			

Table 7: Differences in Psychological Empowerment Perceptions of Female Employees According to Gender

	Type Of Work	Ort.	S	T	Sd	p
Meaning	Part-time	3.6993	1.01642	.652	371	.515
	Full-time	3.6133	1.12225			
Competence	Part-time	3.6630	.94345	-.756	371	.450
	Full-time	3.7604	1.11105			
Self-Determination	Part-time	3.4674	.93899	-1.630	371	.104
	Full-time	3.6572	.97910			
Impact	Part-time	3.0978	.73552	-1.611	371	.108
	Full-time	3.2835	1.02154			

employees ($p < 0.05$). Afterwards, to determine the length of time causing this difference; a research was made with Tukey HSD test which is one of Post Hoc tests. As a result of this research, it has been determined that dual differences of answer averages of employees belonging 1-5 year/ 5-10 year in meaning and competence dimensions are statistically significant; while dual differences between answer averages obtained from other groups are not statistically significant.

According to the Variance Analysis test results; it has been determined that, there is a statistically

significant difference between length of time in tourism sector and empowerment of employees ($p < 0.05$). Afterwards, to determine the length of time causing this difference; a research was made with Tukey HSD test which is one of Post Hoc tests. As a result of this research, it has been determined that dual differences of answer averages of employees belonging less than 1 year-1-5 year, less than 1 year/ 5-10 year, less than 1 year/11 year and over in meaning dimension; less than 1 year/5-10 year, less than 1 year/11 and over, 1-5 year/11 and over in self determination dimension; less than

1 year/5-10 year in competence and impact dimensions are statistically significant; while dual differences between answer averages obtained from other groups are not statistically significant.

A research was made to determine if there is a statistical difference in empowerment dimensions considering type of work in this research (Table. 7). As a result of t-test, it has been seen that there is no statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$).

CONCLUSIONS

In the improving and changing world, empowerment is the important issue to success some organizational goals in the hospitality industry. It involves fundamental changes to the traditional hierarchical organizational structure that most hospitality-management programs teach and how most hospitality operations are run [9].

With empowerment, employees will be able to accommodate customer requests and achieve the highest service quality standards. Empowerment is a prerequisite for successful quality initiatives and should be incorporated into the service delivery process so that customer needs are addressed more quickly and resolved more efficiently [30]. Empowerment applications in a management are not a technique which can be accomplished in short order. Since it brings continual education and development, managements should be dedicated about the subject and focused not on daily but long term incomes. Also, there should be an open communication atmosphere in the management and there should not be any lack of knowledge sharing and a climate of trust has to be established [31].

In this research was conducted to determine if there is a statistical difference in psychological empowerment perceptions of female employees considering respondents some characteristics (ages, marital status, income level, education level, length of time in this organization and length of time in tourism sector) by using Variance Analysis test. In addition this analysis, t-test was performed to determine if there is a statistical difference in empowerment dimensions considering type of work. According to the results; it has been found that there is a statistical differences in psychological empowerment perceptions of female employees according to their age and length of time in this organization (except for self determination dimension), income level (except for competence and self-determination dimensions), marital status, education levels, length of time in tourism sector. In addition this results, it has been seen that there is no statistically significant difference according the type of work variable.

The main contribution of this research is defining the concept of psychological empowerment. Moreover, the study's findings that examining if there is a statistical difference in psychological empowerment perceptions of female employees considering respondents some characteristics would help in managing hospitality industry. Although the study utilized female employees from 5-star hotels in Turkey, the findings will made both global and regional implications for the hospitality and tourism sector.

The use of the solely female hotel employees may be considered a limitation of this study. Future research can be conducted all employees who work in the hospitality sector, in Turkey. Moreover, both psychological and behavioral dimensions of the empowerment can be using more efficient outcomes rather than psychological empowerment dimension. This study finding may be useful for hotel managers to improve their female employees' psychological empowerment levels.

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