

Psychological empowerment and organisational change among hotel employees in Egypt

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Empowering employees can have a significant impact on increasing job satisfaction, efficiency and productivity in the hotel industry. This paper aims to investigate the effect of empowerment on readiness for and acceptance of organisational changes among employees in Egyptian chain hotels. The study used a survey questionnaire to examine psychological empowerment across four dimensions (meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) and readiness for change. Data were collected from 386 employees in chain hotels in Egypt, and the relationships between variables were examined using correlation and multiple regression analysis. The results show that there were no correlations between acceptance of change and any individual dimension of psychological empowerment. However, the regression analysis shows that psychological empowerment had a slight, but significant, positive effect on acceptance of organisational change. The overall model explained 2.7% of the variance in organisational change. Both “meaning” and “impact” constructs were significant, although “meaning” had a slight negative effect. These findings suggest that hotel managers should consider the effect of psychological empowerment when preparing for organisational change, although this is only one factor which should be taken into account.

Keywords: psychological empowerment, organisational change, hospitality industry, Egypt

Introduction

In recent years, the idea of employee empowerment has developed increasing influence in the hospitality and service sector (Kruja, Ha, Drishti & Oelfke, 2016). It is considered to be one of the most efficient methods of increasing productivity and efficiency, as well as improving guest satisfaction (Lee & Ok, 2015a; 2015b; Kruja et al., 2016). Empowerment has been found to help increase employee productivity and efficiency across a wide range of sectors. It can also improve employee satisfaction and help to retain the best employees (Elnaga & Imran, 2014; Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2015; Lee & Ok, 2015b).

Empowerment concerns the relationship between managers and employees. Managers are defined as those who make decisions that guide employees through their work. Employees are the subject of decisions made by managers, but can also be actively involved in decisions as they participate in the processes of a job or organisation (Kim, 2011; Kara, 2012; Al-khasawneh, 2013; Fernandez, & Moldogaziev, 2015). This suggests that it is likely to be important to empower employees in any organisation. When employees are given authority and responsibility, and are provided with a suitable environment in which to work, they will significantly contribute to the organisation’s ability to achieve its objectives (Elnaga & Imran, 2014; Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2015; Lee & Ok, 2015a; 2015b).

Hospitality is a service industry, provided from a variety of venues, including hotels, motels, resorts, clubs, and restaurants. The industry has a wide range of management structures and ownership arrangements, ranging from

independent owner-operators to chain operators. The hospitality industry is not seen as a major user of technology, but is in reality reliant upon fairly sophisticated computer equipment for reservations, accounting and monitoring of energy consumption (Kim, 2011; Kara, 2012; Al-khasawneh, 2013). Operational management systems, marketing and finance vary in their sophistication, depending principally upon the size of the company. The staff and customers probably have the biggest impact upon how the process of providing hospitality is carried out. The use of tacit skills – those that interpret the contextual framework and acknowledge the shared perception of customers and staff – are crucial to the enhancement of the service experience (Blanchard, Carlos & Randolph, 2001; Curtis & Lucas, 2001; Mills & Ungson, 2003). Employee perceptions of their organisation, expressed through the concept of “organisational climate” and the employees’ relationship with customers are also crucial to the success of the enterprise.

A wide range of research has been conducted across the hospitality industry, and on empowerment. There are, however, few if any studies that specifically focus on the effect of empowerment on organisational performance in hotels. There are studies on empowerment within the hotel industry (Kim, 2011; Kara, 2012; Al-khasawneh, 2013), but these studies have tended to concentrate on how organisational climate can be translated into an indicator of organisational effectiveness. A recent study on psychological empowerment among primary healthcare workers in Iran suggested that it could improve readiness for, and acceptance of, organisational change (Khammarnia, Ravangard & Asadi, 2014).

The aim of this exploratory study was therefore to evaluate

the effect of empowerment among hotel employees on their acceptance of organisational change. It sought to answer the question: "Does employee psychological empowerment affect employee acceptance of organisational change?" A detailed literature review was carried out and a scale to measure empowerment was developed. 385 hotel employees working in the Egyptian hotel sector completed this via a self-administered questionnaire survey.

Employee empowerment

The concept of empowerment has been increasingly used in management in recent years. Scholars in the field have discussed and developed the understanding of empowerment using various perspectives (Eby, Adams, Russell & Gaby, 2000; Weber & Weber, 2001; Cunningham et al., 2002; Madsen, Miller & John, 2005; Rafferty & Simons, 2006; Lam, Cho & Qu, 2007; Kim, 2011; Fachruddin & Mangundjaya, 2012; Kara, 2012; Al-khasawneh, 2013), and several definitions have been proposed. Some authors have suggested that empowering employees is part of the overall management process, in which authority and power is delegated to employees to involve them in the decision-making process and improve organisational productivity (Lee & Koh, 2001). Pardo del Val and Lloyd (2003, p. 102) defined empowerment as the "involvement of employees in the decision-making process". The concept of empowerment has also been studied from the psychological or motivational perspective, where it is considered to be a strategy to increase feelings of self-efficacy and motivation among organisation members. According to Jha (2011, p. 380), empowerment is "the process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organisational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness, and through their removal by both formal organisational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information". Other authors provide similar definitions, which consider empowerment to be designed to reduce "powerlessness and increase intrinsic task motivation" (Ahmad & Oranye, 2010, p. 583).

Although the empowerment literature offers different definitions of empowerment, most of these assume that empowerment implies giving employees more authority and discretion in performing work tasks. Thomas and Velthouse (1990, p. 667) offer a comprehensive definition of empowerment, stating as follows:

Our perception is that the word empowerment has become popular because it provides a label for a non-traditional paradigm of motivation...that encourage[s] commitment, risk-taking, and innovation...We use the word empowerment to refer to the motivational content of this newer paradigm of management.

This definition suggests there may be different understandings of empowerment in the literature. It describes two main perspectives of the empowerment concept, relational (or organisational) and motivational (or psychological). The literature identifies three common types of empowerment, leadership empowerment, structural empowerment, and psychological empowerment (Kuokkanen & Leino-Kilpi, 2000; Menon, 2001). This study examines the two most frequently used perspectives, *structural/relational* and *motivational/psychological*.

Empowerment as a relational construct

When empowerment is viewed as a relational construct, it is considered to be the relational process by which leaders or managers share their power with employees (Özaralli, 2003). The primary focus is on the authority of the actors (either manager or employee) within the managerial process. Empowering subordinates means they are allocated more power or authority over organisational resources. Many scholars have agreed that the central tenet of empowerment as a concept is to decentralise decision-making power to a lower level of management (Fulford & Enz, 1995; Morrison, Jones & Fuller, 1997).

This perspective therefore considers empowerment as a set of strategies including policy practices, and work processes to distribute responsibilities, authority and power to subordinates (Daft & Lewin, 1993; Chebat & Kollias, 2000). It includes specific aspects of decentralising authority, such as management by objectives, goal-setting by subordinates, and quality circles (Logan & Ganster, 2007; Raelin & Cataldo, 2011).

There are a number of definitions of structural empowerment including "management practices and policies that aimed to transfer power from management to employees" (Kassim, Yusoff & Fong, 2012, p. 133), and "freeing someone from rigorous control by instructions, policies, and orders, and giving that person freedom to take responsibility for ideas that he/she provides for management, decisions, and actions that he/she makes in the workplace context" (Melhem, 2004, p. 73). The main focus of structural empowerment is therefore to set out appropriate policies and practices in the organisational setting to distribute power, authority, and responsibility to the lower levels of the organisation.

The idea of structural empowerment is fostered by democratic values within an organisation. Empowerment is a mechanism in which responsibility and power are shared with individuals at all levels of a system (Prasad, 2001). The main focus of structural empowerment is on sharing power through a system set out for the purpose, in which employees participate and are given responsibility (Chang & Liu, 2008). The structural perspective emphasises the importance of changing organisational policies, practices, and structures from top-down control systems to high involvement practices (Ferris, 2009). As more power, information, knowledge, and rewards are given to employees, they become more empowered.

This structural perspective is limited in several ways. Firstly, it does not address the nature of empowerment as experienced by employees. Some studies have found that even where employees had been given delegated power, knowledge, information and rewards, they still felt disempowered (Elnaga & Imran, 2014; Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2015; Lee & Ok, 2015b). Lack of awareness about the purpose of employee empowerment can lead to its failure in the organisation. These issues suggest that the psychological perspective on empowerment is also important.

Empowerment as a motivational construct

In a motivational sense, empowerment is linked to an intrinsic need for self-determination (Spreitzer, 1992), or a belief in personal self-efficacy (Kuokkanen & Leino-Kilpi, 2000). Empowering employees is therefore a managerial strategy or technique to support their self-determination need or

self-efficacy belief. Lee and Koh (2001) defined “empower” as “to enable”, and equivalent to motivating through enhancing personal efficacy. This has a quite different meaning from the earlier definition of empowerment as delegation of authority and resource sharing.

Psychological empowerment is therefore the set of psychological conditions necessary for individuals to feel in control of their own destiny. In contrast to the structural perspective, which sees empowerment as the process of delegating authority and resources to the lower levels of the organisation, psychological empowerment views empowerment as a strategy that enables or enhances personal efficacy (Liden, Wayne & Sparrowe, 2000). Definitions of psychological empowerment include the state of mind in which an employee experiences the feeling of control over how the job can be done, has enough awareness of the work tasks that are being performed, a high level of responsibility for both personal work outcome and overall organisational advancement, and the perceived justice in the rewards is based on individual and collective performance (Melhem, 2004).

There are four aspects to building a psychological sense of empowerment, competence, impact, meaning and self-determination (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995b). *Competence* reflects self-efficacy, a belief in personal capability to perform work activities with skill. *Impact* is the degree to which the individual can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work. *Meaning* describes consistency between perceptions of the role and the employee’s beliefs, values and behaviours. Finally, *self-determination* is a sense of choice in initiating and regulating personal actions. These four together reflect an active, rather than passive, orientation to the designated role of employees (Spreitzer, 1995b).

This four-dimensional conceptualisation of psychological empowerment is supported by the literature on empowerment from several disciplines including psychology, sociology, social work, and education (Spreitzer, 1995b). Based on the work of Thomas and Velthouse (1990), Spreitzer (1995b) developed a four-dimensional scale to measure psychological empowerment, which was later validated (Kraimer, Seibert & Liden, 1999). This scale has dominated empirical research on psychological empowerment across a wide range of contexts, including a large service organisation (Liden et al., 2000), a Fortune 500 manufacturing company (Spreitzer, 1995a), the lower levels in the insurance industry (Denison & Spreitzer, 1991), the hospitality industry (Corsun & Enz, 1999), hospitals (Kraimer et al., 1999; Brossoit, 2001), and particularly nursing (Brancato, 2007), and banking services (Kark, Shamir & Chen, 2003). It is therefore possible to assert that the psychological perspective on empowerment applies widely and can be generalised across a range of environments (Mallak and Kurstedt, 1996; Bach, Kessler & Heron, 2007; Raelin & Cataldo, 2011; Anders & Cassidy, 2014).

Organisational change and excellence

Organisations have been urged by scholars over many years to use innovative practices to strategically enhance their manpower, achieve organisational excellence and accomplish organisational goals (Holden, 2003; Bach et al., 2007). Organisational change is therefore seen as an essential factor in improving employee performance, productivity, job loyalty, and superordinate–subordinate trust.

There is an extensive body of literature on the factors affecting organisational change. It demonstrates, in particular, that one factor in its success is employee readiness for change, also known as willingness to accept, or acceptance of organisational change. This is defined as “the extent to which individuals are mentally, psychologically or physically ready, prepared or primed to participate in organization development activities” (Hanpachern, 1997, cited in Mangundjaya, 2013). This is demonstrated in particular by a high score for promoting and participating in change in the scale established.

A recent study by Khammaria et al. (2014) examined psychological empowerment and attitudes towards organisational change among primary healthcare workers in Iran. It found positive and significant relationships between competence, impact and attitude towards organisational change. This strongly suggests that improving psychological empowerment of employees could increase the success of organisational change projects designed to improve organisational performance. This may also be the case in the hotel industry. This study therefore aimed to explore the relationship between psychological empowerment and readiness for organisational change among employees of chain hotels in Egypt.

Research approach

This section describes the research setting and design for this study, including the sampling methods, sample, instruments and procedures for data collection and analysis. The study’s main approach is quantitative, to investigate the relationships between acceptance of organisational change and psychological empowerment. The study applied a quantitative design, influenced by its positivist orientation (Creswell, 2003) (i.e. the quantitative data is seen as the most important data collected). The study hypotheses were:

- H1: Employee empowerment affects acceptance of organisational change.
- H1a: The competence domain of employee empowerment affects acceptance of organisational change.
- H1b: The impact domain of employee empowerment affects acceptance of organisational change.
- H1c: The meaning domain of employee empowerment affects acceptance of organisational change.
- H1d: The self-determination domain of employee empowerment affects acceptance of organisational change.

A list of four- and five-star chain hotels in major cities in Egypt was obtained from a directory of Egyptian hotels provided by the tourism authority in Egypt. This served as the sampling frame. These hotels were considered more likely than smaller and more independent organisations to have formal HR practices about employee empowerment.

HR managers in these hotels were contacted personally or by telephone and given information about the study and its aim, then asked whether the researchers could visit the hotel with the questionnaire. Questionnaires were distributed to the 17 hotels that agreed to participate.

The employees were informed in advance of the survey and asked to agree to participate on a voluntary basis. Approximately 45–50 employee in each hotel were involved. Volunteers were asked to set aside 15 minutes of uninterrupted time to complete the survey.

The questionnaire design was informed by the model of Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b), and included questions across four main domains of employee empowerment. Each question was completed using a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A higher score indicates a higher level of psychological empowerment. Sample questions included:

Meaning

- The work I do is very important to me
- My job activities are personally meaningful to me
- The work I do is meaningful to me
- Competence
- I am confident about my ability to do my job
- I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities
- I have mastered the skills necessary for my job
- Self-determination
- I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job
- I have decided on my own how to go about doing my work
- I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my work

Impact

- My impact on what happens in my department is large
- I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department
- I have significant influence over what happens in my department

To measure acceptance of organisational change, this study used Hanpachern's (1997) original 14-item readiness-for-change scale. The items use a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely). Summing and averaging the 14 items, with possible scores ranging from 14–70, determined the overall readiness score. A higher score indicates greater readiness for change.

The data analysis used linear/logistic regression. All analyses used SPSS 23. A descriptive analysis of the demographic data was used to describe the sample characteristics, including means and standard deviations for the demographic variables. Frequency tables were used to assess distribution of study variables for normality, and the data were tested for skewness and kurtosis. Data were inspected for inconsistencies, outliers, and wild data entry codes.

Correlations between the study variables used a chi-square test for nominal level data. A two-tailed test with significance set at the 0.05 level was used, even though the hypothesised relationship was directional, as a conservative check (Field, 2005). The correlation matrix was used to investigate correlations between independent variables and the dependent variable, to determine whether any controls for these were needed in subsequent analyses. The correlation matrix was also checked to see whether the psychological empowerment variables were significantly related to acceptance of organisational change.

Multiple regression analysis was used to assess the relationship between the four dimensions of psychological empowerment. Each of the four dimensions was entered into the model to see its impact on organisational change, and then all four were inserted simultaneously, to see if any were significant predictors of acceptance of organisational change.

Findings

Of the 850 employees who were sent the questionnaire survey, a total of 386 staff responded with usable questionnaires, a response rate of 45%. The sample therefore contains 386 observations and 35 variables (seven demographic and 28 survey questions). Quality analysis was performed on the data for each variable to determine if there were any outliers or erroneous data. No data cleaning was required.

The mean age of the respondents was 32.88 years with a standard deviation of 8.43. The sample was reasonably evenly split between males ($n = 206$, 53.4%) and females ($n = 180$, 46.6%). Most respondents had more than ten years of experience ($n = 280$, 72.5%), but had been in their current position for less than ten years ($n = 344$, 89.1%). The majority had a Bachelor degree ($n = 287$, 74.4%) and were not classed as managers ($n = 242$, 62.7%). In total, 249 were employed in four-star (64.5%) and 137 in five-star hotels (35.5%).

Cronbach's alpha was calculated to test the reliability of organisational change and empowerment items (see Table 1). All the items had sufficient and strong reliability.

Means for each survey question were compared and results are shown in Table 2. Overall, respondents reported a high level of likelihood for each item. "Create new ideas" had the lowest mean at 5.99 and "Learn new things" had the highest mean response at 6.51.

Means for each survey question for empowerment are shown in Table 3. Overall, and like the organisational change items, respondents reported a high level of agreement with each item. "My job activities are personally meaningful to me", from the Meaning construct, had the lowest mean at 6.05 and "I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department", from the Impact construct, had the highest mean at 6.36.

The effect of employee empowerment on acceptance of organisational change was tested using four sub-hypotheses.

Table 1: Reliability statistics

Scale	Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
Organisational change	0.890	14
Empowerment	0.934	12

Table 2: Comparisons of means of organisational change items

Item	Mean
Learn new things	6.51
Change the way I work because of the change	6.40
Be a part of the change programme	6.40
Change something even if it appears to be working	6.40
Take responsibility for the change if it fails in my area	6.39
Work more because of the change	6.38
Improve what we're currently doing rather than implement a major change	6.36
Support change	6.33
Sell ideas about the change	6.33
Do things in a new or creative way	6.29
Find ways to make the change fail	6.28
Be a part of the new project	6.12
Solve organisation problems	6.00
Create new ideas	5.99

Table 3: Comparisons between means for the empowerment dimensions

Construct	Item	Mean
Meaning	The work I do is very important to me	6.17
	My job activities are personally meaningful to me	6.05
Competence	The work I do is meaningful to me	6.15
	I am confident about my ability to do my job	6.12
	I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities	6.23
	I have mastered the skills necessary for my job	6.32
Self-determination	I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job	6.32
	I decide on my own how to go about doing my work	6.31
	I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my work	6.30
Impact	My impact on what happens in my department is large	6.31
	I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department	6.36
	I have significant influence over what happens in my department	6.32

There were no significant correlations between the individual sub-domains and acceptance of organisational change, although the individual sub-domains were correlated with each other. Table 4 shows the overall correlation matrix.

Multiple regression analysis was used to examine whether Meaning, Competence, Self-determination, and Impact were significant predictors of acceptance of organisational change. The overall regression model has an R² of 0.027, which means that the model explains 2.7% of the variation in acceptance of organisational change. The *F*-test statistic was 2.615 with a *p*-value of 0.035, meaning the model is statistically significant. Meaning was a significant predictor, with a *t*-test statistic of -2.452 and *p*-value of 0.015. The model therefore predicts that for every one point increase in Meaning, acceptance of organisational change will decrease by 0.128. Impact was also a significant predictor, with a *t*-test statistic of 2.585 and *p*-value of 0.01. The model predicts that for every one point increase in Impact, acceptance of organisational change will increase by 0.125. Tables 5, 6 and 7 show these results.

Table 4: Correlation matrix (N = 386)

		Acceptance of change	Meaning	Competence	Self-determination	Impact
Acceptance of change	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.064	-0.005	0.023	0.081
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.211	0.921	0.654	0.112
Meaning	Pearson Correlation	-0.064	1	0.727*	0.575*	0.597*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.211		0.000	0.000	0.000
Competence	Pearson Correlation	-0.005	0.727*	1	0.784*	0.612*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.921	0.000		0.000	0.000
Self-determination	Pearson Correlation	0.023	0.575*	0.784*	1	0.699*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.654	0.000	0.000		0.000
Impact	Pearson Correlation	0.081	0.597*	0.612*	0.699*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.112	0.000	0.000	0.000	

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

A logistic regression model was run first on the organisational change and empowerment items to determine the best predictors of whether the respondent worked at a four- or five-star hotel. The results showed that no individual items were significant predictors of hotel rating. The same logistic regression model was also run to determine the significant predictors of whether the respondent was a manager. The results revealed one significant predictor: from empowerment, “The work I do is very important to me” was significant (Wald = 5.356, *p*-value = 0.021). The odds ratio showed that for every one point increase in the level of agreement for that item, the respondent was 1.61 times more likely to be a manager.

Conclusion

This study has investigated the relationship between psychological empowerment of employees and their acceptance of organisational change. Overall, none of the individual dimensions of psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995a; Hanpachern, 1997) were significantly correlated with acceptance of organisational change. However, the overall regression model showed that psychological empowerment explained 2.7% of the variance in organisational change acceptance (although this is small, it is nonetheless significant, and so should not be ignored), with the Meaning and Impact constructs both being significant. Although Impact was positively related to acceptance of organisational change, Meaning was negatively related. This seems to suggest that as employees are given more meaningful work, their acceptance of organisational change decreases slightly.

Overall, the finding that psychological empowerment has a direct positive effect on acceptance of organisation change is consistent with previous studies (e.g. Eby, Adams, Russell & Gaby, 2000; Weber & Weber, 2001; Cunningham et al., 2002; Madsen, Miller, & John, 2005; Rafferty & Simons, 2006; Lam, Cho & Qu, 2007; Fachruddin & Mangundjaya, 2012). The findings are also similar to other studies using the same constructs, but in different industries or sectors (for example, in the health sector, Khammarnia et al., 2014, and Abd-Elkawey & Sleem, 2015). This study’s strength lies in the size and consistency of its sample. A total of 386 questionnaires is a very reasonable sample size, especially compared to previous studies on empowerment and acceptance of organisational change (Helfrich, Li, Sharp & Sales, 2009).

Hanpachern (1997) suggests that there are three types

Table 5: Multiple regression analysis

Model summary	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	Std. error of the estimate
1	0.163*	0.027	0.017	0.41480

*Predictors: (Constant), Impact, Meaning, Self-determination, Competence

Table 6: ANOVA*

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
1	Regression	1.800	4	0.450	2.615	0.035**
	Residual	65.554	381	0.172		
	Total	67.354	385			

*Dependent variable: Acceptance of change

**Predictors: (Constant), Impact, Meaning, Self-determination, Competence

Table 7: Coefficients*

Model		Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	<i>t</i>	Sig.
		<i>B</i>	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.275	0.235		26.715	0.000
	Meaning	-0.128	0.052	-0.190	-2.452	0.015
	Competence	0.024	0.054	0.044	0.452	0.652
	Self-determination	-0.022	0.053	-0.038	-0.414	0.679
	Impact	0.125	0.048	0.194	2.585	0.010

*Dependent variable: acceptance of change

of factor which could affect readiness for change: work, non-work, and demographic factors. Few studies, however, have examined whether individual readiness for change varies with age, gender, job title, level of employment or level of education. Madsen et al. (2005) found that demographic factors did affect acceptance of change. This study, however, found no significant links between demographic factors and acceptance of change, which is consistent with Hanpachern's original work.

This study found a small, but significant, positive influence of employee psychological empowerment on readiness for change among hotel employees. This suggests that hotel managers should consider issues of psychological empowerment when preparing for organisational change. However, there are clearly many other factors that will affect acceptance of organisational change; the model in this study explained only 2.7% of variance in this factor. Further research is needed to identify other factors that should also be taken into account in preparing for organisational change.

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