AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE INFLUENCES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AND OVERALL JOB SATISFACTION ON EMPLOYEE LOYALTY: THE CASE OF MALAYSIAN FRONT OFFICE RECEPTIONISTS

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ABSTRACT

The hotel industry has the responsibility and role of increasing guest satisfaction with its services and products. This can be carried out through efficient service by frontline employees, particularly the Front Office receptionists. Developing an efficient workforce may depend on their sense of belonging or loyalty to the organization. There are many ways and means of developing employees' levels of loyalty to their organization. Empowering employees and high job satisfaction levels are among the studied factors that influence positive employee outcomes. This study was conducted to examine the influences of psychological empowerment and overall job satisfaction on the employee loyalty of Front Office Receptionists in Kuala Lumpur 5-star hotels. A total of 210 questionnaires were distributed at 21 hotels rated as 5-star hotels in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Results showed that employee psychological empowerment does not have any significant impacts on loyalty. However, the findings suggested that overall job satisfaction did have a significant influence on loyalty. Hotel managers might consider more competitive solutions in their effort to increase the employee's loyalty, for example by enhancing participation in the departmental decision making, encourage creativity, implementing a better work environment and employment packages.

Keywords: psychological empowerment, overall job satisfaction, employee loyalty, front office receptionists

INTRODUCTION

Hotel growth and its alignment with the tourism industry continue to be one of the key drivers of the growth and development of the service sector in Malaysia. Tourism contributed a total of RM 47.5 billion from foreign earnings and the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2007 was RM 641.9 billion (Tourism Malaysia, 2008). The industry has expanded at the rate of 7.1% and accounted for 54.3% of the nation's GDP, as compared to previous year's rate of 53.6% (Ministry of Finance [MOF], 2008). The hotel industry is expected to retain its share of 2.4% GDP in 2008, supported by higher consumer spending, sustained domestic investment and higher tourist arrivals (MOF, 2008). It is undeniable that the contributions of the hotel sector to the national economy are major in providing employment opportunities, provision of alternative and added income for the rural population and supporting the growth of secondary activities such as material and equipment suppliers. The sector also complements the expansion of both domestic and inbound tourism (Awang, Ishak, Radzi & Taha, 2008). Despite that, the issue of attracting and retaining skilled, knowledgeable, motivated and loyal employees for the survival of the industry has become critical (Malaysian Association of Hotels [MAH], 2000). The industry however is still viewed as a hierarchically-structured system of organization with minimal skill levels, thus it is difficult to counter staff turnover. This is the reason the problems of job mobility and a high turnover rate among employees worry managers the most.

The hotel industry has the responsibility and role of increasing guest satisfaction with its services and products. This can be carried out through efficient service by frontline employees, particularly the Front Office receptionists. The Front Office is known to be the nerve centre of a hotel, although its strengths are only supported by 11.0 % of the total workforce by departments in Malaysia (MAH, 2008). Frontline employees in the hotel industry, particularly front office personnel often have to face the challenge of interacting with customers or business consumers – whom they personally do not know and whose preferences and interests are often different. The highly volatile and competitive business environment has encouraged the hotel sector to be more practical in its employees' performance so as to provide a high standard of quality services to the customers (Alan, 2007). With that, their role of upholding a satisfactory service level is vital since the industry is heavily based on human interactions and it all begins in the front office. Maintaining the appropriate level of services from frontline employees has become a critical issue for the hotel industry because a service firm's success depends on the frontline employees' performance (Chebat, Babin & Kollias, 2002).

As explained by Kemp & Dwyer (2001), employees are likely to be more motivated and more productive if they feel they can make a valuable contribution to the organization through either contributing new ideas, better ways of doing things and participation in decision-making. Kemp and Dwyer (2001) further stressed that employees are more receptive to change in the organization if they

feel they have had their views taken into consideration, even if the organization does not implement the employees' preferred options. Paradoxically, frontline employees are still under-trained, underpaid, and overworked (Singh, 2000). In response to this, hotel managers have sought possible solutions and strategies that will increase frontline employees' performance and job satisfaction. There are many ways and means of developing employees' levels of satisfaction with their work. Empowering employees may be one of the approaches to a better organizational strategy in harmonizing employees' performance and job satisfaction. By empowering employees in the organization, managers can not only solve leadership problems but also increase employees' loyalty (Leong, 2001).

Employee loyalty, empowerment and job satisfaction have been raised as important issues and emphasized as ways to reduce employee turnover, improve workplace environments, and help organizations function effectively in the hospitality industry (Erstad, 1997). What is lacking in the empowerment research is an exploration of the relationships of the individual components of empowerment to employee outcome variables such as commitment and intention to leave the job (Osborne, 2002). By identifying and exploring the relationship, it is hoped that the implementation of such concepts and strategy will help management to reduce employee turnover, thus increasing employees' loyalty, especially in the hospitality industry. Given the extent to which strategies designed to foster employee empowerment and job satisfaction are being implemented in the hospitality industry, research on its outcomes (organizational commitment and loyalty) is clearly warranted (Sparrowe, 1994). Therefore this study has been carried out to examine the relationship between employee psychological empowerment and overall job satisfaction on employee loyalty, focusing on the Front Office receptionists of 5-star hotels in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee Psychological Empowerment

The multiple dimensions of employee empowerment make it a difficult concept to define (Honold, 1997). Numerous studies have defined empowerment as intrinsic task motivation (e.g, Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) or motivation reflecting the person-environment fit (Zimmerman, 1990). Empowerment has also been defined as perceptions (Parker & Price, 1994) and as commitment-based designs (Spreitzer, 1996). Brymer (1991), on the other hand, defined empowerment as the process of decentralizing decision-making in an organization, by means of which managers give more discretion and autonomy to the frontline employees. Researchers have also defined empowerment in terms of job structure; from the transfer of power or authority (Burke, 1986) to job support structures such as the sharing of resources and information (Hardy &

Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998). Although empowerment has been defined in numerous ways, most authors agree that the core element of empowerment involves giving employees discretion (or latitude) over certain task related activities without neglecting the responsibilities that come along with it (Bowen and Lawler, 1992; Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Schlessinger and Heskett, 1991). Early use of the construct of empowerment tended to revolve around issues of power and control where empowerment was considered a management technique used to motivate employees, by delegating or sharing power with them (Kanter, 1983). Investigation of the use of empowerment in service sector organizations however reveals a number of different forms of empowerment being applied in practice (e.g. Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1992, 1995; Zimmerman, 1995). These different approaches provide evidence of a range of managerial meanings being applied which are based on different perceptions of business problems, motives for introducing empowerment and perceived benefits to be gained from empowerment (Lashley, 1999).

Conger and Kanungo (1988) approached empowerment in terms of two points: 1) the power approach and 2) the motivational approach. The power approach focused on the decentralizing of power and authority to let employees participate in the decision making process. The motivational approach on the other hand was explained through the concept of self-efficacy and self-determination. Conger and Kanungo described how employees would perceive themselves as more powerful when self-efficacy and self-determination were appropriately practised. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) explained the cognitive model of empowerment, which focuses on an intra-personal cognitive process. The model used intrinsic task motivation to explain the empowerment process in individuals. The six processes model contains 1) environmental events (e.g. training sessions or evaluation of performance), 2) task assessments (impact, competence, meaningfulness, or choice), 3) behaviour (activity, concentration, initiative, resiliency or flexibility), 4) global assessment (impact, competence, meaningfulness or choice), 5) interpretive styles (attributing, evaluating, and envisioning), and 6) interventions. Spreitzer (1992) on the other hand focused on the psychological empowerment construct and validation of empowerment. A model of an initial nomological network of psychological empowerment described the way antecedents of psychological empowerment (e.g. locus of control, self-esteem, access to information, and rewards) influenced psychological empowerment (e.g. meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) and then this psychological empowerment influenced the consequences of psychological empowerment (e.g. managerial effectiveness and innovation). Four task assessments (e.g. impact, competence, meaningfulness, and choice) used in Thomas and Velthouse (1990) were used to define psychological empowerment.

The four dimensions of empowerment outlined by Spreitzer (1995) were developed and evaluated by research conducted in a manufacturing environment. The dimensions, therefore, may not fully apply effectively in a service organization. Fulford and Enz (1995) assessed the effects of perceived

empowerment on employees in an empirical study of a number of service organizations, where data were collected from service employees in a number of American private clubs. They argued that in a service environment an employee's ability to influence his or her own work duties is not separate from the ability to influence organizational goals because a significant proportion of organizational outcomes in a service context rely on employee behaviours. As the delivery of services by service employees involves interacting with customers, the dimension of self-determination captures the degree to which employees are able to control the customers' experiences of service. This is an organizational outcome (Fulford & Enz, 1995). Therefore, Fulford and Enz (1995) suggested that the three dimensional construct of psychological empowerment was more suitable in the service industry setting, namely meaningfulness, competence and influence which are the earlier constructs developed and validated by Spreitzer (1995) and Thomas and Velthouse (1990).

Job Satisfaction

Ivancevich and Donnelly (1968) stated that almost every writer has defined job satisfaction in his own way although this leads to, basically, an identical definition. Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences. Edward and Scullion (1982) identified the meaning of job satisfaction as the overall measurement of working attitudes of the reception, happiness, and pleasure in the job. Employees' job satisfaction is also concerned with supervision quality, working conditions, intrinsic compensation, benefits, and company policies (Hoffman & Ingram, 1992). Robbins and Coulter (1996) stated that job satisfaction is an employee's general attitude towards his or her job. When people speak of an employee's job attitude, they are likely to be referring to his/her job satisfaction. Meanwhile Cranny, Smith, and Stone (1992) defined job satisfaction as whether employees find their employment sufficiently satisfactory to continue in it, either permanently or until they have prepared for greater responsibilities. Hsiao and Kohnke (1998) defined job satisfaction as one's emotional response to a job that results from the person's expectations of the job and the reality of the job situation. Susskind, Borchgrevink, Kacmar, and Brymer (2000) explained that job satisfaction represents the workplace and employees' perceptions of their job. Job satisfaction can be predicted by employees' evaluation of the work climate, levels of organizational support and the employment situation. Efraty and Sirgy (1990) described job satisfaction as one's effective appraisal of various job dimensions such as the work itself, supervision, pay, promotion policies and co-workers. Loscocco and Roschelle (1991) described job satisfaction as the overall effective orientation to the job. In the hospitality industry, not much of a difference was discovered. According to Lam, Zhang, & Baum (2001) the hotel's goal rests on the employees' belief that their efforts can lead to the satisfaction of employees' needs.

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Psychological Empowerment and Employee Loyalty

Employees do perceive their work performance as an important indicator for them in deciding whether to stay in their current position or to move on to another organization. A study carried out by Fulford and Enz (1995) revealed that perceived empowerment does have an effect on loyalty. However, the instillation of such a strategic work concept does not really encourage employees to stay. This added work load must be assessed carefully so that employees perceive it as a productivity enhancement responsibility rather than an added burden on them. A study by Lee (2008) found that employees who had a high acceptance of empowerment had a higher sense of loyalty to the organization and were willing to accept any additional task if necessary and needed by the employer. According to Bowen and Lawler (1992), a benefit of empowerment is that employees will feel better about their jobs and themselves. Letting employees call the shots allows them to feel ''ownership'' of the job; they feel responsible for it and find the work meaningful. Bowen and Lawler further explained that job design research shows when employees have a sense of control and by doing meaningful work they are more satisfied. Osborne (2002) further agreed that empowerment does have an influence on employees' loyalty level and their intention to leave the organization. When employees feel that they are empowered, their sense of control and authority over others or work makes them want to stay (Osborne, 2002). Fulford and Enz (1995) found that a global measure of employee empowerment accounted for 35 percent of the variation in employee loyalty.

Job Satisfaction and Employee Loyalty

Employees will certainly feel satisfied and honoured if their opinions and performance at work are appropriately acknowledged and a productive workforce certainly possesses feelings of loyalty and belonging to the organization. McGuiness (1998) further agreed that employee loyalty is associated with overall job satisfaction, higher productivity, and lower training costs. Organizations particularly in the hospitality industry, view the efforts to create a productive and quality workforce as their priority owing to the nature of the relationship between employees and customers. Productive employees help in enhancing a positive organizational performance which is always warranted by their stakeholders. In an effort to retain employees with high levels of performance, organizations try to foster positive organizational attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Matzler & Renzl, 2006). Research has generally found that satisfied employees are more productive and committed to their jobs, whereas dissatisfied ones experience absenteeism, grievances and turnover (Smith, 1996).

Several empirical studies have found that employee satisfaction is a strong determinant of organizational commitment and loyalty (Mak & Sockel, 2001; Martensen & Gronholdt, 2001), and it is negatively related to turnover (Tekleab, 2005). In their meta-analysis of the antecedents and correlates of employee

turnover, Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner (2000) found that overall job satisfaction and facet satisfaction are strong predictors of turnover. Chang (2003) found that the probability of a hotel worker intending to remain at the current hotel increased as overall job satisfaction increased. His analysis indicated that the findings were applicable to those who worked in food service, front office and administrative jobs. The results of his study also indicated that the level of intention to remain at, or be loyal to the current hotel increased as the level of job satisfaction increased, regardless of the worker's length of tenure at the hotel, in the industry or the work schedule. Wetprasit (2006) confirmed that there was a significant relationship between employees' job satisfaction and their retention intention or loyalty. Based on the literature reviews highlighted above, the following hypotheses were proposed:

> H1: *Employee psychological empowerment positively influences employee loyalty.*
>
>> H1a: *The employee psychological empowerment dimension of meaningfulness positively influences employee loyalty.*
>>
>> H1b: *The employee psychological empowerment dimension of competence positively influences employee loyalty.*
>>
>> H1c: *The employee psychological empowerment dimension of influence positively influences employee loyalty.*
>
> H2: *Overall job satisfaction positively influences employee loyalty.*

Theoretical Framework

The following Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical framework for this study. The dimensions of psychological empowerment used were based on the work of Fulford and Enz (1995). For overall job satisfaction, a three item construct was used adopted from Salazar (2000) and Di Xie (2005). The dependent variable; employee loyalty was based on the study by Mowday, Porter, Steers and Boulian (1974).
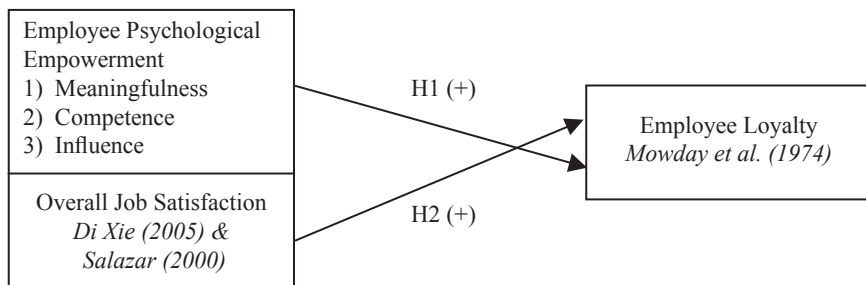

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

METHODOLOGY

Sample of the Study & Data Collection Method

As mentioned earlier, Front Office receptionists working at 5 star hotels located in Kuala Lumpur are the focus of the study. Tourism Malaysia's Accommodation Guide (2007) listed 23 hotels categorized as 5 star rated hotels, or large-sized hotels with 100 rooms and above in Kuala Lumpur. Meanwhile, after cover letters were sent to the 23 hotels involved, two (2) hotels replied and were unable or refused to participate in the study. Therefore the population was reduced to only 21 hotels. The sample size amounted to a total of 210 receptionists and the mailed questionnaire method was employed. A time frame of one month was set to make sure that the questionnaires were returned within the stipulated period for ease of data analysis and avoiding bias. At the end of the time frame, a total of 91 questionnaires were gathered, usable and finally coded. This represents 43 percent of the total questionnaires distributed earlier.

Instrumentation

The following Table 1 outlines the measures of the study variables including twelve statements that were intended to assess receptionists' psychological empowerment, three statements for meaningfulness, three for competence and six for influence constructs, three statements for overall job satisfaction, and ten statements for employee loyalty.

Table 1: Measures of the study variables

Study Variables	No. of Items	Sources of Scale	Type of Scale	Questions Number
Employee Psychological Empowerment			A seven-point Likert-scale from (1) " Strongly Disagree" to (7) "Strongly Agree"	
• Meaningfulness	3	Fulford & Enz (1995)		
• Competence	3			1-12
• Influence	6			
Overall Job Satisfaction	3	Di Xie (2005) & Salazar (2000)	A seven-point Likert-scale from (1) "Strongly Disagree" to (7) "Strongly Agree"	13-15
Employee Loyalty	10	Mowday *et al.* (1974)	A seven-point Likert-scale from (1) "Strongly Disagree" to (7) "Strongly Agree"	16-25

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Reliability & Validity Analysis

As shown in Table 2 below, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient value for all variables in the study revealed a range of coefficient values from .68 to .91 accordingly. The independent variable of overall job satisfaction had a high reliability coefficient of .91 despite the low number of scale items (three items). However, the dependent variable of employee loyalty on the other hand had a reliability coefficient value of .70. The other independent variable of psychological empowerment showed that its dimensions of meaningfulness had a coefficient value of .87, competence a value of .68 and influence had a reliability coefficient value of .84. The overall coefficient value of psychological empowerment had a reliability coefficient value of .86. The results also indicated that the reliabilities of the scales used in this study were high and aligned with previous researchers' findings (Fulford & Enz, 1995; Salazar, 2000; Di Xie, 2005; Lee, 2008; Coughlan, 2005). The internal consistency of a reliable scale is also demonstrated.

Table 2: Reliability Coefficient Values of Study Variables

Variables	Number of Scale Items	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (α)
Employee Psychological Empowerment		
• Meaningfulness	3	.86
• Competence	3	.87
• Influence	6	.68
Overall Job Satisfaction	3	.91
Employee Loyalty	10	.70

Descriptive Statistics & Analysis

As shown in Table 3 below, there was a significant correlation between dimensions of meaningfulness and competence with r =.32 (p < 0.01). This was followed by a correlation between meaningfulness and influence with r =.44 (p < 0.01) which was also significant. There was also significant correlation between competence and influence with r =.38 (p < 0.01). The results concluded that the three dimensions of employee psychological empowerment were significantly related and correlated with each other and were moving in the same direction as one variable or construct.

Table 3: Pearson Correlations Matrix among Psychological Empowerment and Employee Loyalty

Scales	1	2	3	4	Mean	SD
1. Meaningfulness	-				5.89	0.80
2. Competence	.32**	-			6.02	0.53
3. Influence	.44**	.38**	-		5.85	0.64
4. Employee Loyalty	.26*	.26*	.29**	-	6.25	0.32

Note: N = 91
*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01*

Table 3 above also presents correlations among three dimensions of employee psychological empowerment and overall job satisfaction with employee loyalty. The correlations between psychological empowerment dimensions and employee loyalty showed that there were significant positive correlations between employee loyalty and meaningfulness (r =.26, p < 0.05), competence (r =.26, p < 0.05) and influence (r =.29, p < 0.01).

Table 4: Pearson Correlations Matrix among Overall Job Satisfaction and Employee Loyalty

Scales	1	2	Mean	SD
1. Overall Job Satisfaction	-		5.95	0.88
2. Employee Loyalty	.43**	-	6.25	0.32

Note: N=91
**p<0.01

The relationship between overall job satisfaction and employee loyalty was also significantly and moderately correlated (r =.43, p < 0.01) as shown in Table 4. Pearson product moment correlations results concluded that all variables in this study correlate and have positive relationships among them.

Hypothesis Testing

The influences of the three dimensions of employees' psychological empowerment on employee loyalty were explored and examined by using multiple regression analysis (as shown in Table 5) and after considering that there was no violation of multiple regression underlying assumptions. The coefficient of relationship (R²) of 0.126 showed that 12.6% of the variance in employee loyalty was explained

by the three sub dimensions of employee psychological empowerment. From the three dimensions of psychological empowerment, none of them had a significant influence on employee loyalty. This means that all three sub dimensions of employee psychological empowerment were not the predictors of employee loyalty in this study, although they correlate significantly with each other. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 (H1) was not supported.

Table 5: Multiple Regressions of Employee Psychological Empowerment Dimensions and Employee Loyalty

Independent variable in the equation	*B*	β	*t*	*p*	R² (F)
constant	4.867		11.926	0.00	
Meaningfulness	0.056	0.141	1.244	0.217	0.126 (4.20)*
Competence	0.091	0.152	1.380	0.171	
Influence	0.086	0.172	1.482	0.142	

*$p < 0.05$

Linear regression was conducted in order to assess the ability of overall job satisfaction to predict employees' loyalty as shown in Table 6. Preliminary analyses were also conducted to ensure there were no violations of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity. The result showed that there was a relationship between overall job satisfaction and employee loyalty. The coefficient of the relationship (R²) of 0.186 showed that 18.6% of the variance in employee loyalty was explained by the overall job satisfaction of the respondents. The result also suggested that overall job satisfaction was a significant predictor of employee loyalty ($p = 0.00$), or when respondents experienced more job satisfaction regarding their hotel, job position or the work, they become more loyal to the organization and its management. Therefore Hypothesis 2 (H2) was supported.

Table 6: Linear Regression between Overall Job Satisfaction and Employee Loyalty

Independent variable in the equation	*B*	β	*t*	*p*	R² (F)
constant	5.309		25.175	0.00	0.186 (20.37)*
Employee Loyalty	0.158	0.432	4.513	0.00*	

$p < 0.05$

DISCUSSION

Employee Psychological Empowerment and Employee Loyalty

Fulford and Enz (1995) stressed that employees who perceived themselves as being empowered in their workplace experienced greater consequences for work attitudes, such as loyalty towards their organization and employer. However, their notion is contradictory and different from the findings in this study. This study revealed that employees perceiving themselves as empowered were not necessarily linked by their overall attachment to the organization and their loyalty levels were not necessarily influenced by it. Not all employees can cope with extra responsibility, role stress and ambiguity that are the concomitants of empowerment and the boundary spanning nature of the job of front-line employees (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1998). Although research has provided evidence of positive performance results accruing from the use of empowered teams at both the individual and team levels of analysis (Cohen & Ledford, 1994), other work has shown no effects (Pearson, 1992) or even negative influences (Wall, Kemp, Jackson, & Clegg, 1986). One potential explanation for such conflicting results is the tendency for employees to resist change in general (Strebel, 1996) and, in particular, to resist empowerment interventions. For example, the findings of a study of 98 university personnel involved in office relocations provided evidence that individuals who were dispositionally inclined to resist changes were more distraught by the change and reported an increased difficulty in working effectively (Oreg, 2003). In fact, research provided examples of organizational transitions to empowered teams that have been followed by increased levels of employee absenteeism and turnover (e.g. Cordery, Mueller & Smith, 1991).

Overall Job Satisfaction and Employee Loyalty

Results gained in the study revealed that the overall state of receptionists' job satisfaction had a positive influence on employee loyalty. It revealed that, as receptionists experienced increased levels of job satisfaction, they actually tended to be more loyal and focused on efforts to help the organization reach its goals. This is congruent with the findings of Lee (2008) that employee job satisfaction did have a positive influence over employee loyalty and coincided with previous findings by Silvestro (2002). Several empirical studies have also found that employee satisfaction is a strong determinant of organizational commitment and loyalty (Mak & Sockel, 2001; Martensen & Gronholdt, 2001). A study by Chang (2003) found that the probability of a hotel worker's intention to remain at the current hotel increased as overall job satisfaction increased. His study supported this notion when the results of his study indicated that the level of intention to remain at, or be loyal to the current hotel, increased as the level of job satisfaction increased. This notion was

earlier justified by Vondrasek (2000) who found that job satisfaction did have significant influence on organizational commitment and reducing turnover. Manger and Eikeland (1990) in their study found that general employee satisfaction was a strong predictor of an intention to leave. When employees were dissatisfied, they had higher intentions of leaving the organization. These results from various studies provided strong support and an indication that this notion was agreed upon collectively. The result also coincides with the conclusions of Wetprasit (2006) on employees of the spa industry in Thailand that employee job satisfaction was a significant predictor of and influence on their retention intention / loyalty. Wetprasit (2006) also found that work-related determinants such as environmental, management and structural variables had an impact on job satisfaction thus leading to a positive retention intention or loyalty of the employees.

LIMITATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Several limitations faced throughout the process of this study are worth highlighting as these limitations would be the points to consider in future research of similar interest. The first limitation relates to the selection of hotel category in this study. Instead of only looking at the responses of receptionists in 5-star rated hotels alone, it is also recommended that further investigation be carried out into other significant categories of hotels as well (3 & 4-star rated hotels). This would certainly give variation to the findings and the study could be further classified and compared based on the distinctive star rating category. The second limitation of the study was the mailing survey technique chosen. This method which was considered as a widely used method of obtaining quantitative data can only gather opinions and respondents' perceptions without knowing any other possible answers. The nature of the work that receptionists have to do on a daily basis on the job limits the researcher's ability to approach them personally. If it is possible to do so, other triangulation methods can be used to gather other in-depth responses such as personal interview or the use of group administered questionnaires. The busy and round the clock working hours of receptionists limit their participation in this study, although follow up efforts were made to increase the response rate and reduce the possibility of non-response bias. Next, the limitation identified through the study was the limited scope of the study. This study targeted employees at the operational level, but the participation of managerial level employees might give different perspectives to the research area due to the role of managerial level employees as employers and department leaders. Input from managers would certainly provide insights and valuable information as to how certain relationships and influences could be established.

CONCLUSION

The study has certainly achieved its objectives in answering the research questions where hypotheses' support or otherwise was elaborated. However, the influence of employees' psychological empowerment on their level of loyalty towards the organization proved to be null and insignificant in this study. It showed that psychological empowerment was not perceived as a medium to enhance performance only. It was also considered as an additional responsibility and burden for some. It might be true based on the views of management on the implementation of such a work concept. Collaborative efforts need to be assessed further not only in the implementation process, but also in the planning of such change. The management should look into the job offers themselves, as a better pay structure, career development plan, job security and other job-related variables can possibly influence employee loyalty. Perkins (1995) suggested that the critical first step in empowerment initiatives involves individual consciousness-raising in which the individual's world-view is challenged so that s/he recognizes her/his relative lack of power within a particular context. Once this consciousness raising has taken place, the unintended consequence that may occur is a tendency for competition among various sub-groups to begin to emerge. Perkins (1995) recommends that empowerment cannot be simply an individual process. People will need to learn how to deal with working as group members and collaborating effectively in coalitions within the larger organization to resolve inequities of power distribution (Perkins, 1995).

As expected, the impact of the overall job satisfaction of receptionists on their level of loyalty was significant and positively correlated. Undoubtedly, a better feeling of satisfaction towards work will enhance receptionists' intention to stay thus increasing their sense of affective belonging with their employer. This will certainly enhance their commitment and they will be more likely to remain with the current organization and see other outside job offers as unnecessary or unappealing. Potterfield (1999) concluded his research with four recommendations for effective implementation of empowerment in the workplace. First, employees need to understand the goals of empowerment in order to embrace the process. Top down imposition of empowerment initiatives is anathema to true employee empowerment. Second, the boundaries of employee decision-making need to be clear. Third, in order for empowerment to become effective, inconsistencies in the system need to be identified and addressed openly without organizational defensiveness. Fourth, a forum for employee suggestions for improvement needs to be developed in order to foster effective organizational communication (Potterfield, 1999).

In conclusion, it is hoped that the study findings can be used as a basis for Malaysian hotel managers in understanding their workforce's ability, self-efficacy, control and influence over work groups. Specifically, it is hoped that managers will be able to understand the effect of the empowerment concept on

their employees. Considering the labour-intensive nature of the hotel industry, coping with turnover trends is relatively significant and a priority for them. From the findings in this study, it can be concluded that, although empowerment might not have any significant effect on loyalty, a significant effect of job satisfaction on loyalty was established. Therefore, managers should not purposely ignore the effect that job satisfaction has on the loyalty level of employees. Managers might not be able to cultivate ideal and loyal employees, but they certainly need to ensure that employees are satisfied and enjoy what they do at work. More focus should be on developing employee loyalty and sense of belonging towards their employer. Maybe the existence of a mediating variable in between the relationship of empowerment and loyalty warrants further investigation.

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