The Role of Empowerment, Customer Orientation and Organizational Factors in Hospitality Organizations

Case study: Mellat bank third zone branches of Tehran

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The present study investigated the influence of employees’ customer orientation and organizational factors on the employee empowerment perceptions.

Design/methodology/approach: With a Practical Approach a convenient sample of 176 guest contact employees working at a bank completed a pencil-and-paper based questionnaire voluntarily.

Findings: Our findings suggest that hospitality organizations should have appropriate organizational supporting systems including service training and service communication to enhance employees' empowerment. Employee’s customer orientation is an important antecedent of their perceived empowerment. In other words, the more employees describe themselves as customer oriented, the more they feel confident about their job performance. Although customer orientation do not necessarily increase the sense of their impacts on the organization, organizational supporting factors such as training and service standards communication do increase the perception of their influence in the workplaces.

Practical implications: This study suggests hiring employees with customer oriented personality is important for hospitality organizations to cultivate an empowerment culture. Thus, we suggest that hospitality organizations HR managers must focus on assessing an individual’s customer orientation during the interview process.

Originality/value: In this study, which has been done in one of the largest Iranian banks with many customers, proof that, whatever HR managers attempt to hire customer-oriented employees and support them whit explaining service standards communication, they will have more empowered employees. Hence, the results of such research are propelling the managers to the promotion and excellence of human resource and use it to achieve success in today’s businesses.

KEYWORDS: Empowerment, Customer orientation, Service Training, Service Reward, Service standards communication
INTRODUCTION

The concept of employee empowerment may be determined as the symbolic construction of the personal state of employees so that its characteristics include competence, or the skill and also capability to execute effectively, and control, or the authority and autonomy to act (e.g., Menon, 2001). Probable advantages of empowerment encompasses a quicker response to customer needs, meanwhile it provides sources of ideas for new services. This would be specifically vital in situations that are involved in exercise judgment and discretion. Another condition that is essential for utilizing empowerment is motivation to comply with customer requests (Lashley, 1995; Sternberg, 1992).

Empowerment can be considered as a key determinant of service quality and customer satisfaction. Empowered employees utilize their discretion to satisfy the customers’ needs and wants and also to solve their problems in order to enhance the quality of services and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, important behavioral outcomes are a result of empowerment. As an example, empowerment enhances the self-efficacy of employees (Conger and Kanungo, 1998) meanwhile discretion will allow them to make decision about selecting the best way to serve their customers (Gist and Mitchell, 1992).

According to a 1994 study by Scott and Bruce, empowerment will assist the employees to become more adaptive. On the other hand, employees will be able to need their customers' requests via empowerment and they attain the highest service quality standards as well. In addition, the concept of empowerment has been developed and advanced by several researchers (Conger, 1989; Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Hartline and Ferrell, 1996; Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas and Velthouse, 1990). Based on the above mentioned researchers' recommendations, the empowerment can be defined as an important driver for organizational effectiveness and performance. However; both researchers and practitioners believe that empowerment and its role in organizations have not been still recognized completely (Kanter, 1989; Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas and Velthouse, 1990).

Based upon Robbins et al. (2002), employees' perceptions relating to work environment can be considered necessary in the empowerment process by the researchers as well. Moreover, according to Schlesinger and Heskett (1991) and Varca (2004), service organizations are another topic that has been analyzed by some researchers so that these kinds of organizations should invest in training service skills unless they will not be able to enhance their employees' capabilities in order to meet the complex service demands of customers. Furthermore, the importance of rewards for influencing the employees' behavior has been emphasized by some researchers as well (Hartline and Ferrell, 1996; Gkorezis and Petridou, 2008). In addition, all members of the organization including line employees must communicate and understand the service standards of internal service quality, because it will cause more confident for employees to act autonomously (Lytle et al., 1988; Yoon et al., 2007).

According to the previous studies, the employees will not necessarily feel the state of empowerment without the adequate perceptions for the essence of training for services, receiving rewards for their success, and observing the service standards together with the right communications in their organization.

Although empowering the employees who are involved in guest contact has often been prescribed as an efficient strategy for hospitality organizations, the individual and organizational indices should be taken into account to gain more insight in employees’ perception of empowerment. Attention must be paid that a few studies has examined people or organizational
factors, and there are rare researches that cover both factors. We believe that the understanding of the aforesaid factors is important for providing useful insights in employees’ empowerment. This study examines the impact of employees' capabilities in the field of customer satisfaction as well as the organizational supporting factors that play a key role in perceiving empowerment. We have also specifically focused on employees' abilities on customer orientation, training of personnel, considering rewards for competent staff and required communications for offering standard services to the customers. Our findings in this study will be accompanied the literature relating to the employees’ empowerment with addressing the effects of employees' tendency in individual customer orientation and also the supporting criteria of organizations on perceiving empowerment via an empirical examination. The results also offer managerial insights in connection with developing the employees' abilities for encountering the customers' requests in order to satisfy their needs and also best provide quality services to the guests who expect the organization's services via empowering the personnel.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Empowerment

By considering the motivational effects on employees, empowerment has been analyzed in the literature in three broad categories (Leach, Wall, and Jackson, 2003; Menon, 2001; Spreitzer, 1995) that are leadership, structural, and psychological perspectives respectively. According to Menon (2001) and Yukl (1989), the emphasis has been applied on leadership styles in empowerment and employees' behaviors; and this kind of analysis has been studied by considering the leadership perspective. If someone considers the structural perspective, he/she should focus on policies and practices enacted by management that aims at cascading power, decision-making authority and responsibility upper to lower levels of the organization (Blau and Alba, 1982; Bowen and Lawler, 1992; Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Eylon and Bamberger, 2000; Mathieu, Gilson, and Ruddy, 2006; Spreitzer, 2007). The psychological aspect is another state that can be taken into consideration so that the psychological empowerment has been examined as an individual-level variable in our study.

Conger and Kanungo’s psychological empowerment approach has been extended by Thomas and Velthouse (1990) by determining a set of assessments and evaluations such as meaningfulness, competence, choice and impact. Following the researches by Conger and Kanugo (1988) and Thomas and Velthouse (1990), Spreitzer (1995) defined empowerment as a psychological state and motivational construct declared in four cognitions named Meaning, Competence, Self-Determination, and Impact respectively. Consequently, a motivational construct has been described in the model presented by Mills and Ungson (2003), Spreitzer (1995), and Spreitzer, Kizilos, and Nason (1997) so that it will lead to an increase in motivating the intrinsic tasks that can be declared on behalf of employees in a set of cognitions related to their occupation role.

Based upon Spreitzer (1995), Spreitzer et al. (1997), and Thomas and Velthouse (1990), the aforesaid cognitions encompass meaning(value of a work objective judged in relation to an employee’s own standards and ideals), competence(employees' beliefs in their capabilities to perform skilled activities), self-determination (employees sense of selecting choices of commencing and regulating actions) and impact (the degree to which an employee perceives if he/she can influence strategic, administrative or operating outcomes at his/her work). On the other hand, according to Spreitzer (1995), these four factors act additively to specify the extent
of psychological empowerment experienced by employees and, hence, it will enable them to practice their empowered role in the organization. Furthermore, these cognitions reflect an active orientation to the work role, so that the work situation is not seen as ‘given’ but it is observed as a factor that can be shaped by employees' actions (Spreitzer et al., 1999).

This kind of measures are caused to have optimistic employees and involves them in organizational activities and also commits them to cope themselves with adversity where they feel a sense of responsibility and capability (Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998). Hence, employees can develop a sense of empowerment and it will both enhance their work value and increase their job satisfaction meanwhile creates productivity and success at work (Koberg, Wayne Boss, and Goodman, 1999).

Based upon the relevant previous researches (Saxe and Weitz, 1982; Kelley, 1992; Daniel and Darby, 1997; Brown et al., 2002; Hennig-Thurau, 2004; Matsuo, 2006; Luo et al., 2008; Gkorezis and Petridou, 2008; Tajeddini, 2010; Kim et al., 2011; Chiang and Birtch, 2011; Ro and Chen, 2011), we have identified an individual factor, i.e., customer orientation and also three organizational supporting factors named training, rewards, and service standards communication. These are important factors that can play a significant role in performance of those employees who communicate with the customers and they are desperately in need of empowerment. Employees' orientation to the customers, training for offering better services, considering rewards for the personnel who best serve the customers, and observing the desired communicative standards to the customers are the subjects we have discussed in the following sections.

2. Customer Orientation

According to a 1996 study by Horney, service organizations aim to increase customer satisfaction and their loyalty as the ultimate goals of their firms. Horney also adds that the service organizations rely on their employees to deliver them qualitative services and also adopt the kind of customer-oriented mindset for them to both attain the customer loyalty and achieve the organizational goals.

Developing human capital is a related subject that has been discussed by Barsky and Dittmann (1990). According to the aforesaid researchers, factors such as customer service orientation, superior performance, and pride in the job are the relevant outcomes for developing human capital.

Friendly relation between staff and customer and vice-versa is a sustainable quality that provides a competitive advantage for an organization. The essential feature of appropriate service quality from the organization's viewpoint is the customer orientation so that the employees are enthusiastic to deliver superior services to their customers. The service delivery process will occur during the adequate interaction between service employees and their customers. The attitudes and behaviors of service employees influence customers’ perceptions concerning the service quality (Hartline and Ferrell, 1996). A friendly interaction between the employees and customers as well as their warmth and enthusiasm is an important measure that draws customers back for repeating patronage. Attention must be paid that the organizational commitment to service quality is reflected in its customer orientation. Customer orientation has been examined in various contexts and is assumed to be a source of competitive advantage (Luo et al., 2008; Matsuo, 2006; Saxe and Weitz, 1982).

Customer orientation has been defined as a disposition to serve customers in a helpful, considerate and cooperative manner by Hogan et al. (1984). It refers to those activities and
behaviors that are carried out to satisfy customers’ requirements. To build loyalty and also obtain ideas for improving the service delivery process, establishing relationships with customers will be too important. A crucial part of the guest's experience if the employee. Assuring the customers on meeting their expectations together with creating a memorable experience for them will be a crucial trend that should be performed by a service provider (Dienhart et al., 1991).

Satisfying the customer needs is more important for service businesses than other business sectors, only due to the unique features of services. Consequently, a large number of prior researches have focused on employees who serve in the front line of organizations. For instance, Bowen and Schneider (1985, pp. 129) believe that the employees deliver and create the service and they also are actually a part of the service in the customer’s view. Therefore, the service provider and the services are often considered as synonymous in the eyes of customers (Bowen and Schneider, 1985; Daniel and Darby, 1997).

In most of literatures about services, scholars emphasize on the interaction between staff personnel and customers and call it as “customer service” (Albrecht and Zemke, 1985). Therefore, the employee’s level of customer orientation can be taken into account as a crucial leverage for the economic success of enterprises which are involved in service sector (Hennig-Thurau, 2004; Sergeant and Frenkel, 2000), meanwhile customer contact personnel have a main sources of influence on the creation of expectations, managing and controlling customer experiences and in forming the overall assessment of the service that is received by clients (Bateson, 1992; Daniel and Darby, 1997; Lovelock, 1981). Hennig-Thurau (2004) believes that customers often rely on the behavior of service employees when judging a service quality because of the intrinsic intangibility and heterogeneity characteristics of service industries. An enhanced feeling of customer-orientation in a firm is a vital element that will lead to successful external marketing, enhanced customer satisfaction, and increased overall performance of the enterprise and the organization (Dowling, 1993).

**H1. Customer orientation will have a significant positive effect on perceived empowerment.**

3. Service training

Based on Ro and Chen (2011) research are described, The importance of human relations skills in employees who have direct contact with customers have been recognized by professionals and researchers who are expert in the field of human resources (Schneider and Bowen, 1993; Morris, 1996). As a matter of fact, a 1990 study by Bitner et al. revealed that more than 40 percent of those who encounter with unsatisfactory services result from lack of ability of employees or their unwillingness to respond to failures in their offered services. In addition, based on Forrester (2000), building employees’ knowledge, skills and expertise is an eligibility that can only be acquired via formal training and education. Therefore, the successful organizations in service sector value investment in people and specifically in service training including inter-personal and problem-solving skills to enhance the ability of employees in order to meet the complex service demands of customers (Schlesinger and Heskett, 1991; Lytle et al., 1988).

According to Lee et al. (2006), service training is positively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment; meanwhile its effect on perceived empowerment is rarely examined yet. However, researchers suggest that service training is essential and crucial for attaining empowerment (Chebat and Kollias, 2000; Ueno, 2008).

**H2. Service training will have a significant positive effect on perceived empowerment.**

4. Service reward
Based upon a 1992 research by Kelley, employees can be socialized by their organizational climate for offering services. In addition, according to Schein (1985), a reward climate reveals the importance of service values and behaviors for an organization. On the other hand, it describes what specific service objectives and behavioral standards are most valued (Schneider, 2000). Moreover, according to Eccles (1991), “what gets measured gets done, particularly when rewards are tied to the measures”. When employees of an organization perceive that their firm values certain service behaviors and rewards these kinds of behaviors, they will be more enthusiastic to embrace such values and deliver the desired behaviors accordingly. However, if their efforts for offering adequate services go unrewarded, such orientations and behaviors may be discontinued or lost its importance. Furthermore, according to a 1992 study by Schneider et al., when organizations reward such behaviors and establish efficient procedures that support service delivery, employees will be more likely to offer excellent services to their customers.

**H3. Service rewards system will have a significant positive effect on perceived empowerment.**

5. Service standards communication

It is an individual tendency as well as a set of values, beliefs, and perceptions (micro-perception) (Dietz et al., 2004) featured by a desire and enthusiasm to provide a high standard of service in order to satisfy an organization’s strategic priorities together with the customer needs and demands (Brown et al., 2002; Cran, 1994). It also reflects commitment level of service providers to their customer (Susskind et al., 2003).

According to Arnett et al. (2002), employee attitudes and behaviors relating to their job and knowledge together with their skills and the customer-orientation mindset are a sign of commencing the development of human resources; meanwhile the satisfied and committed employees contribute in offering better and high quality services to their customers. Furthermore, based on Bitner (1990), in the employees-customers interactions, the attitudes and behaviors of employees who work in the service sections effect on customers’ perceives relating to their services. Barsky and Dittmann’s study (1990) reveals that the employees who are capable of well-training and receive fairly payments, contribute more in their activities comparing those whose benefits are in lower rates. On the other hand, satisfied customers create higher return rates for the organization. Thus, the employees are more likely to engage in activities that their results are customer satisfaction and also profitability for the organization.

**H4. Service standards communication will have a significant positive effect on perceived empowerment.**

**METHODOLOGY**

1. Sample and data collection

A convenient sample of 176 guest contact employees working at a bank (Mellat bank) completed a pencil-and-paper based questionnaire voluntarily. All respondents were native and granted permanent working status. After gathering the data, four questionnaires were excluded due to the excessive missing information and thus, 172 questionnaires were selected as usable documents. The sample was predominantly comprised of males (89.5%) with 47.1% of participants possessing college degrees. All of them worked in guest contact (front line) positions like front desks and most of them were cashiers.

2. Measures

Perceived empowerment was assessed by 12 items developed by Spreitzer in 1995. For customer orientation assessment, 13 items from Brown et al. (2002) were used. Service training, rewards,
and service standards communication were evaluated utilizing multiple items developed by Lytle et al. (1988). In addition, service training was measured via three following items:

1. Each employee receives personal skills training so that it will enhance his/her ability to deliver high quality services
2. We spend much time and effort in simulated training activities that assist us to provide higher levels of services when we actually encounter the customer, and
3. We work through exercises during training sessions to identify and improve attitudes toward customers.

On the other hand, service rewards was measured via two items as stated below:

1. Management provides excellent incentives and rewards at all organizational levels not only for productivity but also for service quality.
2. This kind of organization noticeably celebrates offering excellent services to its customers.

Furthermore, service standards communication was assessed via three following items:

1. Every employee understands all of the service standards that have been instituted by other departments,
2. We have a developed chain of objectives linking together each branch in support of the corporate vision, and
3. Service performance measures are communicated openly with all employees regardless of their positions or tasks.

Attention must be paid that all the above items were measured using a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree).

RESULTS

First of all, it should be clarified that the empowerment items are subjected to an exploratory factor analysis. A principal component analysis with Varimax rotation factor analysis yielded four factors named Impact, Meaning, Competence and Self-determination. All items and their factor loadings have been shown in Table 1. The Eigenvalues for the factors were 1.05 for Impact, 1.82 for Meaning, 4.56 for Competence, and 1.27 for self-determination. A four factor solution accounted for approximately 72.35% of the variance and the internal reliability values for the all empowerment dimensions were adequate (Cronbach alpha of 0.847, 0.715, 0.770 and 0.814 for Impact, Meaning, Competence, and Self-determination respectively). Also, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy (0.811) and Bartlett’s test of sphericity (p = 0.000) indicate that factor analysis is appropriate and acceptable.

The descriptive statistics of three organizational factor variables and customer orientation have been shown in Table 2. The construct reliability of service training, service rewards, service standards communication, and customer orientation were 0.783, 0.774, 0.814 and 0.849 respectively.

To examine construct reliability, we have used Lisrel software so that the four dimensions of empowerment (Meaning, Competence, Impact, and Self-determination) were simultaneously examined by the Customer Orientation, Service Training, Service Rewards and Service Standards Communication. As hypothesized, we expect that customer orientation, service training, service rewards, and service standards communication will positively influence employees’ perceived empowerment.

As figure 2 and figure 3 illustrate, customer orientation (factor loading =0.6, t = 6.37) and service standard communication (factor loading = 0.4, t = 2.3) had a significant and positive
effect across empowerment variables. In other words, higher levels of individual employees’ customer orientation resulted in higher perceptions of confidence in their job performance. But unexpectedly, service training (factor loading = 0.19, t = .062) had a weak effect on empowerment and service rewards (factor loading = -0.029, -0.017) not only didn’t have any positive influence on perceived empowerment but also had even negative influence on perceived empowerment. Therefore, as indicated in figure 2 and figure 3, it demonstrates that H1 (Customer orientation will have a significant positive effect on perceived empowerment) is totally supported and H4 (service standards communication will have a significant positive effect on perceived empowerment) is partially supported, and thus, the hypothesis H2 and H3 are not supported, because the factor loadings in levels of p<0.05 are not meaningful (in other words, factor loadings relating to the values between -1.96 to 1.96 have been placed in rejected zone). (Field, 2009)

DISCUSSION

Previous research indicated that the front-line employees play key roles in the effectiveness of empowerment in the hospitality industry (Lashley, 1999; Rapp et al., 2006; Chow et al., 2006; Jha and Nair, 2008; Tajeddini, 2010; Barton and Barton, 2011; Chiang and Birtch, 2011; Kim et al., 2011; Rita Men, 2011; Ro and Chen, 2011; Sun et al., 2012). It is easily assumable that service-oriented organizations persuade employee empowerment. Yet, it's not been clear whether the employee’s own characteristics enhance employees' empowerment, even though there's a lack of research as to which organizational supporting factors can contribute to employees' empowerments.

Our findings suggest that service management should consider employees’ customer orientation characteristics in order to implement a successful empowerment program. Moreover, service organizations should have appropriate organizational supporting systems including service training and service communication to enhance employees' empowerments. Employee’s customer orientation is an important antecedent of their perceived empowerment. In other words, the more employees describe themselves as customer oriented, the more they feel confident about their job performance. The Bank is considered to have an efficient service for their guests. Hiring the right people who naturally enjoy customer interactions is particularly important in the aforesaid bank due to the emotional content of the work in the bank. The Bank guest contact employees work enthusiastically and they respect the guests by satisfying their needs. In addition, the employees can perform better roles when customer oriented employees are selected for the related job. Although customer orientation do not necessarily increase the sense of their impact on the organization, organizational supporting factors such as training and service standards communication do increase the perception of their influence in the workplaces. In other words, when the employees perceive that they receive good service training and understand service standards (i.e., internal service quality expectations are well communicated), employees view it as they are making a greater impacts in the workplaces. Good service training both guides and enhances employees’ service skills in order to provide excellent services. In addition, clear and open communication of service standards helps employees understand the level of service expectations for the particular companies and also remind the employees what rules can be broken when necessary to provide extraordinary services. These organizational efforts can help employees understand the significance of each employee’s work in the organization. The Bank service organizations are often large corporations with a large number of employees. It would be
natural if an individual employee may not easily realize how his/her work contributes to the organization. Good service standards communication can provide employees with a sense of importance of the work that they perform.

IMPLICATIONS

Based on Ro and Chen (2011) research are described, The human resources strategy wheel (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000) suggests for service organizations to (1) hire the right people,(2) develop people to deliver service quality, (3) provide the needed support system, and (4) retain the best people. These general strategies provide good guidelines to human resource managers in the Bank that employ tens of thousands of people in a variety of positions. However, empirical investigation of the organizational practices on employees’ empowerment perception has been scant among the national banks. Our results indicate that both individual and organizational factors should be considered to increase psychological empowerment. This study attempts to make several contributions to the knowledge and study of employee empowerment. Researchers indicate that much of what has been stated about the success of employee empowerment has been celebratory rather than critical and they are based upon a limited number of recurring case studies (Hales and Klidas, 1998). Although empowerment literature in hospitality research proposed conceptual frameworks (e.g., Lashley, 1996; Ford and Fottler, 1995) which have been discussed extensively, they tended to focus on its benefits and consequences. By empirically examining specific antecedents of perceived empowerment, this study identifies several critical factors in both individual and organizational aspects. While selecting and training employees has been well acknowledged as important factors, providing communicating service standards clearly have been less focused on.

This study suggests employee perception of empowerment is an intricate process with multiple influencing factors. Also, by examining perceived empowerment as a multi-dimensional construct, this study reveals relationships between antecedents and specific empowerment dimensions. In addition, this study has several practical implications for hospitality organizations. First, hiring employees with customer oriented personality is important for service organizations to cultivate an empowerment culture. Employees must have the right personality and love the jobs they handle to provide extraordinary guest services. Since employee turnover is very costly for the companies, the Bank human resource managers must focus on hiring right people who fit the companies’ culture and needs. Thus, we suggest that hospitality organizations human resources managers must focus on assessing an individual’s customer orientation during the interview process.

Next, service managers should also concentrate on building an organizational empowerment supporting system. Service training should focus on enhancing employees’ confidence in the decision-making process to deliver high quality service for customers as well as their perceived control and influence at work. In addition, it is important for service organizations to communicate service standards. Without systematic organizational support, employees may not feel they are actually empowered to make decisions and may therefore lack confidence in their actions. Although appropriate recruitment and training are necessary for empowering employees successfully, there will be an increase in the cost of selection and training (Bowen and Lawler, 1992). On the other hand, it should be noted that high empowerment does not necessarily represent high service quality, while low empowerment does not inevitably correspond to low
service quality. Different degrees of empowerment could each have merit as there are positive and negative outcomes of empowerment (Ueno, 2008).

LIMITATIONS AND SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCHES
First, this study employed a convenient sample of guest contact employees working in a bank as a permanent job and the majority of participants were male. Convenient samples of these sample characteristics will limit generalization of the study to other guest contact employees and other types of hospitality organizations (such as hotels, restaurants, and airlines) and the industry as a whole. Future study may consider a cross cultural aspect and the different industry characteristics (e.g., standardization versus customization oriented operation style) in empowerment perceptions. Next, this study focuses on guest contact employees and managers by taking a psychological empowerment approach. As Klidas et al. (2007) and Heller (2003) declare, the structural empowerment approach considers the power issues or political aspects of empowerment in the organizational hierarchy. Future studies can examine the organizational structural issues relating to empowerment such as a dyadic relationship between empowering leadership and subordinate employees and other related questions. Followings are some examples of the related questions:
Does empowerment result in fewer managers?
Will it be helpful if the service organizations create new positions such as empowerment supervisors?
How about creating new policies and procedures related to empowerment in the organizations?
What about having developed programs for empowering employees including training and so on?
Furthermore, two hypotheses (service training and service rewards) have been rejected in this study and this may be due to the characteristics of the participants in this study. We suggest for future researches that researchers focus on temporary workers. Yet many hospitality organizations are employing temporary workers from either domestic or foreign workforce sources. In addition, future studies may explore possible challenges in managing and empowering foreign workforce. Also, based upon a 2008 study by Gkorezis and Petridou, service rewards can be further examined by considering intrinsic rewards (e.g. trust and recognition) and extrinsic rewards (e.g. financial rewards and job security).
Finally, Schneider (1980) argues that people who choose to work in service occupations generally have a strong desire to provide good services. It may be based on this reality that customer orientation has an individual characteristic while organizational service orientation has an organizational characteristic. Future studies may also investigate the association between organizations and individuals in terms of service orientation and its impact on perceived empowerment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
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REFERENCES:


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**Figures and Tables:**

Figure 1 (on page 3 after the second paragraph, as an individual-level variable in our study)

![Diagram](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Figure 1. A multilevel model of empowerment and creativity (Sun et al., 2012)**
Figure. 2 (on page 8 after third paragraph)
Table 1 (on page 8 after first paragraph)
Factor analysis of empowerment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empowerment dimensions</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>meaning</th>
<th>competence</th>
<th>self-det</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department</td>
<td>0.766</td>
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<td>I have significant influence over what happens in my department</td>
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<td>My impact on what happens in my department is great</td>
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<td>The work I do is very important to me</td>
<td>0.845</td>
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<tr>
<td>My job activities are personally meaningful to me</td>
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<tr>
<td>The work I do is meaningful to me</td>
<td>0.782</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I am confident about my ability to do my job</td>
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<td>I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities</td>
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<td>I have mastered the skills necessary for my job</td>
<td>0.843</td>
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<td>I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job</td>
<td>0.761</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work</td>
<td>0.801</td>
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I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job.

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<td>0.770</td>
<td>0.814</td>
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Table 2 (on page 8 after the second paragraph)

**Descriptive statistics**

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<th>Standard Dev.</th>
<th>Cronbach’s alpha</th>
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<td>Service training</td>
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<td>Service rewards</td>
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<td>Service Standards communication</td>
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