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Quantitative Research: The Significant Effect of Psychological Empowerment on Retail Sales Employees

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to establish the effects of psychological empowerment on retail sales employees. It further investigates how psychological empowerment can be used to mitigate the factors that affect sales workers in addition to meeting the feelings and emotional wellbeing of sales workers to improve their productivity and the success of their organizations. **Research design, data, and methodology:** The current author conducted SPSS statistical analysis program to gauge the statistical association between two main constructs (Psychological Empowerment and Job performance) using 217 respondents. The main statistical tool was selected by a multiple regression methodology. **Results:** The statistical test from the analysis is presented in the finding section and shows that β values and P-values are greater than 0 and less than 0.05 respectively and thus, this research could reject null hypotheses which mention that psychological empowerment cannot be associated with job performance. **Conclusions:** All in all, this research could conclude that it will improve the attitudes of retail sales workers towards their job, making them self-committed to the tasks assigned through significant psychological empowerment factors. The retention of these workers would be enhanced because they would attain job satisfaction through a positive perception of the tasks assigned to them.

Keywords : Distribution-Related HR Strategy, Psychological Empowerment, Retail Sales Employee

JEL Classification Code : L81, O15, L10, C46

1. Introduction

Sales representatives are inseparable from the organizations they work for and are critical to many companies because they act as the link between the firm and the customers (Rodriguez, Boyer, Fleming, & Cohen, 2019). The work of sales representatives is characterized by mobility, spending most of their working hours out of the office (Rodriguez et al., 2019). In addition to making sales to customers, retail sales workers also have the responsibility of attending to customers and creating relationships (Seong, 2021). The retail sales workers play the critical role of ensuring that customers across the globe receive the products and services they need (Lee, 2021). Yet

most often, the emotional wellbeing and stress of these workers are not taken care of leading to poor performance. It is the duty and responsibility of organizations to ensure that they take care of the emotional health of their workers so that they can perform their tasks efficiently.

Furthermore, Retail sales workers are impacted by several factors which impede their performance. Among these factors are overworking and poor remuneration (Kang & Hwang, 2021). Additionally, retail sales workers frequently interact with customers and are bound to experience burnout. Having good health and a state of mind is an important factor for sales workers to efficiently perform their duties. According to the previous research (Kim & Jung, 2021), retail sales workers are likely to suffer

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from fatigue, depression, and health-related complications like insomnia. Research has been lacking on the feelings and emotions of sales workers and how these affect their productivity. The tasks undertaken by sales workers are associated with emotional labor, with studies showing a positive correlation between emotional labor and depression (Kim & Wang, 2018). Psychological empowerment (PE) significantly improves the productivity of sales employees.

PE can be defined as the intrinsic work motivation influencing a sensitivity of self-control regarding one's task and active involvement in one's performance effect (Aggarwal, Chand, Jhamb, & Mittal, 2020). Psychological empowerment is a significant component of workforce empowerment that consists of intrinsic motivations to job performance, rewards to employees, and the strengthening of working conditions. When employees are empowered, there is meaningful allocation of tasks in an organization, self-efficacy, competence, and self-determination (Aggarwal et al., 2020). Those factors can be connected to psychological empowerment, reflecting worker's alignment for their performance. Moreover, the factors can lead to constructive effects at the workplace. Aggarwal and his colleagues (2020) have insisted that worker's empowerment recognition may perform one of the most important roles in employee perspectives at the workplace. Yet few studies have focused on its role on retail sales employees.

This study aims to establish the effects of PE on retail sales employees. It further investigates how psychological empowerment can be used to mitigate the factors that affect sales workers in addition to meeting the feelings and emotional wellbeing of sales workers to improve their productivity and the success of their organizations. Sales employees are important to any organization because they are the face of the organization, linking customers to its products (Rodriguez et al., 2019). However, their productivity is affected by burnout, fatigue linked to the mobility of their work, overworking, and underpayment. (Kim & Jung, 2021). Therefore, it is vital to investigate how psychological empowerment can improve job perception, working environment, and productivity of retail sales employees.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Psychological Empowerment and Job Perception

The prior literature studied the mediating role of PE on leader-member exchange and work engagement. Psychological empowerment has a significant contribution to the perception of things at the workplace (Aggarwal et al., 2020). Leader-member exchange (LMX) is a theory that suggests the association between practitioners and their

bottom-line employee at the workplace. The relationship between leaders and their subordinates is diverse and ranges from low to high quality. A high-quality relationship is considered by the exchange of ideas, commitment, openness, clarity, job satisfaction, and less stress at work (Bibi & Afsar, 2018; Maan, Abid, Butt, Ashfaq, & Ahmed, 2020). On the contrary, low-quality LMX leads to higher job stress, less support to the subordinates, withdrawal behaviors, high employee turnover, and lower job satisfaction (Bibi & Afsar, 2018; Maan et al., 2020). The evaluation of employee output is based on several factors, including agreeableness, neuroticism, extraversion, locus control, and competence. A good relationship between leaders and their subordinates results in more empowerment, hence increasing job satisfaction and performance.

2.2. Psychological empowerment and work engagement

Aggarwal et al. (2020) notes that there are four elements to psychological empowerment including "employee competence, meaning derived from work, self-determination, and impact" (p. 3). PE is associated with positive work engagement among employees (Ahmed & Malik, 2019). When employees manifest higher work engagement, their commitment and job satisfaction increases (Javed, Abdullah, Zaffar, ul Haque, & Rubab, 2019). Additionally, employee truancy at the workplace is reduced. Further, psychological empowerment may guide more constructive engagement for workers. According to the prior research (Aggarwal et al, 2020), conditions like organization culture, job enrichment, and the opportunities to work under supportive leadership" are associated with psychological empowerment.

2.3. LMX and PE

Considering LMX, PE plays a part in the way managers relate with their subordinates. A high leader-member relationship leads to a supportive organizational culture through information sharing, building trust, rewarding workers, sharing resources, and openness (Aggarwal et al., 2020; Bibi & Afsar, 2018). When there is psychological empowerment, employees express themselves openly, have positive attitudes towards accepting work challenges. Moreover, they have a higher sensitivity to work contexts and are more innovative. Employee relationship with the leaders is critical to employee performance and satisfaction. When sales worker perceives their relationship with their leaders as high, they perform better than employees who have a lower relationship with their leaders. Additionally, employees with a high relationship with their leaders easily adapt to change (Appuhami, 2019). High LMX results in the

psychological empowerment of employees leading to better productivity (Bibi & Afsar, 2018). There is a positive correlation between ethical leadership, employee attitudes, and psychological empowerment (Qing, Asif, Hussain, & Jameel, 2020; Li, Shi, Li, Xing, Wang, Ying, & Sun, 2018; Ahmed & Malik, 2019). PE plays a significant role between moral leadership and work attitudes, promoting both job satisfaction and job commitment for retail employees. Organizations that employ retail sales workers should enhance psychological empowerment to improve employee productivity and job satisfaction.

2.4. Psychological empowerment and innovative work behavior

The previous research (Rehman, Ahmad, Allen, Raziq, & Riaz, 2019) related psychological empowerment and innovative work behaviors by retail sales employees. The current author opines that a high degree of collaboration with 'Human Resource (HR)' department might lead a high degree of empowerment rate among workers. Psychological empowerment leads to increased creativity among workers. Creativity is enhanced because employees feel confident to perform the organizational tasks based on their sense of responsibility for the tasks assigned to them. Psychological empowerment also leads to the "professional development of the employees". There are four components of psychological empowerment that lead to innovative work and professional development, including competence, meaning, autonomy or self-determination, and impact (Rehman et al., 2019). The belief by employees that they have the required skills to perform a given task is referred to as competence, while meaning is the relevance of the task and its alignment to the values and standards of the employee (Appuhami, 2019). The impact is the measure of the perceived influence of the employee on their work environment while self-determination refers to the will of the workers in performing their jobs. If employees are rigorously selected and competently trained, their competence and autonomy will improve, hence, boosting their psychological empowerment.

When a HR department compensated and provides some meaningful feedbacks to the retail sales workers for their specific tasks, probably they can strong be connected with their significant tasks. Additionally, performance appraisals and compensations given by organizations affect the meaning aspect of psychological empowerment (Rehman et al., 2019). Sales employees feel psychologically empowered when they receive constructive feedback and compensation based on their performance. Business organizations should give their employees a chance to contribute to the decision-making process to increase their psychological empowerment. When employees are engaged in decision-

making, there is a sense of ownership of the decisions and activities of the firm, further leading to psychological empowerment.

Furthermore, flexibility in the design of tasks carried out by retail sales workers and enhanced participation in decision-making by retail sales workers increase the autonomy and the discretion of the workers (Jena, Bhattacharyya, & Pradhan, 2019). The human resource practices within an organization that affects psychological empowerment include can be categorized as ability-enhancing practices that "focus on improving the skills and abilities of the employees".

2.5. Research Gap

Despite psychological empowerment attracting numerous research studies, there are few efforts directed towards analyzing the effects of psychological on retail sales employees. Studies have investigated the mediating role of psychological empowerment and emotional intelligence in the medical industry, the mediating role of psychological empowerment on LMX and work relationships (Aggarwal et al., 2020), or high involvement HR systems and innovative behavior (Rehman et al., 2019). Other studies have focused on the link between emotional labor and stress among retail sales workers (Kim & Jung, 2021; Karimi, Leggat, Bartram, & Rada, 2020), or how psychological empowerment impacts interpersonal conflicts and sharing of knowledge among employees. Another study focused on the mediating role of psychological empowerment in the public sector (Qing et al., 2020; Karimi et al., 2020).

Even though sales workers play a vital role in linking organizations to their customers, and acting as the face of business organizations, they are affected by stress, fatigue, low remunerations, negative attitudes, and a lack of meaning and job satisfaction. Their job outcomes are negatively affected leading to poor outputs at the organization level. Yet there are no studies that have focused on how psychological empowerment could be used to enhance positive well-being, job satisfaction, and higher productivity of retail sales workers. This study seeks to establish the effect of PE on retail sales employees to mitigate the negative effects of their working environment and enhance their productivity.

Based on many previous experts, the hypotheses which are matched to the purpose of this study:

- H1:** More emphasis (High Level) on psychological empowerment for sales employees positively affects to job performance.
- H2:** Less emphasis (Low Level) on psychological empowerment for sales employees negatively affects to job performance.

3. Study Design

3.1. Questionnaire Development

The current research selected total 14 survey questions for achieving the purpose of the research (Psychological Empowerment: 7 items and Job performance: 7 items). To collect real dataset from the survey participants, items of psychological empowerment were created by current authors based on two previous studies (Malik, Sarwar, & Orr, 2021; Maan et al, 2020; Spreitzer, 1995). Regarding the items of job performance, the current author also created through two previous studies (Seong, 2021; Lee, 2021). Table 1 points out total five prior studies which were based on creation of survey items and all used sources indicated a high degree of content validation. The Likert Scale (5 point) was selected by the current author to apply for measuring two main constructs, ranging from 1. Strongly Disagree to 5. Strongly Agree.

Table 1: Used Past Resources

Main Factors	Number of Questions	Previous Resources
Psychological Empowerment	7	(Malik et al., 2021; Maan et al., 2020; Spreitzer, 1995)
Job Performance	7	(Seong, 2021; Lee, 2021)
Total	14	

3.2. Sample

The current research obtained total 217 South Korean employees who work at retail stores as a final sample for two weeks (February 7, 2022, and February 21, 2022), distributing the questionnaires through an online format. The current author asked helping to collect a high-quality real dataset. According to the research professional agency, they tried to use 'Random Sampling' approach which is one of the most famous sampling approaches so that the current author could obtain the high quality of real dataset, protecting a certain demographic group has a large portion in sampling process.

As presented the Table 2, although total 400 papers were distributed via electronic email system, the current author could obtain only 275 datasets, identifying 68.7% returned rate. Furthermore, collected dataset was subtracted 58 datasets additionally due to checking these datasets were not responded at least 80% survey questions (Park & Kang, 2021). The following Table 2 indicates the survey collection process and Table 3 shows the detailed demographic characteristics regarding the usable sample.

Table 2: Detailed Sample Collection Procedure

	Total	Percentage (%)
Survey Distributed	400	100
Uncollected Survey	125	31.3
Collected Survey	275	68.7
Discarded Survey	58	14.5
Usable Survey	217	54.2

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics

	Number of Response	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	104	47.9
Female	113	52.1
Job level		
Entry	76	48.9
Intermediate	81	18.6
Managerial	60	32.5
Age Group		
20s	56	25.8
30s	52	24.0
40s	54	24.9
50s	55	25.3

4. Statistical Findings

4.1. Reliability Analysis

The current author conducted SPSS 24 statistical program to gauge the statistical connections between two main factors (Psychological Empowerment and Job performance). Firstly, to measure the construct's reliability before conducting the main statistical procedure, this research started to gauge 'Internal Consistency' as a pre-investigation.

Past studies have already presented and confirmed that if Cronbach value is more than 0.6, internal consistency value will be acceptable number, meaning that items can be together as one construct. As shown by Table 4, regarding two key factors of the current research, first, the Cronbach alpha values regarding all seven items of 'Psychological Empowerment for survey participants' (0.743) and all seven items of 'Job performance for survey participants' (0.781) were greater than 0.6 respectively. Therefore, the author could obtain the justification to measure statistical analysis.

Table 4: Results of Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient

Key Construct	Question Number	Cronbach Alpha Value
Psychological Empowerment	7	0.743
Job Performance	7	0.781

4.2. Factor Analysis and Regression

Using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) approach, the adequacy and factor loading of the sample for this research was measured. As seen by Table 5, two KMO values regarding PE and JP indicated that both values are greater than 0.5, identifying constructs groups may be used.

Table 5: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measurement

Group of Constructs	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)
Psychological Empowerment	0.832
Job Performance	0.851

As a next step after completing the KMO analysis, this research conducted a significant statistical methodology which is a multiple regression analysis. This method has been widely selected by numerous prior researchers to gauge the association analysis between key constructs in the quantitative study. The distinct purpose of this research method indicates the strong predictions between variables in the linear equation. The statistical test from the analysis is presented in Table 6, the results revealed that the present author could accept both H1 and H2, rejecting null hypotheses because β values are greater than 0 and the P-values are less than 0.05. Therefore, this research concluded that the psychological empowerment of retail sales workers can be associated with sales workers' job performances.

Table 6: Statistical Results of Regression.

(Path Analysis)	β	p-value	hypothesis
H ₁	0.44	0.01	Accept
H ₂	0.46	0.03	Accept



*HRS-Human Resource Strategy, PE- Psychological Empowerment, HJP- High Degree of Job Performance

Figure 1: Role of Psychological Empowerment for Better Performance

5. Discussions

The study of psychological empowerment and its impact on retail sales workers has numerous implications, not only to the retail workforce but also to other employees in various sectors. According to the previous research (Arogundade & Arogundade, 2015), various dimensions of psychological

empowerment like meaningfulness, impact, competence, and self-determination can be used to enhance the career satisfaction of employees and hence improve their productivity. Organizations should enhance aspects of employee satisfaction like competence and impact through rigorous recruitment to acquire the best talents in the market. Additionally, business organizations should invest in the training of their employees to enhance their career satisfaction hence ensuring their retention and improving their productivity. Therefore, this study implies that organizations should create a work environment that is empowering to improve work outcomes for their employees, sustain productivity, and improve their career satisfaction.

This study extensively contributes to psychological empowerment at the workplace. According to the findings of this study, the relationship between workers and their supervisors is critical for the outcomes at the organizational level and at the individual level (Aggarwal et al., 2020). Psychological empowerment affects organizational behavior and the commitment of employees to the firm. Additionally, psychological empowerment impacts employees' satisfaction at the workplace. Leaders in an organization should enhance the psychological empowerment of the employees by enhancing good relationships between workers and their subordinates. Such relationships take time to build, and should be based on mutual respect, loyalty, and produce high performance. If business firms are built on high controls by the supervisors, it would be difficult to enhance harmonious relationships amongst workers in such organizations.

In addition, high controls by managers in organizations lead to jeopardized situations for the managers, with limited opportunities to interact with their subordinates and also fewer opportunities for the subordinates to reciprocate. Therefore, this study serves to enhance relationships between managers and workers in an organization hence reducing negative feelings and enhancing positive feelings related to work among retail sales workers. This study established a strong relationship between psychological empowerment and positive relationship in an organization. Organizations that enhance the positive relationship between managers and their employees enhance positive empowerment leading to positive outcomes for the organization and its employees.

Moreover, retail sales workers are affected by numerous factors like fatigue, job stress, depression, and insomnia because of the nature of their work. Such factors result in psychological health problems, negative feelings, lack of good health, and poor productivity (Seong, 2021). This study will assist business organizations in ensuring that the emotional well-being of their workers is taken care of, leading to a feeling of empowerment and meaning at the workplace. Organizations that put into practice the findings

of this study will have their employees feel more confident and capable of achieving self-actualization.

Furthermore, a high-quality relationship at the workplace would enhance psychological empowerment, making retail sales workers feel psychologically empowered. When these employees feel psychologically empowered, they derive meaning in their work, and their confidence in performing assigned tasks increases. The business organization benefits tremendously because the productivity of the workers is enhanced. There is a sense of trust in organizations that enhance psychological empowerment (Aggarwal et al., 2020). Leaders and retail sales workers respect each other and therefore the leaders enhance empowering working conditions through the provision of working resources, flexibility in working schedules, and workers forming an integral part of decision-making within the organization. Therefore, managers need to enhance a positive working relationship to maximize the benefits of psychological empowerment among retail sales workers.

Besides, this study has an implication on the existing literature concerning psychological empowerment at the workplace. This study adds to the existing body of knowledge and will form a foundation for reference in future studies on the effects of psychological empowerment among workers. This study found out that there is a mediating role between psychological empowerment and the relationship between managers and retail sales workers. Therefore, the study will contribute towards empowered leadership of managers to their subordinates, further resulting in more control at the workplace. When retail sales workers have more control at the workplace, their intrinsic motivation will be enhanced, further resulting in the high engagement at the workplace. The net effect is that firms will see more productivity, revenue generation, attachment to customers, and overall sustainability in their operations when psychological empowerment is enhanced.

Additionally, psychological empowerment would enhance intrinsic motivation among retail sales workers in business organizations, leading to high levels of engagement by the retail sales workers. High levels of engagement of workers in an organization lead to high levels of job satisfaction by the subordinates, reducing their psychological withdrawal behavior (Lee, 2021). The implication is that employees who are psychologically empowered and have a high-quality relationship with their managers have a sense of ownership and reduced levels of psychological withdrawal behavior, hence, enhanced performance.

This study had several limitations that have to be taken into consideration when generalizing its findings. The first limitation is related to data collection. This study was a qualitative analysis of the existing literature about the effects of psychological empowerment on retail sales

workers. To handle this limitation, the study explored secondary data from a variety of sources to improve credibility. By exploring a variety of studies, this research paper varied scope and analyzed the findings of both qualitative and quantitative studies focused on psychological empowerment and its effects on employees. In so doing, the credibility and trustworthiness of this study were enhanced.

Besides, other intervening variables may affect the outcome of this study and make conclusions not credible. However, this study considered intervening variables like employee relationship with supervisors, employee engagement, psychological withdrawal behavior, and rewards within an organization. The study further analyzed the relationship between these variables and psychological empowerment, investigating the mediating role of psychological empowerment and the intervening variables. The researcher ensured the effects of the intervening variables were minimized by widening the scope in the analysis of secondary data. Therefore, the findings of this study are not affected by the listed intervening variables.

Additionally, the other limitation is concerning data analysis methods. This study used qualitative methods to analyze data. The study recommends that future studies should use both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis to gain more insight into the effects of psychological empowerment on retail sales workers. The use of such a mixed-method would generate depth in data that gives detailed insights into the variables under study.

6. Conclusions

This study investigated the effects of psychological empowerment on the performance of retail sales employees. This study noted that retail sales employees are the face of business organizations, providing a direct link to the customers. They attend to customers and create relationships. However, retail sales workers face a myriad of problems ranging from fatigue, stress, insomnia, and their emotional well-being is not taken care of leading to poor performance. Psychological empowerment is the intrinsic motivation of workers that leads to a sense of self-control, and implies playing an active role in one's work (Aggarwal et al., 2020). Psychological empowerment signifies the empowerment of workers in their roles leading to high performance. This study analyzed how psychological empowerment can be used to reduce negative factors that impede the performance of retail sales workers and improve their performance.

This study will help solve various problems that affect retail sales workers and improve their performance. It will improve the innovative behavior of retail sales employees

making them find solutions to workplace issues (Malik et al, 2021). Business organizations would find solutions to the lack of innovation by retail sales workers through psychological empowerment. Additionally, psychological empowerment will lead to empowering leadership that enhances the performance of retail sales employees (Riaz, Shahid, & Ali, 2021). It will improve the attitudes of retail sales workers towards their job, making them committed to the tasks assigned. The retention of these workers would be enhanced because they would attain job satisfaction through a positive perception of the tasks assigned to them.

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