

## **The Effect of Psychological Empowerment on Job Satisfaction at Express Logistics Company in Malaysia**

Nurhafizah Mohd Zolkapli, Siti Norashikin Bashirun, Siti Nurul Akma Ahmad, Nor Maslia Rasli Samudin

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Melaka, Malaysia

Nur Idayu Badrolhisam

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Puncak Alam, Malaysia

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### **Abstract**

This study was conducted to examine the effect of psychological empowerment dimensions on job satisfaction as well as to determine the most influential predictor on job satisfaction in one of the express logistics companies at Johor Bharu, Malaysia. About 120 employees from the respective company were selected conveniently to taking part in this study. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze data through three analyses which are descriptive, correlation and regression analysis. Based on descriptive analysis, the results indicated that majority of the respondents were male and Malay. Moreover, most of the respondents were aged between 30-39 years old, married and hold a certificate. Referring to correlation analysis, the finding revealed that there is a positive and weak relationship between competence as well as meaning dimensions with job satisfactions. However, self-determination and impact have positive and strong relationship with job satisfaction. Furthermore, the finding of the study based on regression analysis signified that the dimensions of psychological empowerment had an influence of 64.6% towards job satisfaction. Another 35.4% were possibly influence by other variables not being studied. Additionally, it also demonstrated that self-determination is the most influenced dimensions towards job satisfaction. The research findings offer several significant insights for the company about the importance of psychological empowerment and its connection with job satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Psychological Empowerment, Job Satisfaction, Meaning, Impact, Self-Determination, Competence.

**Introduction**

Extensive studies have been conducted on the area of job satisfaction due to its crucial influences on organizations' success. Over the years, numerous predictors have been studied to test the influence on job satisfaction however no conclusive evidence to show the best-suited predictors since it was tested on different contexts and scope of studies. By definition, job satisfaction refers to the pleasant emotional state that results from the attainment of job values (Courtney & Younkyoung, 2017). Job satisfaction is a positive emotional state that is caused by the consideration of an employee job and knowledge. It is the way how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs. Employees will prefer the jobs that give them opportunities to apply their skills and abilities and offer a variation of task, freedom, and feedback on how well they are doing. Job satisfaction plays a vital role in enhancing and maintaining employee's performance in the organization. Thus, it is a focal point in most of the organization regardless of the industry.

Many of the organization have conducted a study to specifically identify the factor that lead to job satisfaction among their employees. One of the factors that lead to job satisfaction being studied is psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment refers to several internal processes and psychological states of cognitive type, that change the perception of the subject concerning himself and the context in which it is (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). In recent years, wide focus has been given to the study of the empowerment concept. Several researchers look at the concept of employee empowerment as an antecedent and predictor of constructive outcomes in the organization.

Based on the reviewed of numerous literatures, various studies can be found signifying that empowered employees will help their organization to achieve a competitive advantage (Forrester, 2000). Besides, it also proved that psychological empowerment has high relationship with job satisfaction of the employees (Aryee & Chen, 2006; Carless, 2004; Koberg et al., 1999; Liden et al., 2000; Seibert et al., 2004 & Sparrowe, 1994). Although empowerment practices have been applied since the early nineties in Malaysia and there are substantial number of research studies conducted to explore the impact that these empowerment practices on job satisfaction, but there is still lack of such study especially in the express logistics industry.

In the organization, an employee is one of the valuable assets that could support various organization activities where they bring their knowledge, skills, and experiences in the human capital form. This human capital helps organizations to grow and attain its objectives and goals. Employees in numerous sectors including those in express logistics company, are receiving lots of day-to-day works and projects which required them to finishing it in a very tight dateline or schedule. Hence, this will create stressful situation in the organization that could affect the employees' performance and satisfaction. Essentially, communication and interaction between employees and management affects many aspects within of the business environment. There will be a difference of opinions in the process of decision making which make the association more complicated to understand. Employees who are not interested to work in their organization will contribute to negative impact on the employees itself and organization. Its mean that, if employees are not happy, the work result and their performance will be affected and decreased.

The question is, what an organization should do to ensure the employees will be stay motivated and loves their job. One of the ways is by providing some authority and empowerment for the employee in doing their work that includes letting them to make their own decision making and solving the problem. However, in business culture, many superiors

are reluctant to delegate power to their subordinates. It can be due to many reasons for instance a lack of skill or experience in handling people, lacking trust in their team or employees, refusal to let go the jobs which they priorly owned, fear of incapability to delegate the tasks, fear of the risk or challenge, and fear for their own role or job security. These problems can be seen in many organizations where the employees are not given a chance to make their own decision. Nowadays, employees' psychological empowerment is considered as a vital issue in human resource management which require the organization to concern and take care about it.

Therefore, based on the background of the study and problem statement, the objective of this study is to examine the effect of psychological empowerment dimensions which consists of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact on job satisfaction. This study is also aims to determine the most influential predictor on job satisfaction in one of the express logistics companies at Johor Bharu, Malaysia.

## **Literature Review**

### **Psychological Empowerment**

The concept of empowerment is known to be vital for the organization's effectiveness since the advancement of the science and technology advancement together with the increase of worldwide competition (Ergeneli, Ari & Metin, 2007). Likewise, empowerment also known as a one of the crucial factors that lead contributes to organization's success (Jose & Mampilly, 2014). Empowerment can be described as individual's internal (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Tsemach, 2014) or external process of emotion being empowered (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Tsemach, 2014; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). It is essential to know that empowerment can be defined in some different viewpoints which include structural approach, process approach, and psychological approach (Leach, Wall & Jackson 2003; Mathieu, Gilson & Ruddy 2006; Menon 2001; Spreitzer 1995; Uner & Turan, 2010; Quiñones, Van den Broeck & De Witte, 2013).

Psychological empowerment is a novel way of motivating worker and it gained great attention from superiors in organization (Edalatian Shahriari, Maleki, Koolivand & Meyvand, 2013); thus for this reasons, there are various definitions of this concept (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Tsemach, 2014). According to Conger, Kanungo and Menon (2000), psychological empowerment can be defined as a motivation and process of people understands of their personal effectiveness in comparison to the other individuals in organization, together with an aid of formal and informal measures and methods for stimulating effectiveness. Besides, psychological empowerment also can be described as a practice of improving self-efficacy's feeling among organizational members via the identification and elimination of situations that foster powerless by both formal organizational practices and informal techniques of delivering access to usefulness information (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Psychological empowerment also known as a form of intrinsic motivation to perform task, demonstrated in the following four cognitions: meaningfulness, competence, self-determination, and impact (Avey, Hughes, Norman & Luthans, 2008). Additionally, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) specified that, psychological empowerment involves worker's belief about the meaning of their work, their capability to do their job well, their sense of self-determination and their autonomy in influencing work outcomes.

**Job Satisfaction**

The concept of job satisfaction is broadly studied and measured in the organizational literature. Due to this fact, many definitions can be found by us (Westover & Taylor, 2010). Job Satisfaction can be defined as an individual's cognitive attitude or affective response toward job; it is an extent to which a person like or dislike their job (Ivancevich & Matteson, 2002; Spector, 1997).

According to Robbins and Judge (2015), a person who have high level of job satisfaction usually have positive attitude towards their job; but if they have low level of job satisfaction, they usually have negative attitude towards their job. In order to understand the intricacy of job satisfaction as a concept, we need to understand about the association between individual and organization, since job itself creates feelings which cause satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Spector, 1997). From this perspective, it can support the organization to keep their employees (Saari & Judge, 2004).

Job satisfaction of the employees is an indicator of organizational success, which is influenced by dispositional and organizational factors (Rothmann & Coetzer, 2002). Most of the superiors are mindful with the importance of job satisfaction, since they recognized that satisfied employee is also a productive employee. Majority of managers are aware of importance of job satisfaction because they know that satisfied employee is also a productive employee (Saari & Judge, 2004).

**Psychological Empowerment and Job Satisfaction**

Various studies had proved that psychological empowerment and job satisfaction have a positive relationship (Ambad & Bahron, 2012; Fong & Snape, 2015) which indicated that empowerment help to increases job satisfaction which means that empowerment increases job satisfaction (Menon, 2001; Ravichandran & Gilmore, 2006; Stewart, et.al, 2010). Moreover, employees that have been empowered tend to be satisfied with their job as compared to less empowered employees. When investigating the association between four dimensions of psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) and job satisfaction, each dimension has positive influence (Ambad & Bahron, 2012).

Furthermore, Carless (2004) stated that among the four dimensions of psychological empowerment, competence and meaning were more significant in predicting job satisfaction. Based on Bowen and Lawler (1995), employees were more satisfied as a result of being psychologically empowered. Further, Gazzoli, Hancer and Park (2010) revealed that psychological empowerment had a positive effect on employees' job satisfaction. In line with these results, in a study that had been conducted by Avey et. al (2008), psychological empowerment appeared as a possible and crucial predictor of employee's job satisfaction and turnover intention in an organization. Likewise, Seibert et al. (2004) summarized that psychological empowerment mediates the association between empowerment climate and job satisfaction.

Moreover, the findings of several studies discovered that an individual's perception of empowerment is an essential mediator between the organizational context and job satisfaction (Larrabee et al., 2003; Spreitzer, 1995). Based on the study conducted by Holdsworth and Cartwright (2003), it revealed that increased job satisfaction is one of the key results of the perceived feeling of psychological empowerment among the employees in the organization. They also found that, even though impact and meaning dimensions lead to the overall feeling of job satisfaction, yet self-determination has been identified as a dimension that has the most significant relationship with job satisfaction.

Regarding the competence dimensions of psychological empowerment, Bordin et al. (2007) summarized that a person who feel they have the required competency to perform their assigned tasks are more likely to feel more contented with their jobs. Furthermore, Spreitzer, Kizilos and Nason (1997) revealed that all four psychological empowerment dimensions are positively associated to job satisfaction, where meaningfulness dimension showed the strongest relationship with job satisfaction. Additionally, study conducted by Liden et al. (2000), established the relationship between meaningfulness and competence dimensions with job satisfaction.

Based on the study performed by Bordin et al. (2007) found that all four psychological empowerment dimensions have a key role in affecting the job satisfaction. Concerning the meaning dimension, Liden et al. (2000) revealed that the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment has the strongest argument for a positive association to job satisfaction. Hence, the meaning is vital for job satisfaction since a person can only gain satisfaction from their job when their job is meaningful to them. Pertaining to the impact dimension, Liden et al. (2000) contended that when employees have a feeling that the job they do can influence the outcomes within their organization, they will feel dynamically involved and thus develop a sense of job satisfaction. Figure 1 exhibited that the research framework for this study that illustrate the relationship between independent variables which are psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) and dependent variable which is job satisfaction.

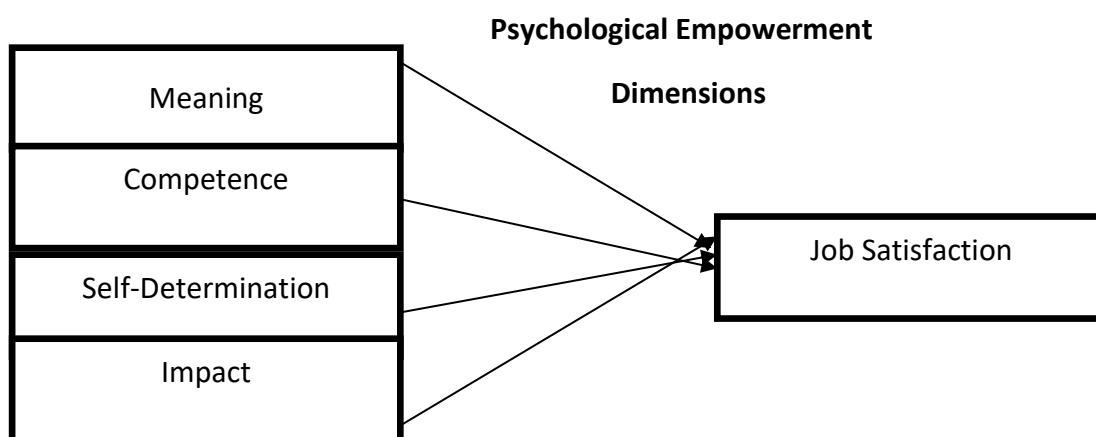


Figure 1. Research Framework

Consistent with the discussion above and the elucidation of the literature review following hypotheses have been developed to examine the relationship between the variables:

- H<sub>1</sub> There is a positive and significant relationship between meaning and job satisfaction.
- H<sub>2</sub> There is a positive and significant relationship between competence and job satisfaction.
- H<sub>3</sub> There is a positive and significant relationship between self-determination and job satisfaction.
- H<sub>4</sub> There is a positive and significant relationship between impact and job satisfaction.

### Methodology

The study is concentrating on examining the effect of psychological empowerment dimensions on job satisfaction as well as to determine the most influential predictor to job satisfaction. The convenience sampling technique was applied in distributing questionnaire

to the respondents. The list of all registered employees at one of the express logistics companies at Johor Bharu, Malaysia was used as a sampling frame. 130 employees were selected as population and sample size for this study. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze data through three analyses in this study. First, a descriptive analysis was performed to generate descriptive results related to gender, age, race, marital status, and level of education. Second, a correlation analysis was used to measure the relationship between psychological empowerment dimensions and job satisfaction among employees. Third, a regression analysis was used to identify the most influential predictor among psychological empowerment dimensions on job satisfaction.

### Reliability

Reliability testing can be defined as a test which is intended to examine how stable and consistent a measuring tool or instrument (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). The reliability of questionnaire was analysed using Cronbach's Alpha to measure the internal consistency and the level of strength of each variable that available in this study. According to rules of thumb by Sekaran and Bougie (2013), it was indicated that each of variables have excellent and good consistency with Cronbach's Alpha value for competence dimension (.914); meaning (.862); self-determination (.878); impact (.888) and job satisfaction (.911). This value is adequate to verify its reliability as what Sekaran (2003) discussed in their studies.

### Findings and Discussions

#### Descriptive Analysis

From 130 questionnaires that were distributed by the researchers, only 120 respondents responded valid questionnaires. Therefore, this study represented from 120 employees from one of the express logistics companies at Johor Bahru, Malaysia. Based on Table 1, it exhibited that majority of the respondents were male (n=84, 70%) and Malay (n=82, 68.3%). Moreover, most of the respondents were aged between 30-39 years old (n=63, 52.5%). Further, majority of the respondents were married (n=91, 75.8%) and hold a certificate (n=76, 63.5%).

Table 1

#### *Demographic Background*

|                       | FREQUENCY (f) | PERCENT (%) |
|-----------------------|---------------|-------------|
| <b>Gender</b>         |               |             |
| Male                  | 84            | 70          |
| Female                | 36            | 30          |
| <b>Age</b>            |               |             |
| 20-29 years           | 29            | 24.2        |
| 30-39 years           | 63            | 52.5        |
| 40-49 years           | 21            | 17.5        |
| 50 years and above    | 7             | 5.8         |
| <b>Race</b>           |               |             |
| Malay                 | 82            | 68.3        |
| Chinese               | 18            | 15.0        |
| Indian                | 10            | 8.3         |
| Others                | 10            | 8.3         |
| <b>Marital Status</b> |               |             |
| Married               | 91            | 75.8        |
| Single                | 28            | 23.3        |

|                           |    |      |
|---------------------------|----|------|
| Others                    | 1  | 0.8  |
| <b>Level of Education</b> |    |      |
| Certificate               | 76 | 63.5 |
| Diploma                   | 27 | 22.5 |
| Degree                    | 11 | 9.2  |
| Master                    | 5  | 4.2  |
| PHD                       | 1  | 0.8  |

### Correlation Analysis

In order to examine the relationship between psychological empowerment dimensions and job satisfaction in this study, it had been interpreted by referring to the Strength of Correlation Interpretation guidelines by Salkind (2014). Thus, the results available in the Table 2 indicated that, there existed a positive and weak relationship between competence and job satisfactions ( $r=.347$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Moreover, there is also a positive and weak relationship existed between meaning and job satisfaction ( $r=.381$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). However, self-determination and impact have positive and strong relationship with job satisfaction ( $r=.739$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and ( $r=.714$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) respectively. All dimensions of psychological empowerment indicated significant relationship with job satisfaction. Therefore, all the research hypotheses that have been constructed earlier were accepted.

Table 2

*Correlations Table for Psychological Empowerment Dimensions and Job Satisfaction*

|                  |                     | Competence | Meaning | Self-Determination | Impact |
|------------------|---------------------|------------|---------|--------------------|--------|
| Job Satisfaction | Pearson Correlation | .347**     | .381**  | .739**             | .714** |
|                  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | 0.00       | 0.00    | 0.00               | 0.00   |
|                  | N                   | 120        | 120     | 120                | 120    |

### Regression Analysis

In this study, in order to identify how well the independent variables, predict the value to the dependent variable, multiple regression analysis had been performed. Referring to the results of regression analysis that available in Table 3, the results of R Square was 64.6%. This signified that the independent variables which are dimensions of psychological empowerment (competence, meaning, self-determination and impact) had an influence of 64.6% towards the dependent variable (job satisfaction). Another 35.4% of the independent variables were not influencing the dependent variable and were replaced by other variables. This conveyed that 64.6% of job satisfaction among employees at selected express logistics company can be explained by psychological empowerment's dimensions. Table 4 presented the regression results of the association between dimensions of psychological empowerment and job satisfaction. From the table it could be seen that self-determination is the most influenced dimensions towards job satisfaction with beta value .415. The second highest dimensions that influenced job satisfaction is impact with beta value .403 followed by meaning with beta value .073, while the least influence dimension is competence with beta value 0.67. Furthermore, table 4 also indicated that two independent variables which are self-determination and impact are significant because their p-values are below than 0.01. However, the p-values for

competence and meaning are greater than 0.05 which signified that the result is not statistically significant.

Table 3  
*Model Summary*

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .804 <sup>a</sup> | .646     | .634              | .42856                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Competence, Meaning, Self-Determination, Impact

b. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction

Table 4  
*Results of Regression Analysis*

| Coefficients  |                             |            |                           |       |      |
|---------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| Model         | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t     | Sig. |
|               | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |       |      |
| (Constant)    | -.060                       | .454       |                           | -.131 | .896 |
| 1 Meaning     | .103                        | .113       | 0.67                      | .910  | .365 |
| Competence    | .114                        | .117       | .073                      | .970  | .334 |
| Self-         | .454                        | 0.87       | .415                      | 5.195 | .000 |
| Determination | .339                        | .063       | .403                      | 5.368 | .000 |
| Impact        |                             |            |                           |       |      |

a. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction

### Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has few limitations and offers potential areas for future research. First, the study has specifically focused on express logistics companies at Johor Bharu, Malaysia. The generalizability of the results should be further established through studies across other employment sectors. Second, the study has considered only four dimensions of psychological empowerment which are meaning, competence, self-determination and impact as the job satisfaction predictors. In future study, it is suggested to examine the effect of other organizational resources or dimensions, such as motivation, leadership, employee rewards and other organizational and personal resources on employees' job satisfaction. Finally, the present study is cross-sectional in nature, which restricts causal inferences. It is recommended to conduct a longitudinal study in order to establish causal inferences.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The main purpose of this study is to examine the effect of psychological empowerment dimensions on job satisfaction. Research findings signified that all dimensions of psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination & impact) have significant relationship with job satisfaction among employees at one of the express logistics company at Johor Bharu, Malaysia. In which the result showed that there is a weak significant relationship between competence ( $r=0.347$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) as well as meaning ( $r=0.381$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) with job satisfaction. Nevertheless, the result revealed that, self-determination ( $r=0.739$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and impact ( $r=0.714$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) has strong significant relationship with job satisfaction. Besides, based on the result of the study, it proved that self-determination is the most



influential predictor that lead to job satisfaction among employees at the respective company with highest beta value ( $\beta=0.415$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Regarding the result of study, it can be concluded that the meaning, competence, self-determination and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment significantly influenced employees' job satisfaction which supporting the constructed hypotheses. These findings can be supported by Bowen and Lawler (1995) who indicated that, the employees were more satisfied as a result of being psychological empowered. Besides, Gazzoli, Hancer and Park (2010) revealed that psychological empowerment had a positive effect on employees' job satisfaction. Further, Ambad and Bahron (2012) stressed that employees that have been empowered are more likely to be satisfied with their job as compared with less empowered employees. Furthermore, when they are investigating the relationship between four dimensions of psychological empowerment and job satisfaction, each dimension showed a positive influence. Since psychological empowerment was considered important within the organization, therefore, it can be recommended that the superiors create equal conditions and friendly environment, delegate more authority or power to the employees, send employees to several training to enhance their skills and competence, eliminate unwanted or unnecessary control at hierarchical levels of the organization as well as encourage active participation among the employees in the organization. Thus, the employees will feel more empowered and ultimately help to increase their satisfaction and decrease turnover intention.

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### **Corresponding Author**

Nurhafizah binti Mohd Zolkapli

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Melaka

Email: nurhafizahzolkapli@uitm.edu.my

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