



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Relationship between Job Empowerment and Employee Retention: The Mediating Role of Flow Experience

Mark Kasa^{1*}, Zaiton Hassan², Sheila Lim³, Dayang Kartini⁴, Li Cheng Wang⁵

^{1,2,3,4}Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Jln Datuk Mohammad Musa, 94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia

⁵Faculty of Economic and Business, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Jln Datuk Mohammad Musa, 94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Jun 25, 2024	Empowerment fosters responsibility and innovation in achieving organizational objectives. This study investigates the impact of psychological and structural empowerment on employee retention in the hotel industry of Sarawak, with flow experience as a mediating factor. A total of 256 valid questionnaires were collected from the respondents. The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 PROCESS Model 4 approach and G*Power software to calculate the statistical power to determine the minimum sampling size. The findings show a positive relationship between job empowerment dimensions and employee retention while flow experience acting as a significant mediator. Findings of this study suggest that hotel management should consider job empowerment strategies to enhance employee retention.
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*Corresponding Author:	
ekmark@unimas.my	

INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector in Malaysia significantly contributes to the nation's economic landscape, accounting for 15.9% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), or RM240.2 billion, in 2019. This industry has also been a major employment catalyst, generating approximately 3.6 million jobs in 2019 across various sectors, including hospitality, shipping, and retail (Department of Statistics, 2020). Despite this, the hospitality sector encounters substantial challenges in employee retention, with an annual turnover rate averaging 32.4%, as reported by the Malaysian Association of Hotels (2021). This concern was further exacerbated during the pandemic, leading to nearly 150,000 job exits, primarily due to economic instabilities and enforced lockdowns (Ibrahim et al., 2021). Furthermore, turnover rates in the Asian hospitality and restaurant sectors are alarmingly high, surpassing 40% (Abomurad & AL-Khrabsheh, 2019; Khatri et al., 2001). This highlights the critical need for strategies to bolster employee retention and curb turnover within the industry.

Job empowerment, characterized by granting employees the autonomy to meaningfully pursue their work objectives (Laschinger & Leiter, 2006) and few recent studies revealed that empowerment may

influenced retention (Sandhya & Sulphrey, 2020). For example, job empowerment happens when the management provides employees with the authority to make decisions. Furthermore, previous studies revealed that job empowerment helps increase employee retention (Liu et al., 2011; Punia, 2004). However, studies on the relationship between job empowerment and employee retention among hotel employees, particularly within Sarawak, are unknown. Moreover, the relationship between the two types of job empowerment, namely structural and psychological empowerment with employee retention is limited.

Besides that, the experience of flow was found to be related to positive outcomes such as work enjoyment and professional efficacy feeling (Burke & Matthiesen, 2004), customer satisfaction (Ram et al., 2011) and job performance (Chu & Lee, 2012). Limited studies have integrated flow as a mediator between structural and psychological empowerment on employee retention (Schermuly & Meyer, 2020), however previous studies widely reported the finding of empowerment as a primary construct (Ahmad & Karia, 2000). With the known gaps, the purpose of this study is to assess flow as a mediator linking both structural and psychological empowerment to employee retention. Among hotel employees in Sarawak. Consolidating from the introduction elaboration above, the objectives of this study are:

1. To understand the structural empowerment can positively influence employee retention.
2. To analyse the positive influence of psychological empowerment to employee retention.
3. To investigate whether flow can positively influence employee retention.
4. To research on how the flow mediates the relationship between structural empowerment and employee retention.
5. To determine if the flow mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and employee retention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Job Empowerment

Job empowerment is conceptualized as a working condition where management either delegates or collaborates with employees, granting them the autonomy to make decisions and pursue their work objectives in a meaningful manner (Laschinger & Leiter, 2006; Sandhya & Sulphrey, 2020; Stewart et al., 2010; Wilson, 2011). Besides, job empowerment outcomes are associated with various benefits such as employee retention, organisational commitment and feeling a sense of meaning (Eskandari et al., 2017; Irabor & Okolie, 2019; Marin-Garcia & Bonavia, 2021; Stewart et al., 2010) and categorised into structural and psychological empowerment (Menon, 2001). This empowerment is not just about delegating tasks but involves sharing power and decision-making authority, enabling employees to take initiative and control over their work environment. The relationship of these dimensions with job empowerment will be further discussed in the following section.

Employee Retention

Employee retention is acknowledged as one of the most effective strategies for maintaining a workforce of dedicated and deserving individuals. Its significance extends beyond preserving personnel continuity; it is vital in sustaining organizational productivity. It is essential to maintaining organisational productivity and goes beyond maintaining staff continuity. By reducing the expenses related to high staff turnover, effective retention measures can save a company a significant amount of money and stop a fall in employee morale. Reducing costs and complications associated with staff turnover and raising morale in the workplace are the main goals of putting employee retention methods into practice. As a result, to reduce turnover, businesses adopt a range of theories and strategies that try to identify the fundamental causes of employee decision-making.

Organizational performance is becoming increasingly concerned due to the high rates of employee turnover. This is on the grounds that it conveys enormous misfortunes connected with the monetary and social capital of an organization. It results in significant setbacks and the loss of resources, and it is detrimental not only to the organization but also to the individuals. As a result, academics in business are constantly looking for theories of employee retention that can help keep both the employer and the employee happy. The main theories that will be discussed in the study are as follows:

- The Theory of Organizational Equilibrium (TOE)
- The Social Exchange Theory
- The Job Embeddedness Theory
- Herzberg's Two-Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory
- The Resource-Based View
- The Equity Theory
- The Human Capital Theory

The fact that the reasons for employee turnover are numerous and subjective has been taken into consideration when formulating these theories. Dissatisfaction at work, a lack of potential job growth, and misplaced hiring are the most common causes. In addition, it is essential to comprehend that the causes include both internal and external factors, such as team dynamics. To reap the benefits of employee retention, businesses must apply a variety of theories to discover what works best for them. If applied correctly, a combination of these theories will undoubtedly boost employee satisfaction and business output.

Structural Empowerment and Employee Retention

Access to organizational structures (opportunity, information, resources, and support) is the foundation of structural empowerment, which empowers employees to act (Kanter, 2010). The opportunity to learn new things, advance in one's career, and rise through the ranks is called access to opportunity. The opportunity to receive the necessary information about an organization's policies, procedures, mission, and vision from management and co-workers is known as access to information. Access to support also includes assistance from supervisors, friends, and co-workers (Orgambidez & Almeida, 2020). Therefore, having access to resources means having the appropriate tools, financial assistance, materials, and time needed to accomplish a specific task. An organizational philosophy known as structural empowerment gives employees the freedom to make their own decisions to boost their confidence, increase their involvement, and motivate them (Abdeldayem, 2021). The literature demonstrates a strong connection between organizational performance and structural empowerment (Rajendra & Asmita, 2020). It strengthens collaboration between the company and its employees and gives employees the chance to actively participate in decision-making (Ibua, 2017). On the other hand, structural empowerment slows down the decision-making process in organizations (Elnaga & Imran, 2014) and causes employees to not be given enough authority to carry out their responsibilities, which makes it hard for employees to live up to their work expectations (Turkmenoglu, 2019). Positively, workers can adhere to organizational procedures and practices thanks to structural empowerment (Echebiri et al., 2020). It is anticipated, based on this knowledge, that:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between structural empowerment and employee retention.

Psychological Empowerment and Employee Retention

Psychological empowerment can be defined as empowerment that manifests when an employee experience intrinsic motivation which reflect a sense of self-control or self-autonomy in relation to one's work (Manojlovich, 2007; Rania et al., 2021). Psychological empowerment can be expressed in four cognitions such as: meaning or degree of compatibility between one's demand at work and personal self-beliefs and value, self-determination, competence, and impact (Rania et al., 2021; Seibert et al., 2011). Besides that, psychological empowerment has been associated with the personal psychological constitution, perspective, and choices. Thus, an employee who chooses to be empowered can exert greater engagement experience and be goal oriented (Glor, 2005). Furthermore, past studies found that psychological empowerment correlates with positive outcomes such as job satisfaction and organisational commitment that drives the organisations to execute empowerment activities (Maynard et al., 2012) and retain employees longer (Guilding et al., 2014). The positive outcome of psychological empowerment associated with the factors leading to employee retention (Han, 2022) signifies a possible relationship between psychological empowerment and employee retention. Thus, the following hypotheses were developed:

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between psychological empowerment and employee retention.

Flow, Job Empowerment (Structural Empowerment and Psychological Empowerment), and Employee Retention

Flow is defined as when people are fully concentrated in work activities for intrinsic rewards instead of materialistic gains (Bakker, 2005; Tse et al., 2022). Literature has asserted that flow is positive psychology that increases work productivity, enhances innovation, and develops employees (Kasa & Hassan, 2017). Various studies identified that the mediating role of flow concerning job empowerment could lead to flow (Park et al., 2021; Schermuly & Meyer, 2020). Flow could positively lead to employee retention because the outcomes of flow (e.g., psychological well-being (Steele & Fullagar, 2009), increases work performance (Demerouti, 2006), organisational commitment (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), and well-being (Laschinger & Leiter, 2006) which are antecedents of employee retention. Thus, a relationship might exist between job empowerment and flow associating employee retention. However, no known research was conducted to directly identify the weather flow mediates the effect of job empowerment on employee retention, specifically among Malaysian hotel employees. Flow experience was chosen as the mediator, considering the relationship of flow with the two variables and the benefit of flow as a positive psychological experience. Thus, the following hypotheses are developed:

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between flow and employee retention.

H4: Flow mediates the effect of structural empowerment on employee retention.

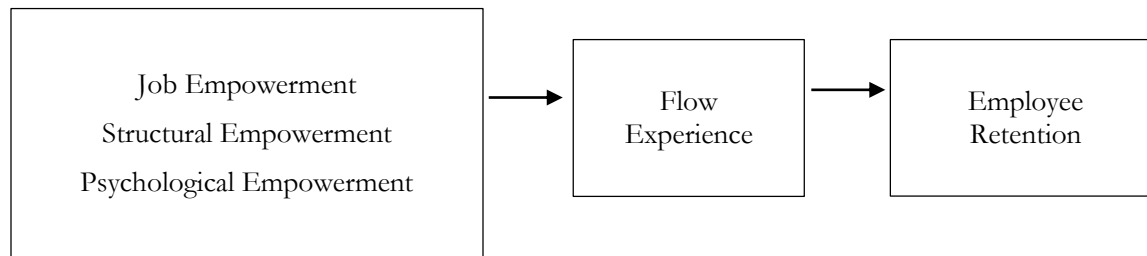
H5: Flow mediates the effect of psychological empowerment on employee retention

Underpinning Theory

This investigation is grounded in Kanter (1979) structural empowerment theory, which asserts that an organization's structure influences employees' perceptions and actions. Kanter argued that institutional resources significantly impact employee attitudes, leading to variations in work-related dispositions and effectiveness. According to this theory, and as supported by Degner (2005), empowered employees demonstrate commitment, responsibility, and efficiency. Kanter's framework extends beyond behavior, highlighting the importance of a positive psychological state, such as flow, in augmenting the theory's applicability. Kanter suggested that empowerment is optimized in an environment where employees collectively strive towards shared organizational aims, culminating in mutual success (Erickson et al., 2003)

However, Kanter (2010) theory may not be appropriate for today's competitive era due to differences in time, setting, context, and perspectives. Originating in the early 1990s, the theory may face constraints when applied to modern workplaces characterized by rapid changes, technological evolution, and global integration. The initial assumptions and perspectives might not fully capture contemporary organizational settings.

Given these dynamics, this study intends to evaluate Kanter's structural empowerment theory's applicability in the present-day business milieu, with a focus on its potential to foster employee flow. This examination seeks to understand how structural and psychological empowerment elements can enhance employee retention in the modern, competitive landscape. Five hypotheses were developed based on previous research findings, as shown in the conceptual model in Figure 1.



Note. Source: Developed by the authors for this research

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Collection Process

This quantitative study was conducted among hotel employee working in six rated five-star hotels located in Kuching, Sarawak because employee retention rate in the state is higher than most states in Malaysia. The six hotels are all situated in the city centre of Kuching, the capital city of the state Sarawak, as they were located at different districts in Sarawak. Total of six (6) hotels were selected due to willingness to participate, familiarity, and prior cooperation between the researcher and general manager of the hotels. Before the study was conducted, the general manager of the hotels was first contacted; after clarifying the intentions of this study, the general managers agreed to the request to conduct a survey amongst their employees.

Besides that, the hotels selected for this study are of a five-star standard and registered as a member of Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH). This was dictated due to association between number of stars and service quality. Being rated five stars and being a member of MAH signifies that the hotels met the high-quality standards which signifies that the hotels are doing things right in terms of training and developing their staff to become effective and efficient in translating their knowledge, skills and ability into quality service (Biswakarma, 2017; Malaysian Association of Hotels, 2021). All the hotel management had given their prior approval to complete the survey within eight weeks. The participants' confidentiality was highly respected as the data was collected solely for academic purposes.

In actual study, a total of 280 questionnaires been distributed to the six (6) hotels among the full-time hotel employees deriving from operational (n=178) and non-operational department (n=78). A total of 256 valid questionnaires received exceeded the 107 minimum sampling for the present study based on the G*power version 3.1.9.2 with actual power, 0.950 and an effect size of 0.15 for the minimum sampling size calculation. In actual study, the data was normally distributed, as according to George & Mallery (2010) that normality is assumed if the score is ± 2 . In addition, the Z-value for every item is within the acceptable range of ± 3.29 , any score more than ± 3.29 ($p < 0.001$) should be removed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). No major issue with normality and outlier of the data collected.

Research Instrument

Table 1 summarises the variables analysed in this study with the instrument associated with measuring the variables. All four variables used in the research model (Figure 1) (i.e., Structural empowerment, Physiological empowerment, Flow, and Retention) were examined by using instruments adapted from previous studies. Structural empowerment was measured using 12 items from Kanter's (1979, 2010) study, Physiological empowerment was measured using 21 items from a study by Spreitzer (1995), Flow was being measured using Bakker (2005) study which contains 13 items, and Retention was being measured with 11 items from a study by Kyndt et al. (2009). All items utilized were being rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" (1) to "Strongly Disagree" (5).

All the items of the instruments met the required standards of validity, and reliability tests with a Cronbach's alpha value ranging from 0.87 - 0.93. The factor loadings for all variable items surpassed 0.40 (Hair et al., 2005), whereas Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) test values attained an agreeable standard of 0.70. Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO), a statistical test known as the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test is used to assess the suitability of data for factor analysis. For each model variable and the entire model, the test measures sampling adequacy. A measure of the proportion of variance between variables that might be common variance is the statistic.

Table 1: The Research Instrument

No.	Variables	Number of Items	Instruments	Source	Cronbach's Alpha
1.	Structural Empowerment	12	Conditions for Workplace Effectiveness Questionnaire 2 (CWEQ-II)	(Kanter, 1979, 2010)	0.87
2.	Physiological Empowerment	21	Psychological Empowerment Scale (PES)	(Spreitzer, 1995)	0.80
3.	Flow	13	Work-related Flow Instrument (WOLF)	(Bakker, 2005)	0.93
4.	Retention	11	Employee Organisation Commitment (EOC)	(Kyndt et al., 2009)	0.91

Note. Source: Developed by the authors for this research

A pilot test was carried out to determine the reliability and validity of all research instruments and identify any potential research method issues. A total of 38 valid questionnaire has been collected from one (1) of the hotels in Kuching city which considered sufficient by previous literature recommended the size of respondents for a pilot study is of 10% from the estimated sample size (Connelly, 2008). Thus, the researcher proceeds to conduct the actual study as there was no major issues been found while all the items posted in the questionnaire is valid, reliable and accurate as per recommended by Hair et al. (2005).

Multicollinearity Testing

To ensure that there are no issues with multicollinearity testing is by identifying the correlation level using VIF. There is a strong indication of multicollinearity based on the VIF value exceeding 10 (Frost,

2017). The statement from Frost (2017) is backed up by Burns & Burns (2008) who mention that if the VIF value exceeds 10, it suggests the presence of multicollinearity. However, according to Hair et al. (2022), a recommended cut-off value for multicollinearity is 5.0.

Based on the findings presented in Table 1a, it can be concluded that none of the variable items have a VIF greater than 10. This suggests that there is no multicollinearity among the independent variables. Therefore, the VIF value obtained from this study, following the recommendations of Frost (2017) and Hair et al. (2022), indicates that there are no significant issues with multicollinearity.

Table 1a: Multicollinearity Test Result

Model		Collinearity statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)		
	SEmean	.724	1.249
	PEmean	.627	1.531
	FWmean	.591	1.681
	Rmean	.493	1.712

Note. ^aDependent variable = retention; Source: Developed by the authors for this research

Common Method Variance

Beyond the Multicollinearity Testing outlined in Table 5 we further employed the post-hoc Harman's single factor test to ascertain the presence of any issues related to common method variance. The findings, detailed in Table 1b, reveal that the variance accounted for by a single factor fell below the advised threshold of **50%**. This result suggests that common method bias is unlikely to be a concern in our data, reinforcing the robustness of our analysis (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

Table 1b: Common Method Variance Result

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	14.930	26.192	26.192	14.930	26.192	26.192
2	8.571	15.037	41.229			
3	3.662	6.425	47.654			
4	2.831	4.967	52.621			
5	2.505	4.394	57.016			
6	1.887	3.310	60.326			

7	1.790	3.140	63.466			
8	1.625	2.850	66.316			
9	1.377	2.415	68.731			
10	1.319	2.314	71.045			
11	1.298	2.277	73.322			
12	1.109	1.946	75.268			
13	1.088	1.909	77.177			
14	.967	1.697	78.874			
15	.919	1.612	80.486			
16	.896	1.572	82.058			
17	.825	1.447	83.505			
18	.783	1.374	84.879			
19	.747	1.311	86.190			
20	.708	1.241	87.432			
21	.626	1.099	88.530			
22	.588	1.032	89.562			
23	.540	.947	90.509			
24	.482	.846	91.355			
25	.423	.743	92.098			
26	.399	.701	92.799			
27	.379	.665	93.463			
28	.344	.603	94.067			
29	.321	.563	94.630			
30	.309	.541	95.171			
31	.276	.484	95.656			
32	.264	.463	96.119			
33	.252	.443	96.561			
34	.247	.434	96.995			
35	.208	.366	97.361			
36	.177	.311	97.672			
37	.157	.275	97.947			
38	.142	.249	98.197			
39	.133	.233	98.429			

40	.121	.213	98.643			
41	.111	.195	98.838			
42	.098	.173	99.010			
43	.091	.159	99.170			
44	.080	.140	99.310			
45	.066	.115	99.425			
46	.056	.099	99.524			
47	.054	.095	99.620			
48	.043	.075	99.695			
49	.040	.071	99.766			
50	.030	.053	99.819			
51	.028	.048	99.868			
52	.024	.042	99.910			
53	.018	.031	99.940			
54	.014	.025	99.965			
55	.009	.017	99.982			
56	.007	.012	99.994			
57	.003	.006	100.000			
Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; ; Source: Developed by the authors for this research						

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Findings

In this study, demographic variables such as gender, age, race, marital status, education level, and department were presented. There were 149 female respondents (58%) and 107 male respondents (42%). Majority of the 99 respondents (39%) were in the age range of 28 to 32 years old. There were 76 respondents (30%) with age ranging from 23 to 27 years old followed by 61 respondents (24%) aged between 18 to 22 years old. There were 20 respondents (8%) with age range of 33 to 37 years old. Most of the respondents were Chinese, with 85 respondents (33%) and most of the respondents' status were single, with a total of 120 (47%). Majority of the respondents were bachelor's degree holders with 99 respondents (39%), followed by Diploma with respondents of 71 (27%), and third most respondents holding the level of education in secondary school such as SPM, STPM, CFP, MCE, and HSC with 65 respondents (25%). Most of the respondents were bachelor's degree holders with 99 respondents (39%), followed by Diploma with respondents of 71 (27%), and third most respondents holding the level of education in secondary school such as SPM, STPM, CFP, MCE and HSC with 65 respondents (25%). Most of the respondents were working in operation department such as Food and Beverage department, housekeeping department, front office department, kitchen and stewarding department which consist of a total of 178 (69%) respondents.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: There Is a Significant Positive Relationship between Structural Empowerment and Employee Retention

Hypothesis 1 proposed that structural empowerment is positively significantly related to employee retention. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (1-tailed test) was computed to assess the relationship between the variables. Hypothesis 1 is supported because there is a significant positive link between structural empowerment and employee retention [$r = .418^{**}$, $p = .001$, $n = 256$]. These findings reveal that structural empowerment is an element of employee retention, and that hotel employees who are structurally empowered are likely to feel that satisfied with the organisation and are more likely to remain with the organisation.

Hypothesis 2: There is a Significant Positive Relationship between Psychological Empowerment and Employee Retention

Hypothesis 2 proposed that psychological empowerment is significantly positively related to employee retention. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (1-tailed test) was calculated to assess the relationship between the variables. These findings indicated a positive correlation between psychological empowerment and employee retention [$r = .254^{**}$, $p = .001$, $n = 256$], supporting hypothesis 2. Findings reveal that psychological empowerment is also a factor of employee retention. Hotel which focuses on psychologically empower their employees are likely to have employees which are feel satisfied with the organisation and prefer to remain with the organisation.

Hypothesis 3: There is a Significant Positive Relationship between Flow and Employee Retention

Hypothesis 3 proposed that flow positively significantly relates to employee retention. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (1-tailed test) was computed to assess the relationship between the variables. The results denoted a positive correlation between flow and employee retention [$r = .551^{**}$, $p = .000$, $n = 256$], supporting hypothesis 3. These findings reveal that flow as a positive psychological experience can potentially lead to positive experiences at work. Hotels which capitalised on fostering flow among their employees are likely to have employees that prefers to remain with the organisation.

Hypothesis 4: Flow Mediates the Effect of Structural Empowerment on Employee Retention

Hypothesis 4 proposed that flow mediates the effect of structural empowerment on employee retention. The results from Table 2 supports hypothesis 4, signifying that flow mediates the effect of structural empowerment on employee retention at $.152^{***}$, with a lower-level coefficient of $.062$, whereas the upper-level coefficient was $.258$. In short, structurally empowered employees enhances their experience of flow, which the positive experience derived from flow in turn influence the employees to develop a positive and satisfactory outlook towards the hotel which subsequently led to higher intention to remain the hotel.

Hypothesis 5: Flow Mediates the Effect of Psychological Empowerment on Employee Retention

Hypothesis 5 suggested that flow mediates the effect of psychological empowerment on employee retention. The findings in Table 2 supported hypothesis 5, implying that flow mediates the effect of psychological empowerment on employee retention at $.291^{***}$, with lower-level coefficient of $.117$, whereas the upper-level coefficient was $.526$. Thus, hotel employees being psychologically empowered by their organisation further enhance their experience of flow, which further influences their motivation to retain with the organisation.

Table 2: Direct, Indirect, Total Effects

Variables	Direct	Indirect		Total	Lower Limit (LLCI)	Upper Limit (ULCI)
Structural Empowerment	.448	.152		.600	.062	.258
Psychological Empowerment	.291	.291		.001	.117	.526
Total	.739	.443		.601		

Note. Source: Developed by the authors for this research. The results were derived from Hayes' PROCESS model (Preachers & Hayes, 2004)

Discussion

The research objectives of this study were achieved as findings indicates that both structural and psychological empowerment can positively affect employee retention, revealing that hotel employees that felts being structurally and psychologically empowered are more likely to remain with the hotel. Furthermore, this study indicates that employees that experience flow are likely to remain with the organisation. Moreover, the experience of flow does mediate the impact of structural and psychological empowerment on employee retention. From the result, to retain employees, hotel managers and human resource practitioners should focus on structurally and psychological empowering their employees, and additionally implement ways to allow cultivation and enhancement of flow experience among the employees.

The Relationship between Structural Empowerment and Employee Retention

Statistical result revealed that the structural empowerment could lead to employee retention (Han, 2022). As the focus of the hotel industry toward developing service climate and it is important that the mindset of hotel employees to be service-oriented. Thus, the focus of developing service climate performs by hotel employees need to be structurally empowered by employers through providing access to support, information, job resources, and the power to make decisions and grow (Maertz & Campion, 1998; Marin-Garcia & Bonavia, 2021). In addition, empowerment exercises are effective ways for hotel employees to deliver great customer service to customers. Simultaneously, strong positive working relationships among the colleagues ensure that they continue to be engaged in their work towards customer satisfaction (Orgambidez & Almeida, 2020; Spence Laschinger et al., 2009). Hotel employees might focus more on work competency when they feel empowered. The feeling of being empowered allows them to handle their work with the skills and support, which explains why they remain with the hotel.

The Relationship between Psychological Empowerment and Employee Retention

The findings of this study corroborate previous research, indicating that psychological empowerment significantly contributes to employee retention. Psychological empowerment, characterized by an intrinsic motivational framework, plays a pivotal role in the workplace by enhancing the employees' sense of autonomy, meaning, and competence (Manojlovich, 2007). As majority of this study were the tenure between 1 to 3 years with the hotel and this explained that the hotel employees need to be stable and developing their knowledge, skills and abilities while gain the psychological empowerment at the workplace that lead to being motivated to retention with the organization. The statement also supported by various studies reported a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and employee retention (Hee & Rhung, 2019; Jha, 2019).

Moreover, the motivational aspects derived from psychological empowerment serve as a buffer against various work-related stressors, including burnout (Rubino et al., 2009). The Job Demand-

Resources model posits motivation as a personal resource that can effectively counteract workplace stressors (Van Den Broeck et al., 2013). All the mentioned studies supported that motivation could reduce job stressors and lead to employee retention (Han, 2022), resembling the hotel employees' experience. Despite being in a challenging and complicated service climate, motivated employees tend to deal better with stressors and are additionally motivated by intrinsic reasons. They feel that their job is worth doing, which further leads to employee retention.

The Relationship between Flow and Employee Retention

Investigations from this study establish a strong positive link between experiencing flow and sustaining employee retention. Flow is defined as a state of positive psychological engagement that results in heightened focus and concentration during work tasks (Bakker, 2005; Kasa et al., 2019; Kasa & Hassan, 2013). This intense engagement not only elevates individual job performance but also significantly boosts overall productivity, leading to beneficial outcomes for organizations. Moreover, being in a state of flow is linked to increased personal happiness and job satisfaction (Chen et al., 1999; Engeser & Rheinberg, 2008; Kasa et al., 2019; Kasa & Hassan, 2013), which are key drivers of employee retention.

The study highlights the similarity between the effects of flow and the foundational elements necessary for retaining employees (Han, 2022). Particularly within the hotel industry, employees who experience the intrinsic rewards associated with flow are found to be more motivated and effective in their roles, thereby reducing their likelihood of job discontent. This enhanced motivation stemming from flow experiences plays a critical role in an employee's decision to remain with their current employer.

Despite the clear positive influence of flow on employee retention, the specific features of flow that are most impactful in retaining employees remain somewhat undefined. While flow has been identified as a beneficial factor for retention, pinpointing the exact characteristics of flow that are most effective in encouraging employees to stay requires further exploration. Future research should focus on identifying these characteristics to offer a clearer perspective on how flow experiences can be strategically utilized to improve job satisfaction and retain employees in the hospitality sector. This direction for future research is essential for devising focused strategies that capitalize on the advantages of flow to boost employee satisfaction and retention.

The Mediation Effect of Flow between Structural Empowerment and Employee Retention

The analysis from this study aligns with previous research, demonstrating the mediating role of flow in the relationship between job empowerment and employee retention (Park et al., 2021; Schermuly & Meyer, 2020). Jobs inherently come with specific demands, each distinct and unique (Bakker et al., 2007), and the hotel industry emphasizes creating a service climate aimed at delivering high-quality services and ensuring customer satisfaction (Chi & Qu, 2008). This study suggests that the mediating effect of flow in the hotel sector may be attributed to employees experiencing enjoyment while performing their tasks, enhancing their work engagement and satisfaction.

A key aspect of structural empowerment involves delegating authority and empowering employees (Menon, 2001). When structural empowerment is effectively integrated with flow, it enables employees to engage fully and concentrate within their work environment. However, the occurrence of flow necessitates the availability of suitable job resources (Kasa & Hassan, 2017), which, in turn, contributes to employee retention. Therefore, empowering hotel employees is critical, as a lack of autonomy can lead to decreased productivity and increased errors (Glor, 2005). Enhancing structural empowerment is essential for facilitating the manifestation of flow and reducing employees' intentions to leave.

In summary, this discussion emphasizes the importance of structural empowerment in the hospitality sector as a catalyst for inducing flow experiences among employees, which subsequently contributes to their retention. The enjoyment derived from work, facilitated by an empowering structure and adequate job resources, plays a significant role in maintaining a committed and satisfied workforce. Thus, fostering an environment that supports flow experiences through structural empowerment can be a strategic approach to improving employee retention rates in the hotel industry.

The Mediation Effect of Flow between Psychological Empowerment and Employee Retention

Findings from this study indicate that flow mediates the effect of psychological empowerment on employee retention. The plausible reason for flow to mediate the effect between psychological empowerment and employee retention might be since flow is a positive construct (Bakker, 2005; Kasa & Hassan, 2017). The findings align with past studies on the mediating role of flow concerning psychological empowerment (Park et al., 2021; Schermuly & Meyer, 2020). Schermuly & Meyer (2020) mentioned that a link exists between different psychological empowerment dimensions and distinct facets of flow experience, such as competence and self-determination (psychosocial empowerment dimensions), can help to foster flow experience (Schermuly & Meyer, 2020), while flow can further lead to positive outcomes such as employee retention (Han, 2022). Thus, hotels that psychologically empower their employees are simultaneously creating circumstances that foster flow.

From this study, it revealed that hotel employees who feel psychologically empowered may subsequently experience flow where the positive experience of flow might experience positivity from the work they are doing and can further contribute towards employees' decision to remain with the hotel.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Theoretical Implications

Kanter's (1979) structural empowerment theory provides a robust framework for understanding phenomena related to adverse work behaviours, such as employee turnover. (Kanter, 1979, 2010) proposes that individuals act based on their rational interpretations of their circumstances. When environments are structured to foster empowerment, employees tend to exhibit higher job satisfaction and believe they are delivering superior quality work.

Furthermore, there are no studies examined whether flow mediates the relationship between the two types of empowerments and employee retention. This study fulfilled this gap by contributing to current knowledge showing that flow does mediate the relationship between the two types of empowerments and employee retention, that structurally and psychologically empowered hotel employees are likely to increase their experience of flow which further improves retention rates.

Managerial Implications

These findings offer actionable guidance for practitioners in the hotel industry, such as hotel managers and human resources professionals, to understand and enhance employee retention rates through job empowerment and flow experience. Organizations should focus on implementing empowerment initiatives to motivate employees in the Asian hotel sector, addressing potential obstacles that may hinder empowerment in the workplace. It is crucial for management to commit to structural empowerment, fostering an environment where hotel employees feel valued and empowered (Berg et al., 2021).

Hotel management must recognize the benefits of distributing power, allowing employees to participate in decision-making processes and contribute ideas. Empowerment practices should become standard in the Malaysian hotel industry, moving away from a strict hierarchical approach

where only top-level decisions are valued. Instead, management should view employees as integral members contributing to collective success and participating in decision-making processes.

Additionally, structural empowerment can be enhanced by providing necessary resources, information, support for responsibilities, and opportunities for growth (Moore, 2014). Psychological empowerment can be fostered through transformational leadership encouraging autonomy (Brock et al., 2016), strong interpersonal relationships (Morales, 2005), acknowledging contributions, and sharing positive customer feedback to boost morale (Guerrero et al., 2018).

Moreover, to create workplaces fostering flow experience, managers and HR should reduce unnecessary interruptions: clearly communicating goals, reducing meetings, allowing alone time for tasks, changing the "must-reply-instantly" culture, and training on breaking tasks into smaller chunks. Managers and HR should involve employees, letting them know flow is important.

Conclusion

The key connections between empowerment, flow, and retention among workers in the hotel sector, particularly in Kuching, Sarawak, have been clarified by this inquiry. The data points to a strong relationship between employees' perceptions of flow and empowerment and their propensity to stick with the organisation. This study not only enriches the existing literature but also advocates for hotel administrators to cultivate environments that support empowerment and flow, aiming to enhance employee contentment and minimize turnover.

Nevertheless, the research faced limitations, primarily in its methodological approach and geographical scope. The study's reliance on quantitative data might overlook the nuanced social and emotional aspects of employee experiences in the hotel industry. Future research could therefore benefit from incorporating qualitative methods to capture a more detailed and holistic view of the employee experience. Moreover, the study's focus on a specific region in Sarawak due to travel constraints suggests a need for broader research that includes a wider array of locations across Malaysia, encompassing various hotel categories and star ratings to ensure a more diversified and comprehensive analysis.

In summary, although this study offers valuable insights into the ways in which empowerment and flow might impact employee retention in the hospitality industry, it also emphasises the need for more comprehensive and diverse research approaches. Future research must broaden its geographical and category scope to fully comprehend the factors that influence employee retention in the larger hospitality sector.

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