

A Comparative Study of Psychological Empowerment and Employee Commitment between Chain-affiliated and Independent Hotels in Krabi

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Abstract

The objectives of this study were to (1) measure the hotel employees' psychological empowerment and employee commitment in Krabi, (2) compare the employees' psychological empowerment and employee commitment between the independent and chain-affiliated hotels in Krabi, and (3) examine the relationship between psychological empowerment and employee commitment. This study targeted hotel employees in Krabi. A quantitative approach was applied. 480 questionnaires were distributed to hotel employees in Krabi. 376 completed questionnaires were submitted and usable. 141 were from independent hotels and 235 were from chain-affiliated hotels. The findings showed that the hotel employees in Krabi had moderately high levels of psychological empowerment. Hotel types had an impact on the employees' psychological empowerment but no impact on employee commitment. Additionally, there was a positive relationship between psychological empowerment (competence, meaning, and influence) and employee commitment. The results of this study would help hotel managers to increase employee retention.

Key words: psychological empowerment, employee commitment, hotel employees, Krabi

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การศึกษาเปรียบเทียบการมอบอำนาจในงาน เชิงจิตวิทยาและความผูกพันทางใจต่อองค์กรของ พนักงานระหว่างโรงแรมในเครือบริหารและโรงแรม บริหารโดยอิสระในจังหวัดกระบี่

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บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ของการศึกษาค้นคว้าครั้งนี้ คือ (1) ประเมินการมอบอำนาจในงานเชิงจิตวิทยาและความผูกพันของพนักงานต่อโรงแรมในจังหวัดกระบี่ (2) เปรียบเทียบการมอบอำนาจในงานเชิงจิตวิทยา และความผูกพันทางใจต่อโรงแรมระหว่างพนักงานโรงแรมอิสระและพนักงานโรงแรมในเครือ และ (3) ประเมินความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างการมอบอำนาจในงานเชิงจิตวิทยาและความผูกพันทางใจต่อโรงแรมของพนักงาน เป้าหมายของการศึกษาค้นคว้าครั้งนี้ คือพนักงานโรงแรมในจังหวัดกระบี่ ใช้การวิจัยเชิงปริมาณ จากแบบสอบถามทั้งหมด 480 ชุด ที่ส่งไปให้พนักงานโรงแรมในจังหวัดกระบี่ มีแบบสอบถามที่ได้รับกลับมาและมีความสมบูรณ์สามารถใช้วิเคราะห์ได้จำนวน 376 ชุด จากพนักงานโรงแรมอิสระจำนวน 141 ชุด และพนักงานโรงแรมในเครือจำนวน 235 ชุด ผลการศึกษาพบว่า การมอบอำนาจในงานเชิงจิตวิทยาสำหรับพนักงานโรงแรมในจังหวัดกระบี่ มีผลการประเมินอยู่ในระดับค่อนข้างสูง และประเภทของโรงแรมมีผลต่อการมอบอำนาจในงานเชิงจิตวิทยาของพนักงานแต่ไม่มีผลต่อระดับความผูกพันทางใจต่อโรงแรม นอกจากนี้ ผลการศึกษาค้นคว้าครั้งนี้ ยังพบว่า การมอบอำนาจในงานเชิงจิตวิทยามีความสัมพันธ์เชิงบวกกับความผูกพันทางใจต่อโรงแรมอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ ผลการศึกษาค้นคว้าครั้งนี้จะเป็นประโยชน์ต่อผู้จัดการโรงแรมในการเก็บรักษาพนักงานให้อยู่กับองค์กร

คำสำคัญ: การมอบอำนาจในงานเชิงจิตวิทยา ความผูกพันทางใจต่อองค์กร พนักงานโรงแรมกระบี่

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Introduction

The importance of empowerment in the hospitality industry is increasingly recognized as a key to catering to more and more demanding customers (Boshoff and Allen, 2000). Employee empowerment is a wide-ranging activity, and the way that empowerment activities are practiced, in accordance with their content, brings up a relationship between the task performed and the job satisfaction the employees will get. Many studies have investigated the relationship between psychological empowerment, job satisfaction and organizational commitment in hotel business (Aryee and Chen, 2006).

In Krabi Thailand, the hotel industry has been recognized as a potential prospect in the growth of the hospitality industry. However, growth is impeded by the high turnover rates of employees in the hotel industry. Many organizations in the hotel industry face difficulties in retaining employees since they are unable to identify the factors which contribute to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. (Aryee and Chen, 2006)

Additionally, as the hospitality industry is growing, not only in size, but also in terms of sophistication and expectations of return on investment, the scene has shifted from the more traditional dominance of independent privately owned small outlets to larger multinationals and multiple brand affiliations (Lomanno, 2010). Where it used to be a matter of small, owner-run outlets operating in the same fashion for generations, it is now an industry where investors seek return on their invested capital, and the larger hospitality corporations now count as important and influential companies in most countries (Bailey, 2007). Many studies (e.g. Jensen, 1983; Schulze et al., 2001) reported differences in business practices between chain-affiliated hotels and independent operators. The human management system and practices between chain-affiliated hotels and individual hotels were found to be different. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the employee empowerment

and commitment levels between chain-affiliated hotels and independent hotels and examine the relationship between psychological empowerment and employee commitment. The results of this study would help the hospitality managers to increase employee retention and performance.

Literature Reviews

1. Psychological empowerment

Psychological empowerment refers to a motivational process that enhances employees' self-efficacy (Kim, Lee, Murrmann and George, 2012). It is also conceptualized as intrinsic task motivation based on four task-related employee work role cognitions resulting in a four-dimensional construct including meaning (the fit between values and job), competence (self-efficacy), self-determination (autonomy over task), and impact (influence over job outcomes) (Kim et al., 2012). Empirical studies show that empowerment enhances self-efficacy resulting in employee satisfaction and increased organizational commitment (OC) (Bhatnagar, 2007). Hospitality research has found positive relationships between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction among hotel workers (Chiang and Jang, 2008), restaurant workers (Gazzoli et al., 2010), and US hotel managers (Salazar et al., 2006). The same research found positive relationships between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment among hotel employees (Chiang and Jang, 2008) and upscale hotel restaurant employees (Kim et al., 2012). Therefore, there is adequate evidence showing that psychological empowerment leads to job satisfaction and employee commitment.

2. Organizational Commitment

Various studies in the literature addressing the concept of organizational commitment have underlined a concept named as

attitudinal commitment (Mowday et al., 1979), whereas Price and Mueller (1986) defined it as behavioral commitment. Another approach was that of Meyer and Allen (1991). This is one of the most widely recognized approaches in organizational commitment literature.

According to Mowday et al., organizational commitment is an attitude which exists between the individual and the organization. That is why it is considered as the relative strength of the individual's psychological identification and involvement with the organization (Jaramillo et al., 2005). Hence, this psychological conceptualization addresses affective commitment where it includes three factors: identification, involvement, and loyalty (Banai et al., 2004). In addition to this earliest construct, some researchers (such as Angle and Perry (1981), Hrebiniak and Alutto (1972), and McGee and Ford (1987)) underlined another important dimension labeled as “continuance” commitment, where an individual is committed to the organization not because of a general positive feeling but because of extraneous interests such as pensions, family concerns, etc. (Shaw et al., 2003).

The concept of employee commitment to organizations has received attention for decades as both managers and academicians try to find ways to increase employee retention and performance (Steers, 1977). Recent studies showed a strong relationship between employee commitment and many important outcomes, such as job performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, willingness to share knowledge, absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover. (Fedor, Caldwell, and Herold, 2006).

Research Methodology

1. Type of research

The objective of this research is to investigate the relationship between employee empowerment dimensions and employee commitment within chain-affiliated and independent hotels in Krabi. In this research, the researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze the data in order to change the raw data into a more understandable format (Zikmund, 1993). This study applied a quantitative approach by using questionnaires to collect data.

This survey research method was used because it is a method of primary data collection based on the method of distribution of the questionnaire and to cooperate with face to face participation with the respondent. Kumer, Aaker, and Day (1999) said that the advantage of this type of research is to obtain information from a respondent in a one-time participation, with quick, cheap, efficient and accurate information to explain the needs and desires of the population. Moreover, Zikmund (1993) stated that a survey is suitable when the study is expected to obtain a representative sample of the target population.

2. Research Instrument

One of the most commonly applied techniques used to obtain information from research subjects is a questionnaire (Schumacher & Mc Milan, 1993). A self-administered questionnaire was considered the best research instrument for this study. The respondents were asked to complete a set of questions containing two parts. Part 1 consisted of 10 questions asking about demographic data in terms of gender, age, education background, work experience and job characteristics; Part 2 consisted of 15 questions asking the degree to which each statement represents an employee empowerment dimension and employee commitment (Chiang and Jang, 2008). The scale ranges from 4 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree).

3. Population and Sample

The population of this research was employees working in chain-affiliated hotels and independent hotels in Krabi. However, the target of this study were the full-service hotels (4 star up hotels) with a minimum number of guest rooms not less than 70 rooms. According to Krabi Hotel Association (2014), there were 29 hotels that met this criteria with 3,100 rooms in total and the estimated number of employees was 2,170. Yamane (1967) formula was applied with a 95 percent confidence interval:

Where;

N = Population number

e = A desired precision level

n = Sample size

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{2170}{1+2170(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 337.5$$

The sample size was 337. 16 out of 29 hotels support the study. 8 domestic and international chain- affiliated hotels and 8 independent hotels in Krabi allowed the researcher to collect data from their employees. 30 sets of questionnaires were handed to Human Resources Departments at each hotel to distribute to their employees. In total, 480 sets of questionnaires were distributed. After 2 weeks from the delivery date, 141 completed questionnaires from the independent hotels and 235 completed questionnaires from chain-affiliated hotels were returned. The total number of completed and usable questionnaires was 376.

4. Data Analysis

To achieve the objective No.1, the descriptive statistics were

calculated to transform raw data into a form that makes it easy to understand and interpret. Calculating averages, frequency distributions, and percentage distributions were the most common ways of summarizing (Zikmund, 1993). The four point Likert scale was applied to assess the perception of the respondent toward the psychological empowerment and employee commitment. The ranges between levels of agreement were as follows:

1.00 – 1.75: Strongly Disagree

1.76 – 2.50: Disagree

2.51 – 3.25: Agree

3.26 – 4.00: Strongly Agree

In order to investigate the impacts of hotel types on the psychological empowerment and employee commitment, the Independent –Sample T-test (comparing the difference between two groups of respondents) was applied. A multiple regression was calculated to investigate the relationship between employee empowerment and employee commitment.

Findings

1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

From Table 1, the majority of the respondents were female (232 or 62 percent). 227 or 60 percent were between 25-34 years old. 85 or 23 percent were in between 35-44 years old. 46 or 12 percent were aged less than 25 years and 18 or 5 percent were 45 years or older. In terms of marital status, most of them were single, at 55 percent, followed by married, at 38 percent, and widowed, at 7 percent. Most of the respondents had bachelors' degrees (192 or 51 percent), followed by vocational school diplomas (68 or 18 percent), and last, high school certificates (56 or 15 percent). 298 or 79 percent came from Southern Thailand.

In terms of work experience, 140 or 37 percent had 2-5 years of work experience, 108 or 28 percent had 6 months or more but less

than 2 years. 90 or 24 percent had work experience for more than 5 years. The majority of the respondents had been working with their hotel for 2 or more years.

Table 1: Respondents' Characteristics

Respondents' Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	144	38
Female	232	62
<i>Age</i>		
<25 years old	46	12
25-34	227	60
35-44	85	23
45 or older	18	5
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single	205	55
Married	143	38
Widow	28	7
<i>Education Background</i>		
Primary School Certificat	12	3
Secondary School Certificate	34	9
High School Certificate	56	15
Vocational School Diploma	68	18
Bachelor Degree	192	51
Master Degree	14	4
<i>Hometown</i>		
Northern	18	5
North Eastern	27	7
Central	30	8
Eastern	3	1
Southern	298	79

<i>Working experience in the industry</i>		
Less than 6 months	41	11
6 months or more but less than 2 years	105	28
2-5 years	140	37
More than 5 years	90	24
<i>Years of service in this hotel</i>		
Less than 6 months	20	5
6 months or more but less than 2 years	62	17
2-5 years	122	32
More than 5 years	172	46

2. Job characteristics of the respondents

Table 2 shows the job characteristics of the respondents. Most of the respondents were in operational levels (225 or 68 percent), followed by supervisors (76 or 20 percent), and managers or department heads (45 or 12 percent). 97 or 26 percent were in front office, 72 or 19 percent were in food and beverage, 62 or 17 percent in housekeeping, 49 or 13 percent in accounting and finance, and 96 or 25 percent in engineering and other departments. There were 235 or 62 percent working at chain-affiliated hotels and 141 or 38 percent working at independent hotels.

Table2: Job characteristics of the respondents

Job Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
<i>Job level</i>		
Operation	255	68
Supervisor	76	20
Manager/Department Head	45	12
<i>Department</i>		
Food and Beverage	72	19
Front Office	97	26
Housekeeping	62	17

Accounting and Finance	49	13
Engineering	31	8
Others	65	17
<i>Hotel Type</i>		
Independent	141	38
Chain Affiliated	235	62

3. Psychological Empowerment of Hotel Employees in Krabi

4 psychological empowerment factors were investigated to measure the perception of hotel employees in Krabi. The respondents were asked to rate 12 attributes using the 4 point Likert scale, where 1 represents “strongly disagree” and 4 represents “strongly agree”. The results were shown in Table 3.

Meaning: 3 attributes were rated. The highest mean belongs to “The work I do is very important to me” (3.39), followed by “The work I do is meaningful to me” (3.32), and the lowest mean was “My job activities are personally meaningful to me” (3.23).

Competence: 3 attributes were rated. The highest mean belongs to “I am confident about my ability to do my job” (3.38), followed by “I am self-assured about my capability to perform my work activities” (3.35), and the lowest mean was “I have mastered the skills necessary for my job” (3.23).

Self-Determination: 3 attributes were rated. The mean scores were almost the same among 3 attributes: “I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job”, “I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work” and “I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom on how I do my job” (3.19, 3.19, and 3.18 respectively).

Influence: 3 attributes were rated. The highest mean belongs to “My impact on what happens in my department is large” (3.27), followed by “I have a great deal of control over what happens in

my department” (3.10), and the lowest mean was “I have significant influence over what happens in my department” (2.94).

Table 3: Psychological Empowerment of Hotel Employees in Krabi

Psychological Empowerment Dimensions	Mean	S.D.	Agreement level
<i>Meaning</i>			
The work I do is very important to me.	3.39	0.61	Strongly agree
My job activities are personally meaningful to me.	3.23	0.60	Agree
The work I do is meaningful to me.	3.32	0.60	Strongly agree
<i>Competence</i>			
I am confident about my ability to do my job.	3.38	0.55	Strongly agree
I am self-assured about my capability to perform my work activities.	3.35	0.56	Strongly agree
I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.	3.23	0.57	Agree
<i>Self-Determination</i>			
I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job	3.19	0.63	Agree
I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work	3.19	0.63	Agree
I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom on how I do my job.	3.18	0.66	Agree
<i>Influence</i>			
My impact on what happens in my department is large.	3.27	0.69	Strongly agree
I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department.	3.10	0.74	Agree
I have significant influence over what happens in my department.	2.94	0.83	Agree

4. Hotel Employee Commitment in Krabi

3 employee commitment variables were rated to measure the hotel employees’ commitment. The results are shown in Table 4. The highest mean belongs to “I feel proud to work for my hotel” (3.41), followed by “I have confidence in the future of my hotel”

(3.32), and the lowest mean was “I would recommend employment with my hotel to a friend” (3.28).

Table 4: Employee Commitment

Employee commitment	Mean	S.D.	Agreement level
I have confidence in the future of my hotel.	3.32	0.64	Strongly agree
I feel proud to work for my hotel.	3.41	0.64	Strongly agree
I would recommend employment with my hotel to a friend.	3.28	0.74	Strongly agree
Overall	3.35	0.57	Strongly agree

5. Hotel Types and Employee Empowerment

Table 5 shows that there were significant differences between the respondents' hotel type and the perception toward the “I have mastered the skills necessary for my job” attribute ($p \leq 0.01$) under the “competence” factor and “I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department” attribute ($p < 0.05$) under the “influence” factor. The respondents who worked in chain-affiliated hotels had more opportunity to master the skills necessary for their job and they had a greater deal of control over what happens in their department than the respondents who worked in independent hotels.

Table 5: Hotel Type VS Employee Empowerment

Employee commitment	Independent Hotel (N=141)		Chain-Affiliated Hotel (N=235)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
<i>Meaning</i>				
The work I do is very important to me.	3.42	0.56	3.37	0.63
My job activities are personally meaningful to me.	3.20	0.54	3.24	0.63
The work I do is meaningful to me.	3.29	0.56	3.33	0.62

<i>Competence</i>				
I am confident about my ability to do my job.	3.37	0.51	3.37	0.56
I am self-assured about my capability to perform my work activities.	3.32	0.55	3.36	0.56
I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.	3.12	0.57	3.28	0.55
<i>Self-Determination</i>				
I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job	3.14	0.62	3.23	0.64
I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work	3.13	0.62	3.23	0.64
I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom on how I do my job.	3.13	0.62	3.20	0.69
<i>Influence</i>				
My impact on what happens in my department is large.	3.27	0.69	3.26	0.67
I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department.	2.99	0.78	3.17	0.70
I have significant influence over what happens in my department.	2.87	0.88	2.97	0.79

* p-value ≤ 0.05 ** p-value ≤ 0.01

6. Hotel Type and Employee Commitment

Table 6 shows that there were not significant differences between the respondents' hotel type and employee commitment. Employee commitment between independent hotels and chain-affiliated hotels was not significantly different.

Table 6: Hotel Types VS Employee Commitment

Employee commitment	Independent Hotel (N=141)		Chain-Affiliated Hotel (N=235)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
I have confidence in the future of my hotel.	3.32	0.61	3.31	0.64
I feel proud to work for my hotel.	3.41	0.67	3.41	0.61

I would recommend employment with my hotel to a friend.	3.28	0.68	3.27	0.76
Overall	3.34	0.56	3.33	0.57

* p-value \leq 0.05 ** p-value \leq 0.01

7. The relationship between psychological empowerment and employee commitment.

A multiple regression analysis was calculated using employee commitment as the dependent variable and employee psychological empowerment dimensions as the independent variables. The derived model could explain 51 percent of the variance in employee commitment.

Table 7 shows that 3 psychological empowerment dimensions (meaning, competence, and influence) exerted positive correlation with employee commitment ($p < 0.00$). Meaning scored the highest beta value (0.53), followed by competence (0.20), and influence (0.19). If hotels implement the concept of employee empowerment focusing on these psychological empowerment dimensions, it could enhance their employee commitment level.

Table 7: Results of Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Significance
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.35	0.16		2.18	0.03
Meaning	0.53	0.05	0.47	9.73	0.00
Competence	0.20	0.04	0.16	3.22	0.00
Influence	0.19	0.04	0.20	4.50	0.00

a. Dependent Variable: employee commitment

Conclusion and recommendations

Objective 1: *To measure the hotel employees’ psychological empowerment and employee commitment in Krabi.*

The results of this study show that hotel employees in Krabi have a

moderately high level of psychological empowerment. They are competent to perform their jobs in a proficient manner. Their jobs have meaning for them. They have self-determination and they have influence on the nature of their jobs. Also their overall employee commitment was reasonably high.

Objective 2: To compare the employees' psychological empowerment and employee commitment between independent and chain-affiliated hotels in Krabi.

This study found that hotel type had an impact on psychological empowerment. The employees who work in chain-affiliated hotels have more opportunities to master the skills necessary for their jobs and they have a greater deal of control over what happens in their hotels when compared to the employees who work in independent hotels. As Kim, Lee, Murrmann, and George (2012) stated, psychological empowerment refers to a motivational process that enhances employees' self-efficacy. So, chain-affiliated hotels try to empower their employees to perform their tasks, especially when dealing with problems, to maximize their guests' satisfaction.

However, hotel types do not have influence on employee commitment. The level of employee commitment was not significantly different between independent hotels and chain-affiliated hotels in Krabi. McGee and Ford (1987) mention another important dimension: labeled "continuance" commitment, it describes where an individual is committed to the organization not because of a general positive feeling but because of extraneous interests such as pensions, family concerns, etc.

Objective 3: To examine the relationship between psychological empowerment and employee commitment.

The findings of this study showed that psychological empowerment has a positive relationship with employee commitment (Figure 1). This result supports Yoon et al. (2001), Wang and Lee (2009), and He et

al. (2010). Hotel managers should provide more training in both skills and standards of service to ensure that their employees can work with confidence in making decisions and providing better services to their guests. Additionally, hotel managers should help employees develop their sense of meaning, competency, and influence by demonstrating their appreciation for each of their employee's contributions and for the value of their participation. Also, the hotel managers should be trusting and communicate with employees in an open and honest manner.

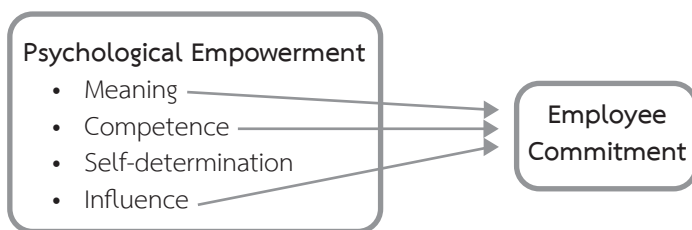


Figure 1: The relationship between psychological empowerment and employee commitment.

This study investigated employee empowerment and employee commitment between chain-affiliated and independent hotels in Krabi and examined the relationship between psychological empowerment and employee commitment. For future research, it would be interesting to investigate employee empowerment for hotels' front-line staff and its impact on workplace relations and the improvement of customer service quality.

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