

## Employment Empowerment through Human Resource Department in Enriching Employee Satisfaction: The Hilton Way in Malaysia

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**Abstract:** The purpose of the research is to determine the relationship between employees empowerment and employees satisfaction. The main focus of the study is on the three Hilton Hotels – Hilton Kuala Lumpur, Hilton Petaling Jaya and DoubleTree by Hilton – in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor region and their specific Human Resource Policy. It is essential for the hotels to determine and evaluate their employees empowerment efforts in ensuring job satisfaction. The employees empowerment measures examined in this study are decision-making, recognition and reward, job development, on the job training and de-jobbing; whereas for employees satisfaction the study will look into employees turnover, service quality, customer satisfaction and productivity level. The study adopted a quantitative research methodology and data was collected from two types of questionnaires distributed to two different samples that consisted of five Hilton's Human Resources representatives and 100 of Hilton's employees through online questionnaires. The results found that there is a strong positive relationship between employees empowerment and employees satisfaction. The findings contradicted the results from the human resources department of the hotel

**Keywords:** Employee development, employees empowerment, employees satisfaction, employee training, human resources

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### Introduction

“Empowerment is a humanistic device to improve the quality working life for ordinary employees” (Lincoln *et al.* 2002). There are several employees empowerment measures that can be carried out by Human Resources Department (HRD), such as participation of employees in making decision, on-job training, fair payment system, job enrichment and appreciation awards (Pelit, Ozturk & Arslanturk, 2011).

Hilton Worldwide was founded in 1919 by Conrad N. Hilton, with the vision “To fill the earth with the light and warmth of hospitality”. It has brought Hilton worldwide recognition and Hilton has become one of the leading hotel brand in the hospitality industry. A prestigious hotel chain like Hilton should find out the underlying employees empowerment to sustain the employees satisfaction for the smooth runs of hotel's operation. Furthermore, according to Hilton Worldwide (2011) the group has become the fastest growing major hotel company by

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the growth of 27 percent on its portfolio. This shows the determination of Hilton in broadening their mission “to be the preeminent global hospitality company”. In short, to be the first choice of guests, team members, and owners alike (Hilton Worldwide, 2011). Therefore, in order to achieve the above statement, it is crucial for Hilton Worldwide to determine the importance of employees empowerment for the future development of the chain.

Pelit, Ozturk & Arslanturk (2011) carried out a study entitled, “The Effects of Employee Empowerment on Employee Job Satisfaction: A Study on Hotels in Turkey.” The research has concluded that there are positive results on job satisfaction level that come with behavioral and psychological employee empowerment. It seems like the use of employee empowerment has played a major role in sustaining employees output, or in another word, enriching the employees satisfaction. Labor force plays an important role in maintaining smooth operations of a hotel, therefore employee empowerment is desirable to increase the employees productivity and ensure the organizational efficiency (Guzel, Aydin Tukelturk & Ozkul, 2008). It is necessary for the managerial level especially the HRD to take note on what they can do in nourishing the employees satisfaction, which is essential for the operations of the hotel, particularly in terms of lowering high staff turnover (Chen, Wang & Chu, 2010). It is good for HRD to consistently put effort in employees empowerment to keep their employees satisfied. This is because it can be costly for a hotel to employ new staffs frequently within a year (Jacobs, 2011). Therefore, it is necessary to ensure employees satisfaction in order to run the smooth operations of the hotel. In addition, Inverson and Deery (2007) stated that hospitality industry reinforced high turnover culture as the employee belief that there is limited career development and promotional opportunity. Furthermore, the hospitality industry is growing rapidly, and as part of ensuring customer satisfaction, the importance of employees satisfaction is reinforced.

The main objective of this research is to find out what are the employee empowerments done by HRD in enriching their employees satisfaction in Hilton hotel. Several employee empowerments measures that can be adopted by the HRD are (a) to give an employee the power to make decision when dealing with the guest complaints; (b) training to enhance employees’ hospitality skills; (c) better communications between the managerial and operational employees; and (d) company rewards to the employees to improve employee satisfaction. In addition, this research is expected to establish the relationship between employees empowerment and employees satisfaction. Literature shows that there is a strong positive relationship between employees empowerment and employees satisfaction, and that employees empowerment play an important role in sustaining the employees’ loyalty as well.

Increase of employee satisfaction can increase employee participation which in turn increases an employee’s loyalty to the company (Abdullah *et al.*, 2009). Furthermore it also shows that the employees who have been given the opportunity to make decisions on their own performs better (Munjuri, 2011). This suggests that behavioral and psychological empowerment have positive effect on the job satisfaction levels of employees.” (Pelit, Ozturk & Arslanturk, 2011).

### Problem Statement

However, employees empowerment is still not practiced in Malaysia. Hotels are still structured in a way that managers are commanding their teams instead of managing them. Furthermore, with the lack of empowerment, employees are unsatisfied and switch between jobs and companies. This research explores looking in the following problems:

- Employees empowerment by the HRD is linked with employees satisfaction.
- Employees empowerment by the HRD has an influence on employees satisfaction.

- Employees empowerment by the HRD rise higher when employees satisfaction rises and vice versa.

This research also examines ways to increase job satisfaction via empowerment. In view of the importance of employees empowerment, Hilton tries to implement it in their Malaysian hotels to enhance employees satisfaction.

### Literature Review

HRD is acting as a backbone of an organization to recruit and train employees. According to Nickson (2006), human resources management is seeking to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce, using an integrated array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques. Researches show that there are positive relationship between employees empowerment and employees satisfaction (Mushipe, 2011; Pratheepkanth, 2011; Dickson & Lorenz, 2009; Hafiza *et al.*, 2011; Grill *et al.*, 2010; Munjuri, 2011; Seibert, Silver, & Randolph, 2004; He, Murrmann & Perdue, 2010). Employees satisfaction is playing an important role in maintaining employees performances. Miller and Monge (1986) in their study of participation, satisfaction and productivity have shown that employee participation has positive effects on satisfaction and productivity and concluded that satisfaction leads to more positive effects than productivity.

According to Naseem, Sheikh and Malik (2011) in their study on “Impact of Employee Satisfaction on Success of Organization: Relation between Customer Experience and Employee Satisfaction”, employee satisfaction is central concern particularly in the service industry. It has strengthened the need and importance for HRD to ensure the employees satisfaction for smooth operation of a hotel. Employees satisfaction act as their motivation and motivated employees are keen to participate fully in their work task compare to the unmotivated employees (Pratheepkanth, 2011).

The theoretical framework shows five types of employees empowerment. They are recognition and rewarding, decision-making, job development, on-job training and de-jobbing. It is believed that with these employees empowerment by HRD in the three Hilton properties in Kuala Lumpur region, employees satisfaction can be improved. Satisfied employees indicate low turnover, high productivity, good service quality and customer satisfaction.

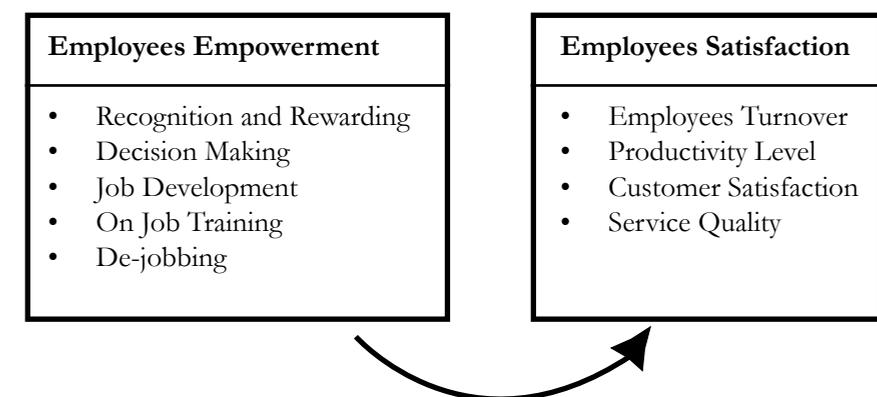


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

## Employees Empowerment

### (a) Recognition and Rewarding

Every employee needs recognition and appreciation from their employer and it can act as a powerful tool to create motivations to work harder towards achieving the set targets. In short, everyone wants to be appreciated or acknowledged for what they have done. Since job satisfaction is not only about providing standard physical conditions and social facilities therefore the hotel managers should introduce incentives (overwork payment, rewarding etc.) and fair payment systems (Pelit, Öztürk & Arslanturk, 2011). Expectancy theorists, such as Lawler & Porter (1967) and Vroom (1964) (cited in He, Murrmann & Perdue, 2010) believe that job satisfaction is caused by job performance through the provision of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards.

Terry Berry a private US based company which aids in providing significant recognitions and rewards to the employees. Out of the many programs provided by the company, there are certain popular recognition programs which have established the good name of Terry Berry such as the Peer-to-Peer Recognition, Service Awards, Spot Recognition and Manager's Recognition Training (Terry Berry, 2012).

Hilton Worldwide Recognition Programs encompass recognition programs such as CEO Light and Warmth Award, The Spirit Award, Catch Me at My Best and International House-keeping Week. CEO Light and Warmth Award is the highest form of compliment for employees; it is awarded to recognize the team members who have manifested the Hilton Worldwide values of Hospitality, Integrity, Leadership, Teamwork, Ownership and Now (Hilton Worldwide, 2011).

### (b) Decision-making

According to Conger and Kanungo (1988) (cited in Sharma & Kaur, 2008), employee empowerment is a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organizational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal both by formal organizational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information. Sternberg in 1992 (cited in Kim, 2011) says that employee empowerment is proven to be the best method for achieving better hotel service, productivity, and efficiency as well as improving guest satisfaction.

Besides that, involvement of employees in decision-making can lead to several benefits to both the organization and the employees; such as improve morale, productivity, team cohesion and innovations (Richason IV, 2012). According to Richason IV (2012), involving employees in decision-making can empower them to be more autonomous and boost up their confidence.

Hilton Kuala Lumpur has launched a program named 'Make It Right' to deliver its brand promise and building guest loyalty. With the help of the program, the employees are given the power to make their own decision when their guests are not satisfied with their stay in Hilton Kuala Lumpur (Jackson, 2012).

### (c) Career Development

Employees are interested to see job development in the hotel in terms of higher job positions and more favorable remuneration. According to Stringer and Cheloha in 2003 (cited in Monis & Sreedhara, 2011) career development plans for individuals have been found to be effective in fostering future leaders who have the skills and experiences to implement company strategies. The HRD can develop a specific program for the career development of competent employees in the hotel. It is necessary to empower employees by job development, since employees are motivated by opportunity for growth in their career in an

organization (Herzberg cited in Mani, 2010). However, to date, career development or job development opportunities provided in a hotel often overlook the personal growth, level of responsibility, and the social status of an employee's job (Rashid & Rashid, 2011). Besides that, Witt and Nye in 1992 (cited in Rashid & Rashid, 2011) also stated that individuals who identify the promotion decisions are made in a fair and just manner are likely to experience great motivation and satisfaction at work place.

Knowing the importance of job development, Hilton Worldwide has implemented Thomas International Personal Profile Analysis (PPA) to its employees, especially to the potential employees who perform well in the organization. PPA is a tool widely used in determining the internal and external human behavior (Irvine, 2003). It provides the information of an individual such as the work mask, behavior under pressure and self-image. With the help of the PPA, the employers or human resources departments are able to design on the best-fit development program for an individual.

### (d) On Job Training

Training is defined as teaching another person on particular skills or knowledge. In other word, training is a process or an activity to enhance employees' skills and knowledge. According to Armstrong in 2009 (cited in Latif, 2010) training acts as a pathway for learning, which is an important factor in creating a sense of progression and purpose that leads to organizational commitment. Training is a commonly used strategy adopted by many employers to enhance employees' skills and improve their knowledge on specific field. There are several examples such as standard operation procedure in answering a phone call, front desk service etiquettes, guest complaints handling procedure, etc. (Yeo, 2012) or the training model of Nicholls, 1995 (cited in Erstad, 1997).

Hilton Worldwide has made efforts in job training by customizing its own learning system – Hilton Worldwide University – for their employees in specific areas and needs. Hilton Worldwide University comprises of five colleges (Hotel College, Owner College, Commercial College, Leadership College and General Studies College), which offers over 2,500 learning programs for the employees, and the programs are delivered in different ways such as e-learning, iPads, apps and more (Hilton Worldwide, 2011).

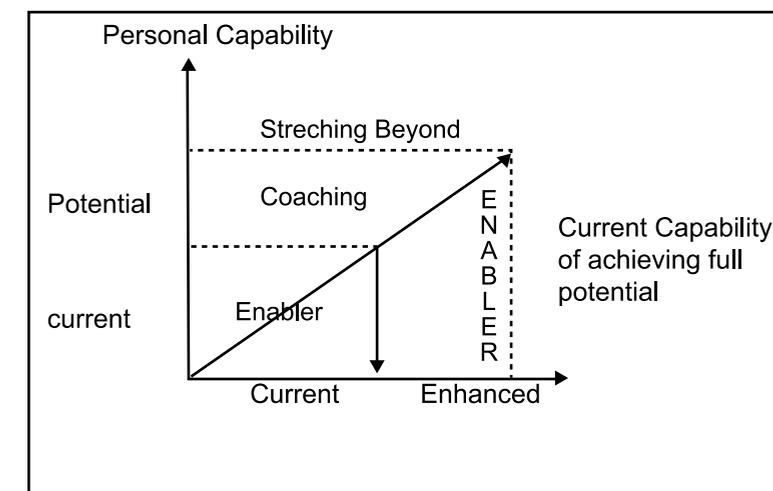


Figure 2. The three stages of training structure

*(e) De-jobbing*

De-jobbing refers to the situation there is neither clear job specification (as conventionally understood). According to Negi *et al.* (2010), de-jobbing can help employees gain passion on what they are doing, identify their core competencies, become flexible, think out of the box and more.

However, de-jobbing is believed to have prompted a bigger human resources issue (Randhawa, 2007). The reason is because most of the employees are used to the 'spoon-feeding' structure of work where the HRD provides them a guidebook, which contains the job descriptions clearly. Therefore, it is essential for the HRD to identify the candidates who can work well without clear job descriptions (Randhawa, 2007).

**Employees Satisfaction***(a) Employees Turnover*

The hospitality industry is categorized as a high turnover of resignation industry. Some of the reasons of resignation, which are highlighted in most of the journals, are remunerations, lack of appreciation, lack of new challenges and limited job development (Gillespie, n.d.; Jacobs, 2011; Monis & Sreedhara, 2011). Employees tend to get bored on the regular tasks given and feel there is lack of new challenges when they are repeating the daily tasks given. Moreover, the gaps between the high and low-income earners can constitute a demotivating factor too. Nwachukwu in 1994 (cited in Pratheepkanth, 2011) highlighted that many employers were unsuccessful in providing adequate remuneration and compensation for their employees' hard work. Hilton's training and development programs are designed to cover several fields, namely, to help gain employees' trust and eventually build up the employees' satisfaction. There is a significant relationship between employees satisfaction and the resignation rate (Singh & Loncar, 2010).

*(b) Level of Productivity*

Employees' productivity is an essential tool in maintaining the smooth running of a hotel. Linkage with the remuneration package has a great impact on employee's productivity, as good payroll is always a great motivation (Pratheepkanth, 2011). In time, employee's loyalty is generated when employees are contented with one's organization. According to Pratheepkanth (2011) an appropriate reward package can 'cheer up' or influence workers to develop positive attitude towards their job and thereby increase productivity.

There are a number of guidelines, which can be used as reference for a HRD in ensuring higher productivity for an organization. For example, Riddle (2011) on his post, 'The Manager's Guide to Increasing Employee Productivity', stated that there are three steps to ensure the employees' productivity. Firstly, measure the employees' productivity in the company. Secondly, implement a practice for improving employees' productivity. Lastly, review the employees' productivity after the empowerment effort implemented by the HRD.

*(c) Service Quality*

According to Abdullah *et al.* (2009), the service profit chain model postulates that there are direct and strong networks of relationships between variables such as profit, growth, customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, the value of goods, services delivered to customers, employee capability, satisfaction, loyalty and productivity.

Furthermore, according to Geralis and Terziovski (cited in He, Murrmann & Perdue, 2010), empowering personnel is an influential strategy that significantly improves service qual-

ity. In other words, good service quality is generated by the empowerment of employees. High service quality has the effect of winning over customers among the competitors as well as helping the organization achieve its business goals or desired revenue (He, Murrmann & Perdue, 2010).

The DoubleTree by Hilton's simple service philosophy – The CARE – culture is a simple service philosophy to encourage their employees to create a rewarding experience for their guests. Indirectly, this brings goodwill to the hotel's service (Hilton Worldwide, 2011). According to Hilton Worldwide (2011), the key objective is to "build brand loyalty by inspiring team members to deliver the special comforts and acts of kindness that bring humanity back to hospitality experience".

*(d) Customer Satisfaction*

High productivity can indirectly lead to good service quality. These are the two important factors, which will enable a hotel to ensure customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is linked to customer loyalty, whereby repeated stays by the same guests lead to increased revenue. Empowerment programs rely on improving customer satisfaction in order to expand organizational value (Moore, Hopkins & Hopkins cited in He, Murrmann & Perdue, 2010). Additionally, research shows that empowered employees can cope with service disappointments when handling complaints (Bitner, Booms & Tetreault cited in He, Murrmann & Perdue, 2010). As stated by Naseem, Sheikh and Malik (2011, p. 41) "customer satisfaction seems to be a natural corollary of employee satisfaction and in turn organizational success is upshot of this duo".

**Methodology**

Two types of questionnaires were distributed to the samples chosen. The first questionnaire was distributed to the stratified sample whereas the second questionnaire was distributed through random sampling to the three Hilton properties in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor region.

Stratified sample is a sampling method that divides the population into sub-population (Holle, 2005; Munjuri, 2011; Ordenez, 1998). In this research, the HRD was stratified according to hierarchical levels, i.e. top, middle and low level of management. Furthermore, questionnaires were only given to the top and middle level management employees since they were the main decision makers in the HRD. The middle level management employees are the human resources training managers and the top management level are the directors and the assistance directors of the HRD. These samples were chosen based on factors such as the position and the authority given by the hotel and their working experience.

Random sampling is a sampling method where all employees in these three Hilton's properties were chosen randomly to answer the questionnaires given (Shelton, 2011; Mani, 2010; Ordenez, 1998). The objective behind the second questionnaire is to determine the employees' level of job satisfaction on the empowerment strategies taken by the three Hilton's properties.

One of the main reasons of using two types of questionnaires was to obtain more accurate results, seen from different points of view. For instance, the training managers may have different perspectives compared to the human resources executive, as training managers are the ones who conduct appropriate trainings to the employees. In addition, the HRD also keeps an employee's individual portfolio, which contains information the employee and affects the type of training offered to an employee.

The first questionnaire was distributed via emails to the respective Hilton management respondents. There were five respondents chosen from three Hilton's properties (Director of HR - Hilton PJ, Assistant Director of HR - Hilton KL, Training Manager - DoubleTree by

Hilton KL, Training Manager - Hilton KL, Assistant Director of HR- DoubleTree by Hilton KL). The second questionnaire was distributed by using 'KwikSurveys' to 100 Hilton employees. Both questionnaires results were obtained from experienced employees and representatives.

There are three objectives for this research. Firstly, to determine the relationship between employees empowerment and employees satisfaction. Secondly, to examine the employees empowerment measures adopted by Hilton's HRD; and lastly, to study Hilton's employees satisfaction level.

The first questionnaire was designed to examine the human resources efforts taken in empowering their employees. The data collected from the sample chosen was then analyzed by using segmented coding to categorize the data based on different codes given. The codes were designed from the dependent and independent variables according to the framework.

The second questionnaire was designed to study Hilton's employees satisfaction level. It was distributed through the 'KwikSurveys' – an online survey platform which allows the user to create and distribute their questionnaires online. In addition, the ease of sharing the survey web link through several social webpage and electronic mails has shortened the duration of data collection. The comparison of data is useful to determine the consistency of the results and the relationship between each factor.

Lastly the two questionnaires were examined in determining the relationship between employees' empowerment and employees' satisfaction by forming a descriptive framework and correlation test (Abdullah *et al.*, 2009; Singh & Loncar, 2010; Rashid & Rashid, 2010). The framework was constructed according to the coding tabulated from the first questionnaire. Then, correlations was tested based on the results obtained from the Hilton employees by using SPSS to determine the strength of relationship between the variables by using the Pearson Correlation ( $r$ ). It is mainly used to measure the strength of the relationship between employees' empowerment and employees' satisfaction.

### **Hypotheses**

Hypothesis 1: Employees empowerment by human resources has a strong relationship with employee satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Employees empowerment by human resources has a strong relationship on the direct impact on employee satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: The degree on empowerment by human resources has a strong relationship to the degree on employees satisfaction, and vice versa.

### **Findings**

#### **Questionnaire Set No. 1 – Respective Hilton Representatives Survey**

The respondents were asked to give the definition of employees' empowerment first. All the respondents have given similar answers, which are related to "Decision Making". One of the respondents from DoubleTree by Hilton has mentioned that empowerment means that employees are given chances to make decision without consulting their superior. Employees feel they have been given trust and authority by the organization to make decision. As part of the decision-making, the employees are given a chance to solve the problems they are facing without the help of their managers or superiors.

On the importance of employees' empowerment, Hilton management respondents think that employees empowerment plays an important role in maintaining employees satisfaction. In addition, employees empowerment affects the employees in terms of productivity level, maintaining customer satisfaction, ensuring service quality and loyalty to the company. A respondent explained the empowerment measures taken, such as decision-making, fits the three 'E' Hilton's objectives, which are 'Enabled, Energized and Engaged'. These three 'E' are closely connected to high productivity and loyalty to the company as per data obtained.

Empowerment practices start with an employee's knowledge of his or her job description. Hilton Worldwide implements measures to ensure their employees are clear on their job scope. In addition, the manager will always examine the employees' performances to help and monitor their work properly. A respondent from Double Tree by Hilton explained that it is very important to monitor employees by providing appropriate on job training such as the 'Hilton recovery tool', which trains employees to handle customer requests and problems. Part of the decision making empowerment introduced by Hilton's HRD was the 'Make It Right' program. According to one respondent, this was designed to empower employees. It was specially designed to ensure Hilton's employees were able to handle different situations by making right decisions in solving guests' issues without consultation with the managers.

The Hilton management respondents were also asked to choose the most important empowerment tools. They were asked to evaluate the tools based on their working experience and as HRD decision makers. Results have shown that recognition and reward, job development and decision making have stronger influence on employees satisfaction. As mentioned earlier all the respondents have defined 'employees empowerment' as the authority given to make decision which contributes to self-confidence. This makes the employees feel they are important and their efforts are seen by the organization. Job development starts to take place once the efforts have been seen. In addition, by providing job development, the employees can always be motivated to pursue each task given at their best performance. Recognition and reward are core elements that employees look for in their jobs. The respondents have found that the empowerment tools such as decision-making and job development increase the employees' productivity and loyalty to the company and they are proud with their contribution to the team and the brand itself.

Efforts are needed in maintaining employees satisfaction, and empowerment can be one of the most powerful tools in sustaining it. Based on the findings from the Hilton management respondents, empowered employees perform better. These respondents gave several examples of empowerment measures such as authority, recognition of efforts and the knowledge that they are empowered to solve the conflicts. Most of the employees like to handle their work by themselves. When the authority is given either verbally or in written form, it makes them feel satisfied and they feel part of the company. These empowered employees play an essential role in building the hotel's brand reputation. The high productivity among employees improved the overall performance of the team. It makes them more willing to run the extra mile in helping the guest. Two respondents (human resources managers from Hilton Petaling Jaya and Hilton Kuala Lumpur) explained that their employees have really transformed when an empowerment program such as 'Make It Right' was launched. This might be because the authority given to employees has built up their confidence. With more customer handling encounters, the employees become more experienced in service recovery.

Finally interviewees were asked to share relevant experiences about 'employees empowerment and 'employees satisfaction' in the last part of the questionnaire. Decision making seems to be the main focus in Hilton's empowerment practices where employees are given a guideline during their training on the following issues: what to follow whenever they are facing a

conflict, how to make a right decision, etc. Satisfied employees are passionate about their job, which leads them to provide excellent services and think out of the box. The Hilton management respondents also highlighted that employees satisfaction are strongly affected by the working environment. A healthy working environment and the Hilton's way in trusting their employees on decision-making have reduced the burden and gaps in management hierarchy. The energized employees have more consistent work performance, which can definitely help in building a long-term employment relationship.

**Questionnaire Set No. 2 – Staff Survey**

On-job training was the most recognized employees empowerment practice by Hilton's employees, whereby 61% of the female respondents who have agreed with it. This is followed by 'decision making' which 58% of the male respondents have chosen for it. There were 53% of female and 47% of male who have chosen recognition and reward. There were a total of

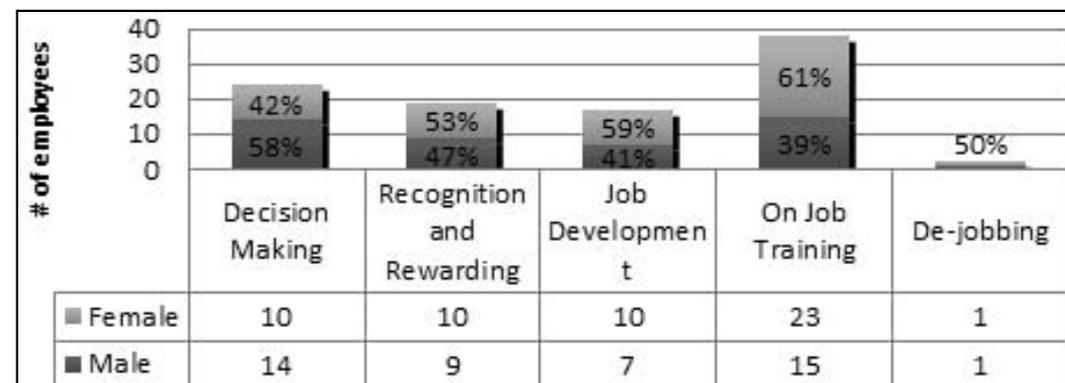


Figure 3. Percentage breakdown: Types of employees empowerment practice by Hilton (n=100)

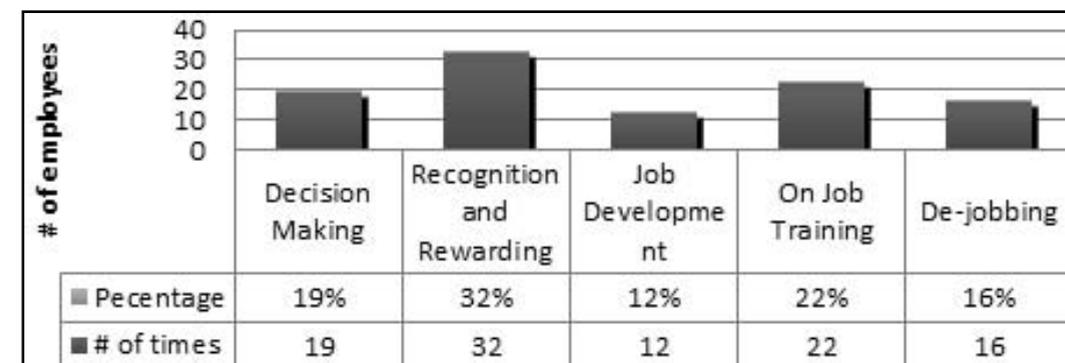


Figure 4. Percentage breakdown: Ranking of employees empowerment and the satisfaction level of Hilton's employees (n=100)

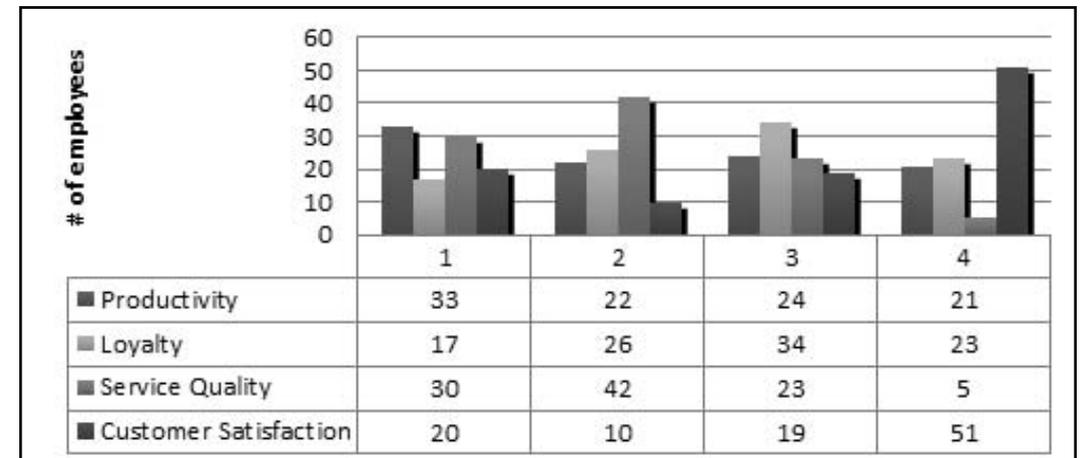


Figure 5. Percentage breakdown: Ranking on the influence from employees empowerment on employees satisfaction (n=100)

17 respondents, which consist of 59% of female respondents and 41% of male respondents who have chosen 'job development'. Based on the bar chart above, there were only 2% of respondents who have agreed with the effort for de-jobbing practice in Hilton.

**Percentage breakdown: Ranking of Employees Empowerment and The Satisfaction Level of Hilton's Employees (n=100)**

Out of the 80% of respondents who are satisfied with Hilton's HRD employees empowerment practice, 32% of the respondents think that recognition and reward are the most effective employees' empowerment strategy. Twenty two percent (22%) of the respondents chosen 'on-job training', 19% chose 'decision making', 16% chose 'de-jobbing' while 12% chose 'job development'. These results were derived by further examining the responses from 80% of the respondents who were satisfied with the employees empowerment practices implemented by Hilton's Worldwide.

The respondents were asked to rank the highest influence from employees empowerment on the four types of employees satisfaction given.

Rank #1 : Thirty three percent (33%) of the employees think that employees empowerment has brought the highest influence in providing high productivity; followed by service quality (30%), providing a better service quality (20%), and lastly, loyalty to the company (17%).

Rank #2 : Next, there were 42% of respondents who believed that employees empowerment would lead them to provide better service quality; followed by loyalty to the company (26%), providing high productivity (22%), and lastly, service quality (10%).

Rank #3 : Thirty four percent (34%) of the respondents ranked loyalty to the company third place on employees empowerment influence on employees satisfaction; followed by high productivity (24%), providing better service quality (23%), and lastly, in ensuring customer satisfaction (19%).

Rank #4 : Fifty one percent (51%) of the employees think that employees empowerment has brought the least influence in ensuring customer satisfaction; followed by loyalty to the company (23%), providing high productivity (21%), and lastly, service quality (5%).

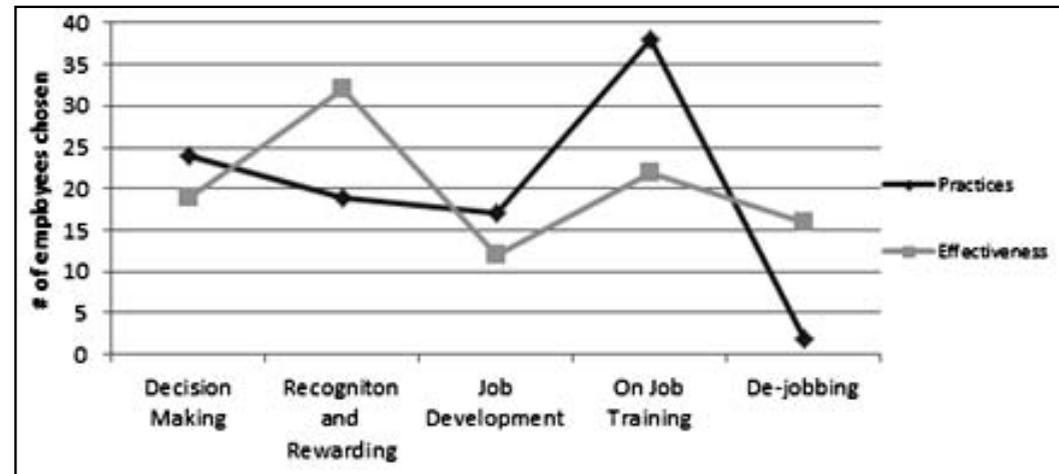


Figure 6. Comparisons of empowerment practices and its effectiveness (n=100)

**Comparisons of Empowerment Practices and Its Effectiveness (n=100)**

Recognition and reward seems to be the most effective empowerment tools to the employees even if it is not the main focus of Hilton’s HRD. Job development happened to be the lesser focus at Hilton. This could be due to the fact that job development practices are designed for certain employees only. De-jobbing seemed to be considered the least important empowerment practices, however its effectiveness was fairly positive.

Table 1. Correlation test for employees’ empowerment and employees’ satisfaction from employees point of view (n=100)

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Empowerment	3.49	.772	100
Satisfaction	3.54	.822	100

Correlations			
		Empowerment	Satisfaction
Empowerment	Pearson Correlation	1	.646**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.646**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(a) *Employees Empowerment and Employee Satisfaction*

Hypothesis 1: Employees empowerment by human resources has a strong relationship with employee satisfaction.

The correlations test shows the relationship between employees empowerment and employees satisfaction. Through the second questionnaire, all the variables under employees empowerment which included recognition and reward, job development, on job training, decision making and de-jobbing and employees satisfaction (which included productivity level), loyalty level, customer satisfaction and service quality were tested. According to the correlation test above, there is a positive relationship between two variables where its Pearson correlation (r) is equals to 0.646. This has supported Hypothesis One (H1) which states that employees empowerment by human resources has a strong relationship with employees satisfaction.

(b) *Employees Empowerment by Human Resources Department*

Hypothesis 2: Employees empowerment by human resources has a direct impact on employee satisfaction.

Based on results obtained from Hilton management respondents, the above framework was constructed to describe the relationship between employees empowerment and employees satisfaction. Almost all of these respondents believed that the authority given to the employees in decision making leads to high employees satisfaction. They also emphasized that empowered employees have higher productivity which in turn can improve their service quality and customer satisfaction. Recognition and proper training provided by HRD again contribute to employees empowerment. Hypothesis Two (H2) is supported as employees empowerment does have a direct impact on the employees satisfaction level.

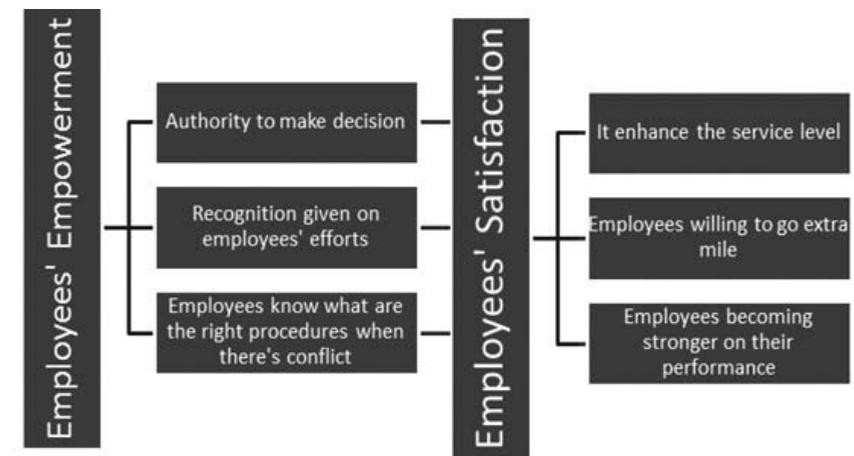


Figure 7. Perceived relationship between employees empowerment and employees satisfaction from human resources point of view (n=5)

(c) *Effect of Employees Empowerment on Employees Satisfaction*

Hypothesis 3: The higher the employees empowerment by human resources, the higher the employees satisfaction, and vice versa.

The coefficients table indicated the relationship between empowerment and satisfaction of Hilton’s employees is 0.687. In other words, every single actions of employees empowerment undertaken by human resources will increase the employees satisfaction level by 0.687.

**Table 2.** Regression test for employees empowerment and employees satisfaction from employees point of view (n=100)

Variables Entered/Removed			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Empowerment	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

b. All requested variables entered.

#### Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.646a	.417	.411	.631

a. Predictors: (Constant), Empowerment

#### Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	1.142	.293		3.890
Empowerment	.687	.082	.646	8.369

Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

Therefore, Hypothesis Three (H3) is supported as the higher the employees empowerment by human resources, the higher the employees satisfaction, and vice versa.

## Conclusion

Hotels no longer provide accommodation only. Guest's expectations have increased especially where a five-star hotel chain like Hilton Worldwide is concerned. Therefore, it is vital to have productive employees who can provide good service to maximize customer satisfaction. This in turn increases customer loyalty which helps to generate more revenue.

It is not easy for a hotel to maintain employees satisfaction. There are several factors where most of the employees will look into before and during their service periods with a hotel. Recognition and reward, opportunity to grow, sufficient trainings, authority and constraints during work are some of the factors that affect job satisfaction in the hotel sector. Therefore, a carefully planned employees empowerment program is needed to ensure long term employments and maintain the service quality of the hotel.

According to Redsteer (2012), the foundation of employee empowerment involves the idea that employees are uniquely placed to identify problems and to solve them. From the find-

ings of questionnaire 1, Hilton Worldwide shows commitment in building a strong foundation on employees empowerment.

The result achieved has shown that most of the employees are satisfied with the current empowerment practices with Hilton. Based on the results, the employees empowerment has the highest influence on productivity level followed by service quality, loyalty to the company and lastly customer satisfaction. Research shows employees satisfaction has the greatest impact on employees productivity and appropriate empowerment programs can lead to positive attitude towards their job (Pratheepkanth, 2011; Riddle, 2011). The four variables used in this research are interrelated, in the sense that when an employee is satisfied with his/ her current job, this will generate higher productivity at work. This highly productive employee will provide excellent service to the guests, and in turn lead to customer satisfaction. It is again proven by Geralis and Terzilvski (cited in He, Murrmann & Perdue, 2010) who noted that empowering personnel is the influential strategy that extensively developed service quality. Hilton's efforts in maintaining the employees satisfaction is important as research shows there are substantial relationship between employees' satisfaction and the resignation rate (Singh & Loncar, 2010; Iverson & Deery, 2007)

Besides, the finding has proven the hypothesis set earlier as there is a strong relationship between employees empowerment and employees satisfaction (Mushipe, 2011; Pratheepkanth, 2011; Dickson & Lorenz, 2009; Hafiza *et al.*, 2011; Grill *et al.*, 2010; Munjuri, 2011; Seibert, Silver, & Randolph, 2004; He, Murrmann & Perdue, 2010).

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