2016

Psychological Empowerment and Customer Orientation in the Grocery Industry

Christopher Nestico
Walden University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations

Part of the Business Commons

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Christopher Nestico

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Mary Dereshiwsky, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration
Faculty

Dr. Annie Brown, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Brenda Jack, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2016

Abstract

Psychological Empowerment and Customer Orientation in the Grocery Industry

by

Christopher Nestico

MA, American Military University, 2012

BA, American Military University, 2009

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2016

Abstract

Organizations incur $83 billion per year in losses because of negative consumer experiences. Leadership behaviors and the various aspects of organizational life affect employee-customer interactions. With psychological empowerment theory as a theoretical framework, the purpose of this correlational study was to investigate the relationship between the independent variables of psychological empowerment (PE), dimensions of PE (e.g., meaning, self-efficacy, influence), tenure, education, and the dependent variable of customer orientation (CO). Employees of a regional grocery retailer in the northeastern United States comprised the population of the study. Data collection involved the use of paper surveys to measure individual worker levels of PE, meaning, self-efficacy, influence, and CO, as well as demographic characteristics. A correlational analysis determined that a statistically significant relationship ($p < .05$) existed between all independent variables and the dependent variable, with all correlations having an effect greater than .36. A hierarchical linear regression established a moderating effect of education on self-efficacy and CO ($F(1,176) = 11.333$, $\Delta R^2 = .024$, $p < .05$) and influence and CO ($F(1,176) = 25.596$, $\Delta R^2 = .017$, $p < .05$). No moderating effect existed for tenure. Managers may benefit from this study by enacting organizational PE initiatives to improve CO in human resources, training, and strategy. The implications for social change include improvements in organizational citizenship behavior leading to positive social outcomes for internal and external stakeholders.

Psychological Empowerment and Customer Orientation in the Grocery Industry

by

Christopher Nestico

MA, American Military University, 2012

BA, American Military University, 2009

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2016

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my biggest supporter, cheerleader, and proofreader, as well as my best friend: my wife, Erin. Throughout the process, she motivated and counseled me to persevere and do my best. Her assistance extended to keeping our four kiddos at bay during my days of writing. Thank you Kaylee, Eloise, Landon, and Addie for putting up with the ever-present displacement and shushing during my times of intense writing.

Donald and Judy Grant were instrumental in the success of this endeavor. Don Grant Printing made the research process infinitely easier. He printed the over 300 surveys and envelopes used in my field work. Judy acted as my editor, providing valuable recommendations during the proposal development process. She also opened her home to the five displaced people mentioned earlier.

Thank you to the teachers and instructors I have had during my time at Walden. Dr. Mary Dereshiwsky was my invaluable guide for nearly two years as I journeyed through the process from brainstorming to completion. Dr. Annie Brown and Dr. Brenda Jack pushed me to be a better scholar with their expert guidance and suggestions. Dr. Stephen Johnson helped me realize that statistical analysis was a possibility for this study because of his outstanding teaching and mentorship.

I would like to thank Crystal Smith for assisting me throughout the data collection process. Finally, I would like to acknowledge all my friends, supervisors, and coworkers in the U.S. Army. I have had the honor of working with some of the most intelligent, selfless, and supportive people during my 20 years in the military. Thank you all!

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Organizational leaders within the retail industry confront rapidly changing organizational environments because of globalization and information technology advances (Nunes, Bellin, Lee, & Schunck, 2013). Although the environment undergoes rapid change, a business necessity of providing value to the customer remains. The goals of this study are to articulate potential techniques organizations may use to realize competitive advantages through customer responsiveness and potentially elucidate the leadership aspect of the value proposition. Section 1 sets the stage for the study and introduces key concepts in the field of organizational leadership and customer orientation. Section 2 addresses the methodology of data collection and the execution of field research. Section 3 contains the results of the field work and a discussion of implications through inferential statistics.

Background of the Problem

Consumer spending accounts for approximately $8 trillion in the United States, or nearly two-thirds of the nation's gross domestic product (GDP; Coley, Mentzer, & Cooper, 2010). Corporations operating in the retail industry strive to attract and retain customers through various marketing initiatives. Monetary spending on marketing activities draws customers initially into retail stores. Corporations subsequently gain loyalty through meeting consumer expectations in product quality, customer rewards programs, and positive customer experience (Deb & Lomo-David, 2013). Customer loyalty may increase revenue and generate net profits even if the company suffers initial monetary loss as a result of a commitment to positive customer experiences (Nunes et al.,

2013). Within the grocery industry, organizations continually attempt to enhance store loyalty through various point-of-sale options and experiences meant to provide a positive experience during check-out (Mirabella, 2011). Further, efficient store management contributes to the attraction and retention of customers in certain markets (Anselmsson & Johansson, 2014)

Customer orientation encapsulates the strategy to meet customers' needs and respond to customer behavior (Coley et al., 2010). Organizations style operations to fulfill customer expectations and provide an environment to encourage ongoing business partnerships. Optimal corporate strategy should account for the various socioeconomic factors of the consumer, factors related to geographic area, and how these factors intertwine with the expectations of the customer (Mirabella, 2011). Additionally, firms should account for psychological factors present in the customer pool, address them, and react accordingly to adverse events or environmental changes (Mende, Bolton, & Bitner, 2013). The responsibility of aligning labor force operations with the organization's understanding of consumer behavior rests with the organizational leadership (Anisimova, 2010). Leadership attitudes toward the labor force contribute to an environment conducive to workers anticipating the unique challenges of a diverse customer base.

Problem Statement

Scholars and practitioners widely recognize employee empowerment as a key factor in customer service success and business profitability (B. Kim, Lee, Murrmann, & George, 2012). Organizations incur $83 billion per year in losses because of negative consumer experiences (Wright & Franks, 2013). Improper leadership attitudes toward

employees potentially degrade the employee-customer relationship, resulting in customer declivity and diminished financial performance (B. Kim, Losekoot, & Milne, 2013). The general business problem is potential private sector unfamiliarity with employee psychological empowerment and associated positive customer-centric work outcomes. The specific business problem is that leadership teams within a retail firm may not recognize the relationship between psychological empowerment dimensions, organizational demographics, and customer orientation, inhibiting the competitive advantages present within customer-oriented workers.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to assist leadership teams in recognizing the relationship between the four dimensions of psychological empowerment, two demographic factors, and customer orientation in a medium-sized retail firm. The independent variables were the psychological empowerment dimensions of impact, meaning, competence, and self-determination, and the demographic factors were tenure and education. The dependent variable was customer orientation. The targeted population was workers within a single retail firm in the Northeast United States. The use of this population was appropriate, as the population for the multistate retail chain provides a representation of similar retail companies across the United States. Social change may be achieved by aiding businesses in establishing assistive and fruitful relationships with stakeholders within their geographic community (Morrison & Humlen, 2013).

Nature of the Study

The relational inquiry of the study required the use of a quantitative design. The description of relationships between variables within a fixed population encapsulates quantitative investigation (Punch, 2014). Structured processes and prespecified research questions further characterize quantitative inquiry. The goals of relationship identification justify the use of quantitative inquiry versus qualitative inquiry. Researchers use qualitative methods for exploration of a new theory or deep explanation of individuals' perceptions of a phenomenon. The relational examination renders qualitative inquiry inappropriate for this research study.

The relational aspect of this study dictated the use of a correlational research design. Correlational designs potentially explain relationships or test the presence of relationships (Adams & Lawrence, 2015). The analysis of the relationships between psychological empowerment, demographic factors, and customer orientation denote the purpose of this study, illustrating the appropriateness of correlational design. Researchers use experimental or quasi-experimental designs to test cause and effect. The nonessential testing of cause and effect and the inability to manipulate variables rendered experimental or quasi-experimental designs inappropriate for this study.

Research Question

One primary research question existed for this study: How do psychological empowerment dimensions, demographics, and customer orientation correlate in the examined firm?

Hypotheses

$H1_0$: There is no significant relationship between the mean level of psychological

empowerment (μ_p) and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}). That

is $(\mu_p) \neq (\mu_{co})$. The relationship between psychological empowerment and

customer orientation was not significant $(p \geq 0.05)$.

$H1_a$: There is a significant relationship between the mean level of psychological

empowerment (μ_p) and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}). That is

$(\mu_p) = (\mu_{co})$. The relationship between psychological empowerment and

customer orientation was significant $(p < 0.05)$.

$H2_0$: There is no significant relationship between the mean level of

meaning (μ_{pm}) and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}). That

is $(\mu_{pm}) \neq (\mu_{co})$. The relationship between psychological empowerment

meaning and customer orientation was not significant $(p \geq 0.05)$.

$H2_a$: There is a significant relationship between the mean level of meaning (μ_{pm})

and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}). That is $(\mu_{pm}) = (\mu_{co})$.

The relationship between psychological empowerment meaning and customer

orientation was significant $(p < 0.05)$.

$H3_0$: There is no significant relationship between the mean level of impact (μ_{pi})

and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}). That is $(\mu_{pi}) \neq (\mu_{co})$. The

relationship between psychological empowerment impact and customer

orientation was not significant $(p \geq 0.05)$.

*H3*ₐ: There is a significant relationship between the mean level of impact (μ_{pi})

and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}). That is $(\mu_{pi}) = (\mu_{co})$. The

relationship between psychological empowerment impact and customer

orientation was significant ($p < 0.05$).

*H4*₀: There is no significant relationship between the mean level of

competence (μ_{pc}) and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}). That

is $(\mu_{pc}) \neq (\mu_{co})$. The relationship between psychological empowerment

competence and customer orientation was not significant ($p \geq 0.05$).

*H4*ₐ: There is a significant relationship between the mean level of

competence (μ_{pc}) and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}). That

is $(\mu_{pc}) = (\mu_{co})$. The relationship between psychological empowerment

competence and customer orientation was significant ($p < 0.05$).

*H5*₀: There is no significant relationship between the mean level of self-

determination (μ_{ps}) and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}). That

is $(\mu_{ps}) \neq (\mu_{co})$. The relationship between psychological empowerment

self-determination and customer orientation was not significant ($p \geq 0.05$).

*H5*ₐ: There is a significant relationship between the mean level of psychological

self-determination (μ_{ps}) and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}).

That is $(\mu_{ps}) = (\mu_{co})$. The relationship between psychological

empowerment self-determination and customer orientation was significant (p

< 0.05).

H6₀: Tenure does not moderate the relationship between mean levels of the

dimensions of psychological and the mean level of customer orientation. As

the categorical variable of tenure changes, the strength of the relationship

between the dimensions of psychological empowerment and customer

orientation will not increase or decrease ($p \geq 0.05$).

H6ₐ: Tenure moderates the relationship between mean levels of the dimensions of

psychological and the mean level of customer orientation. As the categorical

variable of tenure changes, the strength of the relationship between the

dimensions of psychological empowerment and customer orientation will

increase or decrease ($p < 0.05$).

H7₀: Education does not moderate the relationship between mean levels of the

dimensions of psychological and the mean level of customer orientation. As

the categorical variable of education changes, the strength of the relationship

between the dimensions of psychological empowerment and customer

orientation will not increase or decrease ($p \geq 0.05$).

H7ₐ: Education moderates the relationship between mean levels of the dimensions

of psychological and the mean level of customer orientation. As the

categorical variable of education changes, the strength of the relationship

between the dimensions of psychological empowerment and customer

orientation will increase or decrease ($p < 0.05$).

Theoretical Framework

Psychological empowerment theory forms the theoretical framework of this study. Psychological empowerment theory derived from Burns's transformational leadership theory of inspiring subordinates to be intrinsically motivated (Ravazadeh & Ravazadeh, 2013). Intrinsic motivation precipitates from a feeling of empowerment at work. As opposed to structural empowerment, whereby organizations provide an institutional framework to empower employees, psychological empowerment arises from within the employee themselves (Jha, 2013). The four underlying dimensions of psychological empowerment are meaning, impact, competence, and choice (Spreitzer, 1995).

Psychological empowerment theory, as applied to this study, holds that the author would anticipate the independent variable (psychological empowerment constructs), measured by the psychological empowerment questionnaire, to enhance or detract from customer orientation. Zablah, Franke, Brown, and Bartholomew (2012) argued that customer orientation is an external manifestation of internal factors individual to employees. Factors internal and specific to employees indicate that an internal psychological determinant (psychological empowerment) may play a role in customer orientation. Other studies have also uncovered that psychological determinants—such as self-efficacy, self-determination, and autonomy—and demographic factors affect individual levels of customer orientation. (Gazzoli, Hancer, & Kim, 2013; B. Kim et al., 2013; T. Kim & Kim, 2013). These antecedents of customer orientation significantly correlate with the dimensions of psychological empowerment—a reasonable conclusion based on the literature indicating that psychological empowerment correlates with

customer orientation. Further, education and tenure contribute to feelings of psychological empowerment across multiple dimensions of the psychological empowerment construct. Education and tenure should influence the relationship between psychological empowerment and customer orientation.

Operational Definitions

Big five personality traits: The five universal personality traits of agreeableness, narcissism (or emotional stability), conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness to experiences (Yakasai & Jan, 2015).

Frontline worker: Organizational employees responsible for regular interaction with customers (Gazzoli et al., 2012).

Intrinsic motivation: A concept referring to an active rather than passive orientation toward job roles (Spreitzer, 1995).

Organizational leaders: The series of managers from the CEO to frontline managers who execute organizational strategy and accomplish organizational goals (Salleh & Grunewald, 2013).

Psychological empowerment: The internalization of four cognitions—meaning, impact, competence, and choice—that results in increased intrinsic task motivation (Spreitzer, 1995).

Strategic planning: The development of a long-term organizational vision and the establishment of short-term goals in support of long-range planning (Salleh & Grunewald, 2013).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Conditions that contribute to the validity of the findings define assumptions (Shugun, 2007). Three primary assumptions existed in this study. First, it was assumed that all recipients would answer questions on the survey instruments truthfully. Second, it was assumed that participants would not collude with others when answering, nor would their answers be the result of pressure from leadership or peers. Third, it was assumed that past measurements sufficiently captured the full meaning of the psychological empowerment construct, as detailed in the review of academic literature.

Limitations

Limitations include self-reported potential weaknesses in a study that may relate to credibility and context (Brutus, Herman, & Wassmer, 2013). Three primary limitations existed in this study. The first limitation was that organizational leadership provided me with access to the participants, which could have clouded the respondents' decisions when responding to the survey (Fowler, 2014). Second, the use of a single corporation decreased the potential generalizability of the findings. Third, no matching surveys diminished the possibility of a well-rounded view of employee customer orientation. No data gathering regarding customer orientation occurred via customer surveys.

Delimitations

Delimitations define the boundaries and identify the scope of a study (Simon, 2011). Three identified delimitations existed in this study. First, the overall bounds of

the study included frontline workers within the retail industry. Second, psychological empowerment theory comprised the sole theory within the theoretical framework. Third, the geographic scope of the study included the geographic footprint of five states in the northeastern United States.

Significance of the Study

Enhancing customer orientation through the identification of relevant psychological empowerment dimensions and demographic factors provides opportunities for improved business operations. An organization may develop programs that facilitate improved psychological empowerment initiatives to increase levels of customer orientation in frontline workers. Higher degrees of customer orientation contribute to increased service quality, a factor shown to heighten customer commitment (Deb & Lomo-David, 2013). This customer commitment, particularly in organizations with dispersed business units, can translate into improved customer satisfaction and financial performance (Alsemgeest & Smit, 2013).

Contribution to Business Practice

Companies that highlight customer orientation as a component of their strategic planning develop greater long-term sustainability due to long-term revenue increases (Wang & Feng, 2012). Retail businesses should evaluate customer orientation as an element of long-term growth or sustainability initiatives, as positive customer interactions could present a competitive advantage for the organization. Additionally, competitive advantage could result in dividends beyond the regular patronage of a single customer because of the exponential nature of positive word of mouth.

Although loyalty significantly contributes to long-term revenue and sustainability, positive customer orientation assists business operations within the context of information-age solutions. Social media can foster "fans" within the target customer population, generating free advocates for a corporate brand on various platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (Sashi, 2012). Positive customer experiences assist in generating these social media advocates, who will often remain loyal despite any increases in prices. The mass distribution of positive feedback for employees may generate a feedback loop enhancing employee-customer relationships (Deb & Lomo-David, 2013).

Implications for Social Change

Customer orientation may extend outside of organization-to-customer relationships if successfully incorporated into the organizational business model through psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment increases organizational citizenship behavior, interorganizational relationships (Lin, 2013), and positive extrarole behavior (Chan, Taylor, & Markham, 2008). These citizenship behaviors result in positive social-exchange behaviors among all internal and external stakeholders. The acknowledgment of external stakeholders ensures that the organization considers proper stewardship of community resources.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The following sections consist of a review of the academic literature on the contemporary understanding and research into psychological empowerment and customer orientation. Antecedents, components, and benefits of psychological empowerment, including demographic factors of tenure and education, were explored for the review.

The review of literature also encompasses the history, benefits, and antecedents of customer orientation within retail and the contemporary business environment. A discussion of the beneficial relationship between psychological empowerment and customer orientation concludes the literature review.

ProQuest Suite, Sage Publications, Emerald Insight, and EBSCO generated lists of relevant peer-reviewed articles. The keyword search terms for the databases included *psychological empowerment, customer orientation, transformational leadership, structural empowerment, customer loyalty, transformational leaders, customer satisfaction, market orientation, retail consumers, retail strategy, self-efficacy,* and *autonomy*. One hundred eight sources comprised the review of academic literature. Of the 108 sources, peer-reviewed articles accounted for 105 sources (97%), with 97 articles (90%) published in academic journals in the last 5 years. Books comprised the three remaining sources.

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship of the four dimensions of psychological empowerment and two demographic factors on customer orientation in a medium-sized retail firm. Research indicated a positive link between the dimensions of psychological empowerment and customer orientation. Additionally, research indicated that the demographic factors of tenure and education moderated the relationship strength.

Review of Purpose and Hypotheses

The examination of the relationship between psychological empowerment, demographic factors, and customer orientation served as the purpose of this study.

Within the parameters of the above theoretical framework, the following review of the

academic literature provides justification for the seven alternate hypotheses of the study:

(a) there is a significant relationship between the mean level of psychological

empowerment and the mean level of customer orientation; (b) there is a significant

relationship between the mean level of the psychological empowerment dimension of

meaning and the mean level of customer orientation; (c) there is a significant relationship

between the mean level of the psychological empowerment dimension of impact and the

mean level of customer orientation (d) there is a significant relationship between the

mean level of the psychological empowerment dimension of competence and the mean

level of customer orientation; (e) there is a significant relationship between the mean

level of the psychological empowerment dimension of self-determination and the mean

level of customer orientation; (f) tenure moderates the relationship between the mean

levels of the dimensions of psychological and the mean level of customer orientation; and

(g) education moderates the relationship between the mean levels of the dimensions of

psychological and the mean level of customer orientation.

History of Constructs

Many researchers within the academic literature address the concept of

empowerment, although the associated dimensions of meaning, impact, competence, and

self-determination serve as the backbone of the study (Spreitzer, 1995). Building on

prior studies of empowerment, Spreitzer (1995) defined each dimension specifically and

developed a valid and reliable way to measure each one. Whereas the origins of

psychological empowerment are clear, customer orientation evolved from many different

areas over the past 50 years (Appiah-Adu & Singh, 1998; Gazzoli, Hancer, & Park, 2012). Customer orientation primarily emerged from marketing concepts where researchers sought to present customer satisfaction as a primary business goal. In the early 1990s, researchers identified marketing science as deficient without a separate independent acknowledgment of organizational customers (Coley et al., 2010). Researchers subsequently endeavored to identify and measure the idea of customer orientation to provide a framework for businesses to identify current and future needs of their customers.

Antecedents and Development of Psychological Empowerment

The intrinsic motivation to perform tasks defines psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995). The four dimensions of meaning, impact, competence, and self-determination aggregate into an active internal orientation toward job role. In academic research, the four dimensions of psychological empowerment combine to form the total construct of psychological empowerment. Lacking a specific dimension will not eliminate a feeling of psychological empowerment, although it may result in a diminished effect. Researchers recently deconstructed the dimensions of psychological empowerment to measure the individual effect each dimension imparts on employee performance (Jaramillo, Mulki, Onyemah, & Pesquera, 2012).

Within the academic literature, research into empowerment consists of two specific categories, psychological empowerment and structural empowerment. Psychological empowerment differs from structural empowerment because of the orientation toward internal or external aspects of empowerment initiatives. Psychological

empowerment refers to the feelings experienced by the employee, which contrast with organizational policies, structures, and practices used to enact an empowerment climate (Ritter, Venkatraman, & Schlauch 2013). Participative decision making, feedback on performance, and delegation comprise the primary facets of structural empowerment (Cho & Faerman, 2010). Role empowerment or environmental empowerment may also refer to structural empowerment philosophy.

Structural empowerment positively relates to psychological empowerment and may be viewed as a primary mechanism to foster psychological empowerment in employees (Kazlauskaite, Buciuniene, & Turauskas, 2012). Providing individual workers with structurally autonomous support to complete assigned tasks initiates the transference from the external to the internal. The workers receive the autonomous work structure and then use their volition to determine the task procedure (Liu, Zhang, Wang, & Lee, 2011). The external-to-internal orientation directly fosters psychological empowerment. Self-determination theory—a primary component of psychological empowerment—accounts for much of the interaction between the provided autonomy and perceived autonomy.

Leadership empowerment behaviors by frontline managers may supplement structural empowerment initiatives to foster psychological empowerment in frontline workers (Namasivayam, Guchait, & Lei, 2014). Leadership empowerment behaviors consist of six factors: authority, coaching, accountability, skill development, self-directed decision making, and information sharing. Leadership empowerment behaviors by frontline managers result in employees who more readily voice opinions and

recommendations, possess greater intrinsic motivation, and execute self-leadership behaviors. Self-leadership behaviors include goal setting, self-development, and self-confidence (Ross, 2014). A self-led employee requires fewer leadership interventions to complete daily duties, exhibits more positivity within the workplace, responds to setbacks more favorably, and possesses increased self-efficacy and competence—two dimensions of psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment lessens employees' dependence upon leadership to guide them continually (Sosik, Chun, & Zhu, 2014). The crafting of complementary structural empowerment initiatives and leadership empowerment behaviors suggests one framework for fostering psychological empowerment within the workforce.

Transformational leadership and empowerment. Transformational leadership theory addresses another facet of promoting psychological empowerment among constituent workers. Bass (1985) first proposed transformational leadership to counteract the prevailing transactional leadership paradigms of the 20th century. Transformational leadership theory encompasses four key constructs: leader ideals of charisma, ethics, confidence, and power; leadership behavior that implies a central mission and shared values; use of motivational and communication techniques that enhance follower participation in a shared vision; and leadership engagement of employee intellect and creativity to achieve innovative solutions to difficult problems (Ravazadeh & Ravazadeh, 2013). Transformational leadership affects the psychology of the worker and potentially imparts a sense of empowerment when meticulously practiced.

A positive organizational climate achieved through the application of transformational leadership theory principles correlates favorably to psychological empowerment (Wang, Zhang, & Jackson, 2013). Professional interactions, supportive leadership, participative decision making, appraisal and recognition, and potential for professional growth facilitate the establishment of psychological empowerment in employees. Positive professional interactions improve employee psychological health via improvement in perceived organizational justice and psychological empowerment (Walsh, Dupré, & Arnold, 2014). Using transformational leadership to improve empowerment may increase confidence and optimism and decrease anxiety and stress.

Asfar, Badir and Bin Saeed (2011) discovered that a transformational leader's effect on employee innovative work behavior is mediated by the level of psychological empowerment within the subordinate. Psychological empowerment accounted for 13% of the positive effects of transformational leadership on innovative employee behavior. Sosik et al. (2014) and Ravazadeh and Ravazadeh (2013) detailed similar findings regarding transformational leadership and psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment moderates the effects of transformational leadership on positive organizational outcomes such as follower moral identity, response to ambiguous situations, and job satisfaction (Lin & Tseng, 2013; Ravazadeh & Ravazadeh, 2013; Sosik et al., 2014). A longitudinal study confirmed the reciprocal interaction between psychological empowerment and transformational leadership indicated in the research above (Maynard, Luciano, D'Innocenzo, Mathieu, & Dean, 2014). Upon initiation, the

process of psychological empowerment, structural empowerment, and transformational leadership propagates to effectuate optimal employee performance.

Metaphors are useful tools for organizational leaders seeking to illustrate organizational processes (Morgan, 1998). One such metaphor is a structure detailed in the collegial leadership model of emancipation (COLME). The COLME arose out of the transformational leadership construct and offers a visual framework for examining employee empowerment through transformational leadership (Singh, 2013). The COLME consists of a structure supported by four metaphorical pillars: devolution of power, empowerment, shared decision making, and shared leadership. Four theoretical pivots affect the aforementioned factors: emancipation, collegiality, shared vision, and shared values. The employee-centric pillars focus power sharing to boost employee performance. When aggregated into a structure, the metaphorical pillars and the associated pivots create a way for organizational leaders to visualize empowerment transference. The structural empowerment illustrated by the pillars transfers through the transformational leadership behavior of the pivots to produce intrinsic empowerment in employees.

Other antecedents of psychological empowerment. Intrinsic characteristics of leaders also potentially affect employee behavior. For instance, narcissism, one of the big five personality traits, affects levels of psychological empowerment felt by employees (Sosik et al., 2014). Leaders who exhibit a destructive form of narcissism may hinder feelings of psychological empowerment, whereas leaders who exhibit constructive narcissistic behaviors, such as inspiring subordinates through normal levels of self-

esteem, tend to foster psychological empowerment. Positive narcissism precipitates outward displays of charisma and confidence consistent with transformational leadership theory, which enhances psychological empowerment in subordinates and improves moral identity. Leader personality traits permeate the relationships between leaders and subordinates and can affect multiple facets of organizational interactions.

Moral leadership, procedural justice, and interactional justice affect levels of psychological empowerment (Li, Wu, Johnson, & Wu, 2012). Commitment to equal representation of employees, underwriting of honest mistakes, and ethically appropriate behavior epitomize procedural justice. Acting with integrity and treating employees with dignity and respect exemplify interactional justice. Procedural justice, deriving from individual relationships, positively relates to the three psychological dimensions of meaning, competence, and impact. Interactional justice, derived from leader and subordinate relationships, strongly associates to self-determination. Distributive justice, or the fairness of rewards, also contributes to feelings of psychological empowerment in the workforce (Kang, Stewart, Kim, & Lim, 2012). Any perceived deficiency in the facets of organizational justice could adversely affect psychological empowerment with subordinate workers. If deficient, leader ethics and negative interpersonal interactions may potentially sever the internalization link between structural and psychological empowerment in organizations.

Dimensions of Psychological Empowerment

Four dimensions comprise psychological empowerment: meaning, impact, competence, and self-determination. Although psychological empowerment is primarily

a unitary construct in extant literature (Seibert, Wang, & Courtright, 2011), an analysis of

the dimensions may yield indicators for leaders to translate empowerment initiatives into

positive performance outcomes. Leadership strategies should concentrate on the end-

state of empowerment initiatives. The development of structural empowerment is usually

a penultimate goal; the ultimate goal is for organizational members to internalize

structural empowerment endeavors so that the worker feels intrinsically empowered.

Meaning. Meaning may derive from work that is entered into freely, allows

independence and autonomy, maximizes rational thought, provides sufficient wages,

supports moral development, and does not involve paternalistic dynamics (Michaelson,

Pratt, Grant, & Dunn, 2014). Meaningful work occurs when leadership treats the person

not as a means to an end, but as an individual with individual thoughts, needs, and

feelings. The aforementioned transformational leadership discussion provided examples

of this concept of individualized superior-subordinate interaction. Key determinants of

meaning include the leader and subordinate dynamic coupled with value alignment

between the organization and employee values (Spreitzer, 1995).

Supervisors endeavoring to instill a sense of meaning among the workforce

should build a sense of reciprocal trust between themselves and their employees. Trust in

the supervisor significantly affects meaning within the psychological empowerment

framework (Ertürk, 2012). This trust often takes shape as part of a social contract within

the leader-member exchange (LMX). LMX theory originated from theories of social

justice and describes the understanding between superior and subordinates (Kang et al.,

2012). A subordinate's trust in the supervisor because of a positive LMX improves goal internalization and enhances meaningfulness in work.

Michaelson et al. (2014) argued that organizations should offer an organizational structure that facilitates employees to find subjective meaning at work. Inflexible, structured bureaucracies that do not align organizational values with individual values decrease employees' sense of meaning in work, decrease flexibility, and constrain employee creativity (Pan, Sun, & Chow, 2012; Tsirikas & Katsaros, 2014). If appropriate, an organic structure where the work environment reinforces the perceived level of psychological empowerment should complement LMX. Whereas a preference exists for organic organizational structures in the empowerment field, employee latitude to find subjective meaning may assist in situations where operations require a bureaucratic organization. Supervisors who are innovative and creative within their spheres of influence can offer ways for employees to find meaning as long as value alignment exists.

Leader moral competence enhances employee motivation when leader and subordinate values align (T. Kim & Kim, 2013). Individuals also gain meaning from value alignment and internalize positive leadership characterizes, such as moral competence. The presence of trust solidifies value alignment and precipitates a belief in the employee that the organization will act in a positive manner toward him or her. Conversely, organizational members who experience a violation of trust experience diminished levels of psychological empowerment (Hossein, Saleh, Iman, & Jaafar, 2012).

Experiencing meaningfulness at work can be partially contingent upon the trustworthiness of supervisors and fellow employees.

The internal attitudes toward external stakeholders also affect the workers' perceived job meaning. When an employee fosters social good for all stakeholders, organizational members experience greater meaning in work (Lavine, 2012). Organizations that directly or indirectly link core corporate strategies to social benefits instill a sense of meaningfulness in employees. The alignment of personal and organizational spiritual values—the organization acts beneficially to improve humanity—improves psychological empowerment and generates improved personal initiative (Whitaker & Westerman, 2014). The needs and desires of all stakeholders should factor into organizational strategy when organizations consider avenues to improve employees' sense of meaning.

Impact. Impact is a belief by workers that they can participate in organizational decisions and affect the organizational direction (Ertürk, 2012; Spreitzer, 1995). Organizational leaders who foster participative decision making increase employees' feelings of importance toward the firm (Wang et al., 2013). A feeling of importance and ability to influence the organizational direction can make employees more productive and encourage creativity for employment-related issues. Leadership focus on employee welfare enhances employee-organization value alignment, which develops employees' feelings of perceived influence and sense of importance (Ertürk, 2012). A prerequisite for a strategic implementation of a participative decision-making framework is employees trusting their supervisors to act benevolently on the employees' behalf.

Effective strategic planning techniques boost the empowerment of subordinates throughout the organizational hierarchy (Brumm & Drury, 2013). Soliciting of follower input throughout the strategic planning process imparts a sense of empowerment among workers. Vertical dissemination of information regarding plans and goals of the organization, customers, and reward structures, fosters psychological empowerment in subordinates (Kazlauskaite et al., 2012). A structural example of vertical communication is the COLME above. COLME involves the ideas of shared leadership to overcome bureaucratic management philosophies. Participative decision making in response to leadership inquiries facilitates a sense of voice among subordinate workers. Follower input fosters a sense of ownership among members and provides a sense of impact for contributors.

The alignment of organizational and individual goals expands employees' psychological empowerment and creates organizational identification (Prati & Zani, 2013). Organizational identification advances a perception of participation in the organizational direction. Employee-organizational identification improves organizational processes and outcomes, decreases turnover intention, and increases job satisfaction. Member derived bottom-up initiatives foster oneness with the organization that contributes to feelings of psychological empowerment. A prerequisite to employees' perceptions of organizational impact and organizational identification is supervisory trust (Ertürk, 2012). Workers who distrust management may restrict communications to leaders regarding organizational processes despite feelings of empowerment. A leader-member exchange characterized by trust should accompany structural and behavioral

strategies to foster feelings of impact. Absent trust, the benefits of psychological empowerment to work processes, such as customer orientation, may be unrealized.

Workers who feel their work outcomes affect the direction or success of their organization engage in organizational citizenship behaviors characterized by extra-role behavior (Lavine, 2012). Extra-role behaviors may translate into providing extra effort toward customer satisfaction. Organizational impact enhances ethical employee behavior, increases individual responsibility, and decreases pure-profit motivations (Powell, Davies, & Norton, 2013). Increasing impact results in the transition from profit-centered sales motivation toward a customer-centered service orientation. As a result, frontline workers' efforts to resolve customer issues incorporate salient ethical principles, effecting positive resolutions in the interests of all stakeholders.

Competence and self-efficacy. Competence and self-efficacy refer to workers' abilities and beliefs to complete assigned tasks (Spreitzer, 1995). As individuals gain proficiency to complete a task, the individual develops intrinsic belief. Proficiency and competence arise from institutional training, education, experience, and managerial reinforcement (Seibert et al., 2011). Sociopolitical support in the form of materials and power enhances employee feelings of self-efficacy. With power and materials, workers can handle customer encounters more expertly, boosting role-prescribed behaviors and intrinsic motivation.

Although psychological empowerment is an internally based concept, external pay systems may affect internal feelings of competence (Fang & Gerhart, 2012; Gkorezis & Petridou, 2012; Kang et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2013). Workers who receive monetary

rewards for performance experience perceived competence increases. Within the mind of the employee, monetary benefits demonstrate the value the organization places on the employee's skills. As monetary rewards increase, the perceived valuation of the employee's position within the organization increases. The concept that external rewards and appraisals affect competence indicates a linkage between the structural empowerment aspect of feedback on performance and the psychological empowerment dimension of competence.

Competent employees enhance organizational processes as they balance organizational demands with customer needs, increasing organizational knowledge (Dunham & Burt, 2011). Organizational knowledge relates closely to competence, as learned job knowledge permits workers to navigate the organizational environment effectively to complete projects (Seibert et al., 2011). Tenured workers who impart organizational knowledge experience greater levels of psychological empowerment as they teach and mentor colleagues (Dunham & Burt, 2011). Mentorship within an organization may have a bidirectional effect on psychological empowerment as individuals transfer competency through knowledge dissemination. The receiver experiences a greater amount of self-efficacy, and the sender receives a nonmonetary reinforcement of his or her competency in the form of greater self-esteem.

Leaders who activate intrinsic motivation and sharing of competence through structural and behavioral strategies facilitate knowledge sharing (Pantouvakis & Bouranta, 2013). Self-efficacious leaders generate a positive work environment through interpersonal competencies (Singh, 2013). Leaders who are self-aware, confident,

adaptable, and communicate clearly and effectively, generate a collegial work environment. This positive environment increases job satisfaction among organizational workers. The reciprocal relationship of an open and permissive environment facilitates a potential feedback loop for organizational learning and psychological empowerment in leaders and subordinates.

Self-efficacy and perceived competence improve employee views toward organizational reputation (Men & Stacks, 2013). Workers possessing high competence are better able to adapt to adverse situations and perceive the organization in a favorable context. In the retail sector, this positive view of the organization and adaptability engenders more positive customer interactions. Competent employees exercise greater role-prescribed customer service behaviors (Kang et al. 2012). Execution of corporate strategy in customer-service encounters mitigates potential negative interaction, although some customers may still experience a negative event outside the control of the frontline worker. In these circumstances, worker self-efficacy facilitates engagement when confronted with an angry or abusive customer (Goussinsky, 2012). Individuals with high levels of self-efficacy are better able to cope with emotionally charged situations and can provide successful resolutions resulting in customer satisfaction and retention. Competent employees also feel more confident in exercising voice about deficiencies in corporate strategy, as they possess a robust understanding of customer needs and organizational strategy (Jha, 2013).

Self-determination (or choice). Self-determination theory holds that individuals possess a psychological need for autonomy (DelVecchio, Deeter-Schmelz, & Anselmi,

2013; Liu et al., 2011). Individuals possess degrees of disposition to engage in autonomous behavior, and organizations may have variable autonomous orientations within the organizational structure. The existence of structural autonomy alone is insufficient to realize maximum benefits of worker production. The individual worker must perceive autonomy to generate increased levels of intrinsic motivation. When the dispositional need for autonomy aligns with an organizationally autonomous orientation, workers' internal motivations increase.

Perceived autonomy fosters a sense of internal control over how a worker may complete a task (Liu et al., 2011). Innovation increases in organizations where workers perceive autonomy within the work structure (Subramaniam & Moslehi, 2013). Employees often observe multiple methods to conduct organizational processes, and value the ability to select which method suits the time and environment (Ritter, 2013). The choice employees have in the implementation of solutions contributes to feelings of empowerment. Empowered employees expect his or her leaders will value the employees' judgment in method selection.

Constant communication between the leaders and members enables employees to voice opinions and concerns regarding methods to complete tasks. When management allows employees to participate in managerial actions, levels of self-determination increase within the organizational workforce (Tsirikas & Katsaros, 2014). Workers protected from micro levels of oversight and afforded more control over how to execute a task improve upon desired innovative outcomes. Institutional knowledge sharing may confer a business advantage when coupled with employee task innovation (Alipour &

Karimi, 2011). Organizational structures and leader behaviors can generate novel solutions from frontline workers because of their unique insight into customers and corporate strategy.

Institutions prevent stagnation by allowing employees latitude to complete tasks aligned with the self-determination dimension. Highly bureaucratic organizations limit perceived levels of self-determination (Gkorezis & Petridou, 2012). The highly centralized nature of bureaucratic organizations, coupled with strict rules, minimizes the ability of workers to exercise control over task accomplishment. Empowerment of subordinates is still possible, although supervisor creativity may dictate any level of empowerment felt by the employees (Michaelson et al., 2014). Supervisors with an understanding of the bureaucratic structure may recognize nontraditional opportunities to innovate and use LMX to engage subordinates effectively within the bureaucratic framework.

External motivation through pay-for-performance also contributes to perceived autonomy and intrinsic motivation (Fang & Gerhart, 2012). Individuals who receive pay-for-performance garner greater latitude, increasing positive performance outcomes. A review of the differing aspects of transformational and transactional leadership styles provide insight into the connection between pay-for-performance and self-determination (Hargis, Watt, & Piotrowski, 2011). Transformational leadership inspires individuals toward the completion of organizational goals, whereas transactional leadership improves the execution of job-specific tasks. Pay-for-performance generates a positive incentive to complete job-specific tasks through contingent reward. Workers innovate to find unique

methods of completing tasks to maximize both organizational and personal benefit. Though transformational leadership provides the framework to instill psychological empowerment and associated autonomy, transactional leadership may sustain certain aspects with task completion and method selection.

Job autonomy improves mental health and organizational commitment across industries, although in industries where employees are required to innovate high-quality products the relationship is stronger (Park & Searcy, 2012). Autonomous employees granted the authority to respond to customers in innovative ways improve customer orientation (Kassim, Yusoff, & Fong, 2012). The link between job autonomy and positive outcomes aligns with self-determination theory, where individuals' need for autonomy improves psychological well-being and job performance (Pan et al., 2012). Novel solutions to meet customer needs may develop when leadership affords workers opportunities to innovate within the bounds of the organizational strategy.

An individual's reaction to threatened loss of autonomy depends on perceived competence (Radel, Pelletier, & Sarrazin, 2013). Should individuals have a low perception of competence without autonomy, they may resort to dependent behavior that could negatively affect future work endeavors. Therefore, before offering job autonomy to a subordinate, supervisors should ensure a sufficient level of competence exists. Competent individuals more readily regain autonomy when confronted with corrective action, whereas less competent individuals may begin to feel helpless in the situation and detach from the activity.

Benefits of empowerment. Psychological empowerment improves individual job performance, both initially and over time (Maynard et al., 2014). Managers who empower employees create a climate where employees perform better, which prompt managers to provide more structural empowerment initiatives such as autonomy. The reinforcing interaction between leader and subordinate creates a positive work spiral that maximizes employee performance with each feedback loop.

Employees with higher levels of psychological empowerment also experience greater levels of job satisfaction (Chan, Nadler, & Hargis, 2014) and reduced turnover intention (Liu et al., 2011). In a group setting, empowering leadership improves knowledge sharing and increases team cohesion (Kasemsap, 2013). Empowered leadership in teams creates a multidirectional flow of information, improving team performance that leads to increased organizational effectiveness. Leaders who practice empowering leadership principles coupled with positive managerial practices, such as service quality measures and customer relationship management enhance proactivity within the workforce to develop unique solutions (Jha, 2013).

The four dimensions of psychological empowerment positively relate to organizational commitment (Gohar, Bashir, Abrar, & Asghar, 2015; Malik, Chugtai, Iqbal, & Ramzan, 2013). Workers are more committed to their employers when they experience value alignment coupled with the sufficient latitude and ability to complete assigned duties. Employees' connection with the organization through value alignment refers to affective commitment, which psychological empowerment affects positively (Chan et al., 2015; B. Kim et al., 2012). Increases in affective commitment lead to

increased extra-role behavior, intention to stay, and contextual performance. Contextual performance enhances job performance in industries where queues exist, such as the retail grocery industry (Garg, Rahman, Qureshi, & Kumar, 2012).

B. Kim et al. (2013) identified that psychological empowerment increases organizational citizenship behavior. Organizational citizenship behavior increases extra-role behavior and decreases negative work interactions (Lin, 2013). The combination of extra-role behavior and minimal negative interactions improves team cohesion and results in increased team performance. Organizational citizenship behavior promotes a positive workplace environment of employee civic virtue, altruism, and conscientiousness (Chan et al., 2015). Psychological empowerment also facilitates positive responses to workplace harassment (Turte, Correa, da Luz, & Fischer, 2012).

An empowered team positively affects individual psychological empowerment and extra-role behavior, increasing performance (Avery, Mo Wang, Volpone, & Le Zhou, 2013). B. Kim et al. (2013) note in the hospitality industry, where individual monetary goals are the key determinate of objective performance, team empowerment initiatives do not correlate with individual gains. In industries such as retail, where the goal is to provide goods to the customer in an expeditious and courteous manner, individual goals and team goals are more congruous. Congruous team goals may better lead to objective performance regarding customer satisfaction.

Organizational commitment to diversity positively affects organizations in many ways, including psychologically empowering employees (Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013). Commitments to diversity and psychological empowerment result in improved

innovation and decreased turnover intention. Within teams, diversity enhances the effects of empowerment, and leaders should empower traditionally marginalized minorities with a voice (Yang & Konrad, 2011). The commitment to ensuring all parties have equal voice improves innovation in a team setting. A failure of leadership to provide equal voice to all team members negatively affects team performance because of withdrawal by the disillusioned team member (Avery et al., 2013). Psychological empowerment initiatives incur diminished results when one considers himself or herself an outsider to the workgroup. Psychological empowerment practices partnered with diversity commitment enables workers to feel they have a voice, maximizing the benefits of a diverse organization.

As previously stated, lack of organizational trust diminishes the maximum benefits of psychological empowerment. Workers with high levels of psychological empowerment can compensate somewhat for organizational interactions lacking in trust (Ugwu, Onyishi, & Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2014). The ability to overcome an environment lacking in trust arises from the individual's level of self-efficacy and engagement. Engagement with assigned work persists even with diminished levels of trust between subordinate and employee. This relationship between psychological empowerment and worker engagement also exists in the presence of high levels of trust, although the effect is less pronounced.

Although psychological empowerment confers many benefits to organizational members, an absence of accountability limits salient effects (Wallace, Johnson, Mathe, & Paul, 2011). Empowered but unaccountable managers may engage in counterproductive

work behaviors, such as conflict anxiety and confusion. Conversely, empowerment coupled with accountability results in positive organizational performance, such as increased service performance and sales.

Generalization. Psychological empowerment is an isomorphic construct that allows for the same meaning regardless of the environment (Wallace et al., 2011). Spreitzer's (1995) and others' psychological empowerment studies across cultures and industries support the finding of isomorphism. Asian workers operating in cultures with high power distances derive benefits from psychological empowerment (B. Kim et al., 2013; Pan et al., 2012; Sun, Li, Lv, Lin, Lu, & An, 2011). Studies of European workers in public industries also document positive employment-related outcomes from experiencing psychological empowerment (Tsirikas & Katsaros, 2014). Inquiries in the European private sector found similar results (Kazlauskaite et al., 2012). Psychological empowerment improves worker outcomes in the U.S. service industry (Gazzoli et al., 2013; Gazzoli et al., 2012) and university education (Solansky, 2014). Psychological empowerment also established positive worker outcomes in Nigeria (Ugwu et al., 2014). The results here allow for the generalization of psychological empowerment findings from around the world in the evaluation of the business problem within this study.

Alternative conceptualizations and delineation of dimensions. Seibert et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analytic review and found that all four dimensions of psychological empowerment positively relate to organizational outcomes. Seibert et al. argued psychological empowerment should be considered a unitary construct and that individual dimensions are ill suited for inquiries. Since the meta-analytic reviews,

researchers conceptualized the dimensions of the construct differently because of factor

analysis results. Using the same scale developed by Spreitzer (1995), Kim et al. (2012)

and B. Kim et al. (2013) codified psychological empowerment in two dimensions:

attitude and influence. Attitude combined meaning and competence dimensions and

influence combined self-determination and impact dimensions. Gazzoli et al., (2012)

also combined self-determination and impact dimensions into influence while retaining

meaning and competence as two distinct constructs. Seibert et al. (2011) identified

organizational commitment as a possible exception to the position of psychological

empowerment, and Malik et al. (2013) measured how all four dimensions independently

affect organizational commitment.

Different antecedents affect different dimensions differently, evidenced by studies

of procedural and interactional justice (Li et al., 2012). In a study of Jordanian banks,

only three dimensions of psychological empowerment were relevant to customer-

orientated behavior: meaning, competence, and impact (Zeglat, Aljaber, & Alrawabdeh,

2014). A finding of non-significance in self-determination indicated poor leadership

interactions or cultural differences, as self-determination relates to quality of supervisor-

subordinate relationship (Li et al., 2012). The four dimensions were individually used to

study effects on organizational commitment in a survey of construction workers (Ambad

& Bahron, 2012). Self-determination and impact positively associated with

organizational commitment, whereas meaning and competence possessed no association

with organizational commitment. The findings support B. Kim et al.'s (2013) dimensions

of attitude and influence. In summary, the varying uses of the dimensions in more recent

surveys provide a justification for inquiry into how each dimension individually affects frontline workers' customer orientation.

Customer Orientation

Consumers judge organizations based on the interaction with forward facing workers (Siddiqi, 2013). Possessing an organizational customer orientation signifies that customers' needs are placed first to develop a long-term relationship (Saad, Hassan, & Shya, 2015). Customer orientation evolved from the broader idea of market orientation (Anaza & Rutherford, 2012; Donavan et al., 2004). Saarijärvi, Kuusela, Neilimo, and Närvänen (2014) defined market orientation as the execution of three components that firms use to examine their marketplace position: competitor orientation, interfunctional coordination, and customer orientation. Foreman, Donthu, Henson, and Poddar (2014) similarly defined market orientation as the use of business intelligence to analyze competitor and customer orientation to produce competitive advantages that result in positive financial performance.

Saxe and Weitz (1982) generated a seminal work to measure customer orientation of workers within firms and to measure the degree employees assist customers in satisfying needs. Donovan et al. (2004) applied Saxe and Weitz's customer orientation to the service industry and differentiated between high-contact and low-contact workers. Most of the contacts within the food service industry take the form of isolated transactions, which can be similar to retail interactions. The perceptions of relationships formed within the transactions affect consumers' decision to patronize the firm in the future (Bateman & Valentine, 2015). Firms engaging customers with positive

interpersonal communication and recognizing the customers' continued commitment through loyalty programs enhance customers' loyalty toward the store.

Zablah et al. (2012) stated customer orientation arises internally within workers and facilitates a variety of outcomes based on employees' level of customer orientation. In line with Bateman and Valentine's (2013) idea of the contextual nature of customer orientation, internal aspects of customer orientation accord significant advantages depending on the industry. Workers with minimal contact, such as retail workers, bank workers, and quick-service restaurant workers, are greatly aided by possessing high levels of customer orientation (Mathe, Scott-Halsell, & Roseman, 2013; Zeblah et al., 2012). Short-duration interactions require the quick identification of customer needs and rapid actions to satisfy those needs. Customer orientation enhances employees' ability to discern customer needs quickly and respond accordingly.

Appropriate leadership interactions with frontline workers may confer positive customer-related outcomes (Iyer & Johlke, 2015). The elimination of role conflict and role ambiguity enable frontline workers to better respond to customer needs. Coaching, or the development of subordinates through one-on-one interaction, further enhances customer orientation and reinforces an organizational value of customer orientation (Pousa & Mathieu, 2014). Selection, development, and coaching of customer orientation in support of an organizational strategy increase performance in the seller-buyer relationship. An organizational strategy centered on coaching and development of frontline workers' customer orientation potentially provides a positive return on investment.

The development of a climate of customer orientation through internal and external marketing strategy improves customers' perceptions of the company (Saad, Hassan, & Shya, 2015). Organizations that espouse a business philosophy across product, promotion, distribution, and pricing realize enhanced external marketing effectiveness. A culture of organizational learning also improves customer satisfaction (Pantouvakis & Bouranta, 2013). Similar to the above discussion on self-determination, organizational learning cultures incorporate customer feedback. Frontline workers receive feedback and pass the feedback to organizational leadership, which integrates the feedback into operations. Strategy and culture ensure the customer is the center of organizational operations.

Within the market orientation framework, the potential exists that sales orientation replaces customer orientation (Pousa & Mathieu, 2014). Sales orientation consists of a mindset by the seller to entice the consumer to buy a product that may not fit the customer's needs or desires (Bagozzi et al., 2012). Although sales orientation may be a way to boost sales in the short term, this does not build long-term relationships at the same rate as customer orientation. Sales orientation may foster false promises, inaccurate advertising, or pushing a volume of products the customer may not need or desire, damaging long-term relationships. Through coaching and transformational leadership styles, organizations minimize sales orientation and associated negative ramifications (Pousa & Mathieu, 2014).

Coley et al. (2010) detailed justification for a fourth dimension of market orientation, consumer orientation, although studies that are more recent failed to delineate

this additional dimension of market orientation. Consumer supply-driven networks serve as the focus for consumer orientation. A consumer orientation is necessary to determine the values of the end user, which drives the intricate network of business-to-business suppliers. As this study deals with sales by an organization to the end consumer, a focus on consumer orientation would be redundant.

Leadership and customer orientation. Customer orientation naturally flows out of organizations led by transformational leaders (Pousa & Mathieu, 2014). Concern for employees nurtures many positive outcomes—such as psychological empowerment—that enhance worker attitudes about his or her job and customer-service obligations. When transformational leaders possess high levels of customer orientation, subordinate workers raise their levels of customer orientation and enable better organizational performance (Mullins & Syam, 2014). Leading by example, a primary component of transformational leadership, enhances customer engagement and transforms organizational customer orientation into organizational performance.

The composition of the leadership team moderates the effectiveness of a culture of customer orientation (Foreman et al., 2014). Top management teams rich in diversity will operationalize customer-orientated culture more readily than a homogenous top management team. A diverse top management team engages in substantive discussions leading to innovative solutions. When firms leverage innovative solutions as part of a culture of customer orientation, improved strategies result in favorable financial performance. Solutions unique to the industry and specific to the values of the customer flow out of effective and diverse organizational leadership teams.

Direct supervision also influences employee-customer relationships (Mathe et al., 2013). Direct supervisors who constantly communicate with subordinates minimize job frustration; empathic and friendly communication styles often improve employee disposition. Managers who communicate expectations, goals, and standards effectively increase customer orientation within his or her direct reports. Intraorganizational interactions of this nature epitomize a facet of internal service quality (Latif & Baloch, 2015). Engaging employees appropriately and treating them as though they were customers assist employees in translating a customer friendly attitude toward patrons outside of the organization.

Diminishing returns on monetary commitment toward customer orientation is common when dealing with customer service issues (Fitzgerald, Sullivan, & Đokić, 2012; Lapré, 2011). Although strategic customer orientation enhances financial performance, the returns on investment may become inverted or flat shaped as firm size grows. Nonmonetary commitments toward customer orientation, such as effective leadership through empowerment, may offer firms additional avenues to pursue increased customer orientation philosophies without significant capital investment.

Potential negative aspects. Organizational leadership should monitor the potential negative aspects of customer orientation. Excessive customer orientation may lead to the employee overly identifying with the customer and not observing the company's interests during customer interactions (Brady, Voorhees, & Brusco, 2012). For example, excessively customer-oriented employees may provide *sweetheart* deals at the expense of company revenue. Companies attempting to enhance customer orientation

should maintain a strong corporate culture high in organizational commitment to mitigate negative aspects of customer orientation.

Employees exercising high customer orientation may interact with customers excessively or present a brand image that appears desperate for sales (Valenzuela et al., 2010). If the customer views the sellers' actions as excessive or overly sales focused, they may perceive the firm as unethical. Customers can be reticent to receive gifts from an ethically suspect firm, as the customers may believe the organization has ulterior motives when providing the gifts. Firms endeavoring to improve customer orientation should ensure the external perception of the firm is positive and link the customer orientation push with a visible commitment to ethics.

Business advantages. Enhanced customer orientation generates a variety of competitive advantages for business. A primary concern for business leaders is the establishment of fruitful relationships with customers (Deb & Lomo-David, 2013). Customer orientation provides a framework to establish relationships through the identification and satisficing of customer needs. Meeting customer needs can lead to improved customer loyalty, business growth, and longevity. Companies may increase lifetime profits between 25% and 125% with an increased retention of 5% of the company's existing customers (Khan, 2013). Customer orientation increases customer loyalty, the perceived value received by the customer, and positively affects customer satisfaction (Mathe et al., 2013; Valenzuela et al., 2010). Soliciting and responding to customer feedback is a direct way to improve customer satisfaction through customer orientation, as the organization directly responds to the stated needs of the customer.

High levels of customer satisfaction positively relate to firm financial performance, including increases in revenue, more stable customer base, and increased shareholder value (Alsemgeest & Smit, 2013). Changing an organizational focus away from the product toward the consumer may generate improved sales, market share, customer satisfaction, and loyalty, which increases firm financial performance.

Customer orientation comprises an integral portion of the customer relationship management capability (Wang & Feng, 2012). The integration of customer orientation into management philosophies across all small business units within an organization facilitates an organizational culture of customer orientation. Organizational customer-centric philosophies combined with customer-oriented employees effect an organizational culture that values customers and improves business performance.

Contemporary repercussions due to negative consumer interactions are more pervasive than in the past (Nunes et al., 2013). Word of mouth in the modern environment of social media may extend to thousands of consumers. Customers potentially become more loyal to the service provider should companies provide a satisfactory resolution to complaints (Anisimova, 2010). Loyal customers on social media offer a distinct opportunity to influence purchasing practices of prospective customers (Sashi, 2012). Companies that continually engage customers to assuage negative experiences and generate positive word of mouth can improve customers' perception of the company.

The ability to bring useful and innovative products to market offers another benefit of customer orientation. However, organizations often confront a dichotomous

question concerning future market focus (Perez-Luno & Cambra, 2013). A current customer orientation enhances organizational effectiveness when analyzing current customers' needs, securing market share. Future customer orientation facilitates an organizational focus on new or prospective customer needs, which is useful for growing market share or adjusting to environmental changes within the industry. Huhtala, Sihvonen, Frösén, Jaakkola, and Tikkanen (2013) recommended determining the approach based on current economic environment. The overall customer base may expand within a positive economic climate that facilitates a strategy of seeking new customers. Conversely, during economic downturns a strategy of preserving market share may realize results that are more favorable. Within the market orientation framework, the dichotomous relationship of current versus future orientation also relates to the tradeoff between customer orientation and competitor orientation.

Customer orientation can be more important than competitor orientation when delivering products or services to customers, although a total market orientation is necessary if organizations endeavor to expand market share aggressively (Foreman et al., 2014; Perez-Luno & Cambra, 2013). Firms that concentrate solely on current customer orientation and ignore the competitor orientation limit risk taking (Balas, Colakoglu, & Gokus, 2012). Firms attempting to increase market share based on total market strategy must account for customers when evaluating strategic decisions. Failing to account for customer attitude or desires may result in products or services customers are unwilling to buy. Unsold inventory or underused services diminish financial performance and may result in long-term harm to the organization.

Retail specific customer orientation. Food stores confront multiple paths

concerning how to differentiate their products in a crowded marketplace (Courtemanche

& Carden, 2014). Many businesses in the grocery market incur significant competition

from national chains such as Wal-Mart (Kaltcheva, Winsor, & Parasuraman, 2010).

Through supplier leverage and efficient supply chain management, national chains like

Wal-Mart offer goods at a lower price point than many regional or local grocers.

Competing chains may choose to compete on organizational capabilities outside of the

price, such as consumer-focused initiatives.

Customer heterogeneity characterizes the grocery industry, with grocery store

patrons' desires varying dependent upon factors such as income, volume of sale, and age

(Mirabella, 2011). Also, increasing penetration of hypermarkets and small box retailer

increases customer choice (Anselmsson & Johansson, 2014). Food stores benefit when

imparting a sense of value that customers consider unique or enhanced. Customers

perceive disparate value between organizations in terms of economic relationships,

functional relationships, emotional connections, and symbolic connections (Saarijärvi et

al., 2014). Strategic crosswalks for these priorities include maintaining competitive

prices (economic), providing convenience (functional), community engagement

(emotional), and improving brand image. A strategy centered on customer orientation

can encompass portions of all four perceived values, and provide competitive advantages

in each of the areas.

Customers' motivational orientations also determine anticipated sales interactions

(Cheung & To, 2012). Task-oriented and relational-oriented customers possess different

expectations of salespeople. Relational-oriented customers respond favorably to interaction-type customer orientation, whereas task-oriented customers prefer functional orientation (Fung, Cheung, & Wai, 2015). Task-oriented customers, similar to the ones in the grocery industry, exhibit enhanced customer loyalty when they interact with workers espousing functional customer orientation. A functional orientation exists when the salesperson assists in the accomplishment of customers' goals and minimizes attempts to establish a personal relationship at the point of sale.

Managers and workers wishing to balance the factors of service encounters may seek to improve employee-customer identification (Anaza & Rutherford, 2012). Employee-customer identification is a primary antecedent of customer orientation and refers to how employees view their internal self in relation to the customers. Although the interaction within a retail encounter can be brief, employees who identify with customers may generate a more positive service encounter. When waiting for service in a queue such as in a supermarket, need for convenience is often a primary factor in customers' perceived experiences (Garg et al., 2012). Engaged employees can recognize commonalities in customers and quickly adjust the interaction accordingly. Quickly identifying with a customer and facilitating a positive experience, while reducing the waiting time for other customers, should be a goal for managers within the retail industry.

Genetic and learned personality traits may determine the suitability for individuals conducting quick-service interactions. Some individuals are predisposed to thrive in a retail encounter and offer better empathic understanding of customers' beliefs, knowledge, and desires (Bagozzi et al., 2012). Some select individuals possess a natural

proclivity for congeniality, patience, and attentiveness when dealing with customers. An inventory of the big five personality traits could provide insight into a worker's tendency to provide better service quality (Yakasai & Jan, 2015). Conscientious employees more readily find solutions for problems and provide service that is more reliable. Employee agreeableness leads to a greater level of empathy, cheerfulness, and responsiveness in customer interactions characterize high-extrovert employees. A corporate strategy of customer orientation benefits from managerial consideration for individual employee personality type, empathy, and disposition.

Customer orientation assists managers in strategic considerations for inventory management and procurement (Hong, Yang, & Dobrzykowski, 2014). A long-term customer-centered disposition facilitates a strategic customer service orientation that leads to unique solutions to changing customer needs. Innovate capabilities, customer orientation, and effective total quality management, may result in improved operations that minimize inventory losses (MirandaSilva, Gomes, Lages, & LopesPereira, 2014). Companies that understand the demand of customers may improve procedures to ensure targeting inventory capabilities toward actual customer needs. Mitigating inventory waste generates savings for the firm and enhances timeliness in delivery of products that customers value.

Intraorganizational benefits. A culture of customer orientation fosters advantages within retail organizations. Customer oriented employees demonstrate greater job engagement (Bagozzi et al., 2012; Zablah et al., 2012). Workers who operate in industries where customer interaction is a regular occurrence find a greater alignment

between internal values of customer orientation and organizational goals. Employee-organizational value alignment results in greater organizational identification, thus improving satisfaction with employment. Alignment of internal values and organizational values of customer orientation also enhance meaning within an employee. Job satisfaction improves when customer orientation positively affects meaning through value alignment (Gazzoli et al., 2012; Saarijärvi et al., 2014).

Employees with enhanced customer orientation demonstrate improved commitment to the organization (Gazzoli et al., 2012). Possessing a high level of customer orientation and operating within an organizational culture committed to customer orientation leads to greater sense of accomplishment. This alignment of personal and organizational values generates greater levels of organizational commitment. Higher levels of organizational commitment and value alignment result in improved service quality and customer satisfaction.

An organizational culture of customer orientation may also benefit intraorganizational interactions (Latif & Baloch, 2015). Treating employees as customers improves internal service quality through improved intraorganizational interaction. Positive internal service quality improves organizational citizenship behavior, such as altruism and contentiousness, and also positively affects customer satisfaction in service delivery (Siddiqi, 2013). Organizations striving for a positive customer experience via customer orientation may benefit from a strategic objective to favorably treat their fellow employees with dignity and respect, and view all organizational interactions as those between a provider and customer.

Psychologically Empowered, Customer-Oriented Employees

Empowerment positively relates to customer orientation (Kassim et al., 2012; Zeglat et al., 2014). Psychologically empowered employees experience greater job satisfaction (Jeon & Choi, 2012). Improved job satisfaction improves employee interactions with customers, improving customer satisfaction. Psychologically empowered employees demonstrate improved response to customer needs and improved service quality. An employee experiencing high levels of psychological empowerment likely engages in extra-role behavior (Jaramillo et al., 2012). Because of high feelings of self-determination and competence, employees feel as though they have latitude to develop novel solutions to customer problems. Satisfaction increases when customers feel the employee is *going the extra mile* to address their needs.

Antecedents of customer orientation are job autonomy, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Sousa & Coelho, 2013). Psychological empowerment positively affects each of these antecedents (Gazzoli et al., 2012). Self-belief and knowledge associated with task execution improve customer service processes (Jha, 2013). The uniformity of the favorable outcomes of psychological empowerment and the antecedents of customer orientation establishes a link between the two constructs. Any deficiency in psychological empowerment may directly, or indirectly, affect customer-related policies enacted by organizational leadership.

When companies identify deficiencies and attempt to change to a more customer orientated organizational philosophy, psychological empowerment may assist in overcoming internal barriers (Jaramillo et al., 2012). Employee self-efficacy and job

autonomy both facilitate the communication and adoption of change initiatives.

Companies effectively implementing strategic job designs centered around structural

empowerment create employees with greater organizational commitment, job

satisfaction, and psychological empowerment (Kazlauskaite et al., 2012). Intrateam

interaction and a worker's feeling of self-efficacy translate into positive emotional

interactions with others. Psychologically empowered employees may become change

agents as the company transitions to a more customer-centric corporate strategy.

Demographics of education. Spreitzer (1995) observed a significant connection

between education and psychological empowerment. Seibert et al. (2011) also noted the

connection between education and psychological empowerment in a meta-analytic review

of psychological empowerment. Higher levels of educational attainment enable

organizational employees to transition smoothly into new roles and increase innovation in

job-related tasks (Gilbert, 2012). Educated employees possess greater self-confidence

and adaptability that increases self-efficacy, creating greater levels of psychological

empowerment. Education affords workers higher occupational and professional status

within the organization (Salinas-Jiménez, Artés, & Salinas-Jiménez, 2013). Leaders

provide educated individuals greater levels of autonomy and responsibility. Greater

responsibility generates greater meaningfulness, enhancing felt psychological

empowerment. Additionally, greater autonomy affords individuals the capacity to

innovate, improving work-related outcomes including customer orientation (Rajeshwari

& Devaru, 2013)

Training and education programs develop customer orientation and customer relationships within the organization (Kassim et al., 2012; Rajeshwari & Devaru, 2013). Education positively affects employee behavior and improves customer relationships. Training and education develop employee self-efficacy and enable supervisors to allow innovation and latitude in the customer-service encounter. Self-efficacy favorably affects customer relationships through improvement of job performance and improved customer relationships (Goebel, Deeter-Schmelz, & Kennedy, 2013). Although education may increase psychological empowerment, because of the work-related outcomes specified in the discussion of customer orientation, the effect of psychological empowerment on customer orientation should increase with higher educational attainment.

Demographics of tenure. Both Spriezer (1995) and Seibert et al. (2011) observed the benefits of tenure on psychological empowerment. As noted in the discussion of psychological empowerment, tenure contributes to competence through the collection of experience. The relational aspects of tenure positively affect frontline employees' attitudes toward the organization, increasing employees' views of the organization brand (Rajab, Krause, & Wieseke, 2013). Tenure with an organization also increases meaningfulness in work, as a long tenure indicates an established relationship between the worker and the organization (Ismail, Richard, & Taylor, 2012). The aggregated increase of tenure throughout the dimensions indicates tenured employees will respond favorably to psychological empowerment initiatives.

Tenure increases job-performance outcomes and improves job engagement (Bal, DeCooman, & Mol, 2013; Korschun, Bhattacharya, & Swain 2014). Employees who

remain with a company long-term possess greater experience and an understanding of the intricacies of the organizational structures. The ability to navigate and innovate within organizational boundaries enhances the ability to anticipate and respond to customer needs. Long-tenured employees also respond less favorably to transactional rewards in role-prescribed behaviors, necessitating greater motivation through intrinsic motivational principles, such as psychological empowerment (Bal et al., 2013). Individuals with greater tenure should possess elevated relational levels of psychological empowerment and customer orientation based upon the degree of tenure.

Transition

Section 1 of this study encompassed an overview of psychological empowerment and customer orientation. The problem statement detailed the potential of negative customer orientation, and the purpose statement highlighted the manner this study may enable problem identification. The remaining portions of Section 1 contributed to an understanding of the specific research questions and hypotheses, and the literature review offered a comprehensive review of psychological empowerment and customer orientation. Section 2 of this study contains information regarding the execution of the project: the role of the researcher, participants, research method, research design, ethical considerations.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 contains a restatement of the purpose statement and defines the role of the researcher. A discussion of participants and actions to preserve anonymity follows. The discussion continues with an overview of the research method, design, and associated justifications. I highlight ethical considerations that I addressed to ensure that the project remained ethically compliant. The final portion of Section 2 contains detailed information concerning the survey instrument, how I conducted the analysis of the survey data, and how I verified the data as reliable and valid.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to assist leadership teams in recognizing the relationship between the four dimensions of psychological empowerment, two demographic factors, and customer orientation in a medium-sized retail firm. The independent variables were the psychological empowerment dimensions of impact, meaning, competence, and self-determination, and the demographic factors were tenure and education. The dependent variable was customer orientation. The targeted population was workers within a single retail firm in the Northeast United States. The use of this population was appropriate, as the population for the multistate retail chain provided a representation of similar retail companies across the United States. Social change may be achieved by aiding businesses in establishing assistive and fruitful relationships with stakeholders within their geographic community (Morrison & Humlen, 2013).

Role of the Researcher

The researcher in a quantitative study endeavors to design a research study to provide enhanced understanding of topics or problems (Punch, 2014). Adjusting the survey instrument, altering the questions during administration, and soliciting feedback based upon responses do not occur in a quantitative context. In this study, I secured permission to use a survey tool and coordinated with corporate leadership to develop a way to disseminate the survey. Designated individuals mailed the surveys back to the researcher. No contact between the survey participants and the researcher occurred. I had patronized the examined company on occasion through two local stores, although no individuals knew me or that knew that I would be conducting research.

In accordance with the Belmont Report Protocol, this study was not intended for protected persons, nor were the participants part of an experimental design trial (Bernabe, Van Thiel, Raaijmakers, & Van Delden, 2012). Informed consent ensured that the participants understood that survey completion was voluntary. Provisions for anonymity should prevent reprisals by organizational leadership, minimizing risk to the participants.

Participants

Frontline workers and managers within a mid-sized regional retail firm comprised the survey population. I gained access to the organization via correspondence with the management and development training specialist (MDTS). The MDTS obtained approval for the study from the vice president of operations, who agreed to allow access to 10 stores for the study. The MDTS received and disseminated the surveys through intraorganizational mail. Upon completion, participants mailed the surveys directly to

me. A discussion concerning online surveys established information technology

limitations by the firm that negated the possibility of Internet-based applications.

Although Punch (2014) recommended gathering research data in person, the

geographic size of the study area and the necessity of allowing individuals working

different shifts to complete the survey negated the viability of administering an in-person

survey. To reduce the risk of erroneous administration, an instruction sheet accompanied

the survey batches sent to each store. B. Kim et al. (2013) and Gazzoli (2012) conducted

a similar approach for a study on psychological empowerment among geographically

dispersed business units.

Certain measures preserved the anonymity of the participants. The surveys

contained no requests for personally identifiable data, nor did dissemination of individual

survey sheets occur. Further, all employees completed the survey during their regular

duty time, and neither I nor the corporation provided rewards or threatened the employees

to induce them to participate in this survey. Each research packet contained additional

envelopes that individuals used to seal and mail surveys. I compiled the survey data upon

receipt, and I will retain the survey data for 5 years.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

A quantitative study suited the confirmatory nature of the inquiry better than a

qualitative or mixed method study (Punch, 2014). Researchers use qualitative studies to

capture the human experience during a phenomenon, event, or specified timeframe

(Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Qualitative studies may develop new theories through

interviews and analysis of stories from personal or shared experiences. A mixed method approach combines qualitative and quantitative studies for similar purposes.

Study goals centered on the determination of the presence and strength of the relationship between psychological empowerment, dimensions of psychological empowerment, and customer orientation. I did not seek to establish a new theory or gain deeper insight into a specific individual's lived experience with psychological empowerment and customer orientation. Instead, the desire to test hypotheses derived from literature and prior testing established the basis of quantitative inquiry for this study. Tacq (2011) argued for quantitative inquiry as a confirmatory approach in a broader examination of the nature of delineating differences between qualitative and quantitative study. Quantitative inquiry tests the concept under examination.

Spreitzer (1995) formulated the groundwork for inquiry in the psychological empowerment field, allowing the use of quantitative instruments in her original and ensuing studies. In recent years, several studies have quantitatively examined the relationship between psychological empowerment and other organizational factors (Gazzoli et al., 2012; Gazzoli et al., 2013; B. Kim et al., 2013; Pan et al., 2012; Sun et al., 2011; Tsirikas & Katsaros, 2014).

Research Design

The research design for the proposed study was a quantitative correlational study examining the relationship between the dimensions of psychological empowerment, demographic factors, and customer orientation. Correlational research examines the relationship between two or more variables within a single group (Punch, 2014). This

study may support an understanding of the manifestation of the constructs in the examined organization with acceptance of the alternate hypotheses. Prior correlational research on the benefits of psychological empowerment generated relevant managerial implications for business processes (Lin, 2013; Razaie, 2012).

Researchers use survey instruments to measure variables among a population, and correlations are primary tools to measure aggregated survey constructs (Adams & Lawrence, 2015). Correlational designs measure the extent of a relationship between two or more variables. Inquiry into the relationship of multiple variables corresponds more favorably to a correlational design than a causal design. Further, survey dissemination and completion occurred in a field setting rather than an experimental setting, with no variable manipulation, which supported the decision to use a correlational design versus an experimental or quasi-experimental design.

Population and Sampling

I selected the population via purposeful sampling, using 10 stores in multiple districts to obtain a diverse sample. The organization employs approximately 10,000 employees in the front-facing retail sections of the organization. An *a priori* test using G*power software yielded a necessary sample size of 59, assuming a large effect ($f^2 = .15$), and 124, assuming a medium effect ($f^2 = .35$). Extant literature determined that the relationship between psychological empowerment and positive work-related outcomes was medium to large (Gazzoli et al., 2012; Hossein et al., 2012; B. Kim et al., 2013; Lin, 2013), justifying a sample size of 59 to 124.

Ethical Research

Ethical considerations obligate researchers to act in a manner that minimizes risk to participants (Fowler, 2014). The following steps ensure ethical treatment of participants, minimize risk, and preserve anonymity. All participants of the study were asked to complete an informed consent form (see Appendix A). Participants received no direct payment for participation in the survey, although the employer agreed to allow participants to complete the survey while on paid status at their place of employment. All participants were over the age of 18, and the survey involved minimal risk to the participants. The minimal risk involved recollection of stressful leadership or customer interactions. Individual survey results remained anonymous and required no annotation of names on the survey instrument. This study contains no reference to the organization or individual store locations used for sampling. Additional envelopes accompanied the research packets because of the necessity of collecting responses over different shifts. Instructions directed participants to seal responses in an envelope to preclude identification during the collection and return process at each location. I will retain the responses in a secure storage container for 5 years. The Walden University institutional review board (IRB) verified this study met applicable guidelines and assigned the verification number 11-02-15-0430864.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument consisted of 23 questions obtained from a survey by Gazolli et al. (2012) for the assessment of psychological empowerment and customer orientation in the restaurant industry (see Appendix B). Appendix C contains permission

to use the survey instrument. The survey design measured psychological empowerment, customer orientation, and demographic information of service workers. The survey instrument underwent no modifications, as the measures of the hospitality service industry sufficiently captured the desired information sought from the retail industry. The main measures of all constructs were ordinal variables via 7-point Likert scales (Adams & Lawrence, 2015). The instrument administration occurred via a paper survey disseminated through corporate distribution channels with an approximate 10-minute completion time. The individual completed a single survey and placed the survey in an envelope for mailing to me.

Survey Instrument

The four constructs of meaningfulness, impact, competence, and self-determination comprised the measure of psychological empowerment. Gazolli et al. (2012) adapted the measures of the constructs from Spreitzer's (1995) study of psychological empowerment. A 7-point Likert scale measured each item. The items for meaning consisted of the statements "My work is important to me," "My job activities are meaningful to me," and "I care about what I do on my job." The meaning statements measured the survey takers' responses concerning how they individually valued their work (Spreitzer, 1995). The competence dimension contained three statements: "My job is well within my scope of my abilities," "I am confident about my ability to do my job," and "I have mastered the skills to do my job." Each item measured the confidence of survey takers in their individual capability to perform their expected duties (B. Kim et al., 2013). The items "My opinion counts in group decision making," "I have freedom to

determine how to do my job," and "I have a chance to use personal initiative in my work" measured self-determination. Self-determination epitomizes the feeling that an employee can use initiative and choice to execute his or her daily tasks (Gazzoli et al., 2012). The items "I have an influence over what happens in my work," "I decide on how to go about doing my job," and "I have a great deal of control over my job" related to impact. Impact describes the ability to influence the operational direction of the organization (Spreitzer, 1995).

Four factors of customer orientation comprised the measure of customer orientation. Gazzoli et al. (2012) adapted their measures from a survey of customer orientation by Donavan et al. (2004). Four items assessed the workers' need to pamper the customer: "I enjoy nurturing my customers," "I take pleasure in making every customer feel like he is the only one," "Every customer problem is important to me," and "I thrive on giving individual attention to each customer." Pampering the customer establishes a personal relationship with the customer based upon the customer's needs (Gazzoli et al., 2012). Pampering the customer requires a frontline employee to understand and identify the customer's needs. Positive customer orientation derives from the workers' ability to read customers' needs. Four items related to this need: "I naturally read the customer to identify his/her needs," "I generally know what service customers want before they ask," and "I am inclined to read the customer's body language to determine how much interaction to give." Relational customer orientation describes the employee's desire to establish personal relationships with customers (Chan et al., 2013). Two items measured this construct: "I enjoy remembering my customers' names" and "I

enjoy getting to know my customers personally." The final measure of the customer

orientation concept relates to delivery of service (Donavan et al., 2004). "I enjoy

delivering the intended services on time" and "I enjoy having the confidence to provide

good service" measured the delivery need. Measures and analysis of instrument results

occurred via the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The evaluation of

each construct included reliability and validity considerations.

Reliability

An assessment of internal consistency gauges the reliability of a scale (Adams &

Lawrence, 2015). Cronbach's alpha (α) calculations determine internal consistency of

Likert items measuring similar constructs. The α level necessary for internal consistency

was $\alpha \geq .70$, which exceeds the recommended cut-off level of .60 (Nunnally, 1978).

Should items possess a consistency figure $< .70$, evaluation and deletion of individual

items may be possible to obtain statistically adequate reliability.

To avoid common method bias within single-source surveys, I altered the order of

questions so that the participant could not readily identify the measured constructs

(Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Radom ordering of survey items

precluded any common method bias effects.

Validity

Prior use of the items in support of testing of the examined constructs and the

above review of the academic literature established content validity. Spreitzer (1995)

developed and validated the psychological empowerment measures that multiple recent

studies involving service and manufacturing industries subsequently used (Chan et al.,

2015, Gazzoli et al., 2012; Gazzoli et al., 2013; Kang et al., 2012; B. Kim et al., 2013).

The original survey by Donavan et al. (2004) contributed to the quantification of the

customer orientation construct that subsequent studies used to measure customer

orientation in service industries (Gazzoli et al., 2012; Gazzoli et al., 2013).

Establishing construct validity ensures that measured items adequately relate to

the construct (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955). Measures of convergent and divergent validity

across each construct measurement will occur through factor analysis. Factor analysis

allows researchers to evaluate underlying construct dimension fit (Green & Salkind,

2014). The anticipated sample for medium to large effect—59 to 124—enabled an

analysis of factor loading for each construct. Average variance extracted greater than .5

establishes convergent validity (Donovan & Hocutt, 2001). A variance extracted greater

than correlation squared established divergent validity between the constructs. The lack

of time-lagged instrumentation or the retrieval of external data precluded predictive or

concurrent validity, preventing the assessment of criterion validity (Adams & Lawrence,

2015)

Data Collection Technique

The determination of the appropriate data collection technique to answer the

research question accounted for the cost, available information technology solutions, and

geographic considerations. Multiple studies have used surveys to quantitatively address

the relationship of psychological empowerment to other work-related factors (Gazzoli et

al., 2012; Gazzoli et al., 2013; Jha, 2013; Kang et al., 2012; B. Kim et al., 2013).

The survey instrument presents information that may prompt a reply indicating that the worker lacks the competence to complete a task effectively or negatively associates with customers. Fowler (2014) argued that self-administered questionnaires present the best format for participants to disclose negative or sensitive answers, such as those related to competence or negative customer interactions. The ability for the sample population to complete the survey during paid time mitigated negative motivational aspects in a population whose members might not possess the motivation to participate in a research project on their own time. The geographically dispersed business units prohibited the collection of researcher-administered questionnaires in a timely manner. The lack of available information technology solutions for frontline workers in the selected organization prevented the sample population from self-administering the survey online. The quantity of time and availability to me favored self-administered surveys returned by mail over surveys administered over the telephone.

I presented the 10 survey packets with 30 surveys each to the MDTS, who randomly assigned stores from distinct managerial districts. The MDTS disseminated research packets via intraorganizational mail to the managers of the respective stores. Phone contact was afforded between the managers and me for the respective stores, although none was needed. Proper administration techniques and the presence of an instruction sheet facilitated survey completion. The respondents sealed each survey in an individual envelope, and then mailed the sealed survey to me.

Data Analysis

One research question existed for this study: How do psychological empowerment dimensions, demographics, and customer orientation correlate in the examined firm? The following hypotheses addressed the research question:

H1$_0$: There is no significant relationship between the mean level of psychological empowerment (μ_p) and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}). That is (μ_p) ≠ (μ_{co}). The relationship between psychological empowerment and customer orientation was not significant ($p \geq 0.05$).

H1$_a$: There is a significant relationship between the mean level of psychological empowerment (μ_p) and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}). That is (μ_p) = (μ_{co}). The relationship between psychological empowerment and customer orientation was significant ($p < 0.05$).

H2$_0$: There is no significant relationship between the mean level of meaning (μ_{pm}) and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}). That is (μ_{pm}) ≠ (μ_{co}). The relationship between psychological empowerment meaning and customer orientation was not significant ($p \geq 0.05$).

H2$_a$: There is a significant relationship between the mean level of meaning (μ_{pm}) and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}). That is (μ_{pm}) = (μ_{co}). The relationship between psychological empowerment meaning and customer orientation was significant ($p < 0.05$).

H3$_0$: There is no significant relationship between the mean level of impact (μ_{pi}) and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}). That is (μ_{pi}) ≠ (μ_{co}). The

relationship between psychological empowerment impact and customer

orientation was not significant ($p \geq 0.05$).

*H3*ₐ: There is a significant relationship between the mean level of impact (μ_{pi})

and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}). That is (μ_{pi}) = (μ_{co}). The

relationship between psychological empowerment impact and customer

orientation was significant ($p < 0.05$).

*H4*₀: There is no significant relationship between the mean level of

competence (μ_{pc}) and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}). That

is (μ_{pc}) ≠ (μ_{co}). The relationship between psychological empowerment

competence and customer orientation was not significant ($p \geq 0.05$).

*H4*ₐ: There is a significant relationship between the mean level of

competence (μ_{pc}) and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}). That

is (μ_{pc}) = (μ_{co}). The relationship between psychological empowerment

competence and customer orientation was significant ($p < 0.05$).

*H5*₀: There is no significant relationship between the mean level of self-

determination (μ_{ps}) and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}). That

is (μ_{ps}) ≠ (μ_{co}). The relationship between psychological empowerment

self-determination and customer orientation was not significant ($p \geq 0.05$).

*H5*ₐ: There is a significant relationship between the mean level of psychological

self-determination (μ_{ps}) and the mean level of customer orientation(μ_{co}).

That is (μ_{ps}) = (μ_{co}). The relationship between psychological

empowerment self-determination and customer orientation was significant (p < 0.05).

$H6_0$: Tenure does not moderate the relationship between mean levels of the dimensions of psychological and the mean level of customer orientation. As the categorical variable of tenure changes, the strength of the relationship between the dimensions of psychological empowerment and customer orientation will not increase or decrease ($p \geq 0.05$).

$H6_a$: Tenure moderates the relationship between mean levels of the dimensions of psychological and the mean level of customer orientation. As the categorical variable of tenure changes, the strength of the relationship between the dimensions of psychological empowerment and customer orientation will increase or decrease ($p < 0.05$).

$H7_0$: Education does not moderate the relationship between mean levels of the dimensions of psychological and the mean level of customer orientation. As the categorical variable of education changes, the strength of the relationship between the dimensions of psychological empowerment and customer orientation will not increase or decrease ($p \geq 0.05$).

$H7_a$: Education moderates the relationship between mean levels of the dimensions of psychological and the mean level of customer orientation. As the categorical variable of education changes, the strength of the relationship between the dimensions of psychological empowerment and customer orientation will increase or decrease ($p < 0.05$).

I used SPSS v21 to process and analyze survey results. The comparison of more than one independent variable dictated the use of multiple correlation and regression to analyze the data (Aiken & West, 1991). In this study, the primary comparison concerned the relationship between the four dimensions of psychological empowerment, the aggregated construct, two demographic variables, and customer orientation. The Likert scales used to measure the constructs defined the variables as ordinal because the interval distances are subjective and uneven (Lantz, 2013). Multiple linear regression also supported the use of the continuous variables of tenure and education as moderator variables, although moderator analysis requires variable translation to categorical variables in SPSS. Multiple variables eliminated the possibility of univariate statistical analysis such as ANOVA and ANCOVA (Punch, 2015). No manipulation of variables precluded the use of MANOVA.

Fowler (2014) detailed that a non-response rate of less than 5% to individual items likely will not significantly affect data analysis. Surveys with missing items prompted removal as return rates exceeded the desired sample size of 124. Consideration of imputation or the entry of mean answers for missing data occurred, but I dismissed for reasons detailed in section three.

Assumptions

An assumed linear relationship exists between the independent variables and dependent variable within multiple linear regression (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). Another assumption holds that all measurements of data accurately portrayed the phenomenon under investigation. An assumption existed the variables were

homoscedastic, or the heteroscedasticity possessed conditional variance ratios of $X < 10$.

The residuals, or the annotation of the variables, were independent formed another

assumption. Evidence of data clustering may highlight the violation of this assumption.

The final assumption held for a normal distribution of data. Graphical representations of

distributions and linear relationships provided evidence of any assumption violations.

Study Validity

Type I error rates involve the incorrect rejection of a null hypothesis (Adams &

Lawrence, 2015). The level of significance to mitigate Type I errors selected for this

study was $p < .05$, meaning that less than 5% of the time a Type I error will occur. The

tests involved a two-tailed test to reduce further the chance of a Type I error. The

G*Power assessment ensured a correct sample size reduced the probability of a Type II

error or the incorrect acceptance of a null hypothesis. Further, homogeneity of the

sample increased by only testing frontline organizational members and his or her

immediate supervisors.

Measurement validity further enhances internal validity. The instrument

comprised measures taken in multiple studies since Spreitzer (1995) first postulated

psychological empowerment and Donovan (2004) developed customer orientation

measurements in retail. Seibert et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis that further

reinforced the validity of the individual items on the psychological empowerment scale.

The research question addressed the relationship between variables, allowing

purposeful sampling (Punch, 2014). The representative sample was analyzed for

generalizability based upon demographic factors. Efforts to secure greater sample size enabled greater external validity (Adams & Lawrence, 2015).

The present study more closely aligned with a random-effects model for establishing bivariate linear regression assumptions (Green & Salkind, 2004). The first assumption held that the independent and dependent variable were bivariately normally distributed. Normal distribution of each variable, independent of other variables, ensured a linear relationship. The second assumption denoted that the sample was random, and the scores for each variable were independent.

Transition and Summary

This ends Section 2 of the study. Section 2 contained information regarding the preparation and conduct of the study. The section contained details regarding the justification of the multiple linear regression process and mitigating factors used to ensure reliability and validity, both internal and external. Ethical considerations and sample procedures ensured the safety of the participants and minimization of risk. Section 3 contains details of the study results following the administration of the survey instrument to the study sample.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The final section of this study illustrates the statistical analysis of responses provided by the study sample. The presentation of findings contains descriptive data, and the statistical analysis elucidates the rationale for retaining or rejecting null and alternate hypotheses. Detailed suggestions for applications to professional practice based upon the analysis follow the presentation of findings. Social change implications, recommendations for action, and reflections conclude the study.

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to assist leadership teams in recognizing the relationship between the four dimensions of psychological empowerment, two demographic factors, and customer orientation in a medium-sized retail firm. The results of the analysis determined the presence of significant correlations between psychological empowerment, subordinate dimensions, and customer orientation. The moderating relationship of education was partially supported, and the moderating relationship of tenure was not supported. However, further analysis of tenure within the examined firm uncovered a negative correlation between tenure and customer orientation that detracted from the psychological empowerment, tenure, and customer orientation model.

Certain statistical limitations necessitated the use of the aggregated impact and self-determination constructs, which previous researchers named *influence* (Gazzoli et al., 2012, B. Kim et al., 2013). The dimension of influence positively related to customer orientation as well. Psychological empowerment positively affects several job-related

factors, and this study supports previous findings of a significant relationship between psychological empowerment and customer orientation.

Presentation of the Findings

Variable Review and Hypotheses Testing

A review of received surveys revealed 180 suitable for use, with 33 unsuitable because of item nonresponse. No single item possessed a nonresponse rate greater than 3.1%, indicating that the cleansing of these surveys would not introduce bias into the study (Fowler, 2014). Further, a review of the pattern matrix uncovered no discernable pattern to the nonresponses by the survey participants. The 180 suitable surveys exceeded the minimum limits of response identified in the a priori G*power estimate, indicating a sufficient population to produce a statistically reliable result.

The primary research question for this study concerned how psychological empowerment, associated dimensions, demographics, and customer orientation correlated in the examined firm. I used bivariate correlational testing to determine the significance of correlations between psychological empowerment, associated dimensions, and customer orientation (H1–H5). The correlational analysis facilitated the identification of statistically significant relationships between variables, enabling the retention or rejection of the null hypotheses. Multiple hierarchical regression analysis was then used to establish moderating influences of tenure and education (H6, H7).

Descriptive Statistics

Tables 1–3 contain the descriptive statistics for the demographic variables and the survey item responses. Table 4 reflects aggregated item scores. The following section

contains the justification for the listed influence dimension, reflecting the aggregated

dimensions of self-determination and impact.

Table 1

Frequency of Educational Attainment in Sample

	Frequency	Percent
Some high school	5	2.8
Graduated high school	67	37.2
Some college	56	31.1
Associate's degree	35	19.4
Bachelor's degree	14	7.8
Greater than bachelor's degree	3	1.7
Total	180	100.0

Table 2

Frequency of Organizational Tenure in Sample

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 year	10	5.6
1-2 years	26	14.4
3-4 years	20	11.1
5-6 years	12	6.7
7-9 years	19	10.6
10 years+	93	51.7
Total	180	100.0

Table 3

Item Descriptives

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Empowerment Factor 1—Meaning	1	7	6.53	.887
Empowerment Factor 2—Meaning	3	7	6.09	.926
Empowerment Factor 3—Meaning	3	7	6.61	.713
Empowerment Factor 4—Self-efficacy	1	7	6.48	.930
Empowerment Factor 5—Self-efficacy	3	7	6.67	.669
Empowerment Factor 6—Self-efficacy	4	7	6.48	.681
Empowerment Factor 7—Self-determination	1	7	5.22	1.376
Empowerment Factor 8—Self-determination	1	7	5.26	1.286
Empowerment Factor 9—Self-determination	1	7	5.63	1.228
Empowerment Factor 10—Impact	1	7	5.76	1.309
Empowerment Factor 11—Impact	1	7	5.36	1.373
Empowerment Factor 12—Impact	1	7	5.34	1.309
Customer Pampering 1	2	7	5.54	1.243
Customer Pampering 2	3	7	6.23	.958
Customer Pampering 3	1	7	5.98	1.281
Customer Pampering 4	3	7	6.02	1.016
Customer Reading 1	2	7	5.34	1.164
Customer Reading 2	3	7	5.54	1.110
Customer Reading 3	3	7	5.64	1.157
Customer Relation 1	2	7	5.63	1.259
Customer Relation 2	2	7	6.01	1.025
Customer Delivery 2	4	7	6.45	.827
Customer Delivery 1	3	7	6.32	.913

73

Table 4

Aggregated Descriptives for Independent and Dependent Constructs

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	Std. deviation
Psychological empowerment	38.00	77.00	64.93	67.00	7.78
Psychological empowerment—Meaning	7.00	21.00	19.22	20.00	2.22
Psychological empowerment—Self-efficacy	7.00	14.00	13.14	14.00	1.20
Psychological empowerment—Influence[a]	6.00	42.00	32.56	34.00	6.11
Customer orientation	36.00	70.00	58.25	59.00	7.89

[a] Combination of psychological empowerment—self-determination and psychological empowerment—impact.

Test for Reliability and Validity

A Cronbach's alpha (α) test establishes the reliability of constructs when the item composite is α > .70. The construct of psychological empowerment—self-efficacy possessed reliability issues (α < .70), prompting the deletion of Item 4 (see Table 5). Following the deletion, the self-determination construct possessed an α of .738, indicating that the construct was reliable for testing.

Testing for convergent validity via factor analysis established four primary constructs with a factor loading > .50 (see Table 6). A factor analysis test with an oblique oblimin rotation factor established that the six items pertaining to the psychological empowerment dimensions of self-determination and impact loaded on one another and that they represented a singular construct. The six-item loading duplicates the findings of Gazzoli et al. (2012) and B. Kim et al. (2013). Both researchers labeled the confluence of two dimensions as the psychological empowerment dimension of

influence. To preserve a more robust analysis of the data, I proceeded to use the

influence dimension to test the hypotheses related to self-determination and impact.

Additionally, an item normally associated with customer orientation, Customer Delivery

2, loaded on the dimension of meaning greater than the requisite customer orientation

construct, prompting deletion from further analysis.

Table 5

Reliability Analysis of Composite Constructs

	Cronbach's α	Number of items
Psychological empowerment (PE)	.859	12
PE—Meaning	.849	3
PE—Self-efficacy [a]	.695	3
PE—Self-determination	.760	3
PE—Impact	.751	3
PE—Influence [b]	.867	6
Customer orientation	.896	11

[a] Self-efficacy α with Item 4 deleted = .738. [b] Combined value of PE—Self-determination and PE—Impact.

Table 6

Factor Loading With Oblique Rotation

	Customer orientation	PE—Influence	PE—Self-determination	PE—Meaning
Customer Pampering 4	**.807**	.460	-.504	.189
Customer Pampering 1	**.776**	.405	-.415	.271
Customer Relation 2	**.725**	.301	-.506	.234
Customer Pampering 3	**.709**	.308	-.576	.197
Customer Relation 1	**.697**	.243	-.418	.357
Customer Delivery 1	**.659**	.348	-.542	.501
Customer Pampering 2	**.613**	.432	-.516	.085
Customer Reading 3	**.571**	.235	-.293	.242
Customer Reading 1	**.561**	.071	-.160	.337
Customer Reading 2	**.518**	.166	-.195	.318
Empowerment Factor 11—Impact	.163	**.792**	-.262	.155
Empowerment Factor 8—Self-determination	.286	**.787**	-.256	.102
Empowerment Factor 12—Impact	.333	**.775**	-.240	.281
Empowerment Factor 9—Self-determination	.607	**.702**	-.421	.241
Empowerment Factor 7—Self-determination	.315	**.665**	-.384	.119
Empowerment Factor 10—Impact	.349	**.603**	-.404	.039
Empowerment Factor 1—Meaning	.415	.363	**-.903**	.090
Empowerment Factor 3—Meaning	.511	.291	**-.819**	.309
Empowerment Factor 2—Meaning	.424	.421	**-.731**	.099
Customer Delivery 2 [a]	.605	.307	-.616	.532
Empowerment Factor 5—Self-efficacy	.399	.197	-.273	**.816**
Empowerment Factor 6—Self-efficacy	.252	.169	-.048	**.656**
Empowerment Factor 4—Self-efficacy [b]	.435	.270	-.329	**.524**

Note. Factor loadings > .5 are in boldface.
[a] Deleted prior to further analysis because of poor loading. [b] Deleted prior to further analysis because of reliability analysis

Hypothesis Testing

A multiple-step process provided the framework for testing the relevant

hypotheses. Following the elimination of two items, Empowerment Factor 4 and

Customer Delivery 2, and the establishment of the construct of influence, I conducted a

correlational analysis. The correlational analysis enabled the evaluation of H1–H3 (H4

and H5 could not undergo testing). At the conclusion of the correlational analysis, data

evaluation occurred to ensure that the data met all necessary assumptions for the

performance of multiple hierarchical regression. Following data transformation, a review

of the centered product of the means of independent variables during a two-step

regression model enabled the identification of moderating factors. The review of the

results of the two-step model permitted the evaluation of H6 and H7.

Correlational analysis. The six independent variables and customer orientation

underwent correlational analysis, with $p < .05$ required for significance (see Table 7).

The results of the correlational analysis show that all psychological empowerment and

associated dimensions were statistically significant greater than .35 when compared to

customer orientation. The significant finding permitted the rejection of the null

hypotheses for H1–H3 and acceptance of the alternate hypotheses that psychological

empowerment, the dimension of meaning, and the dimension of self-efficacy correlate at

a statistically significant level with customer orientation ($p < .01$). H4 and H5 could not

be tested and resulted in the retention of the null hypotheses that the dimensions of self-

determination and impact did not correlate with customer orientation. Although not an

original hypothesis in this study, the dimension of influence positively correlated with customer orientation.

I also evaluated the demographic variables of tenure and education against customer orientation for illumination of later regression results. Tenure negatively associated with customer orientation in the examined firm ($p < .05$). Education did not correlate with customer orientation, although education negatively correlated with the psychological empowerment—meaning dimension ($p < .01$).

Table 7

Bivariate Correlation Between Aggregate Constructs (N = 180)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Customer orientation	1						
2. Psychological empowerment	.598**	1					
3. PE—Meaning	.572**	.670**	1				
4. PE—Self-efficacy	.364**	.407**	.217**	1			
5. PE—Influence	.482**	.950**	.447**	.243**	1		
6. Tenure	-.175*	-.011	.040	.086	-.045	1	
7. Education	-.130	-.065	-.197**	-.032	-.004	.029	1

Note. PE = Psychological empowerment.
**$p < 0.01$. *$p < 0.05$.

Multiple regression analysis. A pretest review of the data ensured compliance with previously stated assumptions: normal distribution, linearity, and homoscedasticity. An obvious visual skew during histogram review, or a skew statistic above the absolute value of one, demonstrates that the data were nonnormal and violate an underlying assumption to conduct linear analysis (Bulmer, 1979). A review of the established constructs for normal distribution revealed that four of the dependent variables,

psychological empowerment, meaning dimension, influence dimension, education, and tenure, required transformation to reduce skew. The skew likely resulted from the ceiling and floor of the measured variable on the Likert items. As the sample size ($N = 180$) is relatively large, reducing of the skewness to between the values of positive one and negative one served to demonstrate that the data were normally distributed (Adams & Lawrence, 2015). All skewed variables underwent a logarithmic transformation, reducing them to acceptable limits (see Table 8).

A visual analysis to identify patterns between the residual and the predicted value tested for homogeneity of variance. An absence of visual evidence indicative of growth as a function of predicted value ensures homoscedasticity (See Figures 1 – 8). A review of the graphical output of the regression analysis established the linear relationship between variables (See Figures 9-16). All models possessed a VIF < 1.028, indicating no multicollinearity.

Table 8

Results of Logarithmic Transformation of Skewed Variables

	Original value	Transformed value
Psychological empowerment	1.059	.945
Psychological empowerment—Meaning	2.129	.412
Psychological empowerment—Self-efficacy	1.944	.734
Psychological empowerment—Influence	1.176	.469
Tenure with company	.749	.226
Education level	.637	.417
Customer orientation	.557	-

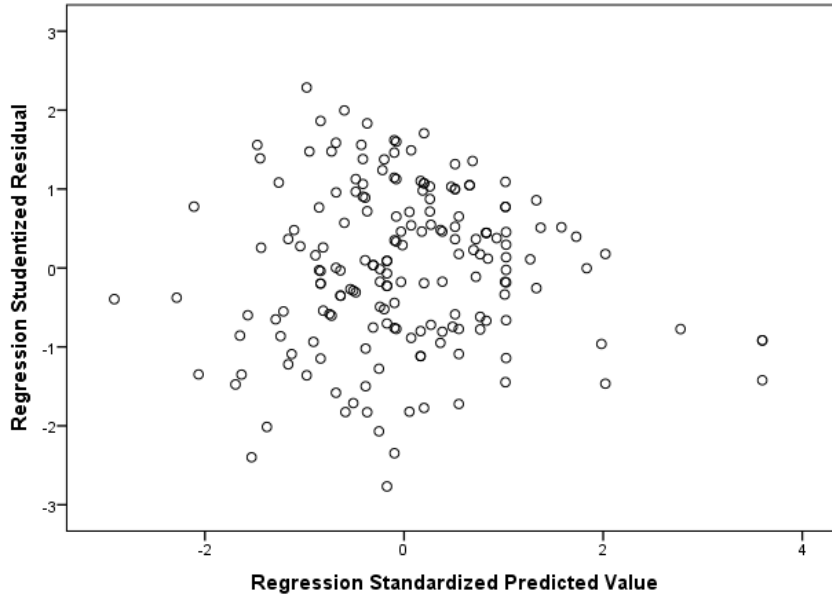*Note.* All values are absolute values.

Figure 1. Homoscedasticity of psychological empowerment, education model.
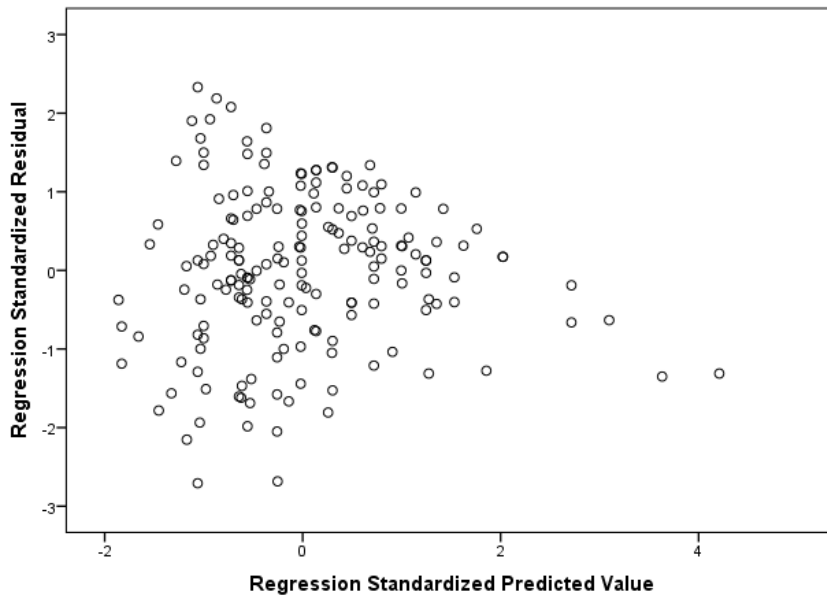

Figure 2. Homoscedasticity of psychological empowerment, tenure model.

Figure 3. Homoscedasticity of psychological empowerment meaning, education model.

Figure 4. Homoscedasticity of psychological empowerment meaning, tenure model.
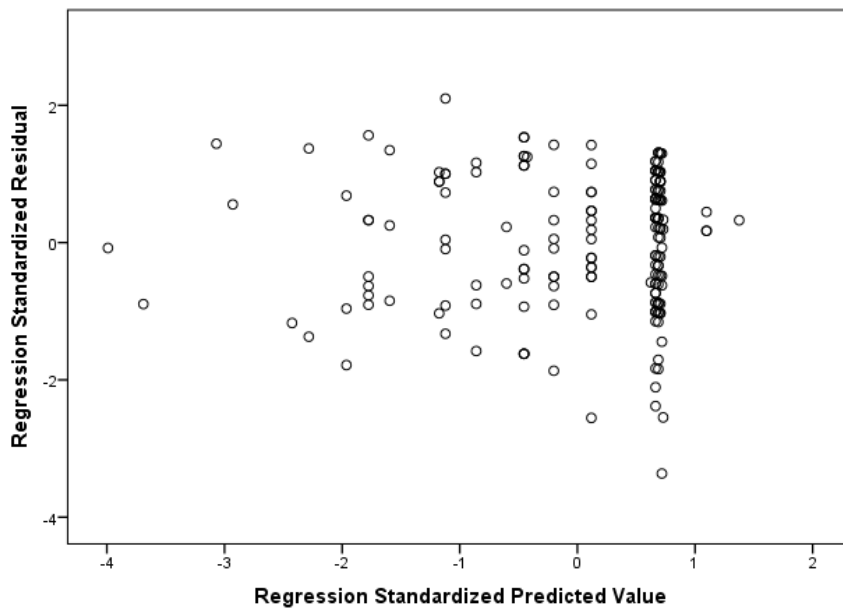
Figure 5. Homoscedasticity of psychological empowerment self-efficacy, education model.

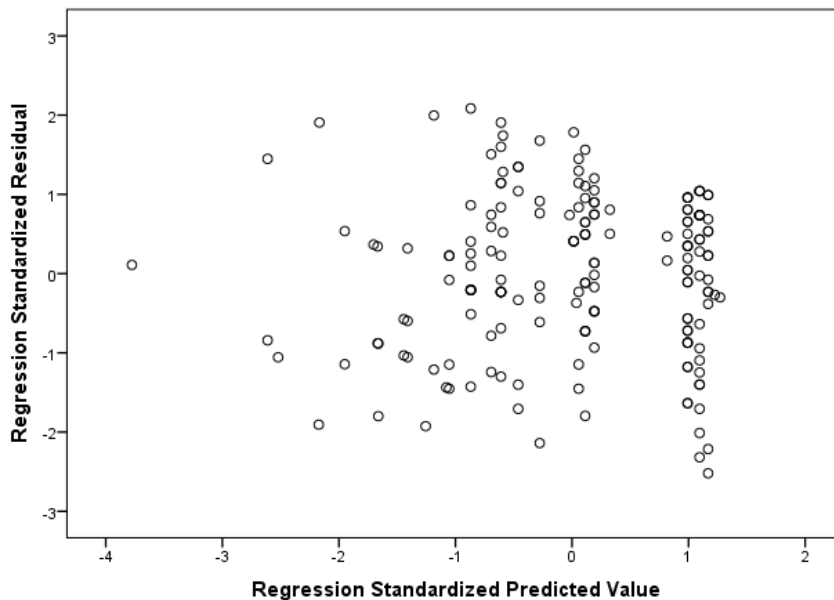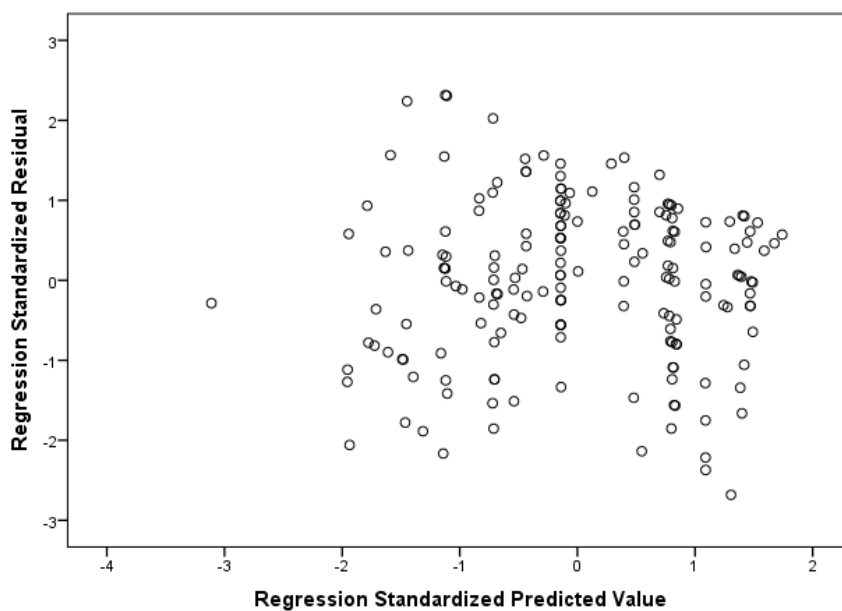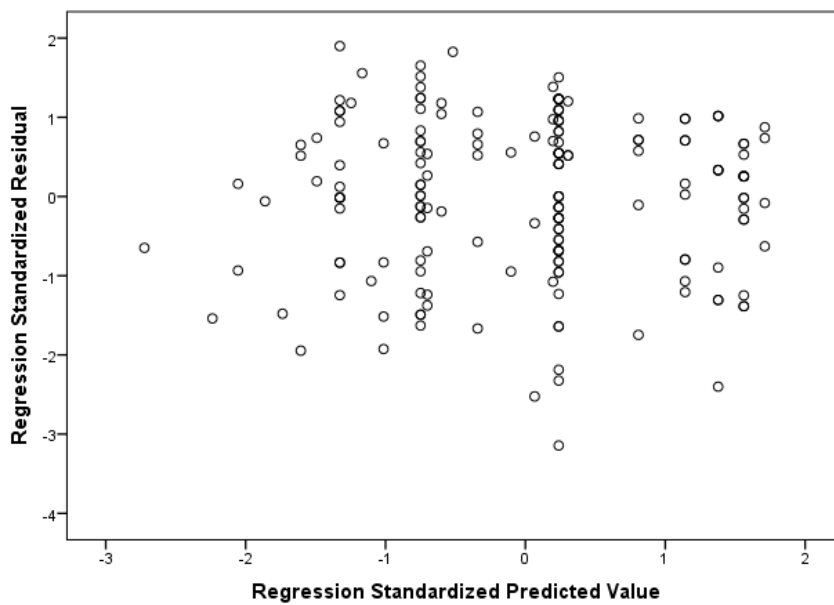*Figure 6.* Homoscedasticity of psychological empowerment self-efficacy, tenure model.
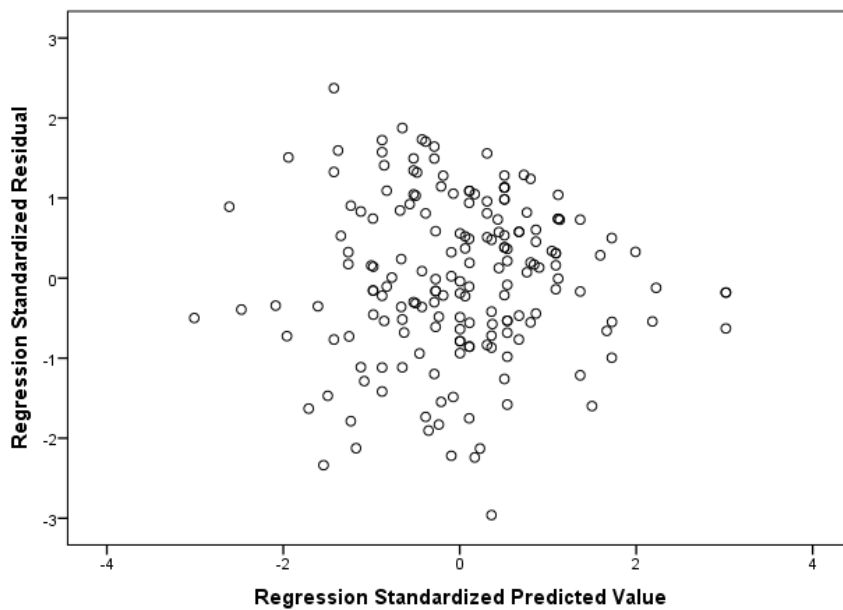
Figure 7. Homoscedasticity of psychological empowerment influence, education model.
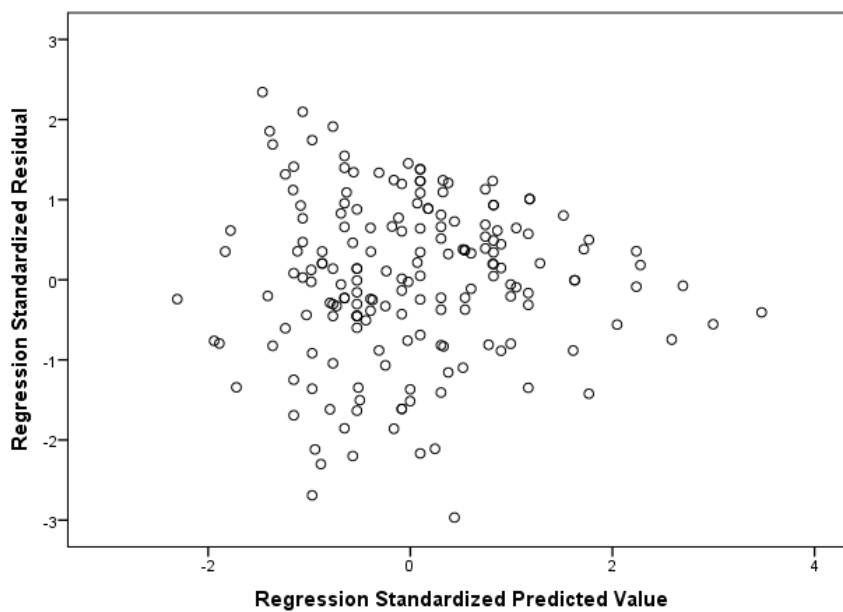
Figure 8. Homoscedasticity of psychological empowerment influence, tenure model.

Figure 9. Linearity plot between psychological empowerment, education, and customer orientation.

Figure 10. Linearity plot between psychological empowerment, tenure, and customer orientation.

Figure 11. Linearity plot between psychological empowerment meaning, education, and customer orientation.

Figure 12. Linearity plot between psychological empowerment meaning, tenure, and customer orientation.
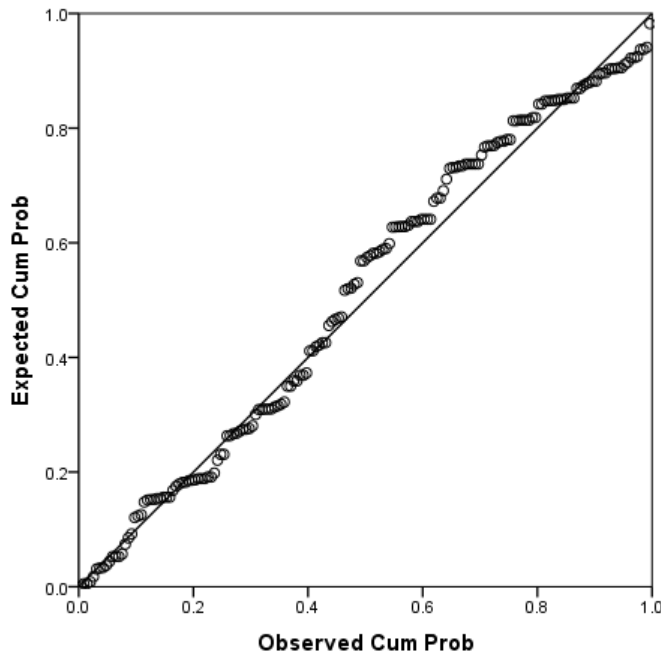
Figure 13. Linearity plot between psychological empowerment self-efficacy, education, and customer orientation.
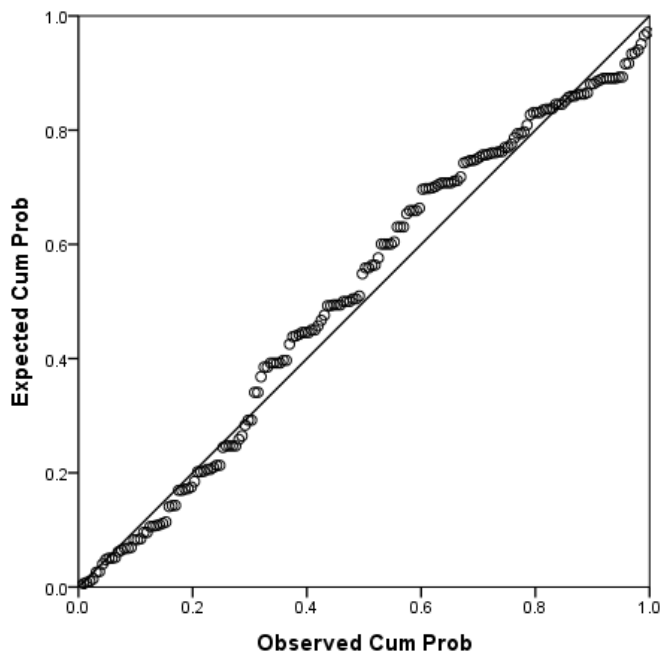
Figure 14. Linearity plot between psychological empowerment self-efficacy, tenure, and customer orientation.

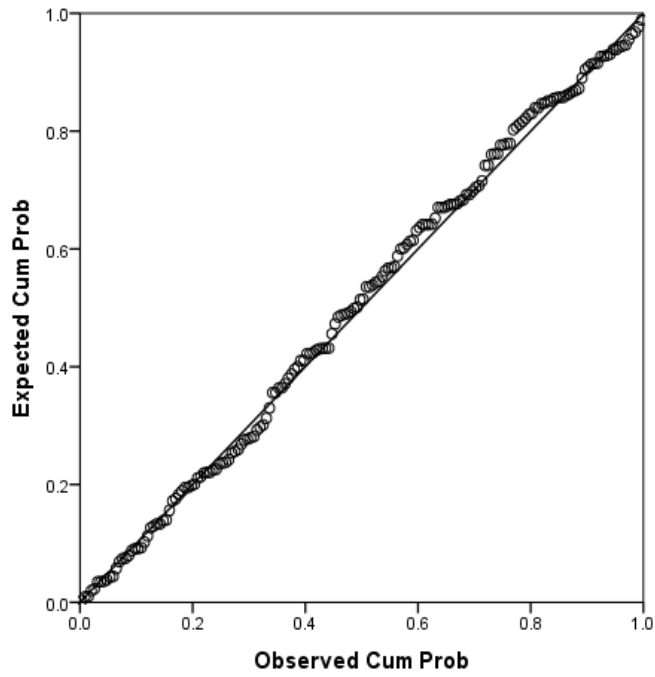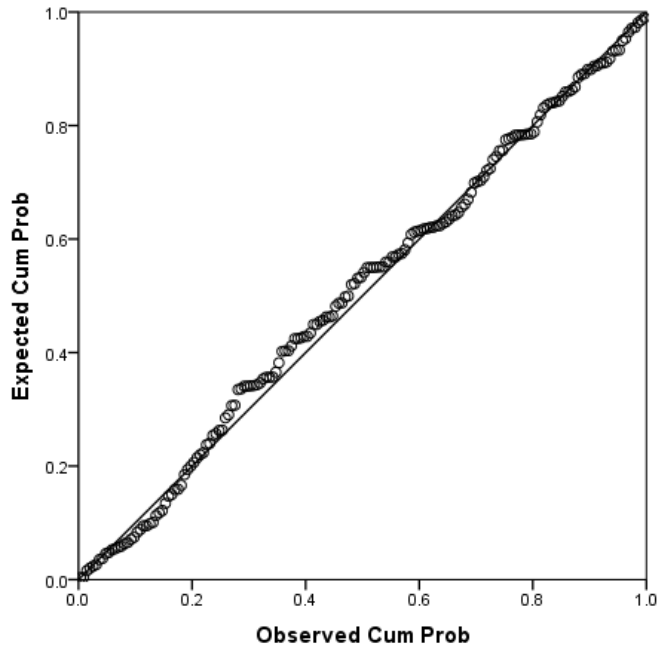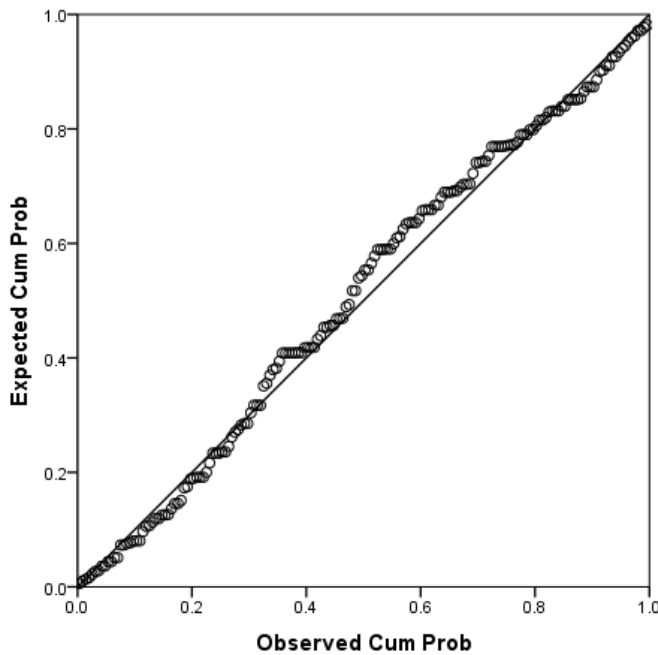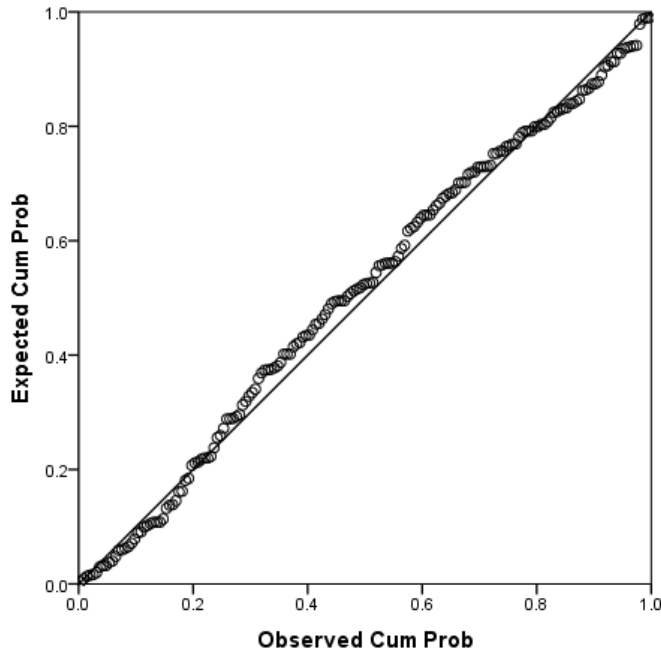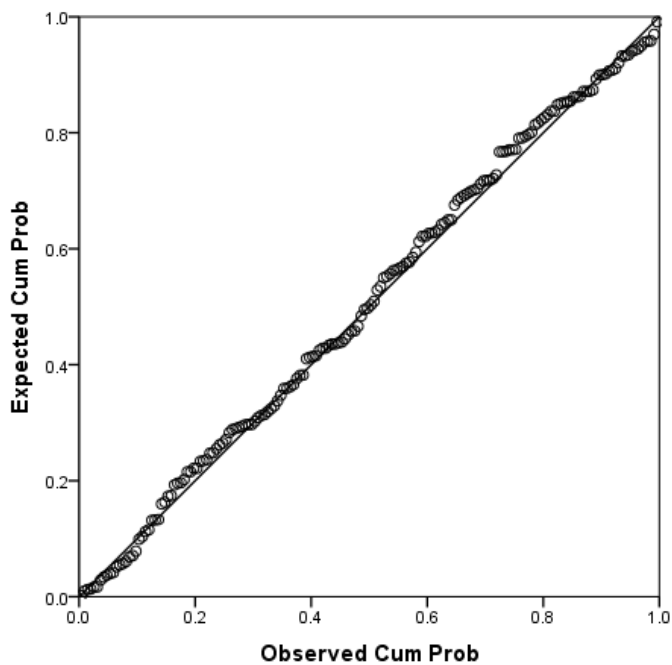*Figure 15.* Linearity plot between psychological empowerment influence, education, and customer orientation.
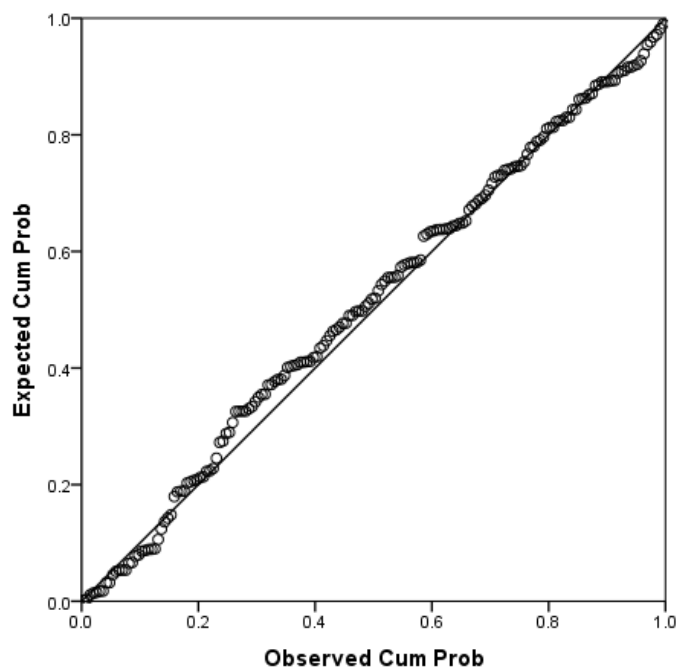
Figure 16. Linearity plot between psychological empowerment influence, tenure, and customer orientation.

Table 9

Results From Hierarchical Regression for Moderating Effects of Education on Psychological Empowerment Factors (N = 180)

Steps	Measurements	B	SE	β	Sig.	F	R^2	ΔR^2	adj R^2
Model 1: Psychological empowerment									
1						48.373	.353		.346
	(Constant)	76.643	2.143		.000				
	PE	15.191	1.586	.579	.000				
	ED	6.186	3.000	.125	.041				
2						33.091	.366	.013	.366
	(Constant)	76.252	2.138		.000				
	PE	14.703	1.596	.560	.000				
	ED	6.401	2.980	.129	.033				
	PE x ED	18.888	10.014	.115	.061				
Model 2: Psychological empowerment——Meaning									
1						40.745	.315		.308
	(Constant)	64.231	1.497		.000				
	PEM	14.504	1.655	.551	.000				
	ED	2.557	3.122	.052	.414				
2						28.117	.324	.009	.312
	(Constant)	64.204	1.492		.000				
	PEM	14.169	1.664	.539	.000				
	ED	2.499	3.112	.050	.423				
	PEM x ED	15.369	10.195	.094	.133				
Model 3: Psychological empowerment——Self-efficacy									
1						14.125	.138		.128
	(Constant)	63.566	1.702		.000				
	PESE	11.684	2.361	.345	.000				
	ED	6.704	3.464	.135	.055				
2						11.333	.162	.024	.148
	(Constant)	63.407	1.684		.000				
	PESE	10.905	2.359	.322	.000				
	ED	6.694	3.424	.135	.052				
	PESE x ED	35.764	15.843	.157	.025[*]				

(*table continues*)

Steps	Measurements	B	SE	β	Sig.	F	R^2	ΔR^2	adj R^2
Model 4: Psychological empowerment—Influence									
1						34.094	.278		.270
	(Constant)	77.760	2.554		.000				
	PEINF	16.521	2.070	.510	.000				
	ED	6.873	3.169	.139	.031				
2						25.596	.295	.017	.283
	(Constant)	77.514	2.533		.000				
	PEINF	16.103	2.061	.497	.000				
	ED	7.271	3.145	.147	.022				
	PEINF x ED	26.708	12.850	.132	.039[*]				

Note. PEM = psychological empowerment meaning, PESE = psychological empowerment—self-efficacy; PEINF = psychological empowerment—influence; ED = education.
[*] $p < .05$.

Education. A multiple hierarchical regression was used to calculate the moderating effects of education on psychological empowerment and customer orientation. The analysis partially supported H7 (See Table 9). A significant interaction existed between the dimension of self-efficacy and education ($\Delta R^2 = .024$, $b = 35.764$, $\beta = .157$, $p < .05$), as well as the dimension of influence and education ($\Delta R^2 = .017$, $b = 36.708$, $\beta = .132$, $p < .05$). No significant moderations existed between psychological empowerment and education or the dimension of meaning and education ($p > .05$).

Tenure. A multiple hierarchical regression was used to calculate the moderating effects of education on psychological empowerment and customer orientation. The analysis did not support H6, mandating the retention of the null hypothesis of no moderation (See Table 10). However, because of the negative correlational coefficient between tenure and customer orientation in the examined firm, I conducted a multiple linear regression of psychological empowerment, tenure, and customer orientation. The

linear combination of tenure and psychological empowerment was significant, $F(2,177) =$ 49.110, $p < .05$ (See Table 11). Although testing of H6 uncovered no evidence of moderation, further scrutiny uncovered a negative effect of tenure on the psychological empowerment, tenure, customer orientation model.

Table 10

Results From Hierarchical Regression for Moderating Effects of Tenure on Psychological Empowerment Factors (N = 180)

Steps	Measurements	B	SE	β	Sig.	F	R^2	ΔR^2	adj R^2
Model 1: Psychological empowerment									
1						49.910	.361		.353
	(Constant)	72.775	1.755		.000				
	PE	15.141	1.578	.577	.000				
	TEN	-3.878	1.547	-.151	.013				
2						33.657	.365	.004	.354
	(Constant)	72.666	1.757		.000				
	PE	15.039	1.580	.573	.000				
	TEN	-3.844	1.546	-.149	.014				
	PE x TEN	5.160	4.927	.063	.296				
Model 2: Psychological empowerment—Meaning									
1						46.4242	.343		.336
	(Constant)	61.949	.833		.000				
	PEM	14.775	1.603	.562	.000				
	TEN	-4.495	1.567	-.175	.005				
2						30.727	.344	.001	.333
	(Constant)	62.055	.881		.000				
	PEME	14.814	1.610	.563	.000				
	TEN	-4.136	1.833	-.161	.025				
	PEM X TEN	6.034	15.880	.027	.704				
Model 3: Psychological Empowerment—Self-efficacy									
1						16.084	.154		.144
	(Constant)	59.338	.854		.000				
	PESE	12.022	2.342	.355	.000				
	TEN	-4.778	1.781	-.186	.008				

(*table continues*)

Steps	Measurements	B	SE	β	Sig.	F	R^2	ΔR^2	adj R^2
2						11.333	.157	.003	.142
	(Constant)	59.306	.856		.000				
	PESE	11.789	2.365	.349	.000				
	TEN	-4.802	1.783	-.187	.008				
	PESE x TEN	5.596	7.376	.053	.449				

Model 4: Psychological Empowerment - Influence

Steps	Measurements	B	SE	β	Sig.	F	R^2	ΔR^2	adj R^2
1						33.855	.277		.269
	(Constant)	73.444	2.203		.000				
	PEINF	16.206	2.076	.500	.000				
	TEN	-3.437	1.648	-.134	.038				
2						22.677	.279	.002	.266
	(Constant)	73.313	2.214		.000				
	PEINF	16.092	2.085	.496	.000				
	TEN	-3.417	1.650	-.133	.040				
	PEINF x TEN	4.642	6.515	.046	.477				

Note. PEM = psychological empowerment meaning, PESE = psychological empowerment—Self-efficacy; PEINF = psychological empowerment influence; TEN = tenure.
[*]$p < .05$.

Table 11

Multiple Linear Regression of Psychological Empowerment, Tenure, and Customer Orientation

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	β		
1	(Constant)	72.775	1.755		41.473	.000
	PE	15.141	1.578	.577	9.598	.000*
	TEN	-3.878	1.547	-.151	-2.508	.013[*]

[*]$p < .05$.

Analysis of results. The findings of this study closely align with prior studies concerning psychological empowerment and customer orientation. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, psychological empowerment theory involves the development of intrinsic values and beliefs that manifest in positive work-related outcomes (Jha, 2013). Customer orientation relates to psychological empowerment because of the internal

manifestation of both constructs (Zablah et al., 2015). The findings continue to build upon extant research linking both constructs, further establishing the link between psychologically empowering subordinates and improving customer-oriented behavior.

The findings of a significant relationship between psychological empowerment and customer orientation align with by work by Gazzoli et al. (2012), Kassim et al. (2012) and Zeglat et al. (2014). Individual workers who intrinsically experience empowerment in work translate empowered feelings into outward expressions of customer orientation. Although Seibert et al. (2011) argued for the unity of the psychological construct, several authors sought to further delineate the dimensions to obtain better fidelity of psychological empowerment theory (Ambad & Bahron, 2012; Li et al. 2012; Malik et al., 2013; Zeglat et al., 2014). This study extends previous work in the psychological empowerment-customer orientation field by evaluating how individual dimensions relate to customer orientation.

The findings that the meaning dimension significantly correlated with customer orientation support previously identified associations between meaning and customer orientation. Psychological empowerment imparts a sense of organizational identification (Zhu, Sosik, Riggio, & Yang, 2012). LMX generates positive meaning at work and positively moderates the relationship between organizational identity and customer orientation (Kang et al., 2014; Lindsey-Hall, Baker, Andrews, Hunt, & Rapp, 2016). Customer orientation naturally arises when an employee responsible for customer interaction experiences meaning at work.

The dimension of influence, the confluence of impact and self-determination dimensions, significantly correlated with customer orientation. The findings of significance support work previously completed with the influence dimension by Gazzoli at al. (2012) and B. Kim et al. (2013). Impact and self-determination both relate to how employees affect decision making within the organization. Employees possessing a sense of influence over organizational direction experience the dimension of impact. Additionally, employees internalizing authority to affect workflow and processes experience self-determination. Forward-facing workers who perceive the ability to influence decision-making processes and organizational direction may tailor those processes to suit specific needs, which often involve serving customers.

Self-efficacy also significantly correlated with customer orientation, supporting prior research between the two constructs. Individuals who possess competency within the scope of daily work manifest an increased internal belief of adequacy to perform assigned duties (Pettijohn, Schaefer, & Burnett, 2014). Self-belief associated with positive levels of self-efficacy improves customer orientation and customer service (Jha, 2013). Within the study, competence possessed the highest mean to maximum ratio within the descriptive statistics. A relative high competence level of the participants existed that permitted the inference that job-training programs were sufficient. Further, self-efficacy possessed the lowest correlational coefficient of any measured construct compared with customer orientation. The low correlational coefficient and the nearly *maxed-out* construct indicates the organization may only marginally benefit from returns on investment into competence.

The finding of statistically significant, but relatively weak, moderating effect of education on self-efficacy and influence supports prior research regarding the relationship between psychological empowerment and education (Gilbert, 2012; Seibert et al. 2011; Spreitzer, 1995). Prior findings combined education and job training, and determined both favorably relate to customer related job performance outcomes (Lee, Chen, & Lee, 2015; Selinas-Jimenez et al., 2013). The combination of job training and education in past research into empowerment could explain the weak interaction between academic education and customer orientation in the examined firm.

This study focused on frontline workers, thus, job training may suffice to generate the benefits of customer orientation derived from employee psychological empowerment. Accordingly, academic education minimally generates further returns beyond the level attained by job training within the psychological empowerment, education, and customer orientation model. The negative correlation of meaning to education in the correlational analysis allows an additional inference. Frontline workers who possess higher educational levels experience less meaning at work, also negating positive effects of academic education within the overall model.

Tenure did not moderate the effect of psychological empowerment on customer orientation. Further, when compared directly to psychological empowerment and customer orientation, tenure imparted a negative effect on the model. The negative effect of tenure was inconsistent with prior research (Ismail et al., 2012; Spreitzer, 1995). In prior studies, tenure increased competence of employees and improved work-related outcomes through imparting additional meaning and self-efficacy. Because of the

contribution of tenure to self-efficacy, tenure may present similar effects as education; job training maximized worker competence, creating a "ceiling" for self-efficacy's contribution to the model. Additionally, Bal et al. (2013) identified that tenured employees respond less favorably to transactional rewards, indicating a need for the organization to motivate tenured individuals by alternate means. The supporting organizational structure may lack nontransactional motivation for frontline employees based on the research and findings described here.

Applications to Professional Practice

Customer service and customer satisfaction pervade organizational strategy for all sectors of private industry. Within the market orientation framework, organizations that ascribe to customer orientation place the needs of the customer at the forefront of corporate strategy (Saarijarvi et al., 2014). A firm-wide customer-oriented strategy focuses on the customer at all levels of the organization. A customer-centric focus builds relationships with customers so that contemporary and future products meet customers' needs, aiding profit maximization. Within the highly competitive grocery retail industry, customer orientation for front-facing workers comprises a key component of the overall customer orientation strategy. Customers judge retail organizations by point-of-sale transactions and may make future purchasing decisions based upon experiences at checkout (Siddiqi, 2013).

Leadership actions directly contribute to outcomes of point-of-sale interactions through effective subordinate development (Iyer & Johlke, 2015). Maximizing employee empowerment engenders increased customer orientation within subordinates. The

traditional use of transactional rewards, even in low-skilled workers, may diminish or suppress positive job-related outcomes. Instead, managers should focus on enabling psychological empowerment within employees at all levels of the organizational hierarchy. The findings of this study support the notion that frontline workers with minimal education and limited scope of work respond favorably to internal efforts by leaders to psychologically empower subordinate workers.

Managers who develop trust with subordinates through positive social exchanges enhance meaning at work (Kang et al., 2012). Workers who experience meaning at work within the studied organization generate enhanced customer orientation. Organizational leadership may highlight core values of customer orientation and seek value alignment between the organization and workers. When workers experience an alignment of organizational values and individual values, meaningfulness at work ensues. Most employees work within the community they live, so a consideration of external community stakeholders may also generate meaning at work (Lavin, 2012; Whitaker & Westerman, 2014). Retail organizations that ascribe to a strategy of community involvement may induce employees to experience further meaningfulness. A feeling of meaningfulness demonstrably results in additional customer orientation for frontline employees.

Organizational leaders endeavoring to increase customer orientation may also increase workers' perceived influence on the organization. Participative decision-making emotionally engages employees in the firm and increases employees' internal feelings of importance (Wang et al., 2013). Participative decision-making leads to increased

productivity and creativity for job-related challenges. Within frontline workers in retail, job-related challenges include interacting with customers on a continual basis. Workers experiencing regular customer feedback may devise novel solutions to improve customer experiences. Participative decision-making enables the consideration of employee generated customer-centric solutions by higher-level organizational decision makers.

Even in some necessary bureaucratic procedures within retail, organizational leaders may enact relatively modest solutions proposed by junior workers, enabling increased feelings of influence (Gkorezis & Petridou, 2012). Worker-generated solutions could extend to work processes by the employees and actual point-of-sale interactions. Workers who possess high levels of influence experience greater levels of customer orientation and may be afforded latitude to respond directly to customer-related challenges in an autonomous manner. The allowance of appropriate levels of autonomy, accompanied by accountability, could raise workers' perceived levels of influence within their sphere of operations. Elevated levels of influence lead to greater customer orientation and may impart a feedback loop with certain employees. As employees develop customer-centric solutions, levels of influence increase, increasing customer orientation and desire to satisfy customer needs, increasing desire to find customer-centric solutions, and so on.

Highly competent employees possess greater levels of customer orientation and can respond quickly to adverse customer interactions (Jha 2013; Kang et al., 2012). Although self-efficacy positively related to customer orientation, the benefits of increasing self-efficacy may result in diminishing returns should organizational leaders

attempt to maximize worker competence on individuals who already possess a mastery of job-specific skills. Low-skilled employees gain a great deal of competence and self-efficacy relatively quickly through effective job-training, so additional efforts of maximizing competency may be unnecessary.

Despite quick benefits of job training in certain frontline specialties, managers within retail should exercise caution when moving employees to a position with little to no experience or training. Workers without competence who lack sufficient oversight could negatively affect worker attitudes toward customers (Radel et al., 2013). Therefore, leadership should set competence as the initial priority for new workers. The leadership empowerment behaviors of training and skill-development are crucial for individuals in new positions. Once leaders establish worker competence, the behaviors associated with self-directed decision-making, coaching, and accountability may be incorporated to move the employee through the empowerment process further.

The weak moderating relationship of education may be a result of job-specific skill requirements. Approximately 97% of the survey participants possessed a high school diploma or higher educational attainment. Additional education generates benefits for employees in terms of professional status and ability to innovate in current roles (Gilbert, 2012; Salinas-Jimenez et al., 2013). The organizational structure and job-related skills may not necessitate high levels of education to provide additional benefits with respect to psychological empowerment and customer orientation. When evaluating front-line workers for hiring, organizational leaders may wish to focus on capacity to

learn rather than attained education level. A capacity-to-learn focus may facilitate a more expeditious movement within the previously described self-efficacy construct.

In contrast to extant research, tenure negatively affected the model between customer orientation and psychological empowerment. The negative finding may be a function of the individual employee, the leader, or the organizational climate. The negative tenure findings potentially resulted from the breaking of trust between the employee and the supervisor. Trust is a component of every dimension of psychological empowerment and a primary contributor to employee job satisfaction (Erturk, 2012). Further, a potential exists that employees lack buy-in concerning any new corporate strategies. Tenured employees may believe that legacy solutions were optimal, and any new strategic directions are unwarranted and result in a perceived loss of influence within the organization (Lie et al., 2011; Subramaniam & Moslehi, 2013). On an employee level, a long-tenured frontline employee could experience greater levels of competence early on, but then fail to develop the needed meaning or influence with the company. A lack of self-actualization may result in a negative impact on psychological empowerment and customer orientation, as the employee develops negative attitudes toward work.

The scope of this study inhibited the determination of the underlying causes for the negative relationship between tenure, psychological empowerment, and customer orientation, although there are some solutions that could potentially improve tenured workers' experiences. Constant and open communication enables employees to feel they have a voice in ongoing management determinations and establishes trust between leaders and subordinate (Chan et al., 2015; Tsirikas & Katsaros, 2014). The

communication should include how organizational strategy benefits individual workers, such as through charitable work for communities. Despite the regimented scope of some employees' daily duties, managers should think creatively to empower employees to come up with organizational improvements. Internal messengers should communicate employee-facilitated solutions throughout the organization as examples of potential employee influence. Managers could also develop innovative reward structures for tenured employees, as transactional rewards may be suboptimal for some employees. Finally, organizations should publicize charitable contributions at the individual unit level to generate meaning at work for employees who live in the community.

Implications for Social Change

When analyzed within the social change paradigm, psychological empowerment of subordinates may generate multiple advantages within and external to the company. A commitment to employee psychological empowerment improves organizational citizenship behavior throughout the organization (Chan et al., 2015). Employees who possess increased organizational citizenship behavior are more altruistic, conscientious, and courteous. Further, as leadership fosters psychological empowerment within subordinate workers, employees are less likely to place self-interest above organizational goals, resulting in fewer value conflicts between members and the organization.

Another aspect of positive social change that may result from this study involves the recommendation for community engagement. Organizations should understand that workers are members of individual communities (Whitaker & Westerman, 2014). For workers to experience maximum meaningfulness in work, the organization should

demonstrate that organizational goals encompass more than profits. Investing in individual communities provides opportunities for workers to gain meaning when the investment occurs in the workers' communities. In the focus of this study, community involvement results in a win-win-win situation for the community, worker, and company. The community reaps the rewards of charitable contribution. The worker incurs greater meaningfulness at work, increasing customer orientation and other job-related outcomes, and the employer gains positive standing within the community coupled with employees who enjoy working for the organization.

Recommendations for Action

Organizational leaders within the retail grocery industry potentially benefit from the results of this study. Anselmsson and Johansson (2014) describe the necessity for grocers in the modern industry to differentiate by service. The pursuit of customer oriented policies to enhance job performance for customer-facing employees enables differentiation of traditional supermarkets from both hypermarkets and discount retailers. Firms operating within the retail grocery industry may realize a competitive advantage from differentiation by service.

The findings of this study suggest psychological empowerment of subordinates is a primary avenue to increase customer orientation. Many opportunities exist to increase psychological empowerment in subordinates. Hiring agents should evaluate individual hires, to the extent possible by workforce pool, for customer-friendly traits. Also, hiring managers should assess aptitude for customer orientation because of natural predispositions for individuals to be more congenial and more empathic based upon

learned and genetic traits (Bagozzi et al., 2012). Managers may wish to identify a suitable capacity to learn to ensure individuals interacting with customers can readily gain competence at assigned tasks.

Upon hiring, unit training managers should conduct intensive training and skill-development programs to produce competence rapidly among frontline forward-facing employees. Forward-facing workers include cashiers, deli workers, bakers, and other individuals that may interact with customers regularly. Once employees possess a high level of self-efficacy within the position, frontline leaders may adjust the leadership style to more of a coaching and mentoring role. During the coaching and mentoring, leadership should welcome feedback and sagaciously forward worker proposals for possible action by the business unit or organization. Soliciting and forwarding of worker feedback may result in increased perceived influence, enhancing psychological empowerment and diminishing negative effects of tenure on frontline workers.

Organizational leaders should foster a culture of trust and communication that permeates to the frontline workers and frontline supervisors. Employee trust in leadership enhances or diminishes psychological empowerment and associated job-related productivity (Hossein et al., 2012). Further, leaders should encourage lower-level subordinates to innovate within their individual sphere of influence and within established corporate guidelines. Modestly innovative actions within a structured bureaucracy may still result in employees finding meaning and increasing psychological empowerment (Pan et al., 2012).

Finally, organizational leaders can target corporate social responsibility initiatives to store levels, or allow local managers to innovate charitable contributions to the community. A focus on the micro enables employees to gain meaning because the employees' place of work becomes part of the community. A community-oriented focus also contributes to value alignment between the organization and the worker. A worker whose values align with the employer experiences a feeling of empowerment, which increases customer orientation in frontline workers.

Organizational strategic planning could incorporate the aforementioned action steps. As part of the strategic plan, human resource managers could tailor hiring practices for identification of capacity-to-learn and empathic traits. Additionally, training and leadership development managers could incorporate the recommendations regarding on-the-job training and employee feedback into regular training regimens. Internal public affairs personnel could identify opportunities to highlight employee influence during regular bulletins. Finally, organizational leaders could stress trust and open communication as part of any total quality management initiatives.

Recommendations for Further Research

The efforts within this study continued the academic investigation into the positive effects of psychological empowerment on job-related factors, including customer orientation. A primary area for exploration in light of the study concerns the inverse relationship with tenure in the participant population. A time-lagged study could identify if organizational factors or employee specific factors cause the phenomenon. For instance, are those who stay in a certain position in the grocery industry more apt to

experience less customer orientation from the onset, does the organizational culture diminish customer orientation as time progresses, or does a combination of factors exist. A time-lagged study could also reinforce the competence to meaning or influence recommendations for empowering employees, perhaps using a structural empowerment questionnaire to track internalization of external empowerment initiatives.

Further studies could also address the limitations above. An examination of other retail grocery chains could allow for further generalization of the findings. Matching surveys of customers could provide a more robust view of individual customer orientation to determine if internal assessments match the perception of customers. Future studies could also incorporate business unit profitability to determine if psychologically empowered and customer orientated employees translate into profitability among diverse business units. A future study could also examine the effects of rising minimum wages by state to determine if wage increases enhance empowerment among employees across states with varying minimum wages.

Reflections

The germination of this study began with wondering how leaders may motivate workers in frontline service industries, such as groceries, gas stations, and convenience markets. Most extant research involves motivating employees to produce innovation in high-tech, high-skilled industries. With that question in mind, I embarked on the journey of discovery, identifying the construct of psychological empowerment that became an academic focus for the better part of two years.

Throughout the journey, the development of novel ways to motivate frontline workers served as my focus. I found no singular path existed that illuminated employee motivation based upon industry or position within the organizational hierarchy. Instead, I found that workers, in general, all wish the same thing: to have meaningful work; say in their working lives; and to be good at what they do. Depending on the specific situation, these three desires can take on a myriad of forms and can change by the month, week, or day. Leaders are the conduit to maximizing the potential of their employees, and leaders should expend significant effort toward that aim.

I believe this study meets the original question of how to motivate a workforce that everyone encounters in his or her daily lives. Invariably this study will fall short in certain aspects, which is the greatness of social sciences. Answers now lead to more questions later. However, I hope that this study assists current leaders in some way or fashion. My leadership skills undoubtedly improved, as I discovered that the leadership process is never complete, and continuous learning is the domain of the leader as much as any follower.

Conclusion

Within the grocery industry, traditional supermarkets continually face market challenges from a variety of competitors. Providing quality customer service produces a variety of competitive advantages and provides a path for traditional grocery firms to differentiate from competitors. Improved customer service involves leveraging human capital to engender customer loyalty and satisfaction. Initiatives to focus human capital toward customer orientation should include leadership actions imparting a sense of

intrinsic motivation. A primary means that leaders use to instill intrinsic motivation involves psychological empowerment.

This quantitative study focused on the use of psychological empowerment to influence customer orientation. The findings support the conclusions of extant literature that psychological empowerment effectively motivates frontline workers in retails firms, enhancing employee customer orientation. The use of dimensions of psychological empowerment generated unique insights into the linkages between psychological empowerment, demographics, and customer orientation. Application of this study may enable human capital improvements to customer service that facilitates differentiation from competitors and improves business performance.

References

Adams, K., & Lawrence, E. (2015). R*esearch methods, statistics, and applications*.

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Afsar, B., Badir, Y. F., & Bin Saeed, B. (2014). Transformational leadership and

innovative work behavior. *Industrial Management & Data Systems, 114*, 1270-

1300. doi:10.1108/IMDS-05-2014-0152

Aiken, L. S., & West, S. G. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting*

interactions. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Alipour, F., & Karimi, R. (2011). Mediation role of innovation and knowledge transfer in

the relationship between learning organization and organizational performance.

International Journal of Business and Social Science, *2*, 144-147. Retrieved from

http://www.ijbssnet.com

Allwood, C. M. (2012). The distinction between qualitative and quantitative research

methods is problematic. *Quality and Quantity*, *46*, 1417–1429.

doi:10.1007/s11135-011-9455-8

Alsemgeest, L., & Smit, A. V. (2013). The contribution of business units to overall

company customer satisfaction and profitability. *Journal of Applied Business*

Research, 29, 1093-1102. doi:10.19030/jabr.v29i4.7918

Ambad, S., & Bahron, A. (2012). Psychological empowerment: The influence on

organizational commitment among employees in the construction sector. *Journal*

of Global Business Management, *8*(2), 73–81. Retrieved from

http://www.jgbm.org/

Anaza, N. A., & Rutherford, B. (2012). How organizational and employee-customer identification, and customer orientation affect job engagement. *Journal of Service Management*, *23*, 616–639. doi:10.1108/09564231211269801

Anisimova, T. (2010). Corporate brand: The company-customer misalignment and its performance implications. *Journal of Brand Management*, *17*, 488–503. doi:10.1057/bm.2010.7

Anselmsson, J., & Johansson, U. (2014). A comparison of customer perceived service quality in discount versus traditional grocery stores: An examination of service quality measurement scales in a Swedish context. *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, *6*, 369-386. doi:10.1108/IJQSS-03-2013-0012

Appiah-Adu, K., & Singh, S. (1998). Customer orientation and performance: A study of SMEs. *Management Decision*, *36*, 385–394. doi:10.1108/00251749810223592

Avery, D. R., Wang M., Volpone, S. D., & Zhou, L. (2013). Different strokes for different folks: The impact of sex dissimilarity in the empowerment-performance relationship. *Personnel Psychology*, *66*, 757–784. doi:10.1111/peps.12032

Bagozzi, R. P., Verbeke, W. J., van den Berg, W. E., Rietdijk, W. J., Dietvorst, R. C., & Worm, L. (2012). Genetic and neurological foundations of customer orientation: Field and experimental evidence. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *40*, 639-658. doi:10.1007/s11747-011-0271-4

Bal, P. M., De Cooman, R., & Mol, S. T. (2013). Dynamics of psychological contracts with work engagement and turnover intention: The influence of organizational

tenure. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *22*(1), 107–122. doi:10.1080/1359432X.2011.626198

Balas, A. N., Colakoglu, S. N., & Gokus, O. (2012). Examining the relationship between the three components of market orientation and innovativeness in export ventures. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship*, *16*, 1–17. Retrieved from http://www.alliedacademies.org/

Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectation*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Bateman, C., & Valentine, S. (2015). The impact of salesperson customer orientation on the evaluation of a salesperson's ethical treatment, trust in the salesperson, and intentions to purchase. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, *35*(2), 125-142. doi:10.1080/08853134.2015.1010538

Bernabe, R., Van Thiel, G., Raaijmakers, J., & Van Delden, J (2012). The risk-benefit task of research ethics committees: An evaluation of current approaches and the need to incorporate decision studies methods. *BMC Medical Ethics, 13*(6), 1-9. doi:10.1186/1472-6939-13-6

Brady, M. K., Voorhees, C. M., & Brusco, M. J. (2012). Service sweethearting: Its antecedents and customer consequences. *Journal of Marketing*, *76*(2), 81–98. doi:10.1509/jm.09.0420

Brumm, C. A., & Drury, S. (2013). Leadership that empowers: How strategic planning relates to followership. *Engineering Management Journal*, *25*(4), 17–32. Retrieved from http://www.asem.org/asemweb-emj

Brutus, S., Herman, A., & Wassmer, U. (2013). Self-reported limitations and future directions in scholarly reports: Analysis and recommendations. *Journal of Management, 39*, 48-75. doi:10.1177/0149206312455245

Bulmer, M. G. (1979). *Principles of statistics*. New York, NY: Dover.

Chan, Y. H., Taylor, R. R., & Markham, S. (2008). The role of subordinates' trust in a social exchange-driven psychological empowerment process. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, *20*, 444–467. Retrieved from http://www.pittstate.edu/department/economics/journal-of-managerial-issues

Chan, Y. H., Nadler, S. S., & Hargis, M. B. (2015). Attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of employees' psychological empowerment: A structural equation modeling approach. *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communication and Conflict, 19*(1), 24-41. Retrieved from http://www.alliedacademies.org/journal-of-organizational-culture-communications-and-conflict/

Cheung, M. F., & To, W. (2012). How does customer motivational orientation affect satisfaction? *Journal of Financial Services Marketing, 17*, 135–147. doi:10.1057/fsm.2012.11

Cho, T., & Faerman, S. R. (2010). An integrative approach to empowerment: Construct definition, measurement, and validation. *Public Management Review, 12*(1), 33-51. doi:10.1080/14719030902798610

Chrobot-Mason, D., & Aramovich, N. P. (2013). The psychological benefits of creating an affirming climate for workplace diversity. *Group & Organization Management*, *38*, 659–689. doi:10.1177/1059601113509835

Cohen, J., Cohen, P., West, S. G., & Aiken, L. S. (2003). *Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences* (3rd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Coley, L. S., Mentzer, J. T., & Cooper, M. C. (2010). Is "consumer orientation" a dimension of market orientation in consumer markets? *Journal of Marketing Theory & Practice*, *18*, 141–154. doi:10.2753/MTP1069-6679180203

Courtemanche, C., & Carden, A. (2014). Competing with Costco and Sam's club: Warehouse club entry and grocery prices. *Southern Economic Journal, 80*, 565-585. doi:10.4284/0038-4038-2012.135

Cronbach, L. J., & Meehl, P. E. (1955). Construct validity in psychological tests. *Psychological Bulletin*, *52*, 281-297. doi:10.1037/h0040957

Deb, M., & Lomo-David, E. (2013). Critical analysis of seller-customer bonding: Perception, retention, orientation and status. *Journal of Management Policy and Practice*, *14*, 90–104. Retrieved from http://www.na-businesspress.com/jmppopen

DelVecchio, S. K., Deeter-Schmelz, D. R., & Anselmi, K. (2013). Big brother or big bother? E-monitoring the salesforce. *The Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, *28*, 288–302. doi:10.1108/08858621311313893

Donavan, D. T., & Hocutt, M. A. (2001). Customer evaluation of service employee's customer orientation: Extension and application. *Journal of Quality Management*, *6*, 293-306. doi:10.1016/S1084-8568(01)00041-4

Donavan, D. T., Brown, T. J., & Mowen, J. C. (2004). Internal benefits of service-worker customer orientation: Job satisfaction, commitment, and organizational

citizenship behaviors. *Journal of Marketing*, *68*, 128–146.

doi:10.1509/jmkg.68.1.128.24034

Dunham, A. H., & Burt, C. D. (2011). Organizational memory and empowerment.

Journal of Knowledge Management, *15*, 851–868.

doi:10.1108/13673271111174366

Ertürk, A. (2012). Linking psychological empowerment to innovation capability:

Investigating the moderating effect of supervisory trust. *International Journal of*

Business and Social Science, *3*(14), 153-165. Retrieved from

http://www.ijbssnet.com

Fang, M., & Gerhart, B. (2012). Does pay for performance diminish intrinsic interest?

International Journal of Human Resource Management, *23*, 1176–1196.

doi:10.1080/09585192.2011.561227

Fitzgerald, J., Sullivan, G., & Đokić, B. (2012). Customer orientation and business

performance in community banks: A five year comparison. *Singidunum Journal*

of Applied Sciences, 9(2), 9–13. doi:10.5937/sjas1202009F

Foreman, J., Donthu, N., Henson, S., & Poddar, A. (2014). The performance implications

of planning, implementation, and evolution of firms' customer and competitor

orientations. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, *22*, 349–365.

doi:10.2753/MTP1069-6679220401

Fowler, J. (2014). *Survey research methods* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Sage.

Fung, Y., Cheung, M., & Wai, M.T. (2015). Do task- and relation-oriented customers co-create a better quality of service? An empirical study of customer-dominant logic. *Management Decision, 53,* 179-197. doi:10.1108/MD-05-2014-0252

Garg, R., Rahman, Z., Qureshi, M. N., & Kumar, I. (2012). Identifying and ranking critical success factors of customer experience in banks. *Journal of Modeling in Management*, *7*, 201–220. doi:10.1108/17465661211242813

Gazzoli, G., Hancer, M., & Kim, B. (2013). Explaining why employee-customer orientation influences customers' perceptions of the service encounter. *Journal of Service Management*, *24*, 382–400. doi:10.1108/JOSM-09-2012-0192

Gazzoli, G., Hancer, M., & Park, Y. (2012). Employee empowerment and customer orientation: Effects on workers' attitudes in restaurant organizations. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, *13*(1), 1–25. doi:10.1080/15256480.2012.640180

Gilbert, D. H. (2012). From chalk and talk to walking the walk. *Education & Training, 54*, 152-166. doi:10.1108/00400911211210260

Gkorezis, P., & Petridou, E. (2012). The effect of extrinsic rewards on public and private sector employees' psychological empowerment: A comparative approach. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *23*, 3596–3612. doi:10.1080/09585192.2011.639025

Goebel, D. J., Deeter-Schmelz, D. R., & Kennedy, K. N. (2013). Effective sales management: What do sales people think? *Journal of Marketing Development and Competitiveness*, *7*(2), 11–22. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-10912-1_4

Gohar, F. R., Bashir, M., Abrar, M., & Asghar, F. (2015). Effect of psychological empowerment, distributive justice and job autonomy on organizational commitment. *International Journal of Information, Business and Management*, *7*(1), 144–173. Retrieved from http://www.jitbm.com

Goussinsky, R. (2012). Coping with customer aggression. *Journal of Service Management*, *23*, 170–196. doi:10.1108/09564231211226105

Green, S., & Salkind, N. (2014). *Using spss for Windows and Macintosh* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle, NJ: Pearson Education Limited.

Hargis, M. B., Watt, J. D., & Piotrowski, C. (2011). Developing leaders: Examining the role of transactional and transformational leadership across contexts business. *Organization Development Journal*, *29*(3), 51–66. Retrieved from http://www.theisod.org

Hong, P., Yang, M., Dobrzykowski, D. (2014). Strategic customer service orientation, lean manufacturing practices and performance outcomes: An empirical study. *Journal of Service Management, 25*, 699 – 723. doi:10.1108/JOSM-12-2013-0355

Hossein, D. H., Saleh, P. A., Iman, A. M., & Jaafar, A. (2012). An analysis of the empowerment level of employees and its relation to organizational factors. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, *3*(15), 255-263. Retrieved from http://www.ijbssnet.com

Huhtala, J. P., Sihvonen, A., Frösén, J., Jaakkola, M., & Tikkanen, H. (2014). Market orientation, innovation capability and business performance: Insights from the

global financial crisis. *Baltic Journal of Management*, *9*(2), 134-152. doi:10.1108/BJM-03-2013-0044

Ismail, K. M., Richard, O. C., & Taylor, E. C. (2012). Relationship conflict in supervisor-subordinate dyads: A subordinate perspective. *International Journal of Conflict Management, 23*, 192-218. doi:10.1108/10444061211218302

Iyer, R., & Johlke, M. C. (2015). The role of external customer mind-set among service employees. *The Journal of Services Marketing, 29*(1). doi:10.1108/JSM-09-2013-0237

Jaramillo, F., Mulki, J. P., Onyemah, V., & Pesquera, M. R. (2012). Salesperson resistance to change: An empirical investigation of antecedents and outcomes. *The International Journal of Bank Marketing*, *30*(7), 548–566. doi:10.1108/02652321211274318

Jeon, H., & Choi, B. (2012). The relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction. *The Journal of Services Marketing*, *26*, 332–341. doi:10.1108/08876041211245236

Jha, S. (2013). Managerial practices, transformational leadership, customer satisfaction and self-efficacy as antecedents of psychological empowerment: A study of Indian IT sector. *Journal of Management Research, 13*(2), 105-117. Retrieved from http://www.macrothink.org/journal/index.php/jmr/

Kaltcheva, V. D., Winsor, R. D., & Parasuraman, A. (2010). The impact of customers' relational models on price-based defection. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, 18*(1), 5–22. doi:10.2753/MTP1069-6679180101

Kang, D., Stewart, J., Kim, H., & Lim, J. (2012). Unravelling the impact of psychological empowerment on customer service behaviors as a consequence of leader-member exchange. *Service Industries Journal*, *32*, 1791–1809. doi:10.1080/02642069.2011.559540

Kasemsap, K. (2013). Strategic business management: A practical framework and causal model of empowering leadership, team cohesion, knowledge-sharing behavior, and team performance. *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, *4*(3), 100–106. Retrieved from http://www.springer.com/economics/growth/journal/40847

Kassim, Z. A., Yusoff, I. Y. M., & Fong, N. L. (2012). Job empowerment and customer orientation of bank employees in Kuching, Malaysia. *Contemporary Management Research*, *8*, 131–140. doi:10.7903/cmr.v8i2.11048

Kazlauskaite, R., Buciuniene, I., & Turauskas, L. (2012). Organizational and psychological empowerment in the HRM-performance linkage. *Employee Relations*, *34*(2), 138–158. doi:10.1108/01425451211191869

Khan, M. T. (2013). Customers loyalty: Concept & definition (a review). *International Journal of Information, Business and Management, 5*, 168-191. Retrieved from http://ijibm.elitehall.com/

Kim, B., Lee, G., Murrmann, S. K., & George, T. R. (2012). Motivational effects of empowerment on employees' organizational commitment a mediating role of management trustworthiness. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, *53*(1), 10–19. doi:10.1177/1938965511426561

Kim, B., Losekoot, E., & Milne, S. (2013). Consequences of empowerment among

  restaurant servers. *Management Decision*, *51*, 781–794.

  doi:10.1108/00251741311326563

Kim, T., & Kim, M. (2013). Leaders' moral competence and employee outcomes: The

  effects of psychological empowerment and person-supervisor fit. *Journal of*

  Business Ethics, *112*(1), 155–166. doi:10.1007/s10551-012-1238-1

Korschun, D., Bhattacharya, C. B., & Swain, S. D. (2014). Corporate social

  responsibility, customer orientation, and the job performance of frontline

  employees. *Journal of Marketing*, *78*(3), 20-37. doi:10.1509/jm.11.0245

Lantz, B. (2013). Equidistance of Likert-type scales and validation of inferential methods

  using experiments and simulations. *Electronic Journal of Business Research*

  Methods, *10*, 16-28. Retrieved from http://www.ejbrm.com

Lapré, M. A. (2011). Reducing customer dissatisfaction: How important is learning to

  reduce service failure? *Production and Operations Management*, *20*, 491–507.

  doi:10.1111/j.1937-5956.2010.01149.x

Latif, K. F., & Baloch, Q. B. (2015). Role of internal service quality (ISQ) in the

  relationship between internal marketing and organizational performance. *Abasyn*

  University Journal of Social Sciences, *8*(2), 230-250. Retrieved from

  http://www.aupc.info/

Lavine, M. (2012). Exploring the relationship between corporate social performance and

  work meaningfulness. *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship, 46*, 53–70.

  doi:10.9774/gleaf.4700.2012.su.00005

Lee, W., Chen, C., & Lee, C. (2015). The relationship between internal marketing

   orientation, employee commitment, charismatic leadership and

   performance. *International Journal of Organizational Innovation (Online), 8*(2),

   67-78. Retrieved from http://www.ijoi-online.org

Li, C., Wu, K., Johnson, D. E., & Wu, M. (2012). Moral leadership and psychological

   empowerment in China. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *27*(1), 90–108.

   doi:10.1108/02683941211193875

Lin, L. (2013). Effects of psychological empowerment on organizational citizenship

   behavior in life insurance industry. *International Journal of Organizational*

   Innovation (Online), *6*(1), 119–127. Retrieved from http://www.ijoi-online.org

Lin, L., & Tseng, C. (2013). The influence of leadership behavior and psychological

   empowerment on job satisfaction. *International Journal of Organizational*

   Innovation (Online), *5*(4), 21–29. Retrieved from http://www.ijoi-online.org/

Lindsey-Hall, K. K., Baker, T. L., Andrews, M. C., Hunt, T. G., & Rapp, A. A. (2016).

   The importance of product/service quality for frontline marketing employee

   outcomes: The moderating effect of leader-member exchange (LMX). *Journal of*

   Marketing Theory & Practice, *24*(1), 23-41. doi:10.1080/10696679.2016.1089762

Liu, D., Zhang, S., Wang, L., & Lee, T. W. (2011). The effects of autonomy and

   empowerment on employee turnover: Test of a multilevel model in

   teams. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *96*, 1305-1316. doi:10.1037/a0024518

Malik, F., Chugtai, S., Iqbal, Z., & Ramzan, M. (2013). Does psychological

   empowerment bring about employee commitment? Evidence from

telecommunication sector of Pakistan. *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly*, *5*(1), 14–21. Retrieved from http://www.jbsq.org

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. (2016). *Designing qualitative research* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mathe, K., Scott-Halsell, S., & Roseman, M. (2013). The role of customer orientation in the relationship between manager communications and customer satisfaction. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research, 20*, 1-12. doi:10.1177/1096348013496278

Maynard, M. T., Luciano, M. M., D'Innocenzo, L., Mathieu, J. E., & Dean, M. D. (2014). Modeling time-lagged reciprocal psychological empowerment–performance relationships. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *99*, 1244–1253. doi:10.1037/a0037623

Men, L. R., & Stacks, D. W. (2013). The impact of leadership style and employee empowerment on perceived organizational reputation. *Journal of Communication Management*, *17*, 171–192. doi:10.1108/13632541311318765

Mende, M., Bolton, R. N., & Bitner, M. J. (2013). Decoding customer-firm relationships: How attachment styles help explain customers' preferences for closeness, repurchase intentions, and changes in relationship breadth. *Journal of Marketing Research, 50*(1), 125–142. doi:10.1509/jmr.10.0072

Michaelson, C., Pratt, M. G., Grant, A. M., & Dunn, C. P. (2014). Meaningful work: Connecting business ethics and organization studies. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *121*(1), 77–90. doi:10.1007/s10551-013-1675-5

Mirabella, J. (2011). Queuing in supermarkets: Satisfying customers at the point-of-sale. *The Business Review, Cambridge*, *18*(2), 52–59. Retrieved from http://www.jaabc.com/brc

Miranda-Silva, G., Gomes, P.,J., Filipe Lages, L., & Lopes Pereira, Z. (2014). The role of TQM in strategic product innovation: An empirical assessment. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management, 34*, 1307. doi:10.1108/IJOPM-03-2012-0098

Morgan, G. (1998). *Images of organizations: The executive edition*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Morrison, G., & Humlen, A. (2013). Retailing with purpose: How the pursuit of social responsibility can inspire and sustain retail growth and innovation. *Journal of Brand Strategy*, *2*(2), 155–169. Retrieved from http://www.henrystewartpublications.com/jbs

Mullins, R., & Syam, N. (2014). Manager–salesperson congruence in customer orientation and job outcomes: The bright and dark sides of leadership in aligning values. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, *34*(3), 188-205. doi:10.1080/08853134.2014.890905

Namasivayam, K., Guchait, P., & Lei, P. (2014). The influence of leader empowering behaviors and employee psychological empowerment on customer satisfaction. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 26*(1), 69-84. doi:10.1108/IJCHM-11-2012-0218

Nunes, P. F., Bellin, J., Lee, I., & Schunck, O. (2013). Converting the nonstop customer into a loyal customer. *Strategy & Leadership*, *41*(5), 48–53. doi:10.1108/SL-05-2013-0035

Nunnally, J. C. (1978). *Psychometric theory*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Pan, W., Sun, L., & Chow, I. H. S. (2012). Leader-member exchange and employee creativity: Test of a multilevel moderated mediation model. *Human Performance*, *25*, 432–451. doi:10.1080/08959285.2012.721833

Pantouvakis, A., & Bouranta, N. (2013). The link between organizational learning culture and customer satisfaction. *The Learning Organization*, *20*(1), 48–64. doi:10.1108/09696471311288528

Park, R., & Searcy, D. (2012). Job autonomy as a predictor of mental well-being: The moderating role of quality-competitive environment. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *27*, 305–316. doi:10.1007/s10869-011-9244-3

Pérez-Luño, A., & Cambra, J. (2013). Listen to the market: Do its complexity and signals make companies more innovative? *Technovation*, *33*, 180-192. doi:10.1016/j.technovation.2013.03.001

Pettijohn, C. E., Schaefer, A. D., & Burnett, M. S. (2014). Salesperson performance: Exploring the roles of role ambiguity, autonomy and self-efficacy. *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal*, *18*, 99-111. Retrieved from http://www.alliedacademies.org/academy-of-marketing-studies-journal

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and

recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *88*, 879-903.
doi:10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879

Pousa, C., & Mathieu, A. (2014). Boosting customer orientation through coaching: A
Canadian study. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, *32*(1), 60–81.
doi:10.1108/IJBM-04-2013-0031

Powell, S. M., Davies, M. A. P., & Norton, D. (2013). Impact of organizational climate
on ethical empowerment and engagement with corporate social responsibility
(CSR). *Journal of Brand Management*, *20*, 815–839. doi:10.1057/bm.2013.14

Prati, G., & Zani, B. (2013). The relationship between psychological empowerment and
organizational identification. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *41*, 851–866.
doi:10.1002/jcop.21578

Preacher, K. J., Curran, P. J., & Bauer, D. J. (2006). Computational tools for probing
interactions in multiple linear regression, multilevel modeling, and latent curve
analysis. *Journal of Educational and Behavioral Statistics*, *31*, 437-448.
doi:10.3102/10769986031004437

Punch, K. (2014). *Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative
approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Radel, R., Pelletier, L., & Sarrazin, P. (2013). Restoration processes after need thwarting:
When autonomy depends on competence. *Motivation and Emotion*, *37*, 234–244.
doi:10.1007/s11031-012-9308-3

Rajab, T., Kraus, F., & Wieseke, J. (2013). Resolving conflict over salespeople's brand adoption in franchised channels of distribution. *Review of Managerial Science, 7*, 443-473. doi:10.1007/s11846-012-0091-z

Rajeshwari, R. R., & Devaru, S. D. B. (2013). Customer service: A potential profit generator and a real concern of everyone in the organization. *International Journal of Management Research and Reviews*, *3*, 2469–2478. Retrieved from http://www.ijmrr.com

Ravazadeh, N., & Ravazadeh, A. (2013). The effect of transformational leadership on staff empowerment. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, *4*, 165-168. Retrieved from http://www.ijbssnet.com

Reinhardt, R., & Gurtner, S. (2011). Enabling disruptive innovations through the use of customer analysis methods. *Review of Managerial Science*, *5*, 291–307. doi:10.1007/s11846-011-0069-2

Ritter, B.A., Venkatraman, S., & Schlauch, C. (2014). A multi-level exploration of empowerment mediators. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 35*, 649-667. doi:10.1108/LODJ-07-2012-0085

Ross, S. (2014). A conceptual model for understanding the process of self-leadership development and action-steps to promote personal leadership development. *The Journal of Management Development, 33*, 299-323. doi:10.1108/JMD-11-2012-0147

Saad, N. M., Hassan, S. H., & Shya, L. M. (2015). Revisiting the relationship between internal marketing and external marketing: The role of customer orientation. *The*

Journal of Developing Areas, 49, 149-262. Retrieved from

http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_developing_areas

Saarijärvi, H., Kuusela, H., Neilimo, K., & Närvänen, E. (2014). Disentangling customer

orientation – executive perspective. *Business Process Management Journal*, *20*,

663–677. doi:10.1108/BPMJ-06-2013-0068

Salinas-Jiménez, M., Artés, J., & Salinas-Jiménez, J. (2013). How do educational

attainment and occupational and wage-earner statuses affect life satisfaction? A

gender perspective study. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 14*, 367-388.

doi:10.1007/s10902-012-9334-6

Salleh, M., & Grunewald, D. (2013). Organizational leadership - the strategic role of the

chief exec. *Journal of Leadership, Accountability and Ethics*, *10*(5), 9–20.

Retrieved from http://www.na-businesspress.com/jlaeopen

Sashi, C. M. (2012). Customer engagement, buyer-seller relationships, and social media.

Management Decision, *50*, 253–272. doi:10.1108/00251741211203551

Saxe, R., & Weitz, B. A. (1982). The SOCO scale: A measure of the customer orientation

of salespeople. *JMR, Journal of Marketing Research*, *19*, 343-351.

doi:10.2307/3151568

Seibert, S. E., Wang, G., & Courtright, S. H. (2011). Antecedents and consequences of

psychological and team empowerment in organizations: A meta-analytic review.

Journal of Applied Psychology, *96*, 981–1003. doi:10.1037/a0022676

Shugun, S. (2007). It's the findings, stupid, not the assumptions. *Marketing Science, 26*,

449-459. doi:10.1287/mksc.1080.0463

Siddiqi, M. A. (2013). Job resources as organizational support, organizational citizenship

behavior and customer satisfaction: Some evidences of linkage. *Journal of*

Services Research, *13*(2), 95–115. Retrieved from http://www.jsr.sagepub.com

Simon, M. K. (2011). *Dissertation and scholarly research: Recipes for success* (2011

ed.). Seattle, WA: Dissertation Success, LLC.

Singh, P. (2013). Influence of leaders' intrapersonal competencies on employee job

satisfaction. *The International Business & Economics Research Journal (Online)*,

12, 953-968. Retrieved from http://www.cluteinstitute.com/journals/international-

business-economics-research-journal-iber/

Solansky, S. (2014). Education and experience impact leadership development

psychological empowerment. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal,*

35, 637-648. doi:10.1108/LODJ-07-2012-0091

Sosik, J., Chun, J., & Zhu, W. (2014). Hang on to your ego: The moderating role of

leader narcissism on relationships between leader charisma and follower

psychological empowerment and moral identity. *Journal of Business Ethics*,

120(1), 65–80. doi:10.1007/s10551-013-1651-0

Spreitzer, G. M. (1995). Psychological empowerment in the workplace: Dimensions,

measurement, and validation. *Academy of Management Journal*, *38*(5), 1442.

doi:10.2307/256865

Subramaniam, I. D., & Moslehi, M. M. (2013). Does workforce innovation mediate the

relationship between internal factors and performance in Malaysian

entrepreneurial SMEs? *Asian Social Science*, *9*(9), 45–63.

doi:10.5539/ass.v9n9p45

Sun, N., Li, Q. J., Lv, D. M., Lin, P., Lu, G. Z., & An, X. M. (2011). The psychometric

properties of the Chinese version of the problem areas in psychological

empowerment scale (PES): Scale development. *Journal of Clinical Nursing, 20*,

369-376. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2702.2010.03519.x

Tacq, J. (2011). Causality in qualitative and quantitative research. *Quality and Quantity*,

45(2), 263–291. doi:10.1007/s11135-009-9293-0

Tsirikas, A. N., & Katsaros, K. K. (2014). Empowerment in the Greek public sector:

Evidence from top management executives. *Advances in Business-Related*

Scientific Research Journal, *5*(1), 67–81. Retrieved from http://www.absrc.org

Turte, S. L., Correa, M. E. C., da Luz, A. A., & Fischer, F. M. (2012). Harassment at

work? Empowerment and autonomy as coping strategies of young workers. *Work:*

A Journal of Prevention, Assessment and Rehabilitation, *41*, 5674–5676.

doi:10.3233/WOR-2012-0916-5674

Ugwu, F., Onyishi, E., & M. Rodríguez-Sánchez, A. (2014). Linking organizational trust

with employee engagement: The role of psychological empowerment. *Personnel*

Review, *43*, 377-400. doi:10.1108/PR-11-2012-0198

Valenzuela, L. M., Mulki, J. P., & Jaramillo, J. F. (2010). Impact of customer orientation,

inducements and ethics on loyalty to the firm: Customers' perspective. *Journal of*

Business Ethics, *93*(2), 277–291. doi:10.1007/s10551-009-0220-z

Wallace, J. C., Johnson, P. D., Mathe, K., & Paul, J. (2011). Structural and psychological empowerment climates, performance, and the moderating role of shared felt accountability: A managerial perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *96*, 840–850. doi:10.1037/a0022227

Walsh, M., Dupré, K., & Arnold, K. A. (2014). Processes through which transformational leaders affect employee psychological health. *German Journal of Research in Human Resource Management, 28*, 162–172. doi:10.1688/ZfP-2014-01-Walsh

Wang, J.-L., Zhang, D.J., & Jackson, L. A. (2013). Influence of self-esteem, locus of control, and organizational climate on psychological empowerment in a sample of Chinese teachers. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *43*, 1428–1435. doi:10.1111/jasp.12099

Wang, Y., & Feng, H. (2012). Customer relationship management capabilities. *Management Decision*, *50*(1), 115–129. doi:10.1108/00251741211194903

Whitaker, B. G., & Westerman, J. W. (2014). Linking spirituality and values to personal initiative through psychological empowerment. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, *11*, 269–291. doi:10.1080/14766086.2014.905221

Wright, C., & Franks, D. (2013, October). *The state of marketing 2013, IBM's global survey of marketers - United States*. Presented at the Proceeds from the 2013 Global Conference, Nashville, TN.

Yakasai, A. M., & Jan, M. T. (2015). The impact of big five personality traits on salespeople's performance: Exploring the moderating role of culture. *Kuwait*

Chapter of the Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review, 4(5), 11-
26. Retrieved from http://www.arabianjbmr.com

Yang, Y., & Konrad, A. M. (2011). Diversity and organizational innovation: The role of
employee involvement. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *32*(8), 1062–1083.
doi:10.1002/job.724

Zablah, A. R., Franke, G. R., Brown, T. J., & Bartholomew, D. E. (2012). How and when
does customer orientation influence frontline employee job outcomes? A meta-
analytic evaluation. *Journal of Marketing*, *76*(3), 21–40. doi:10.1509/jm.10.0231

Zeglat, D., Aljaber, M., & Alrawabdeh, W. (2014). Understating the impact of employee
empowerment on customer-oriented behavior. *Journal of Business Studies
Quarterly*, *6*, 55–67. Retrieved from http://www.jbsq.org

Zhu, W., Sosik, J. J., Riggio, R. E., & Yang, B. (2012). Relationships between
transformational and active transactional leadership and followers' organizational
identification: The role of psychological empowerment. *Journal of Behavioral
and Applied Management*, *13*, 186-212. Retrieved from http://www.ibam.com

Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study of how psychological empowerment affects customer orientation. The researcher is inviting frontline store workers and supervisors to be in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Christopher Nestico, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how empowerment affects customer orientation in frontline workers.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Take a survey lasting approximately 10-15 minutes
- Complete the survey as honestly and accurately as possible
- Return the questionnaire to the provided folder for collection

Here are some sample questions:

Please place a single "X" in the box that represents how you personally feel about the following statements:
> My work is important to me.
> My job activities are meaningful to me.
> I care about what I do on my job.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at your place of employment will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as stress or emotional discomfort from remembering adverse leadership or customer interactions. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing. As a result of this study, organizations may possess better insight on how to better empower employees and improve customer relation. The researcher will not falsify data or disclose private information to the public.

Payment:
You will not be paid for participation in this study. Your employer will allow you to complete the survey during your paid employment time.

Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept anonymous. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secured in a locked storage container, accessible only by the researcher. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via e-mail at christopher.nestico@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210 Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date.**

Please keep this consent form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By returning a completed survey I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Appendix B: Survey Questions

The following are the items contained in the surveys:

EMP Factor 1: Meaning

(EMP1)My work is important to me.

(EMP 2)My job activities are meaningful to me.

(EMP3) I care about what I do on my job.

EMP Factor 2: Self-efficacy

(EMP4) My job is well within my scope of my abilities

(EMP5) I am confident about my ability to do my job

(EMP6) I have mastered the skills to do my job

EMP Factor 3: Self-Determination

(EMP7) My opinion counts in group decision making.

(EMP8) I have freedom to determine how to do my job.

(EMP9) I have a chance to use personal initiative in my work.

EMP Factor 4: Impact

(EMP10) I have an influence over what happens in my work.

(EMP11) I decide on how to go about doing my job.

(EMP12) I have a great deal of control over my job.

Customer orientation (CO)

CO Factor 1: Need to pamper the customer.

(COPAMP1) I enjoy nurturing my customers.

(COPAMP2) I take pleasure in making every customer feel like he is the only one.

(COPAMP3) Every customer problem is important to me.

(COPAMP4) I thrive on giving individual attention to each customer.

CO Factor 2: Need to read the customer needs

(COREAD1) I naturally read the customers to identify his/her needs.

(COREAD2) I generally know what service customers want before they ask.

(COREAD3) I am inclined to read the customers body language to determine how much interaction to give.

CO Factor 3: Need for personal relationship

(CORELAT1) I enjoy remembering my customers' names.

(CORELAT2) I enjoy getting to know my customers personally.

CO Factor 4: Need to deliver the service

(CODELIV1) I enjoy delivering the intended services on time

(CODELIV2) I enjoy having the confidence to provide good service.

Gender

Age

Education level

Company tenure (how long have you worked for the company)

Industry experience

Workload (average hours per week)

Appendix C: Survey Instrument Request Correspondence

Request to use survey instrument

6 messages

Christopher Nestico <christopher.nestico@waldenu.edu>   Tue, Oct 7, 2014 at 7:28 PM
To: gazzoli.g@gmail.com

Hello, my name is Chris Nestico and I am a doctoral student in Walden University's DBA program. I am writing to inquire if you would be amiable to allowing me to use and modify your psychological empowerment and customer orientation survey instrument you utilized in the Effects of Worker Attitudes in Restaurant Organizations article. I came across your study while compiling articles in my literature review and observed your study closely mirrored my desired direction for my doctoral study. I am likely going to pose the same questions you posed, except in a grocery retailer.

I look forward to hearing from you and possibly gaining some insight on the concepts I'm spending the next year on!

Sincerely,

Christopher Nestico
DBA Candidate
11031 Cobbville Road
Adams, NY 13605
315-775-7913
christopher.nestico@waldenu.edu

Gabriel Gazzoli <gazzoli.g@gmail.com>   Tue, Oct 7, 2014 at 7:50 PM
To: Christopher Nestico <christopher.nestico@waldenu.edu>

Hi Chris thank you for your interest in my study. As long as you cite it appropriately I'm fine with it. If I can be of any assistance please let me know. Good luck, Gabriel.

Sent from my iPhone
[Quoted text hidden]

Christopher Nestico <christopher.nestico@waldenu.edu>   Wed, Oct 8, 2014 at 9:58 AM
To: Gabriel Gazzoli <gazzoli.g@gmail.com>

Gabriel,
Awesome! I really appreciate the prompt reply. There are a couple things my university requires In order to ensure the accuracy of the questions and your consent:

I see in the EFA table all of the constructs measured. Are these the questions your team asked on the 7 point scale? Would you be able to forward me a copy of the original survey?

Your assistance is very much appreciated. For your awareness, my study is attempting to gauge if any of the four elements of PE relate to a front-line workers in grocery, which is one of the few industries on-line retail hasn't dented in terms of individuals going to the store.

Thank you again,
Chris

Gabriel Gazzoli <gazzoli.g@gmail.com>   Thu, Oct 9, 2014 at 4:49 PM
To: Christopher Nestico <christopher.nestico@waldenu.edu>

Chris,

I cannot send you a copy of the original survey because I measured other things (stuff that I am working on right now). Please refer to the paper to ensure if constructs were measured on a 7-point, 5-point, 9-point scale - I really don't remember. Good luck with you study!

Gabriel

From: Christopher Nestico [mailto:christopher.nestico@waldenu.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, October 8, 2014 8:58 AM
To: Gabriel Gazzoli
Subject: Re: Request to use survey instrument

[Quoted text hidden]

Christopher Nestico <christopher.nestico@waldenu.edu>   Thu, Oct 9, 2014 at 8:05 PM
To: Gabriel Gazzoli <gazzoli.g@gmail.com>

Got and understand. Thank you much!
[Quoted text hidden]