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Employee Empowerment in Luxury Hotels in East Malaysia

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy in Tourism and Hospitality Department

at

The University of Waikato

by

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

2020

ABSTRACT

Employee Empowerment in Luxury Hotels in East Malaysia

Employee empowerment is a western-centric management philosophy which is commonly perceived as an effective means to boost service quality and operational productivity in the context of the hotel industry. However, the most effective methods for empowering hotel employees in different cultures and contexts are still debatable. This study explores empowerment within the insufficiently researched setting of East Malaysia. Specifically, this study examines the concept of empowerment from the perspective of hotel employees. This study also assesses empowerment practices and the perceived risks of empowerment and their relation to employee empowerment.

From a pragmatist worldview, an exploratory sequential mixed-methods approach was employed by performing an exploratory qualitative data collection and, subsequently, a quantitative study that surveyed hotel employees in East Malaysia.

For the qualitative study phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty hotel employees from different hierarchical positions and departments from various four and five star-rated hotels. The objective was to explore the notion of empowerment specific to the East Malaysia context and then to explore the empowerment practices and the perceived risk of empowerment. The qualitative findings reveal that employees perceived relevant information, formal power, and the empowering leader's role as significant dimensions of empowerment practices. The qualitative findings also uncover the elements of the perceived risk of empowerment (perceived financial, time, and social risk) to enrich the employee empowerment framework.

After integrating the findings from the qualitative study phase, the research framework, and hypotheses, a survey instrument was designed to assess the notion of empowerment and the relationship between empowerment practices, the perceived risk of empowerment and employee empowerment. A questionnaire was distributed to hotel employees of luxury hotels in East Malaysia, and the data (250 responses) analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and SmartPLS for Partial Least Square-Structured Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results show that many (42.4%) of the participants view empowerment as involving power and control and extra responsibilities, while 21.2% of the participants see empowerment as a delegation of authority that enables them to make decisions. Two other definitions of empowerment, as a career motivation tool and a managerial term to add workload, recorded 10.8% and 13.2% respectively, while 12.4% of participants were not sure of the meaning of the term. Employees' view of empowerment varies based on their position in the organisation. Almost half of the entry-level employees view empowerment as power and control. Those at the supervisor level tend to perceive empowerment as a career development tool while higher managerial levels view empowerment as a delegation of authority.

The findings of this study expand the Western notion of employee empowerment by taking into account the East-Malaysia high-power distance culture which influences hotel employees' perception of empowerment. This study also explores the perceived risk of empowerment concept by suggesting that financial, time and social risks mediate the relationship between empowerment practices and employee empowerment.

Theoretically, this study has designed and tested the concept of the perceived risk of empowerment which distinguishes this research from existing knowledge. This study has developed an empowerment framework specifically for hotels in East Malaysia which could also be of value to hotel and human resource managers when assessing the value of empowerment strategies across various cultural environments similar to that of East Malaysia.

The limitations of this study and potential future research opportunities are discussed.

Keywords: Employee empowerment, perceived risk, hotel employees, luxury hotel, East Malaysia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the name of Allah, the most beneficent, the most merciful, Alhamdulillah for His blessing in lending me His strength and persistence to pursue and complete this study. The study was successfully completed is because of the support and guidance of those closely engaged with me throughout this journey.

My highest appreciation to my chief supervisor, Associate Professor Dr Asad Mohsin for his exceptional mentorship and his continual support, guidance, and dedication. He inspired me to keep on moving towards reaching our goals and I am always thankful and indebted to him for his efforts and guidance. Dear Professor Dr Chris Ryan and Dr Jorge Lengler, my co-supervisors, thank you for your exceptional guidance and constructive advice, which guided me through the fundamentals of this study. To all my wonderful supervisors, thank you for never giving up on me, and believing in me when I had my doubts.

I would like to acknowledge my employer, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and the Malaysia Ministry of Higher Education and Universiti Malaysia Sabah for financial support and assistance during this journey. To the Malaysian Association of Hotels, Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board and hundreds of hoteliers from various hotels in Sabah and Sarawak, I sincerely appreciate the kind support and precious time you gave to this study.

Thanks to all the academic and administrative staff at the Waikato Management School and Postgraduate Studies department at the University of Waikato for their generous support. I would like to mention Professor Kay Weaver, Heather Morrell, James Corner, Amanda Sircombe, Grant Harris, Nadia Gush and Emma Juggins: thank you all for the support and kind assistance.

My amazing colleagues and friends in the University of Waikato: Yana Wengel, Nazarina Jamil, Yoo Hye Kyung, and Syeliya Md Zaini, as well as my colleagues in Universiti Malaysia Sabah: Rostika Petrus Boroh, Borhan Sareya, Oscar Dousin, Shafinaz Naim, Alvin Rajah Thurairajah, Wira Ngui, Raman Noordin, Kasim Mansur, and Arif@Kamisan Pusiran. Thank you for your companionship and encouragement on this journey. All the chit-chats and shopping break were vital to keeping a balance in our life as a PhD student. I hope our companionship and friendship will last forever; we are comrades.

To my beloved husband, Amirshah Idris, for his enormous understanding and constant emotional support during this journey. No words can express how truly grateful I am for having him throughout this challenging journey. My ultimate acknowledgement is to my most wonderful parents Andi Kele Sangiang and Patmawati Kadiri, for their love, sacrifice and never-ending prayers for me to achieve a PhD. Thank you for always believing in me, for still being there for me, and for being my Etta and Mama.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Employee Empowerment in Luxury Hotels in East Malaysia

“To free someone from rigorous control... and to give that person freedom to take responsibility for his ideas, decisions, and actions, is to release hidden resources that would otherwise remain inaccessible to both the individual and the organisation.”

Jan Carlzon, former CEO of SAS (Scandinavian Airlines System)
describing the concept of empowerment

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the study and begins with an outline of the research highlighting the notion of empowerment in the hotel industry in East Malaysia. The significance of empowerment practices, as well as the perceived risk of empowerment and employee empowerment practices are discussed. The chapter also presents the research objectives, research questions and as well as a description of the methodological research methods supporting this study. The chapter concludes by outlining the structure of the study and by explaining the purpose and contents of each chapter.

1.2 The Study

The current trend of the world economy is moving towards service-oriented organisations, and the service sector has become extremely competitive, especially when it involves guest service delivery. Guests now have more choice than ever before to choose the services they desired (George, 2018). Employees in a service organisation with direct guest interaction represent that organisation. The organisation basically is assessed its service quality and guest contentment, and both are influenced by employees performance. Bowen and Lawler (1995) argue that the relationship between employer and employee, especially in the service industry, should be transformed to echo the effect of the dynamic relationship between employees and guests. This suggests that empowered employees can offer exceptional service quality to guests, which in turn can be a competitive advantage for the organisation (Enz, 2009).

Guest service delivery requires fast and flexible responses as employees need to make instant decisions and respond in “real-time” (Kim, Lee, & Jang, 2017). Empowerment establishes the organisation's obligation to uphold its employees'

interests, especially in the service context. When employees perceive that the organisation attends to their needs, they, in turn, will better serve their guests. Employee empowerment can have financial rewards for an organisation. Time can be saved by empowering employees to operate with some discretion. By promptly solving an issue, the severity of that issues decreases and allows for service recovery. Employees need immediate feedback and the ability to learn from the experience if they make any mistakes. As guests demand a faster, higher quality service delivery and quality from the hotel, management relies on employee empowerment for solutions (Kim et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, despite the attention given to empowerment during the last few decades, the notion of empowerment remains an issue of debate (Cierniak-Emerych & Piwowar-Sulej, 2017; Greasley et al., 2005; Idris, See, & Coughlan, 2018; Stone & Grønhaug, 1993). Empowerment is claimed to have different meanings within the universal agreement on a definition (Maynard, Gilson, & Mathieu, 2012; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). The many definitions of empowerment made it challenging to describe and led to many interpretations by researchers (Greasley et al., 2008; Herrenkohl, Judson, & Heffner, 1999; Hewagama, Boxall, Cheung, & Hutchison, 2019). In the literature, there are three prominent approaches to empowerment: structural, leadership and psychological approaches (Abel & Hand, 2018).

The structural approach views empowerment from an organisational perspective. It regards empowerment as a measure taken by the organisation to share power and making choices which are mainly concerned with the authority delegation (Boudrias, Gaudreau, Savoie, & Morin, 2009). The leadership approach emphasises the energising part of empowerment. Leaders energise their followers by supporting, coaching, and trusting employees to become empowered. Psychological empowerment is a motivational approach based on Bandura's ideas of self-efficacy and focuses on four cognitive components: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact (Menon, 2001; Spreitzer, 1995). It emphasises the individual level and experience of empowerment, i.e. the individual's impression of effective interventions rather than management practices designed to motivate individuals (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Due to the nature and the process of empowerment, there has been criticism of the structural approach for its shortcomings. The approach mainly fails to discuss the cognitive condition or state of minds of those empowered (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). It is claimed that empowerment occurs if individuals believe that they are empowered (Greasley et al., 2008). According to Menon (2001), it is more beneficial to explore empowerment from an employee's viewpoint since the intended advantages of empowerment will be known when employees experience it directly. In addition, leadership approach researchers have also begun their movement to distinguish themselves from the structural approach and forced to recognise as a standalone construct (Ahearne, Mathieu, & Rapp, 2005; Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000; Brunetto et al., 2012).

However, recent researchers have begun to view the structural, leadership, and psychological approaches as being inseparable. Structural empowerment practices such as sharing information, a delegation of authority, and the leader's empowering behaviour are all used to predict employee psychological empowerment (Ahearne et al., 2005; Backhaus, 2014; Maynard et al., 2012). Therefore, given the gain of structural, leadership and psychological approach this study attempts to integrate the three approaches by assessing the relationship between empowerment practices (the structural component of empowerment and leader's empowering behaviour) and employee psychological empowerment.

Empowerment practices have been widely recognised as a critical factor contributing to organisational performance, with numerous researchers investigating the relationship between employee empowerment and performance (Kazlauskaite, Buciuniene, & Turauskas, 2012; Spreitzer, 1995), employee job satisfaction (Fock, Hui, Au, & Bond, 2013; Pelit, Öztürk, & Arslantürk, 2011; Seibert, Silver, & Randolph, 2004), and employee commitment (Humborstad & Perry, 2011; Raub & Robert, 2013). Employee empowerment offers organisations greater flexibility and responsiveness (Geralis & Terziovski, 2003) and may contribute to performance improvements for both the individual and organisation (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Raquib, Anantharaman, Eze, & Murad, 2010).

However, taking into account that empowerment is a notion framed by Western researchers, it would be valuable to assess to what extent empowerment can affect

workplace behaviours in the Asian context (Baird & Wang, 2010). Studies involving cross-cultural research on empowerment in many countries (Ayupp & Chung, 2010; Cheung, Baum, & Wong, 2012; Dewald & Sutton, 2000; Robert, Probst, Martocchio, Drasgow, & Lawler, 2000) indicates that further examination of empowerment as a universal concept is needed.

Malaysia is located in Southeast Asia and is predominantly a traditional Islamic society. It still adapting to the concept of empowerment as demonstrated in western countries (Ahmad, Solnet, & Scott, 2010). Studies on employee empowerment in East Malaysia are limited, particularly in the context of the hotel industry. A few studies have focused on empowerment in the Malaysian setting (Abdul Aziz, Awang, & Samdin, 2011; Idris et al., 2018; Patah et al., 2009). However, they tended to concentrate on Peninsular Malaysia. Peninsular Malaysia consists of eleven states and two federal territories, while East Malaysia consists of only two states, namely, Sabah and Sarawak. Unlike Peninsular Malaysia, East Malaysia relies heavily on tourism and the hospitality industry for its economic stability (Raquib et al., 2010). Hence, the study of employee empowerment in the East Malaysia context, and within the hotel industry specifically, is significant.

Most corporations in Malaysia have historically had a rigid hierarchical structure because of the high-power distance (Bochner & Hesketh, 1994; Idris et al., 2018), which implies that employees must wait for instructions and follows the decisions of the manager. Managers assumed all responsibility for coordinating, making decisions, overseeing, and preparing activities for employees, resulting in a significant managerial workload. However, the phenomenon of globalisation and the presence of multinationals have encouraged modern western management practices. Numerous international hotel chains such as Hilton, Hyatt, Marriott, and Shangri-La, have begun to operate in Malaysia and brought the notion of empowerment with them. In tourism and hospitality, empowerment is often seen as a way to improve the quality of service and guest satisfaction (Kim et al., 2017). The approach to empowerment in luxury hotels is built on the notion that employees who are empowered, require less supervision, thus removing the need for various hierarchy levels and enabling managers to concentrate on strategic issues, rather than organisational operations (Mohsin & Kumar, 2010; Randolph, 1995).

In hospitality, the empowerment approach is viewed by industry practitioners as an effective way to improve service quality and hotel operations (Lashley, 1999; Raub & Robert, 2013). The reason for such attention lies in three of the generally distinct qualities of service: intangibility, concurrent production and delivery, and guest service involvement (Bowen & Lawler, 1992). The attitudes and behaviour of hotel employees towards guests have been reported to have a significant influence on the guests' perception of service quality (De Zilva & Wong, 2012; Lau, Akbar, & Yong, 2005).

Another benefit of empowerment is the employees' quicker response to dissatisfied guests during service recovery situations (Bowen and Lawler, 1992). Different guests have different requirements on what defines the quality of the service, but basically, all guests agree that failed service experiences should be corrected promptly (Vila, Rovira, Costa, & Santoma, 2012). Several studies confirm that prompt service recovery could lead to customer retention and loyalty (Chen & Chen, 2008; Fulford & Enz, 1995; Hammuda & Dulaimi, 1997). Employee empowerment is claimed to be essential to maintain customer loyalty as service employees are enabled to make prompt decisions to serve the guest. Facilitating the interaction of the guest and employees in these circumstances could be very valuable in ensuring customer satisfaction and loyalty (Bowen & Lawler, 1992).

Empowerment offers substantial benefits for the individual and the organisation as it makes employees feel essential to the success of the organisation and creates a sense of obligation and dedication to the organisation. This enables the employee to make a difference and contribute to the organisation's success. In the long term, employees are more committed to attaining organisational goals (Yagil, 2006). Employees feel most confident and respected when they are active in the organisation's decision-making process. Empowerment enhances trust and conveys a sense of belonging (Abel & Hand, 2018).

Other advantages of employee empowerment in the organisation include decreased top management workload, strengthened employee training and enhanced performance. Once employees can handle issues themselves, their supervisors have more time to focus on more critical issues. If an employee manages issues him or herself, problems can be rectified before things get worse. Employee empowerment promotes a competitive environment and fosters organisational change. In reality,

employees who are empowered and are given substantial accountability and control over their work have a high sense of self-efficiency (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Geralis & Terziovski, 2003).

Overall, employee empowerment improves organisational effectiveness, efficiency and the well-being of employees. For example, an empowered workforce has proven to enhance productivity and curb rising assembly production costs in a transmission factory (Suzik, 1998). Employee empowerment results in job satisfaction, work engagement, loyalty, higher performance and quicker guest service delivery (Bordin, Bartram, & Casimir, 2006; Chiang & Jang, 2008). These factors support the choice of the hotel industry in East Malaysia as the context for this study.

In this study, employee perceived risk is utilised to examine employee empowerment. The complex nature of perceived risk and how it has been analysed in different contexts in the literature are explained. Currently, there are no studies on how this concept has been used at the organisational level, and to be more specific, in the employee empowerment context. The conceptual notion of risk can be applied almost universally, and its usefulness has been illustrated in a variety of applications, from economics to consumer behaviour. (Mitchell, 1999). It is suggested that perceived risk is more potent to explain the behaviour of an individual as people are usually motivated to avoid mistakes to maximise utility when making decisions (Bhukya & Singh, 2015). Therefore, for this study, the effect of empowerment practices on the perceived risk of empowerment and overall employee empowerment is explored. This decision-making process is a very complex cognitive process to measure.

Since the 1960s, the concept of perceived risk has been commonly used in the consumer behaviour literature to assess guest decision-making behaviour (Hsin Chang & Wen Chen, 2008; Kwok, Wong, & Lau, 2015). Perceived risk from a consumer behaviour perspective is described as a consumer's perception about the possible uncertain adverse effects of the purchase of goods or services. Since perceived risk is the biased evaluation of a risk situation by an individual, its assessment depends on the psychological and situational traits of the individual. (Hsin Chang & Wen Chen, 2008).

This study has incorporated the concept of perceived risk into the notion of employee empowerment and developed the concept of the perceived risk of empowerment. The perceived risk of empowerment is defined as an employee's value and belief regarding potential adverse outcomes of empowerment. Thus, the operationalisation of the perceived risk of empowerment concept in examining the connection between empowerment practices and psychological empowerment contributes to the body of knowledge, especially to the employee empowerment literature.

Therefore, the core research question of this thesis is *“How does the perceived risk of empowerment influence the relationship between empowerment practices and employee empowerment?”*. Four sub-research questions derived from the main research question as follows:

Research Question One: What are the East Malaysian hotel employees' perceptions of empowerment?

Research Question Two: What are the determinants of empowerment practices that influence hotel employee empowerment in the East Malaysia context?

Research Question Three: What are the determinants of the perceived risk of empowerment that influence the relationship between empowerment practices and employee empowerment in the East Malaysia hotel industry context?

Research Question Four: What are the relative effects of empowerment practices on the perceived risk of empowerment and employee empowerment in the East Malaysia hotel industry context?

1.3 Overview of Research Methodology

The theoretical research framework of this study is based on a pragmatism worldview, which based on the assumptions that reality is 'what works', and uses various methods to evaluate objective and subjective knowledge (Creswell, 2014; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). It is argued that pragmatic researchers emphasise research issues and tend to employ the necessary methods for understanding them (Creswell, 2014). From this stance on the epistemology of pragmatism, this study adopted a two-phase exploratory sequential mixed-method approach that is transversal in nature as it enables the researcher to perceive and compare a synthesis

of the approaches and as a guideline in choosing the best methodology to fits the research purpose (Almeida, 2018).

Phase one is a qualitative study based on interviews with 20 hotel employees in East Malaysia. The results and findings of this phase are clarified and discussed via an in-depth investigation of empowerment practices as well as elements of the perceived risk of empowerment and their effect on employee empowerment. This study also seeks to contribute to the literature concerning employee empowerment notion in the hotel settings, specifically in East Malaysia.

Phase two is a quantitative study built on Phase one's core findings. Survey questionnaires were completed by 250 hotel employees in East Malaysia. This phase examines the relationship of empowerment practices on employee empowerment. Particularly, it focuses on investigating the construct of structural empowerment components and empowering leadership to employee empowerment. This study also examines the mediating effect of the perceived risk of empowerment with the elements of financial, social and time risk on the relationship between empowerment practices and employee empowerment.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter one provides an overview of the research. It provides a brief outline of the background, the motivation for the research, the research questions, research design and the structure of the thesis.

Chapter two describes the context of the study, the hotel industry in East Malaysia, specifically, in the states of Sabah and Sarawak.

Chapter three reviews the literature. This chapter also explores theories of employee empowerment from the structural, leadership and psychological approaches. The mediating role of the perceived risk of empowerment is also discussed from the Stimulus Organism Responses (S-O-R) Theory perspective.

Chapter four describes the research methodology using a pragmatic framework based on a mixed-method approach and explains the reasoning behind the use of the sequential exploratory approach taken. The epistemology as a constructivist (for qualitative phase) and as a positivist (for quantitative phase) are also discussed.

Chapter five describes the qualitative phase research design and findings for research question one, two and three. The research reflexivity is also discussed.

Chapter six details the formulation of the hypotheses proposed for the analysis and the final research model, integrating the explored empowerment practices and the elements of the perceived risk of empowerment from the qualitative findings in assessing their relationships with employee empowerment. The final research model and the development of hypotheses are also discussed. This chapter also explains the quantitative methodology, namely the data collection and analysis methods. It also outlines the outcomes of the quantitative research, descriptive and confirmatory factor analysis. The structural and measurement model results acquired through the Structured Equation Modelling-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) analysis method clarifies the relationship of the empowerment practices, the perceived risk of empowerment, and employee empowerment.

Chapter seven revisited the findings of both the quantitative and qualitative phases. It also describes the theoretical and managerial contribution of the research, as well as its limitations, recommendations, and conclusions

The final sections of the document contain the references and the appendices.

Figure 1 below presents the organisation of this study.

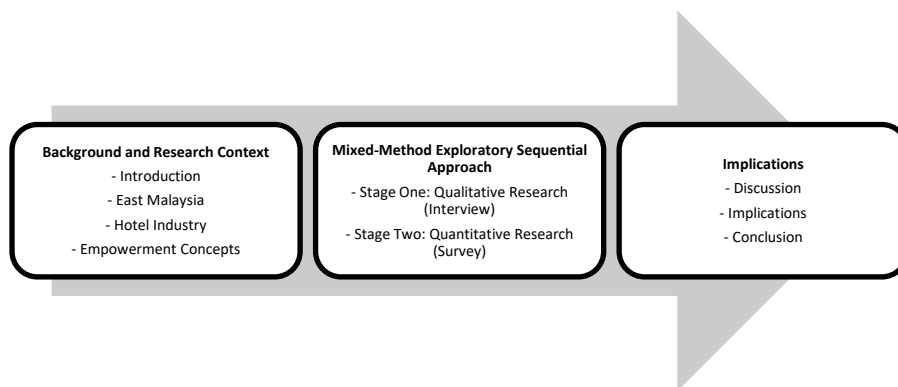


Figure 1: Organisation of Thesis

CHAPTER TWO: EAST MALAYSIA: ITS PROFILE AND HOTEL INDUSTRY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the context of the study, i.e. the culture of East Malaysia, and the role of tourism and hospitality in the country. The overview is mainly based on ‘grey literature’ sources such as books, articles, newspapers, government documents and reports (Dousin, 2017; Farace & Schöpfel, 2010).

2.2 Background and the Culture of East Malaysia

Malaysia is a nation in South-East Asia, made up of the Malaysian Peninsula and Eastern Malaysia separated by the South China Sea, as shown in Figure 2 (Golbez, 2009). On 16 September 1963, the Malaysian Peninsular, Sabah and Sarawak established a Malaysian Federation consisting of 13 states and three federal territories with a total land area of 330,803 square kilometres. Malaysia's total population was estimated at 32 million in 2017 compared to 31.6 million in 2016. Malaysia's GDP growth in 2017 was 5.9%, according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2017). In 2017, the labour force participation rate was 68.5%, and the unemployment rate remained at 3.4% (Dousin, 2017).

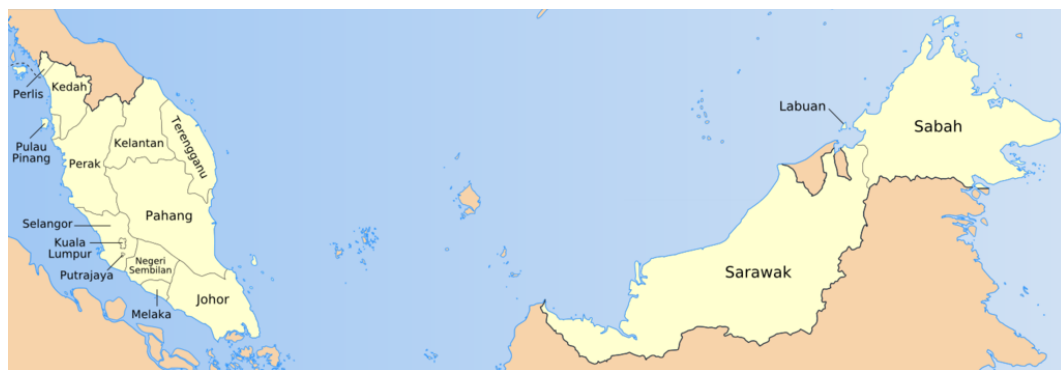


Figure 2: Maps of the States of Malaysia

Sabah is located in the northern part of Borneo Island and is Malaysia's second-largest state with an area of 72,500 square kilometres. Kota Kinabalu is the capital city of Sabah, and other main cities include Sandakan, Tawau, Lahad Datu, Keningau and Kudat. Sabah's total population was estimated at 3.86 million in 2017, with an average annual growth rate of 3.86% (Department of Statistics Malaysia

2017). Sabah's GDP growth in 2017 was 8.2% with a labour force participation rate of 68.4% and 5.6% unemployment (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2017). Sabah's economy depends heavily on minimally-processed exports from the primary industries and other goods. In addition to traditional wood production and agriculture, tourism and manufacturing are also developing, and are quickly becoming an essential source of economic growth. However, the three primary export commodities remain petroleum, palm oil and cocoa (Dousin, 2017).

Sarawak is Malaysia's largest state, with a total area of 124,451 square kilometres (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2017). Kuching is the capital of Sarawak, and other major towns and cities include Miri, Sibu, Samarahan, Limbang, Mukah and Bintulu. Sarawak's total population was estimated at 2.77 million in 2017, with an average annual growth rate of 1.0%. As regards economic development, the state of Sarawak reported a GDP growth of 4.7% in 2017, with a labour participation rate of 67.8% and an unemployment rate of 3%. Sarawak's major economic contributors include tourism, manufacturing, mining and quarrying, agriculture and construction (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2017).

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic nation, and Ethnic Bumiputera makes up 68.6% of the population, followed by Chinese (23.4%), Indians (7.0%) and others (1.0%). Non-Malaysian residents account for around 10.3% of the total population (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2017). There are multiple ethnic groups in Sabah and Sarawak, each with their own distinct cultures and traditions. The main indigenous ethnic group in Sabah are the Kadazan Dusun, the Murut and the Bajau, while in Sarawak the Dayaks are the dominant ethnic group. Many Malaysians are defined by their ethnicity and maintain their culture, traditions and way of life. Malaysian still view the family as the foundation of the social constitution (Dousin, 2017; Hofstede, 2017). Malaysian culture places great importance on harmony, respect and loyalty to the elderly and seeks to uphold the idea of saving face and preventing shame in both public and private settings (Sumaco, Imrie, & Hussain, 2014).

Malaysian culture is characterised as high-powered collectivist, low in masculinity and a moderate community with a long-term orientation. (Hofstede, 2017). This suggests that Malaysian employees are extremely supportive of a hierarchical style of management with little or no resistance to their superiors. Individuals prefer not to publicly question someone in power, as this could contribute to the shame of a

'loss of face' (Brockner et al., 2001; Dousin, 2017). A moderate society with a long-term orientation refers to a community with high respect for values and a desire to produce immediate results. Societies are characterised as group-oriented in a collective culture and have a high propensity to facilitate shared goals, focusing on mutual uniqueness and the importance of public roles and relations (Idris, 2011). Such cultural norms have a strong influence on the attributes of Malaysian labour settings, which emphasises cooperative performance, harmony, avoiding confrontations and valuing the elders and authorities (Triandis, 2001).

In a different view, even though Malaysia is considered as a high-power distance culture, employees feel comfortable with a hierarchical structure and an unequal balance of control in an organisation (Idris et al., 2018). Malaysia is one of many countries in Asia with a high-power distance score that can be linked back to its history due to the former colonisation from the 18th to the 20th century and its feudal system, especially post-independence. (Idris et al., 2018). Abdullah (2005) researched Malaysian, Anglo and Australian managers and found that the focus of the Malaysian community on rank, position and respect for authority was significantly higher than that of their non-Malaysian colleagues. In high-level organisations, decisions are made autocratically by a few at the top with a lack of input from lower-level employees. Hence, the conventional meaning of high-power distance in Malaysia suggests that power relationships between higher and lower levels of the organisational level are also a critical issue that can impact employee empowerment. Despite the criticism of Hofstede's view of national culture, it is considered as a suitable framework to represent Malaysian culture for this study (Venaik & Brewer, 2013).

In proposing the notion of Western-developed theories of empowerment for this study, traditional cultural values and modern governance practices will dynamically interact (Chen, Zhang, & Wang, 2014). How would Malaysian employees with a high-power distance score react to empowerment? Studies propose that individuals with less power accept unequal authority distribution, which means the orientation of individual power distances undermined modernist organisational practices such as delegation, decision-making and leadership (Fock et al., 2013; Idris et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2017).

Malaysians are usually risk-averse, and prudence is always practised when making decisions (Hofstede, 2001; Kidd & Richter, 2004). At work, most Malaysian employees would favour a job with specific task descriptions and clear instructions. Faced with an enormous task, where much is at risk, most Malaysians would choose to 'play it safe' due to anxiety about the potential adverse consequences of their decisions. Thus, this study proposes the notion of the perceived risk of empowerment to further investigate employee empowerment, specifically, in the Malaysian context.

2.3 The Role of Tourism and Hospitality Industry in East Malaysia

Tourism in Malaysia started quite late compared to other Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia and Singapore. The Tourism Department was established in 1959 under the Ministry of Trade of Malaysia. In 1987, the government established the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in line with the Malaysia Plan 1971-1975, which emphasised the role of tourism and hospitality in the economy. On 20 May 1992, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism was rebranded as the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism (MoCAT). However, in April 2004, MoCAT was restructured to accommodate the institution of a distinct ministry which is now the Ministry of Tourism (MoTour). MoTour was responsible for issues relating to tourism and hospitality, and demonstrated the seriousness of the Malaysian government in supporting tourism as one of the country's critical main breadwinners (MOTAC, 2017).

After Malaysia's 13th General Election in 2013, MoTour was reformed as the Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC). Following the 14th General Election, the Ministry was renamed as the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC, 2018). In East Malaysia, the Sabah Tourism Board and the Sarawak Tourism Board are responsible to the state government for operating within the scope of MOTAC and are responsible for marketing, support services, product, research and finance and corporate services for tourism for both states. In 2018, both Sabah and Sarawak recorded 8,250,700 tourist arrival, which was 31.94% of the total Malaysia tourist arrival, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Tourist Arrival in Sabah and Sarawak				
Year	Tourist Arrival			
	Sabah		Sarawak	
	Total	Percentage Change	Total	Percentage Change
2018	3,819,779	+3.66	4,430,921	-8.11
2017	3,684,734	+7.49	4,856,888	+4.20
2016	3,427,908	+7.92	4,661,100	+3.19
2015	3,176,226	-1.68	4,517,179	-7.01
2014	3,230,645	-4.51	4,857,867	+11.12
2013	3,383,243		4,371,748	

Source: MOTAC, 2018

East Malaysia's hotel industry has developed along with its tourism industry. Table 2 shows the increasing numbers of new hotels open and rooms offered in Malaysia. As such, the hotel industry is one of the segments that can significantly contribute to Malaysia's economic growth. According to the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011), the hospitality industry was estimated to increase by 7.2% per annum and by an additional RM115 billion of tourist expenditure and was forecast to stimulate two million job opportunities by 2015. This positive progression increases the need for more hotel employees to accommodate the increasing demand. The hotel industry is a labour intensive and service quality driven industry; thus, the competitiveness and productivity of the industry depend heavily on its employees (Enz, 2009).

Table 2: Supply of Hotels and Rooms in East Malaysia in 2018		
State	Sabah	Sarawak
Number of Hotels	449	291
Number of Rooms	16,738	10,274
Average Occupancy Rate	65.3	52.6

Source: MOTAC, 2018

As the hotel industry in a developing country such as Malaysia expands and the well-established international hotel chains from developed countries arrive. Over 50% of the four and five-star hotel are operated by international hotel chains such as Hilton and Marriott (MOTAC, 2018). It is understandable that these established hotels bring their 'best practices', including employee empowerment to new shores.

It is in this contest, the hotel industry in East Malaysia, specifically in the state of Sabah and Sarawak, that this research focuses on employee empowerment.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The chapter assesses the theories, principles and concepts behind this study's research questions. It starts with a description of the broad discussion of human resource management (HRM) in the hotel industry and the literal meaning of and the different approach to empowerment in the literature. The review then focuses on the consumer behaviour literature of perceived risk and contextualises the perceived risk of empowerment. The importance of Stimulus Organism Response (S-O-R) Theory to the development of the research framework has discussed.

3.2 Human Resource Management (HRM) in the Hotel Industry

To understand human resource management, one must consider its origins and historical development. The roots of HRM perhaps began in the late 1800s and early 1900s as a result of the factory system and mass production (Hughes, 2008). Management theory has influenced HRM since the development of economic, social, political and industrial relations, whereas technology and globalisation have revolutionised the expansion of new approaches (Davidson, McPhail, & Barry, 2011). The concept of the HRM is based on the idea of employees' well-being, which was initially associated with the welfare of employees in organisations (Nickson, 2013). It signifies a time before the acknowledgement of human resource management as a profession. The welfare and administration stage of HRM is rigid, and it only deals with hiring, paying and firing employees (Davidson et al., 2011). The roles of personnel management are scattered and often confined to the administrative areas (Nankervis, Compton, & Baird, 2008). This is almost similar to Taylor's management approach, which emphasises productivity rather than employees (Taylor, 1967).

The trend shifted as personnel management incorporated staffing and training, due in part to the revival of unionism and behavioural science (Davidson et al., 2011). Management theory 'invaded' the arena of personnel management and made a significant impact on the neo-classical approach and Hawthorne experiment (Davidson et al., 2011). Such studies have shown how employees are treated and

how their interests are expressed vital to achieving productivity (Nankervis et al., 2008). The interaction of human relations theory and behavioural science is seen as the start of a personnel management profession.

From the 1970s to the 1990s, personnel management became HRM, which emphasises quality and a strategic focus on an organisations' overall effectiveness (Nankervis et al., 2008). This reflects an enormous extent by general management approaches such as total quality management theories were developed and focused on the work culture and climate (Davidson et al., 2011).

Current HRM promotes a high-performance workforce, talent management and a re-evaluation of what strategic HRM entails in the organisational structure (Davidson et al., 2011; Nankervis et al., 2008). HRM principles and the roles of HR managers are likely to change as the international HR models are given more attention (Davidson et al., 2011). Human capital, talent and knowledge management are becoming critical factors for the organisation as contingency theory becomes significant, indicating no best way to structure an organisation, and that a situational approach influences the type of structure that an organisation should adopt (Nickson, 2013).

HRM has shifted from previously being perceived as a technical, administrative function, which sought to maximise employee and organisational productivity through scientific management, to a humanistic one, which is concerned with employee well-being, motivation and social dynamics in the work environment. It then shifts to a strategic function, which is mainly controlled by literature to validate the attitudinal, behavioural, and bottom-line effects of bundles of HRM practices (Brymer, 1991; Davidson et al., 2011; Guerrier, 2008; Nankervis et al., 2008; Walsh, Sturman, & Longstreet, 2010). There is an extensive HRM literature from which researchers in hospitality have drawn from, and, to some degree, contributed to the research. Much of the recent generic HRM literature has focused on the strategic positioning of the function and points to a range of issues such as recruiting, development and retention that continue to challenge hotel management, as well as factors such as seasonality, high labour turnover and low wages (Baum, 2015). However, there remains a significant lack of research into the changing roles of HR professionals and widespread moves to devolve HR duties to line managers

although the trend towards delayering of managerial levels in the industry has long been recognised (Francis & Baum, 2018).

Raub, Alvarez, and Khanna (2006) state that while having the same HRM components as, namely strategic partnership, administrative expertise, change agents, and employee champions, are implemented across organisations, the concept of how they used are different. They also suggest that, At the management level, there is a much more holistic approach to the issues, while at the departmental level, the administrative aspects and the position of employee advocate persist. They argue that the ideal balance is for the management level to be more tactical and the component level to be more balanced across various and numerous elements in the approach to staff enhancement.

In the hospitality industry, researchers and practitioners have widely recognised empowerment as a human resource technique that enhances efficiency and effectiveness by moving the decision-making process to the forefront. (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Kim, Lee, Murrmann, & George, 2012; Lashley, 1999). It is highly encouraging for the front-liners to be empowered in the hospitality industry as prompt action is often necessary for them to deliver better guest service. Empowerment is also one of the critical success factors leading to innovation success for hospitality organisations, especially in the developed countries such as United States of America (Ottenbacher & Gnoth, 2005). Furthermore, some researchers proposed that employee empowerment has positive effects on individual outcomes including job satisfaction (Humborstad & Perry, 2011; Patah et al., 2009; Wang & Lee, 2009) and organisational commitment (Kim et al., 2012; Raub & Robert, 2013)

For many hotel companies, to create an effective HRM, the fundamental focus should be on the organisational culture (Barrows, Powers, & Reynolds, 2012). For example, since the 1920s the Marriot Corporation has embedded the philosophy of “give to your employees, and they will give back to you”. The Marriot Corporation believes that by motivating, training, caring, and treating its employees well, the employees will better serve their guests. If guests are treated well, they will return (Hinkin, 2006).

Another notable example is the two-time winner of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, Ritz-Carlton, which also focuses on their human resource development and management including human resource planning and assessment, high-performance work systems, employee career development, and employees satisfaction and commitment (Hinkin, 2006). This hotel's lateral service theory illustrates the position of employees, in that they should always assist if another employee asks for help in to meet a guest's request to solve a guest issue (Barrows et al., 2012). It shows that the human resource component will always play a vital role, even though technological advances have modernised the industry.

In order to enhance HRM, such as through training, experiences, professional skills, relationships, satisfaction, and flexibility of employees, the literature shows that empowerment can be one of the answers and eventually increases employees' job performance (Humborstad & Perry, 2011; Pelit, Ozturk, & Arslanturk, 2011; Raub & Robert, 2013). Empowerment gives the individual the capacity to take appropriate responsibility for decision making. It is a broader definition than traditional notions of delegation, decentralisation and participatory management (Sturman & Ford, 2011). Empowerment expands the responsibility for decision making to include the overall role of ensuring that the success of that work fits in with the organisational objectives (Lashley, 1999). It means that employees can personalise the service experience to meet the guest's expectation and be willing to take steps which are necessary to recover from any service failure. For example, Hyatt has introduced a program called 'random acts of generosity' to empower its employees (Sturman & Ford, 2011). The purpose of the program is to make a difference in people's lives by assessing the situation and making the right decision to deliver outstanding guest experiences. For instance, guests might receive a free letter from the loyalty program or even find out that the hotel has compensated for their meal.

Empowerment also allows the decision to be made at the lower level of the hotel organisation, which will improve the responsiveness of the organisation (Humborstad & Perry, 2011; Raub & Robert, 2013). The idea of empowerment has recently gained popularity as organisations function in an increasingly global environment, where service quality is amplified, and guests are less accommodating when complaints are forwarded to higher management levels when they and hotel

employees are faced with a problem. This is important, especially in the hotel industry as employee empowerment is able to enhance the employee's service delivery and encourage service recovery with a prompt response to the guest's needs (Humborstad & Perry, 2011). Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault (1990) support this argument. They studied 700 incidents of satisfactory and dissatisfactory guest service encounters from the airlines, hotels, and restaurants industries, from the guest's point of view. They reveal that during a service encounter, an employee who is given discretion and latitude to take actions and make prompt decisions can change the potentially unfavourable incident to a favourable one.

Additionally, a service-oriented organisation such as a hotel operates in an environment where the potentially contradictory goals of minimising costs and delivering customer-oriented service quality exist (Korczynski, 2001, 2002). According to Korczynski (2001), a customer-oriented bureaucracy suggests that management not only require employees to sustain the so-called myth of customer authority, but also a high level of efficiency and promptness in their daily operations. Employees, especially front liners, are required to handle guest's problem and at the same provide high service quality through empowerment, which results in difficulties in managing their workload.

Moreover, empowerment demands that all employees take ownership of the quality of their work and serve the interests of the guests (Humborstad & Perry, 2011; Lashley, 1999). For example, after considering the hotel occupancy, front office employees might be empowered to offer a discount price to upgrade a guest's room after seeing the guest's information in the database. They can use their discretion to make judgements without reporting to their supervisors (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Kim et al., 2012; Lashley, 1999). Previous research confirms that it is highly encouraging for the front-liners to be empowered in the hospitality industry as prompt action is often necessary for them to deliver better guest service. Empowerment is also regarded as one of the critical success factors for hospitality organisations (Ottenbacher & Gnoth, 2005).

Employees' empowerment is thought to enhance job satisfaction. Bowen and Lawler (1992) state that some of the benefits of empowerment include that employees will feel better about their work and more about themselves. Letting employees make their own choices give them a sense of control over their work,

they feel responsible and consider the job meaningful. Lawler (1993) continues to argue that employees are more satisfied when they have a sense of control and are doing meaningful work.

From the organisational point of view, the value of empowerment activities lies in the fact that hotels offer services where production and consumption simultaneously occur, and issues need on-the-spot solutions to ensure the satisfaction of guests (He, Murrmann, & Perdue, 2010). Thus, employees who are empowered to make decisions and who are able to take responsibility for and solve the problems of guests know their work is important and therefore find it more fulfilling. For instance, recent studies (Humborstad & Perry, 2011; Pelit, Ozturk, et al., 2011) reveal that empowerment of the hotel's front line employees' has positive effects on their job satisfaction.

Even though evidence suggests the benefits of empowerment (Fabre, 2010; Ongori, 2009), in reality, some doubted its efficacy. Researchers argue that more inefficient or inconsistent services may emerge from empowerment (Tariq, Jan, & Ahmad, 2016; Zeglat, Aljaber, & Alrawabdeh, 2014). Customised services can tend to slow and cause inconsistent service delivery. Further, delayed service can cause frustration or unhappiness for guests who are waiting to be served or who think they are being mistreated. Researchers also claim that employees with inadequate experience, training, commitment or supervision can make decisions that the organisation does not desire (Cheung et al., 2012). For instance, if discounts are offered due to a service breakdown, employees may make too many reductions, resulting in decreased revenue. Absolute empowerment is rare, as it would enable employees to influence all facets of the business (Pelit, Öztürk, et al., 2011). Some researchers are concerned that empowerment is used to mask the intensification of work. Fock (2004) claims that empowerment usually requires more accountability for more work but without any additional compensation.

It is argued from the managerial perspective that empowerment refers to the ability of management to share relevant authority and knowledge as a factor to improve job performance (Sturman & Ford, 2011). Yet, previous studies indicate that empowered employees are subject to progressively complex monitoring and control systems (Heery & Noon, 2008). Researchers question the empowerment concept of trusting employees by giving them greater responsibility and flexibility over their

jobs, as managers who use such control systems may indicate that they do not fully trust their employees. Critics of empowerment have thus argued that it is a concept used to mask the harsh truth of work intensification, tension and manipulation (Greasley et al., 2008; Lashley, 1999, 2001).

It is assumed that employees can be empowered in theory, although the form and degree of empowerment can differ significantly (Lashley, 1999). In comparison, hotel employees at a help desk may be empowered to make up to a certain level of credit adjustment without obtaining their supervisors' guidance.

There is proof that the adoption of empowerment strategies is not as widespread as expected, despite the reported benefits of employee empowerment (Tariq et al., 2016). Most employee empowerment strategies are unable to reach the rate of empowerment envisaged by management (Baird & Wang, 2010). Some argue that empowerment is superficial and that employee empowerment is merely a slogan with managers still keeping control (Baird & Wang, 2010). The difference between discourse and implementation is yet another field open for discussion (Greasley et al., 2008). Several researchers have found that the problems are present in name only in some cases (Baird & Wang, 2010; Honold, 1997). Although this is not an obstacle to empowerment, it can contribute to an inaccurate critique of the idea of empowerment, and this can add to discontent among those who are supposed to empower and those who are empowered and reject empowerment as inadequate (Greasley et al., 2008).

Baum (2015) states that there are challenges to the westernised application concepts of empowerment in other cultures such as Asia and the Middle East, which pinpoint the need for more localised explanations of management theory. This is essential as organisations need to explore the transferability of management theory across cultural boundaries, especially when considering how multinational tourism companies can effectively work with and manage their global employees. This view is supported by Cheung et al. (2012), who questions empowerment applicability beyond a developed country context. Lee-Ross (2005) compares hotel employees in Mauritius and Australia and suggests that employees respond negatively to empowerment because they are culturally opposed to such work structures.

Employee empowerment research from the 1990s is still relevant today (Baum, 2015; Kazlauskaite et al., 2012; Mohsin & Kumar, 2010). Empowerment is still perceived to be of great significance in organisations especially hotel, as it could contribute to the following results: satisfied and committed employees; lower labour turnover and costs; higher guest service quality; increase organisation's productivity and increased overall profits and performance. (Lashley, 1999, 2001; Mohsin & Kumar, 2010; Pelit, Ozturk, et al., 2011; Raub & Robert, 2013).

3.3 The Notion of Empowerment

Empowerment is not a new phenomenon, and Argyris (1998) states that employee empowerment is much like the emperor's new clothes myth, suggesting that it is a generally known concept but not so frequently applied. Understanding the concept of power is important in order to explore the concept of empowerment. Power is the ability to leverage resources to achieve goals (Kanter, 1979) and the ability to take decisions pertaining to the role or the work of an individual (Lawler, 1993). It is the degree of the power of each employee possess, which lies at different levels of a structure. Front-line employees should experience higher levels of empowerment to the extent that they have the power to make decisions regarding their task-related role within the organisation (Proenca, Torres, & Sampaio, 2017). Sharing decision-making power grants senior management time and space to concentrate on strategic issues that will drive the organisation's success (Raub & Robert, 2013)

Pfeffer (1981) argues that power occurs when an individual's performance results are not directly accountable for their actions, but what other people do or how others react. Enabling employees to experience their power will help them balance their performance's emotions. Power is defined as the ability to exert influence over others. Steward (1997) defines three kinds of power supervisors used, namely, power through position, knowledge and money. Power through position is the power structures based on the ability to impact others in an organisation's position and refers to the ability to make decisions on penalties, often known as a coercive force. (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). Coercive power often used in the conventional way people are managed where employees are not encouraged, and employees are repeatedly told how to accomplish their work (Huq, 2016; Steward, 1997).

Power through knowledge refers to an individual's specialised skills, knowledge and skills (Steward, 1997). If a person is regarded as an expert in a field, people are likely to believe and do what this individual suggests, which can be a sign of a potentially good leader. Besides, information is power, and the concept of empowerment, power should be shared among the employees. Managers will benefit from empowering their employees to enhance their education and skills and sharing their expertise (Stewart, 1997).

Power through money refers to the probability of supplying or maintaining the instruments for performing a job (Stewart, 1997). Management needs to inspire and provide the employee with the necessary means to accomplish a job. This could mean that the leaders must share their power and responsibilities for empowerment to be a success. (Stewart, 1997). The type of power to be applied within an organisation is power through knowledge as sharing information and capacity-building at and between all levels and is central to the development of an empowered labour force.

Concepts of 'power' and 'empowerment' are among the most interesting topics in organisational behaviour and management research (Argyris, 1998; Arneson & Ekberg, 2006). They have very comparable meanings, but they contradict one another as well. Empowerment includes the word of power, and both meanings share the same origin. Both terms in the English language mean power authority and influence. Nevertheless, these words also differ markedly due to different environments, different procedures and outcomes. The philosophical roots of power date back to the early ages. Thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle argued about power and how power can be used effectively, equally or with force (Demircioglu, 2016).

Before being applied in the management context, the notion of empowerment was implemented in different political and social settings. Potterfield (1999) claims that most researchers are not sure when and where the expression was first used in management studies, but it was widely used during the social reforms movements in the 1960s. Honold (1997) claims that the notion of empowerment in a management context is embedded in the socio-technical approach, namely the principles of job satisfaction, employee engagement and participation.

The terminology of empowerment overlaps in the academic literature. Some researchers interchangeably link empowerment with employee involvement and participation (Lashley, 2001). Empowerment is discussed, covering a wide range of provisions, under the headings of commitment and engagement. However, Foy (1994) differentiates those terms by narrating them in a traditional manner. She stated that “*empowering* people is as important today as *involving* them in the 1980s and getting them to *participate* in the 1970s”. However, Lashley (2001) remarks that such arguments revealed little of the environmental, economic and commercial conditions that led to terminology variations. Honold (1997) also He agrees that it is essential to take into consideration the need for empowerment not only in the commercial setting but also in the social perspective.

Many definitions have been proposed to explain the notion of empowerment, each of which offers a different perspective. Some definitions of empowerment begin with a discussion associated with the delegation of authority (Lashley, 2001). For instance, Burke (1986, p. 51) expresses empowerment in this way: “to empower implies the granting of power-delegation of authority”. This definition is similar to the meaning given by Randolph (1995), who describes empowerment as an employer-to-employee transfer of power.

Some researchers have tried to avoid the term being used to focus solely on authority delegation. Foy (1994, p. 4) explains the distinction “if you give your 12-year-old daughter money to buy jeans, that is delegation... if you give her a clothes allowance which she can spend as she chooses, that is empowerment”. Within the organisational context, managers act as the mother (authority) to empower the daughter (employee). There are, therefore, underlying assumptions that the 'empowerer' (mother) is in a favourable position compared to the empowered (daughter), and this is not a form of negotiation. This notion confirms that there is some imbalance built into the idea of empowerment (Lashley, 2001). In truth, traditional organisation structures, which are based on Weber's formal rationality and Taylor's work organisation, are 'disempowering', as they create feelings of powerlessness (Lashley, 2001; Potterfield, 1999). Within the justification of empowerment in the organisational context, these traditional structures reflect the source of the problem due to the feelings of powerlessness (Lashley, 2001).

Barbee (1991) and Bowen and Lawler (1992) describe the different concept of empowerment in the socio-political context. Barbee (1991) defines empowerment as the act of entrusting accountability in employees to solve the problem, while Bowen and Lawler (1992) illustrate empowerment as management approaches to share managerial authority. Barbee (1991) focuses on vesting responsibility and considers employees have a responsibility not only to serve their guests but also to guarantee the service quality while recognising that their guests' satisfaction is sometimes beyond their control. Moreover, adding extra burdens to employees may increase their workload and stress (Ueno, 2008). On the other hand, the definition provided by Bowen and Lawler (1992) indicate that more authority is delegated to empower employees. In other words, employees will be given a specific authority to make decisions associated with their jobs.

Recently, several researchers define empowerment as inspiring employees to take charge of their work satisfaction (Fock et al., 2013). In this sense, employers encourage employees to make their own decisions concerning their jobs and figure out how to improve their work. This idea of empowerment empowers employees by releasing their talents and skills, satisfying their inner needs and improving their commitment to the organisation (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015; Idris et al., 2018; Lashley, 2001). Some researchers agree with this notion and claimed that there is a need to improve employees' commitment due to internationalisation, rapid technology change and the need for greater organisational flexibility (Humborstad & Perry, 2011; Nixon, 1994). It is suggested that empowered employees are more devoted to an organisation and contribute their full range of skills and experiences to the achievement of organisational objectives (Humborstad & Perry, 2011; Lashley, 2001).

Lashley (2001) has written comprehensively on empowerment in a different setting and argues that various initiatives might bring discrete managerial definitions. He claims that due to the untapped abilities and future organisational performance, the link between employee empowerment and quality is an essential component in the rhetoric of empowerment. In the literature, empowerment is commonly associated with total quality management, customer-oriented organisation, total quality culture, or service-driven culture (Lashley, 2001; Nixon, 1994). This notion of

empowerment assumes that employee commitment is a crucial component to achieve service quality, which has great significance for the hotel industry.

Demircioglu (2016) reflects empowerment as a mere statement in the management concept. He argues that empowerment is an HRM idea, a psychological agreement between employers and employees. Employers need to increase awareness of sharing authority and expertise to employees to improve efficiency, self-reliance and employee confidence.

While many positive results of employee empowerment, such as increased work performance and enhanced job satisfaction and organisational commitment, have been documented in previous studies, there also are some inconsistent and conflicting results (Ahearne et al., 2005; Huq, 2016; Maynard et al., 2012; Proenca et al., 2017). It appears that employee perceptions of empowerment may not always be positive, and these practices cannot be separated from the organisational context or environment (Kim et al., 2017). For instance, Ahearne et al. (2005) reveal that empowerment has a negative impact on the performance of inexperienced salespersons, whereas it benefits highly experienced salespersons. Knowledge and training are essential to ensure that employees are prepared and accountable for their actions.

Lowe (1994) outlines the three most frequently mentioned obstacles to empowerment: managers who refuse to hand over, dislike of the unfamiliar and risk avoidance. One of the main challenges of empowerment is when the manager refuses to 'let go' or to delegate authority, perhaps because they feel ignored when power is shifted from top to bottom. Other factors, such as lack of awareness and vision; supervisors who respond to the confusion of their position by attempting to intensify their degree of control, can also hinder employee empowerment (Huq, 2016).

Another barrier to empowerment for new, junior or experienced employees is the fear of the consequences of taking risks; the fear of lack support from the manager if things go south; the fear of rejection; and, most notably, the possibility of losing one's job either because of errors or by being excess to requirements (Huq, 2016). Supervisors may be unwilling to introduce empowerment if they believe that they may lose control over their employees and that the employee will have a

competitive advantage over them. They also fear the loss of power, their employment, and acknowledge their inability. Employees may also be unwilling to become empowered because of their perceived incompetence. Not all employees are able to take on the necessary accountability and increased responsibility in their work. Employees may also oppose taking on more obligation (Greasley et al., 2008). When the authority of making their own decision is delegated to the employee, the employee is likely to become overly confident and make poor decisions. These barriers are associated with cultural traits. These culture-based aspects are by far the most likely weak points of an empowerment approach, and if the culture of the organisation and its employee's values are not aligned with the concept of empowerment, all changes in systems and structure will be meaningless.

Several researchers also have pointed to possible moral hazard dilemmas for managers and high operating costs as potential downsides of empowerment (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2016; Smith, 1997). Martin, Liao, and Campbell (2013) argue that empowering leadership may trigger a loss of control and boost uncertainty which reduces employee task proficiency and proactivity. Some researchers have discussed the unintended adverse effects of empowering leadership, and for example, followers can interpret it as a *laissez-faire* style of leadership (Humborstad & Perry, 2011). For instance, employees tend to interpret their leaders' delegation of authorities as *laissez-faire* when their leaders' empowering behaviours do not meet their expectations.

Furthermore, organisations may also encounter a number of challenges when empowering their employees. At certain stages, management and employees may avoid empowerment. Under some circumstances, barriers to empowerment can be classified, such as lack of necessary information and disclosure, perceived risk factor, lack of trust, potential downsizing, and irresponsible misuse of power (Smith, 1997).

Employees resist empowerment as they may assume empowerment is just another management strategy to manipulate employees to do extra work (Greasley et al., 2008; Orgambidez-Ramos & Borrego-Alés, 2014). Empowerment could be seen as an instrument to exploit employees and obtain their loyalty to the organisation. An employee may perceive the proposed ideas of empowerment are only for the benefit of the organisation only, and therefore they may not embrace the empowerment

concept effectively. Therefore, despite its popularity, empowerment is faced with many obstacles.

Empowerment is a term that is widely used to indicate a range of concepts. The definition of empowerment shows that there are numerous sets of assumptions underlying the concept. Sometimes those assumptions are mutually exclusive and sometimes they complement each other. Empowerment offers rhetoric, which can explain discrete intentions and assumptions (Lashley, 2001). Greasley et al. (2008) attempt to provide an understanding of the notions of empowerment from the perception of employees. Their findings suggest that some employees do not understand the word empowerment, nor do they attach the term *power* to themselves. However, they relate to concepts such as personal responsibility and control over their work. The understanding of the term 'empowerment' by employees varies. Thus, this research intends to understand the notion of empowerment to offer a viable definition of empowerment within the East Malaysian hospitality context.

3.4 The Definition of Employee Empowerment

Since the 1990s, the definition of empowerment has been a subject of argument among researchers (Greasley et al., 2008). Empowerment is claimed to be a poorly defined term and is often used rhetorically (Greasley et al., 2005). Honold (1997) notes that the various aspects of empowerment have made it difficult to describe, and it is a complex process to find a precise definition. Different researchers use many words to describe the notion of empowerment, mostly because they view empowerment from various standpoints. Empowerment is the key area of this study, so research into the different interpretations of the concept and its context is important.

At a simplistic scale, the Oxford Dictionary (2016) defines empowerment as the authority or power given to someone to do something. The Business Dictionary (2016) suggests a more detailed concept of empowerment as a management practice of sharing authority with employees so that they can take measures to solve problems and improve service and efficiency in the organisation. This verb 'empower' was first used in this form in 1849 (Lincoln, Travers, Ackers, & Wilkinson, 2002). The term 'empower' is of French and Latin origin, combining

the preposition 'em' and the noun 'power'. The first documented usage of the term 'empower' is in the seventeenth century by Hamon L'Estrange in his book *The Reign of King Charles* (Lincoln et al., 2002). This first use is associated with the idea of authorising 'Letters from the Pope', and this idea of authorising is one that the Oxford English Dictionary also sees as standard and remains the legal and constitutional use of the term.

Two early descriptions of the word *empower* are "to bestow power upon and to gain power over" (Lincoln et al., 2002). Such concepts recognise that power is meant to be used to attain a goal rather than be an end in itself. In this regard, power is an important element of any definition of empowerment. Lincoln et al. (2002) argue that academics must acknowledge that empowerment is not power alone, but a mechanism through which the other is given only for the intent or end.

In addition, Lukes (1974) claims that power is the capacity not only to enforce the will of a person but also to lay down the conditions of the agreement which indicates that one would perceive power as forces which one has over another. This notion of power refers to power over an individual or group. This understanding of power in terms of supremacy and suppression arises from an evaluation of the disciplinary misuse empowerment (Cunningham, Hyman, & Baldry, 1996; Lincoln et al., 2002; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). This indicates that an individual's empowerment definition developed from these definitions and the common everyday use of the word. Thus, when organisations implement empowerment policies and fail to provide a definition of empowerment, employees will seek out their own definition (Lincoln et al., 2002). Therefore, it is essential to consider how the notion of empowerment is used before management adopted the term, and how this impacts on the use of the concept within an organisational context.

In an organisational context, Conger and Kanungo (1988) have added in the definition of empowerment and claim that delegation as a set of circumstances will influence employee empowerment. They describe empowerment as a process of expanding employee self-efficacy by establishing conditions that foster powerlessness and removing both formal organisational processes and informal information dissemination techniques. The assumption is that empowerment is a final outcome and that the method they describe is simply a combination of procedures for employee participation (Lincoln et al., 2002). Self-efficacy is a

psychological expression used to describe the confidence an individual has in his or her own effectiveness. Conger and Kanungo (1988) state that empowerment is a management practice of sharing authority and knowledge to increase the efficiency of employees (Spreitzer, 1996). Further study of the employee empowerment literature reveals that researchers have offered various definitions, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Various definitions of empowerment	
Researchers	Definition
Kanter (1979)	Giving power to people in the organisation who are at a disadvantage
Hess and Rappaport (1984)	The fundamental and organisational mechanism that promotes participatory and collaborative engagement in an environment to improve the achievement of the goals
Conger and Kanungo (1988)	A method of enhancing the feelings of self-efficacy among organisational members by identifying conditions that encourage impotence and eliminating them through formal organisational practices and informal techniques of providing information about self-efficacy
Thomas and Velthouse (1990)	A definition that is multifaceted and described as a combination of four different ideas: a sense of impact competence, meaning and choice.
Bowen and Lawler (1992)	Delegation of decision-making responsibilities and providing the lowest possible hierarchical level of access to information and resources
Spreitzer (1995)	A motivational construct embodied in four statements of cognition: meaning competence, self-determination and impact
Randolph (1995)	Recognising and bringing the strength that people already have in their assets and useful knowledge and internal motivation into the organisation
Rothstein, Hackman, Pascual, and Gelinas (1995)	An act of establishing, developing and growing control through cooperation, sharing and collaboration
Zimmerman (1995)	Empowerment has no universal meaning to it. For each person, group or organisation it may have a different sense.
Blanchard, Carlos, Randolph, Carlos, and Randolph (2001)	To be free to act, but also to be accountable for outcomes. Freedom can be accomplished by sharing information, creating autonomy by defining boundaries and replacing hierarchies with self-managed teams
Cunningham et al. (1996)	Distributing administrative responsibility to all levels within the organisation

Menon (2001)	A cognitive condition that experiences its competence, meaning self-determination and impact on employees.
Seibert et al. (2004)	Individuals should be informed about the systems, policies and practices of organisations
Greasley et al. (2008)	Individual 'power over their jobs' and 'responsibility.'
Baird and Wang (2010)	Delegation of influence and power to lower-level employees from higher levels of the organisational hierarchy.
Pelit, Öztürk, et al. (2011)	Delegation of authority and responsibility by a manager to an employee

Table 3 indicates an almost never-ending list of meanings of empowerment and that no consensus has been reached on a definition. Perhaps the overabundance of meanings is linked to the many fields that have shown attention in defining empowerment. As such, following are only a few disciplines which have focused on empowerment including: nursing (Appelbaum, Karasek, Lapointe, & Quelch, 2014; Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian, & Wilk, 2004), psychology (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990), education (Zaeri & Rad, 2017), human resources (Marič, Miglič, & Jordan, 2017; Nickson, 2013) and marketing (Chan & Lam, 2011). Given the diversity of disciplines that have studied the notion of empowerment, it is difficult to reach a consensus on definition of the concept. Empowerment is a complex concept, and this could impose constraints on a complete understanding of the term, as theoretical and organisational concepts often vary from one research area to another.

Different views of empowerment debated in the literature are represented by the many examples in Table 3. Some emphasise empowerment in organisations context as a management tool or technique. Most of the well-known management techniques often found to be related to empowerment include job enrichment (Niehoff, Moorman, Blakely, & Fuller, 2001) job autonomy (Gagné & Deci, 2005), participative management (Cho & Faerman, 2010), employee involvement (e.g. Bowen & Lawler, 1992), self-leadership (Marič et al., 2017) and self-managing teams (Seibert et al., 2004). Some researchers interpret empowerment as an individual's psychological condition, which commonly refers to the individual's understanding and empowerment experience.

3.5 Empowerment Concept: A Structural Approach

From a managerial point of view, employee empowerment is a structural construct that defines the way people with power in organisations share power, information, resources, and rewards with their employees. Derived from social exchange theory, the structural construct interprets power as “a function of the dependence and/or interdependence of actors” (Conger & Kanungo, 1988, p. 472). Power exists when an individual's performance outcomes depend not only on their behaviour but also on others' reactions. Thus, the relative power of one over another is a result of the reliance on their dependence on one another (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

According to Conger and Kanungo (1988), within the organisation, the ability of an individual to provide resources and performance, and manage organisational operations is the source of that individual's power over the organisation. Nevertheless, at the interpersonal level, the sources of personal power over others are debated because of the individual's institutional role, personal attributes, expertise and ability to access relevant information (Randolph, 2011). These theories illustrate the belief that those with power are more likely to accomplish their intended results and those without power are more likely to. This idea has led researchers to concentrate on the origin of individual power and the circumstances advocating such reliance (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Randolph, 2011). Structural empowerment terms, therefore, refer to the mechanism by which a manager shares their authority with employees. Authority in this context represents the ownership of formal authority or influence over organisational assets (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

The structural operationalisation of empowerment began with the human relations movement in organisation theory (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013). An award-winning ethnographic study by Kanter in 1977 offers an essential theoretical framework for structural empowerment. Kanter (1997) examines an industrial enterprise and suggests that structural variables in the workforce have a greater impact on employee attitudes and behaviours than personal prejudices or socialisation interpretations. Kanter (1997) considers power as a core structural foundation for organisational practices and attitudes and views power as incentives, knowledge, support and resources. Kanter established a structural theory of corporate power that describes three power sources, including supply (essential

external environment resources), information (task-related information, performance reviews, and other information regarding the organisation), and support (top management support and ability to participate in creative behaviour). Power in the scope of structural empowerment is perceived as the possession of formal influence or possession of organisational resources (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

Additionally, Menon (2001) argues that power is the driving force of structural empowerment and considers the solution as the allocation of control and decision-making control across the whole organisation, via the delegation of authority down the hierarchy. Kanter (1979) goes on to argue that if managers offer employees more access to these power sources, employees will feel more empowered. Researchers use the word 'power' to describe structural empowerment

Kanter (1979) states that such power lines derive from formal and informal organisational structures. Highly visible positions require versatility in the way work is done and are essential to the overall purpose of the organisation. The subsequent relationships impart informal influence while promoting positive relationships between managers and employees. Elevated levels of formal and informal power provide connections to the power lines and incentives that allow employees to perform their jobs. According to Kanter, formal power is derived from relevant job attributes such as versatility and ingenuity aligned with rational decision making, transparency, and relative importance to organisational objectives. Informal power is based on social relations and communication and information networks built with sponsors colleagues, employees, and cross-functional teams (Kanter, 1993)

A high level of structural empowerment comes from access to resources, information and support (Kanter, 1993; Laschinger et al., 2004). Access to opportunity relates to the potential for growth and advancement within the organisation, as well as the opportunity to improve the skills and experience of employees. In terms of access to resources, it refers to one's ability to obtain the requisite financial means, materials time and supplies to do the work. Next, the access to information comes from having the necessary knowledge to be productive in the workplace. Last but not least, access to support implies that employees, colleagues, and managers seek input and guidance.

Management should create working conditions to ensure that employees have access to the information, support and resources needed to carry out their tasks (Kanter, 1993). The employer should provide continuous development opportunities. Employees who engage with their work environment are empowered to access such resources. Kanter's theory focuses on the interpretation of employees regarding the current circumstances in the workplace, and not on how they perceive this fact psychologically.

Based on Kanter's work, Bowen and Lawler (1992) examine the rapidly growing trend of empowerment in private industry and pinpoint that the essential element of empowerment is the power and authority sharing with employees by enabling them to decide how services are delivered. They also maintain that empowerment programmes that fail do so because they concentrate on power without entrusting information and incentives to employees. In addition, they claim that empowerment of employees is a service delivery strategy that includes exchanging information with employees, rewarding performance-based employees, and delegating power to make decisions that affect organisational efficiency.

In the literature, there is a relatively high degree of consensus on the management practices associated with structural empowerment, as illustrated in Table 4. Structural empowerment has been prominently influenced by Lawler (1993) who began promoting empowerment in high involvement work systems. He suggests that to establish such systems, the organisation need to allow employees access to relevant organisational information, delegate more decision-making power to employees, give relevant training, and reward employees who perform.

Table 4: Structural Empowerment										
	Delegation of Authority/Power	Sharing information and resource	Training and skill development	Reward and Recognition	Team accountability	Selection procedure	Control over decisions	Clear Guidelines	Performance appraisal	Job Enrichment
Lawler (1993)	√	√	√	√						
Lashley (1999)	√		√	√	√		√	√		√

Geralis and Terziovski (2003)		√					√			
Klidas, Berg, and Wilderom (2007)	√		√	√			√			
Boudrias et al. (2009)	√	√	√	√	√					
Kazlauskaite, Buciuniene, Turauskas, and Salciuviene (2009)		√					√	√		
Mohsin and Kumar (2010)		√	√	√	√		√	√	√	
Abbasi, Khan, and Rashid (2011)	√						√			
Ayupp and Chung (2010)		√	√	√						
He et al. (2010)	√						√			
Humborstad and Perry (2011)	√						√			
Pelit et al. (2011)	√	√	√	√	√				√	√
Randolph (2011)	√	√			√					
Tracey and Way (2011)			√	√		√				
Cheung et al. (2012)			√	√					√	√
Fock et al. (2013)	√									
Fernandez and Moldogaziev (2013)	√	√	√	√						

Much of the empirical research on structural empowerment has focussed on organisational policies and practices aimed at delegating power to lower levels of the organisational hierarchy and on the impact of these changes on organisational and employee work-related outcomes. While the prevalence and consequences of structural empowerment have received considerable attention in the organisation studies literature, relatively few studies have explored why organisations use these practices. The next sub-section reviews the antecedents of structural empowerment.

3.5.1 Delegation of Authority

Delegation of authority is commonly practised by managements to enhance empowerment (Abel & Hand, 2018; Dinibutun, 2012; Venton, 1997). For managers, empowerment lessens their operational burdens, increases employees' satisfaction and builds effective cooperation and trust between managers and employees (Venton, 1997). For employees, the delegation of authority works to achieve empowerment and enhances employees' self-confidence and motivates them to

perform. For guests, the delegation of authority ensures that service delivery will not be delayed,

Each employee plays a dual role as manager and employee in a managerial hierarchy, excluding those at the very top level of the organisation. Such an organisational structure demands that a manager-employee relationship be formed. The delegation of authority allows the manager to take on numerous positions (Venton, 1997). Thus, the delegation process is carried out without reference to the higher administrative level, thereby achieving active participation in managing the organisation.

Chen et al. (2014) associate delegation of authority with power-sharing. Managers who delegate authority authorise employees to make job-related decisions. They seek input from employees but maintain management authority for critical decisions (Arnold et al., 2000). Delegation of authority has encouraged employees in all aspects by giving them greater authority to carry out their tasks, greater liberty to contribute to decision-making, greater confidence in thinking and acting as organisational comrades and greater capacity to cope successfully and innovatively with new working settings. Delegation thus increases feelings of self-determination, competence meaningfulness, efficacy and essential value in employee performance (Abel & Hand, 2018; Menon, 2001; Spreitzer, 1996). In general, such results gained verification of empowering work scope and empowering leadership behaviours (Abel & Hand, 2018; Arnold et al., 2000; Boudrias, Gaudreau, & Laschinger, 2004; Spreitzer, 1996).

3.5.2 Access to Information

The crucial step in implementing employee empowerment is the sharing of information and knowledge. (Randolph, 1995). To instil employee empowerment in the organisation, information sharing is needed to form a shared aspect of the organisational culture. Thus, when an organisation communicates information proactively with its employees, it is, in turn, providing a greater degree of empowerment. To foster employee empowerment, organisations need to provide all employee at all level with relevant information(Kanter, 1979).

Randolph (2011) argues that the sharing of information is vital to empowerment. Individuals cannot perform their jobs effectively without relevant information. Insufficient information causes confusion and poses difficulties in the interaction between employee and guest. (Cocioc, 2017). To empower employee, there are two types of information considered essential, the statement of organisation goals and the information related to tasks (Bowen, 2005). Researchers such as Alraja and Alomiam (2013) and Hasani and Sheikhesmaeili (2016) emphasise financial details and performance analysis and as this data is useful to enable employees to support their activities, guide decision making and improve the performance of the organisation.

Moreover, access to information is usually associated with employee empowerment and is thought to support an individual's sense of meaning, competence and self-efficacy (Bowen & Lawler, 1995; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1996). Employees are believed to have greater confidence in their organisations when information is readily available. Relevant information will increase the employee's ability to make decisions that support the organisation's objectives and mission (Lawler, 1993). The association between empowerment and access to information is supported by researchers (Bordin et al., 2006; Bowen & Lawler, 1995; Hasani & Sheikhesmaeili, 2016; Holdsworth & Cartwright, 2003). Even though such evidence shows that there is a significant relationship between relevant information and employee empowerment, there is also a circumstance in which a marginal relationship has been reported (Frank, 2015; Hasani & Sheikhesmaeili, 2016).

3.5.3 Reward System

Individual performance-based benefits are believed to be important for employee empowerment. Rewards acknowledge improved personal skills and provide incentives for employees to engage in decision-making processes that foster empowered actions (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Gernalis & Terziovski, 2003). Organisations may establish a system of compensation that arises from sources outside to the employee and incorporates tangible benefits (such as monetary) and intangible rewards (such as recognition).

There is a positive connection between rewards and employee empowerment (Gkorezis & Petridou, 2008). Birch (2002) examines the influence of rewards on

empowerment in the hotel industry and reveals that while symbolic rewards and monetary awards are instruments used to encourage and appreciate the employee's contributions, it was the mixture of recognition and tangible rewards that the employees truly valued. Thus, it is suggested that organisations utilise the right combination of tangible and intangible rewards to promote employee empowerment.

Empowerment should have reward outcomes, and a system of rewards will help the empowerment process. However, there are that should be considered critical (Born & Molleman, 1996). Another downside of a reward system occurs if comprehensive job descriptions are the basis for rewards. This is supported by Born and Molleman (1996), who suggest that various reward systems should be considered. For example, compensation could be based on employee multi-functionality and the mechanism could be more centred on team performance. It is worth noting that reward systems are both expensive and time-consuming to execute, and therefore management needs to consider the implications of using tangible rewards.

To empower, reward mechanism should consider contributions by the employee. Kanter (1979) further suggests that a reward mechanism that highlights outstanding performance promotes a greater feeling of self-efficacy. Throughout the decades, numerous researchers have discovered that performance-based reward programs promote employee empowerment by motivating employees to participate and engage in their organisation's decision-making processes. (Spreitzer, 1995).

3.5.4 Training and Skills Development

Training and employee empowerment are perceived as interrelated concepts (Hasani & Sheikhesmaeili, 2016; Mohsin & Kumar, 2010; Ongori, 2009). Employees must have the necessary knowledge that extends outside of their roles to enable them to add value to service quality. Klidas et al. (2007) warn that employees are reluctant to take actions outside their field of work if they believe they are not prepared with the necessary training and work skills to manage their additional workload. Bowen and Lawler (1992) conclude that it is critical for individuals to obtain the relevant skills to be capable of carrying out the work efficiently and effectively and to affect the result of the tasks assigned to them.

Technical training should be provided to employees to equip them with relevant knowledge and skills while leadership training should be given to middle and top management so that they can master their job scope and description (Ongori, 2009). If employees are given adequate and proper instructions, their confidence will improve and thus effectively leverage the potential of empowerment.

There is increasing support for providing employees with the resources and expertise to feel empowered to carry out empowerment in the workplace (Conger & Kanungo 1988). Lawler (1992) describes the skills necessary for efficient employee empowerment, including problem-solving, decision-making, team-building and contextual analytical skills. These skill sets are essential to enable employees to have strong interpersonal and technical abilities to enable them to become empowered in the workplace.

Investing in employee training and skill development, and also in their organisational orientation, accomplishment and self-efficacy will boost the probability that an empowerment approach is accomplished. The value of enhancing work-related knowledge and skills through training employees to motivate them is also highlighted by the researchers (Holdsworth & Cartwright, 2003). Training is conceptually considered an essential prerequisite for empowerment to develop skills and knowledge (Baird & Wang, 2010; Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Spreitzer, 1996). Employee adaptability, particularly in the services industry, is an important factor affecting their efficiency.

3.6 Empowerment Concept: A Psychological Approach

Other noteworthy literature raises questions as to whether employees are naturally empowered when authority and resources are communicated, or whether empowerment comprises only of employee involvement and the sharing of organisational resources (Cheung et al., 2012; Menon, 2001). Menon (2001) note that there is no assurance that organisational regulations and policies would automatically establish a personal sense of empowerment within the employee. Spreitzer (2008) adds to this debate by claiming that empowerment has gained a fair amount of attention from practitioners because it allows them to see how management intervention can promote employee empowerment. However, the concept is restricted as it presents an organisational-centred perspective of

empowerment that does not tackle the idea of empowerment as felt by employees. This is crucial because management may share power, information and rewards with employees, yet in some cases, employees still feel disempowered (Zakaria, 2011).

Zakaria (2011) states that structural empowerment critique illustrates the shortcomings of this way of viewing empowerment and triggers the need for an alternative method that can address these flaws. Another explanation of empowerment starts to emerge, which draws heavily on human psychology. Yukl (2010) stresses that one reason the psychological cycle of empowerment is important is that it helps to clarify when and why attempts to empower employees are likely to succeed.

Over the last three decades, researchers have studied empowering management practices, including delegating authority and improving employees' access to information and resources from the top to the lower level of the organisation. (Bowen & Lawler, 1992). In contrast to the structural approach, the psychological approach stresses personal empowerment experiences, in other words, the employee needs the experience to become efficient, instead of specific management practices designed to empower employee (Spreitzer, 1995; Zakaria, 2011). In short, it is all about whether the employee views him or herself as empowered (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Conger and Kanungo (1988) are two of the initial researchers who instigated the creation of different points of view on empowerment that can distinguish between situational attributes and the personal opinions of employees regarding those attributes. Based on Bandura's (1978) notion of self-efficacy, they describe psychological empowerment as a process of boosting the sense of self-efficacy among employees by identifying conditions that promote inadequacy and by removing them through both formal organisational practices and informal practices. Conger and Kanungo (1988) perceived empowerment as a psychological concept of self-efficacy that stimulates empowerment rather than delegation and argues that there are other requirements for empowerment other than authority delegation and employee involvement.

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) reflect on the interpretation proposed by Conger and Kanungo (1988) and claim that it is too conventional to conceptualise empowerment as a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among employees. They suggest a psychological model under the concept of empowerment as an intrinsic motivation arising from a collection of four task-related evaluations of employee empowerment: a sense of impact, competence, meaningful and choice. Nevertheless, they do not stress the impact of managers on the understanding of the role by employees (Konczak, Stelly, & Trusty, 2000).

Spreitzer (1995) offers her conformity with Thomas and Velthouse (1990) concepts of psychological empowerment. She claims that empowerment cannot be forced on employees, but they must instead feel psychologically motivated to become empowered. Therefore, psychological empowerment of employees is described as one's subjective empowerment experience based on self-awareness of one's role in the workplace.

Like Conger and Kanungo (1988), Menon (2001) also implies that empowered employees possess the empowerment attribute and have an empowerment mindset. Based on a review of significant empowerment research, Menon lists three psychological empowerment dimensions which underlie the mechanism of empowerment: (1) perceived control, (2) perceived competence and (3) goal internalisation (see Table 5).

Table 5: Psychological Empowerment	
Perceived control	The views about autonomy
Perceived Competence	The sense of efficacy and personal ability emotions
Goal internalisation	For example, the energetic power of the vision of an organisation for the future, and the association of individuals with such an idea or goal.

Adapted from Menon (2001)

Employee perceived control refers to beliefs on autonomy in the execution of work, resource availability, authority and latitude in decision making (Menon, 2001). Perceived competence expresses the proficiency of the role regarding self-efficacy and confidence in role requirements (Menon, 2001). Goal internalisation reflects the facilitating power of thoughts, such as the desired goal, mission or vision, that

is to say, the person believes and values the goals of the organisation and can act on the organisation's behalf (Menon, 2001).

Menon (2001) and Spreitzer (1995) measurement scales are commonly used by researchers to measure psychological empowerment. Based on the research of Thomas and Velthouse (1990), Spreitzer (1995) developed and validated the psychological empowerment assessment instrument and reported on several papers between 1992 and 1999, resulting in 31 statistically-based research findings. Spreitzer (1995) determines employee empowerment in terms which reflect an active work role orientation and identifies four factors of employee empowerment that comprise of the locus of influence and self-esteem, information access and rewards. Spreitzer also classifies two psychological empowerment implications: innovation and managerial effectiveness, and forms a partial nomological hub of psychological empowerment concepts. Spreitzer (1996) validated the first employee psychological empowerment instrument in the workplace with 393 managers at an industrial Fortune 50 company and 128 employees of an insurance company, and Spreitzer (1996) used the same data to analyse the social characteristics structure that is related to employee psychological empowerment. A seven-point Likert scale was used for all survey items.

Spreitzer's four-dimensional scales was adopted for this study. The scale has been tested across many cultures and has been confirmed in various organisational contexts. The scale has also been translated into other languages and validated (Abel & Hand, 2018). Spreitzer's scale seems to deliver an appropriate measure of psychological empowerment with its impressive results and proven generalizability across diverse cultures, organisations, and countries. Another reason for applying Spreitzer's scale is the reasonable reliability score documented in many studies, as presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Reliability Scores Informed by Studies Adopting Spreitzer's Scale		
Researchers	Settings	Score
Snodgrass Rangel, Suskavcevic, Kapral, and Dominey (2020)	United States Education	Ranging from 0.80 to 0.90 Total score = 0.88
Putra, Dwiatmadja, Sasongko, and Suharti (2019)	Indonesia Banking sector	Total score = 0.843
Zhu, Yao, and Zhang (2019)	Korea Education	Ranging from 0.88 to 0.92 Total score = 0.91

Dust, Resick, Margolis, Mawritz, and Greenbaum (2018)	United States Education	Total score = 0.94
Stewart, McNulty, Griffin, and Fitzpatrick (2010)	United States Health services	Ranging from 0.72 to 0.89 Total score = 0.86
Uner and Turan (2010)	Turkey Health sectors	Ranging from 0.81 to 0.94 Total score = 0.88
Tuuli and Rowlinson (2009)	Hong Kong Construction organisation	Ranging from 0.82 to 0.91 Total score not reported
Boudrias et al. (2009)	Canada health services, insurance and communications	Ranging from 0.80 to 0.81 Total score not reported
Hall (2008)	Australian manufacturing organisations	Ranging from 0.90 to 0.96 Total score not reported
Chiang and Jang (2008)	Taiwan hotel companies	Ranging from 0.82 to 0.91 Total score not reported
Holdsworth and Cartwright (2003)	United Kingdom call centres	Ranging from 0.74 to 0.95 Total score = 0.89

Adapted from Zakaria (2011)

Table 6 indicates high scores of alpha reliability across different organisational settings and cultures for Spreitzer's scale. Some have even exhibited outstanding scores (Arneson & Ekberg, 2006). Despite the strengths mentioned above, Spreitzer's scale has been criticised. A significant criticism is the apparent overlap of the dimensions of effect and self-determination. Therefore, only three conceptually distinct dimensions are required (Menon, 2001).

However, Spreitzer's scale was considered to have more advantages compared to Menon's scale. The generalisability Menon's scale is quite minimal, although Spreitzer's seems to generalise through different organisational and culture settings. Menon's scale indicates internal consistency with reasonable to excellent reliability scores, whereas Spreitzer records higher internal consistency from satisfactory to excellent reliability, which suggests Spreitzer's dominance over Menon's scale (Zakaria, 2011). This study uses Spreitzer's (1995) scale to assess psychological empowerment for the reasons above. Definitions of each of the four cognitive dimensions are described below.

3.6.1 Meaning

Meaning refers to the importance of a work goal, based on the ideas or expectations of an employee (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). The term implies the intrinsic care of the individual for a given task that fits the criteria of a role and beliefs, values and attitudes (Spreitzer, 1995). Yukl (2010) clarifies this definition as the situation where the content and results of the work conform to the values and ideals of an individual. On the other hand, Holdsworth and Cartwright (2003) describe meaning to how people believe that they are performing a worthy goal mission and detail meaningfulness as an individual's impression that they are doing something valuable of time and effort is vital in the wider scope of the overall context. Spreitzer (1996) defines meaning as an employee's belief their job is important and that they care about what they do. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) refer to meaning as employees' views of how important their roles are perceived to be influencing their feelings.

Meaning encompasses a fit between employee's beliefs, values, and behaviours and the requirements of their work role (Spreitzer, 2007). In other words, employees desire to feel that doing work is meaningful to them. Thus, once employees know their jobs are important, the sense of the value of work is conveyed in contrast with a person's expectation or ideal.

Employees will be dedicated to their work if they view the work as meaningful when moving away from work and are not interested in it if they find the job to be less meaningful (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990). If the organisational goal adheres to their sense of importance, the employee may believe that their job is important and they value about everything they do (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas and Velthouse, 1990). Meaning requires not only intrinsic concern about the task but also involves external factors that affect people's understanding of how important they should feel (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990).

3.6.2 Competence

The cognitive dimension of competence is drawn from the clinical psychological literature study by Bandura (1977) of self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) suggests that high self-efficacy frequently leads to the induction of behaviours, high commitment

and resilience in the face of challenges, while low self-efficacy leads to employee avoiding circumstances requiring relevant skills and thus keeping them from learning and developing necessary skills. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) support the concept of competence over self-efficacy, describing it as the degree to which an employee can competently carry out task activities when he or she strives Spreitzer (1995) describes competence as an employee's confidence in his or her ability to carry out professional job activities. For Yukl (2010), competence occurs when the employee has a high level of confidence that he or she can do the work properly.

For an employee to feel empowered, he or she needs a sense of self-efficacy or professional skill (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). The employee, therefore, trusts in his or her abilities and skills to complete the task efficiently and competently influence the job and organisation. Employees feel competent when they are positive that they can do their work well (Spreitzer, 1996)

3.6.3 Self-determination

Self-determination represents an employee's sense of choice when initiating and controlling behaviour (Spreitzer, 1995). This implies a sense of control, as working activities and procedures are introduced and continued. George (2018) describes self-determination as the extent in which employees feel physiological accountability for the selection or regulation of tasks, whereas Yukl (2010) explains self-determination as the employee being able to assess in what way and at what time the job should be completed. Holdsworth and Cartwright (2003) assert that the aspect of self-determination represents the locus of cause and effect, which governs an employee's action is considered to be self-determination. Unlike competence which expresses the beliefs of an employee about behavioural competence, self-determination generally reflects a preference of actions (Zakaria, 2011).

Employees with a sense of self-determination in their position at work are expected to show faster and more effective reactions to service delivery (Ambad & Bahron, 2012). The employee experiences a sense of power over his or her behaviour's initiation and persistence and feels more accountable for their behaviours. Autonomy is sensed when making a decision, particularly regarding working practices, process, effort and time (Spreitzer, 1995).

3.6.4 Impact

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) describe the impact as the extent to which actions are perceived to make an impact on the fulfilment of the objective of the task. Impact refers specifically to the degree of direct control over organisational results or the perception that an employee can make a change in the workplace. While, Spreitzer (1995) explains impact as to the extent to which an employee may affect tactical, managerial or functional consequences in the workplace. Yukl (2010) defines impact as an employee's belief that he or she can have a major influence on the workplace. The common definition of impact has been researched under different terms, including locus of control which has a comparable connotation to impact which refer to the degree to which an employee believes that actions are taken will influence results (Menon, 2001). However, it can be argued that impact is distinct from locus of control in that impact applies to the nature of the job, while the internal locus of control is a universal attribute of personality common in all circumstances (Spreitzer, 1995).

Overall, impact refers to the degree that an employee thinks he or she can make a significant difference and that his or her job can significantly impact the achievement of organisational goals. If employees experience power in decision-making processes, they sense an impact (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990). While the aspect of self-determination represents control of actions, effect reflects influence over the result. Impact is determined by the nature of the work and is not a feature of a universal personality that persists in different circumstances.

The psychological aspects of empowerment represents an aggressive rather than an inactive attitude towards a position in work (Spreitzer, 1996). Within an employee desires, a complex path is manifest that a person may affect his or her position in the workplace. It is proposed that those dimensions can only deliver the constructive nature of empowerment. (Ambad & Bahron, 2012; Amenumey & Lockwood, 2008; Spreitzer, 1996). To create an overall construct of psychological empowerment, it is necessary to combine the four dimensions (Uner & Turan, 2010; Zakaria, 2011).

3.7 Empowerment Concept: A Leadership Approach

Leadership has long been identified as a critical factor in achieving employee and organisational goals. Leadership, which can be defined as the ability to influence

others, has been the subject of managerial studies since the 1930s (Yukl, 2010). Thus, leaders' attitudes and behaviours toward empowerment play a significant role in establishing an empowerment climate. Empowering leadership is a leadership style where employees perceive their manager as someone who gives them the necessary freedom and ability to make independent decisions (Slåtten, 2009).

Empowering leadership is a style of leadership that facilitates performance by creating an empowered work environment and encouraging employees in their work roles (Arnold et al., 2000). Empowering leadership fits in the research stream of socio-structural empowerment because it focuses on the managerial perspective of empowerment (Cheong, Spain, Yammarino, & Yun, 2016). Over the last few decades, researchers have attempted to identify various types of managerial actions or practices that can increase employee perceptions of empowerment (Maynard et al., 2012; Seibert et al., 2004). These actions include delegating decision-making authority to employees, soliciting input or suggestions from employees when making decisions, enhancing employees' senses of personal control and accountability, providing employees access to important resources and information, helping employees to develop skills and self-confidence, rewarding employees for higher efforts and productivity, and eliminating hierarchical restrictions (Ahearne et al., 2005; Arnold et al., 2000; Bowen & Lawler, 1995). Many of these empowering leadership practices are identified and discussed in research on high-involvement management practices, participatory decision-making, and self-managing teams.

Bester, Stander, and van Zyl (2015) define leadership empowerment as an intrinsic motivation for employees by sharing authority and supporting employee growth. They explain that there are various means by which appointed leaders try to influence their followers, so empowering leadership is a somewhat special case because employees lead themselves, which is a type of downward transfer of power. Other researchers define empowerment as a form of self- or shared-leadership for employees.

According to Ahearne et al. (2005), empowering leaders display four styles of actions: highlighting the importance of jobs, ensuring decision-making input, building confidence that results will be outstanding, and eliminating any hierarchical limitations. Conger and Kanungo (1988) propose that these behaviours

of leadership empowerment are based on the general interpretation of empowerment and refer to empowerment as a motivational development rather than a delegation of authority to employees. A leader must, therefore, assist employees in understanding the significance of their roles in the organisation, including employees in the decision-making process, trust that employees are able to achieve goals and refine organisational policies and procedures to become empowered.

Recently, several attempts have been made to consolidate the list of empowering leadership practices. One notable empowering leadership model was developed by Arnold et al. (2000), who propose and validate a five-factor construct consisting of mentoring, consulting, leading by example, expressing concern and taking participatory decisions. More recently, Boudrias et al. (2009) propose a five-factor measure of empowering leadership that included a delegation of authority, nurturing the progress of employee skills, sharing pertinent job information, recognising and rewarding employee performance, and sustaining positive relationships in the workplace.

From Lawler's work in 1993, numerous researches have attempted to distinguish empowering management practices that are under the influence of a leader (Arnold et al., 2000; Boudrias et al., 2009; Konczak et al., 2000; Raub & Robert, 2013). These studies have identified that delegation of authority, participatory decision making, leading by example, mentoring, information sharing, and showing concern could all be effective empowering leader behavioural practices, as illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7: Empowering Leader Behaviour	
	Definition
Delegation of Authority	A set of behaviours that show the leader delegates sufficient authority to encourage employee's independence
Accountability	A set of behaviours concerning the leader's emphasis on accountability for outcomes
Leading by example	A series of actions that demonstrate the devotion of the leader to his or her job as well as employees under his or her supervision.
Coaching	A set of behaviours that educate employees and help them to become self-reliant.
Participative decision making	A leader's use of employees' information and input in making decisions.

Sharing information	The sharing of specific information such as mission and ideology as well as other relevant information by the leader
Skill Development	A leader provides opportunities for the employees to learn in their job
Showing concern	A collection of behaviours that demonstrate general regard for team members' well-being.
Express confidence	A leader shows confidence in high performance

Adapted from Arnold et al. (2000), Konczak et al. (2000) and Ahearne et al. (2005)

The variety in these models indicates that there still is a lack of consensus on what comprises empowering leadership. Despite the differences, there are some similar themes and overlapping managerial practices, mainly supporting or coaching, recognising, delegating, and consulting (Boudrias et al., 2009). Studies on empowering leadership have provided support for many positive influences of these practices, at both the individual and the organisational level (Chen et al., 2014; Raub & Robert, 2013; Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

A study by Ahearne et al. (2005) on the effect of leadership empowerment conduct on guest satisfaction and sales performance lead to the development of multidimensional employee empowerment definitions that perceived empowerment from the lens of leadership perspectives. They assessed the constructs of leadership empowerment practices such as enhancing the meaningfulness of work for the employee, encouraging participation in decision-making, expressing trust and confidence, and providing self-determination from administrative limitations.

Six dimensions of leader empowering behaviour were introduced by Konczak et al. (2000). One of the aspects is the delegation of authority, where empowering leaders share information with employees to empower them to participate completely and make wise decisions that are worthwhile for the organisation. The accountability aspect focuses on leaders transferring authority and granting employees responsibilities, holding the employees responsible for their performance. Information sharing dimension literary means that managers share information with employees. In addition, leaders play a critical role in employees' skills development and mentoring for consistent performance (de Klerk & Stander, 2014).

Researchers suggest that empowering leadership is primarily a relationship between a supervisor and an employee, and indicate that supervisors distinguished from an

employee by the extent of their autonomy (Ahearne et al., 2005). Cheong et al. (2016) report positive outcomes resulting from empowering leadership and enabling the process of empowering leadership, enhancing employees' self-efficacy and performance. However, they also reveal the inconveniencing mechanism in which particular leadership empowerment behaviours can increase tension, which in turn reduces the positive impact of empowering leadership on the employee's job performance.

Amundsen and Martinsen (2015) hypothesise the critical elements of empowering leadership consists of power-sharing and motivation support. It is suggested that such elements foster the awareness of self-reliance, encouragement, and capacity of employees to work independently within limitations. The power-sharing and motivation support cycle represents the leadership behaviours of managing people, coordinating the sharing of information, encouraging action, and inspiring employees.

Previous researchers generally believed that management support and employee morale are essential to empowerment performance (Boudrias et al., 2009). Trust is assumed to be a requirement for empowerment achievement, as it attempts to improve the employee's performance. In line with this argument, the significance of trust as one of the conditions for the effectiveness of empowerment activities has been stressed by many researchers. For instance, Yukl (2010) implies that empowerment is more achievable when the degree of shared trust between leaders and employees is strong.

In addition, leaders can motivate and promote participation through the involvement of employees especially when the decisions directly affect them. Involving employees can ultimately increase the quality of decision-making in the work environment and employee satisfaction. Employee participation also helps build decision-making skills. Four basic types of decision-making procedures can be arranged on a spectrum ranging from unaffected by others to a high level of influence. These processes are known as autocratic, consultative, joint and delegated. The leader who likely to make tyrannical measures without consulting employees for their views, so there's no involvement in this situation. Participatory decisions are those in which the leader asks employees for ideas and opinions and makes a final decision in consultation with the employees. Thus, delegation

indicates that the leader assigns the power and authority to employees to make a decision. (Yukl, 2010)

Therefore, leaders should provide an environment that encourages employees' feelings of self-efficacy by being involved in decision-making, and removes factors that nurture a sense of inadequacy and offers employees the opportunity to be independent. This is supported by Zhang and Bartol (2010), who reveal that there is a positive effect on leadership and employee empowerment, which also influences intrinsic motivation. So, when leaders permit employees to engage in the process of decision-making and express their confidence in them, this will encourage employees to be empowered. Thus, leaders' empowering behaviours refers to leaders' enhancing meaningfulness for employees, including them in decision-making, expressing trust and fostering employees' independence (Boudrias et al., 2010).

Brockner et al. (2001) theorise that employees vary in the degree of self-control or self-management they desire. This indicates that while empowering leadership practices can provide employees with a sense of autonomy, it still depends on the individual's choice to achieve empowerment, which could be partially shaped by the individual's personality and background. For various reasons, many employees may feel uncomfortable with job-related decision-making, be reluctant to work independently, feel unwilling to deal with new responsibilities and have other justifications why they do not want to become empowered. In short, many employees perceive empowerment as incompatible with their expectations and perceptions of their position in the workplace. However, other employees who view empowerment positively will likely see it as compatible with their role and desires and will experience higher psychological empowerment in the context of empowering leadership.

3.8 Integrative Approach of Empowerment

Empowerment is seen as a valuable tool for employee and organisational development (Zakaria, 2011). There are aspects of empowerment, however, which may sound good in theory but may not empower employees in practice. (Honold, 1997; Wilkinson, 1998). Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) note that organisations can implement empowerment practices, but the practices will not be as successful

unless the employees feel, think and believe they are empowered. It is the perceptions of individuals about their workplaces which form empowerment rather than some absolute truth (Arneson & Ekberg, 2006). Regardless of how researchers describe empowerment, the common factor is the expected impact of the different measures on individual employees (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Therefore, to grasp the notion of empowerment, researching empowerment from an individual employee's perspective is more beneficial, as the benefits anticipated will only be realised if the employees psychologically feel empowered (Menon, 2001). Consequently, the importance of psychological empowerment in practice is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. It was previously mentioned that structural and leadership strategies are equally important in achieving the intended results of empowerment, but greater attention has been paid to the structural perspectives of empowerment (Honold, 1997). Between the two methods, there is a need for more balance relationship, which should be examined equally (Cho & Faerman, 2010).

Irrespective of the distinctive attributes of each approach, there is an indication that psychological empowerment, leadership and structural empowerment are interconnected (Cho & Faerman, 2010; Zakaria, 2011). Researchers propose that psychological empowerment can be investigated as a result of the empowerment of structures and empowering leadership behaviours (Ahearne et al., 2005; Cho & Faerman, 2010). Seibert et al. (2004) suggest a connection between these two approaches and contend that structural empowerment directly influences psychological empowerment. Menon (2001) and Thomas and Velthouse (1990) explain that structural empowerment such as empowerment practices and leader's support shapes the four cognitive dimensions of psychological empowerment namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. However, researchers such as Boudrias et al. (2009) and Ahearne et al. (2005) suggest that leader's empowering behaviour influences an employee's psychological empowerment, and that this construct is distinct from the structural components of empowerment.

Several recent studies propose an integrative approach to employee empowerment that includes both the socio-structural and psychological perspectives of empowerment (Menon, 2001). The integrative perspective is based on social

cognitive theory, which suggests that personal dispositions are reciprocally determined by individual, behavioural, and environmental interactions (Bandura, 1977). The social cognitive theory emphasises the importance of the presence of empowering leaders in stimulating individual feelings of empowerment. According to this theory, empowerment is understood as a dynamic process, in which employees' perceptions of empowerment are designed by interactions with management practices or organisational structures directed at the employees. This approach suggests that empowerment is best conceived as an interactive process rather than a set of either organisational or managerial actions or psychological outcomes.

Proponents of the integrative approach state that despite their differences, the structural and psychological perspectives complement one another (Abel & Hand, 2018). Besides, relying on any single perspective provides only a partial and incomplete picture of a concept. Proponents of the integrative perspective argue that the structural conditions and managerial activities that are considered empowering should influence and reinforce the cognitive states of employee empowerment, and eventually promote positive outcomes (Menon, 2001). The resulting outcomes may provide further justification for the new managerial and organisational practices, which, in turn, should trigger experiences of empowerment (Maynard et al., 2012). This suggests that in order to have a thorough understanding of the processes and manifestations of employee empowerment in organisations, one must simultaneously consider the structural, leadership and psychological perspectives.

The emergence of the integrative lens is associated with attempts to differentiate empowerment from similar concepts. Researchers often associate empowerment with the term employee participation, engagement, and participation in the literature (Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Honold, 1997). Integrating the structural and psychological perspectives into one model would help to distinguish among related constructs and avoid confusion (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995). Some researchers have also noted that recent studies place insufficient focus on organisational structures and management practices that facilitate empowerment; instead, the focus has been primarily on feelings of empowerment. The sole focus on the psychological perspective also makes it challenging to differentiate

empowerment from other related psychological factors such as self-efficacy, motivation, and positive orientation.

Several recent studies have used the integrative perspective to examine the effects of empowerment on various aspects of performance effectiveness (Ahearne et al., 2005; Boudrias et al., 2009; Raub & Robert, 2013; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). A few studies also assess the connection between structural empowerment and psychological empowerment at the workgroup or the organisational setting (Seibert et al., 2004; Spreitzer, 1996). These discoveries indicate further support for the argument that empowerment is a process that includes both actions and outcomes. They also show the benefits of integrating the two perspectives into one mixture.

Matthews, Diaz, and Cole (2003) propose that to shape a genuinely empowering framework, its components must be derived from all approaches, and this indicates that both structural and leadership components are essential in nurturing employees' empowerment within the organisation. To create an empowered workforce, utilising a single approach will not produce the anticipated result, but if all approaches are utilised, this will achieve a competitive advantage for the proposed empowerment framework (Arneson & Ekberg, 2006; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995)

The goal of empowerment theory is to define and describe the relationship between the determinants of empowerment and the feelings and behaviours of the employee, and eventually forecast how these components affect empowerment overall (Zimmerman, 1995). To achieve this, researchers suggest that it is necessary for the assessment of empowerment in various dimensional instead of one-dimensional tactics (Baird & Wang, 2010; Cho & Faerman, 2010; Honold, 1997; Kazlauskaite et al., 2012; Menon, 2001; Murari & Gupta, 2012; Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

The benefit of the integrative approach is that when addressing empowerment, it takes into account the organisation of responsibilities and management strategies, thereby taking into account the impact that empowerment structures have on employees but does not consider empowerment as being accomplished unless the employees experience empowerment. Also, the integration of empowerment may provide more clarity to the overall empowerment picture. Therefore, this study

views empowerment in an integrative way and the research builds on the integration of structural, leadership and psychological empowerment as illustrated in Figure 3.

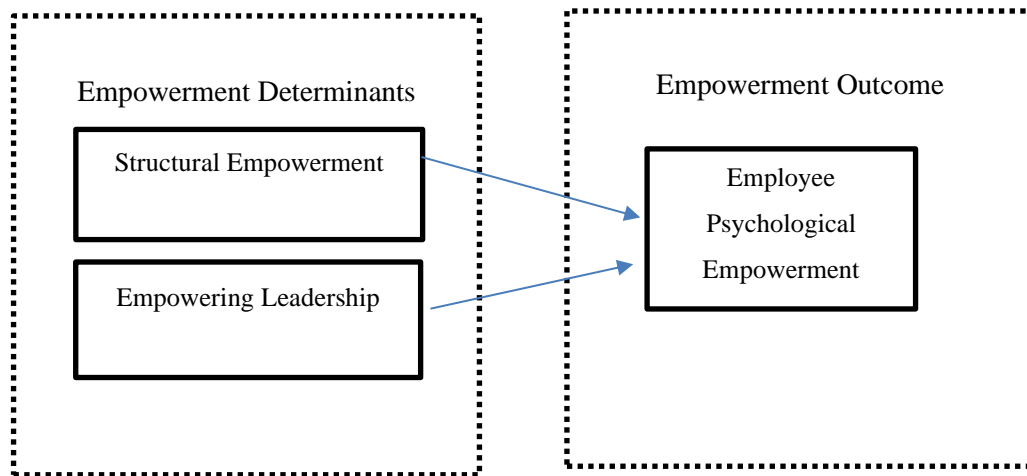


Figure 3: The Integrative Conceptual Framework of Empowerment

3.9 The Notion of Perceived Risk

The idea of risk is prominent in the concepts of individual choices (Dowling, 1986). Decision theorists define risk as the situation in which one knows beforehand both the implications of each option and the possibility of each event occurring (Dowling, 1986). According to Cocioc (2017), the notion of risk was popularised subject in the economy by economists such as Frank Knight and John Maynard Keynes in the 1920s through studies on probability theory. In the risk management literature, there are numerous discussions about risk, but only a few clear and concise definitions are provided (Holton, 2004). This is probably because of the researchers' interchangeable use of the risk and uncertainty concepts (Fischhoff & Kadvany, 2011). Uncertainty is a condition where awareness of the future is missing, and information is not accessible or restricted (Cocioc, 2017). Knight (1964) explains that uncertainty applies not only in cases where an economic agent cannot rationally allocate the probability of different options that may occur due to lack of information, as well as in cases where it simply does not do so. In such an approach, if precise subjective probabilities are applied to it beyond the data available, then we are dealing with risk and not uncertainty. Different from uncertainty, the risk is categorised by the possibility of specifying a law of probability for the desired outcomes, and is known to the economic agents (Cocioc, 2017).

Cocioc (2017) also states that traditional decision theory defines the risk of rejecting variations in the distribution of potential results and subjective preferences. There are two theoretical perspectives of risk in the literature on consumer behaviour, which concentrates on a decision resulting in uncertainty and the costs or implications of such outcomes (Fischhoff & Kadvany, 2011). Gefen, Karahanna, and Straub (2003) note that there is no agreement on the concept of risk since some researchers believe positive and negative uncertainties are outcomes of judgments, while others researchers suggest only negative decisions as an outcome. Mitchell (1999) tries to connect risk to the probability of failure, implying that the likelihood of a result is unknown when the threat is said to occur (Fischhoff & Kadvany, 2011).

In the psychometric literature, Slovic (2010) initiates a discussion of risk perception theory through the lens of a psychological approach. He investigates the heuristics and prejudices that individuals tend to develop and to interpret the level of risk in their environment. He summarises numerous social and cultural variables which lead to incoherent risk assessments and states that the perception of risk is complicated by various mechanisms of psychology and cognition. The underlying mechanism of this view is that risk perception consists of a number of measurable and subjective risk attributes of specific threats, including terror, awareness and controllability (Slovic, 2010). Since the 1980s, hundreds of environmental studies have cited risk concepts to magnify perceptions of risks, for example, as avian flu, genetically modified foods and financial decisions (Fox-Glassman & Weber, 2016).

In the consumer behaviour literature, the notion of perceived risk was initially introduced by Bauer (1964) who viewed perceived risk as risk considered by an individual. The risk assessment influences their purchasing behaviour such as searching for information about the product where to purchase merchandise, loyalty to a particular brand or individual or group influence when purchasing product or service. The notion of the perceived risk defined by Baur (1964) is a compilation of uncertainty or threats that influence individual behaviour and induces predictable outcomes.

Thus, in this study, the perceived risk is defined as the probability of adverse effects resulting from the decision taken and is essential at the level perceived by the employee (Bhukya & Singh, 2015). The range and type of reaction depend on the

risk level perceived by the employee and his or her level of tolerance for the taken risk (Lim, 2003).

Cunningham (1967) was the first researcher to recognise the dimensions of perceived risk by identifying performance and psychosocial risk clusters and further characterising six categories: performance/functional, financial/economic, opportunity/time, security/physical, social and psychological risk. Subsequently, Jacoby and Kaplan (1972) suggested an overall measure of perceived risk based on Bauer (1964) and revealed five dimensions of perceived risk: financial, performance, physical, psychological, and social risk. Several prior studies focused on five risk dimensions: financial, physical, psychological, social, and time risk (Lim, 2003) as presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Type of Perceived Risk	
Financial Risk	Monetary loss and unexpected cost
Physical Risk	Associated to safety or health
Psychological Risk	One's disappointment in making a poor selection
Social Risk	Result in the disapproval of friends and families
Time Risk	The time lost because of product or service failure

Source: Chuchu (2017)

With the development of e-commerce and the popularity of online shopping, changes in consumers' perceived risk aligned with environmental changes (Hsin Chang & Wen Chen, 2008). Online shopping does not include physical risk, and different perceived risk components were introduced, such as privacy risk and delivery risk (Gefen et al., 2003).

Forty years after the introduction of the concept, marketing researchers continue to be interested in the notion of perceived risk (Chuchu, 2017; Fox-Glassman & Weber, 2016; Mitchell, 1999). There are a few factors why perceived risk theory still appeals to researchers. Firstly, perceived risk has intrinsic value and lets marketers see the world through the eyes of consumers (Mitchell, 1999). Moreover, perceived risk is a universal and versatile concept that can be applied in a wide range of context. In this study, the concept of perceived risk is examined in the

context of employee empowerment in the hotel industry in East Malaysia. Mitchell (1999) suggests that perceived risk is more valid and appropriate to understand individual behaviour, as an individual is more likely to avoid mistakes than to optimise buying potential. The above is central to this study of the hospitality industry in East Malaysia, as perceived risk is used to explain employees' empowerment as employee tend to avoid making a wrong decision rather than exercising their full potential.

Furthermore, perceived risk often varies from culture to culture, and from individual to individual (Woodside, Hsu, & Marshall, 2011). Perception was defined as the selection, organisation and interpretation of information to create a sense of reality (Slovic, 2010). The way that risk perceived by the employee depends not only on the physical trigger but also on the relationship between the stimulus and the environment and the employee's cognitive state. Perceived risk, therefore, depends on how a person views a phenomenon and experiences it.

The complex nature of perceived risk has been analysed in a different context in other literature. No work has shown how this concept has been used at the organisational level, specifically for employee empowerment. For this study, literature from consumer behaviour is adopted to evaluate risk perception at the individual level. The conceptual notion of risk can be applied almost uniformly, and its usefulness has been illustrated in a variety of applications, from economics to consumer behaviour (Mitchell, 1999). Moreover, It is proposed that perceived risk is more effective to explain the behaviour of an individual since people are normally driven to avoid errors rather than to maximise the effectiveness of empowerment (Bhukya & Singh, 2015).

3.10 Stimulus Organism Response (S-O-R) Theory

The theoretical framework of this study is established based on a modification of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) in environmental psychology theory which was later modified by Jacoby (2002) and is widely used in the consumer behaviour and marketing literature. They propose that environmental stimuli (S) stimulate an emotional reaction (O), which influences one's response (R). The stimulus is the determinant that stimulates action, and the organism suggests intervention between stimulus and

response, as it can be considered a cognitive and affective intermediate state, and the response is the conclusive result that either reflects avoidance or behaviour (Balakrishnan, 2017; Jacoby, 2002).

Figure 4 shows the original S-O-R framework that suggests environmental stimuli trigger individual states, which lead to a response (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). This framework aims to clarify the emotional responses that arise from interaction with environmental stimuli. The stimuli usually contain a sense of variable modality that refers to changes in environmental stimuli. The theory of the environment allows marketers to manipulate stimuli to create unique emotional reactions. The component of the organism shows the consumer's emotional reactions to a situation (Balakrishnan, 2017).

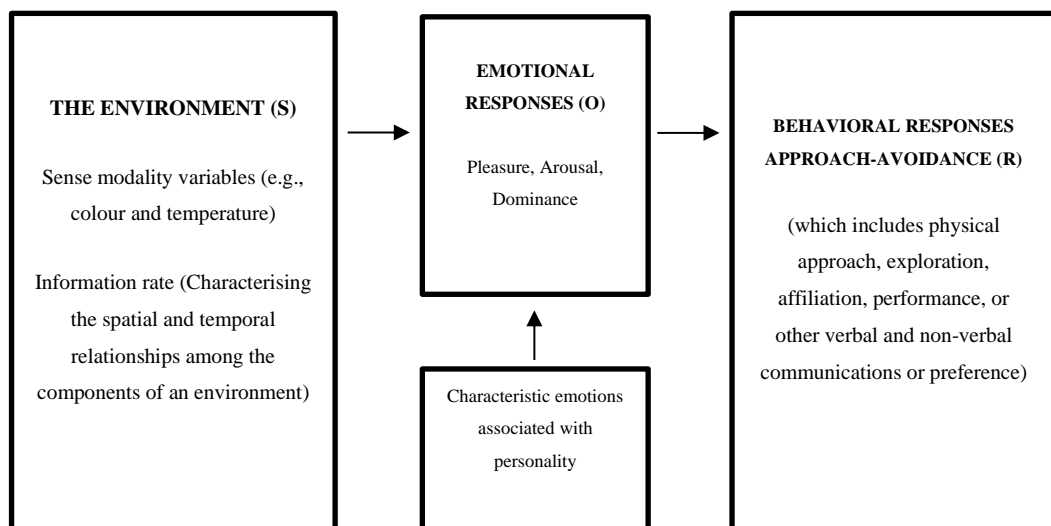


Figure 4: Traditional S-O-R Framework by Mehrabian and Russell (1974)

Mehrabian and Russell (1974) classify all emotional responses within an organism into three separate conditions, namely Pleasure-Displeasure (P), Arousal-No arousal (A) and Dominance-Submissiveness (D). The model's response includes approach and avoidance behaviours that mainly include three key components that are motivated to explore an environment, stimulate interaction with others in the environment, and satisfy the climate. (Mehrabian & O'Reilly, 1980).

In the classical S-O-R model, S-Stimuli (the environmental stimuli) affect O-Organism (The analysis of environmental indications obtained by individuals and the reaction or emotional state of the person). The individual's emotions then determine an individual's various R-Response/s (responses or behaviours, approach

or avoidance behaviours) (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Some researchers describe the response as the individual's final decision to avoid or approach behaviour as either a physiological response or a behavioural response. (Balakrishnan, 2017; Goi, Kalidas, & Zeeshan, 2014; Ul Islam & Rahman, 2017)

The S-O-R model is commonly applied in research related to consumer purchasing behaviour. This research is the first application of the model the notion of employee empowerment, and in particular, to test the perceived risk of empowerment by the employee. The S-O-R model comprises of the stimulus as an independent variable, organism as a mediator, and response as the dependent variable. For this study, the stimuli are the empowerment practices such as structural empowerment and a leader's empowering behaviour as they affect the employee's cognitive responses. Organism applies to internal process and structures prevailing between stimuli and external to the person final response emitted. The intervening processes and structure consist of the perceived risk of empowerment. Response in the S-O-R theory shows the results of employee empowerment. The S-O-R model is still significant and has been incorporated in many recent psychology, marketing and business studies (Balakrishnan, 2017; Hsin Chang & Wen Chen, 2008). Figure 5 demonstrates the significance of the S-O-R model to variables in the present study. Based on the S-O-R theory, there are four hypotheses identified as follow:

H1: Empowerment practices have a negative relationship with employees' perceived risk of empowerment

H2: Empowerment practices have a positive relationship with employee empowerment

H3: Perceived risk of empowerment has a negative effect on employee empowerment

H4: Perceived risk of empowerment mediates the relationships between empowerment practices and employee empowerment.

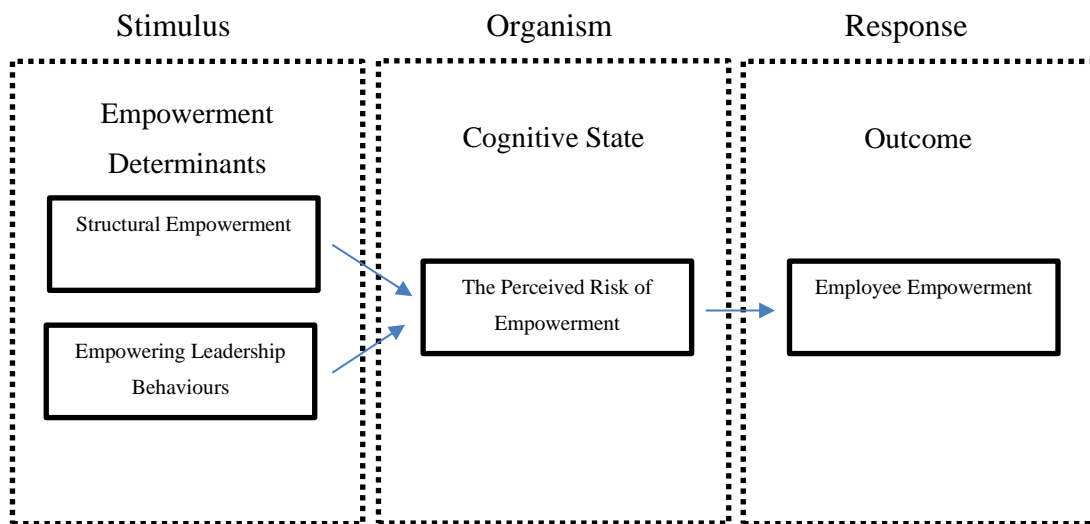


Figure 5: The Theoretical Framework of this Study

3.11 Summary

This chapter provided a discussion of HRM in the hotel industry and the literal meaning and different interpretations of the concept of empowerment in the literature and across different cultural contexts. The practice of empowerment has been widespread in Western societies for more than two decades, but its meaning and conceptualisation remain varied among researchers.

This literature review contributes to a better conceptualisation of empowerment elements by detailing the impact of the elements of structural, leadership and psychological empowerment that stimulate the perceived risk of empowerment. The theory should not only encompass causality aspects to investigate fundamental factors but should also be used to explain the nature of the interactions and to explain the rationale explanations for the creation of those relationships (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2015). Based on the specific condition of this study, the S-O-R model is, therefore notably the most suitable framework for integrating the relationship of the structural empowerment approach, empowering leadership approach, psychological empowerment approach and perceived risk. This research intends to identify the determinants of empowerment practices, perceived risk of empowerment and their effect on employee empowerment. Figure 6 shows the relationships hypothesised for further analysis and assessment by conceptualising the literature review.

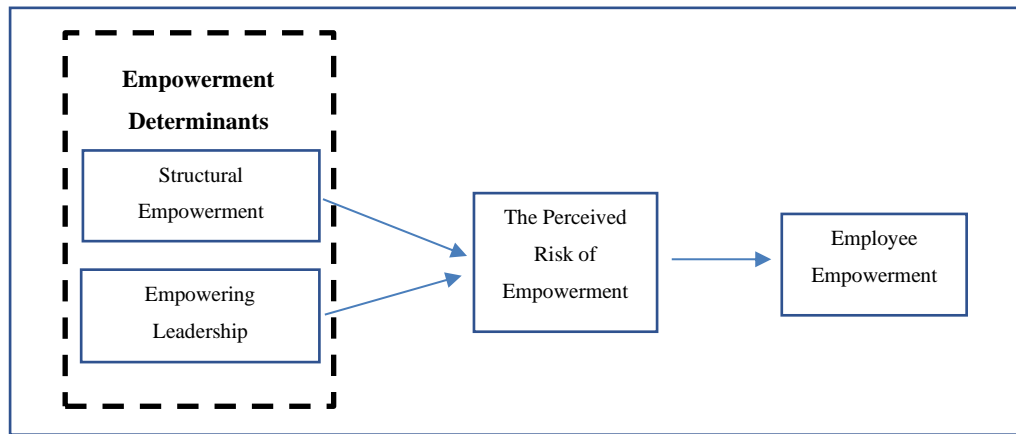


Figure 6: The Conceptual Framework of this Study

Drawing on different disciplines, this chapter describes the various approaches to empowerment and the essential facet of perceived risk, which is a limitation implicit in the conceptualised framework. A thorough qualitative study to investigate the concepts of perceived risk components in the context of empowerment is required, followed by further assessment via a quantitative approach. The next chapter describes the study's research design and methodology for the research's qualitative study process, to examine the empowerment components and interpret the context-specific risk to empowerment.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methods used to examine the research question described in chapter one and explains the current study's approach to achieving the research goals. It begins with a summary of the study's theoretical framework, clarifying the choice of research design and addressing the selection of the mixed-method approach as the research design. The next section explores the ethical considerations, explains how the thesis aims to adhere to the ethics code and addresses the fundamental principles.

4.2 Research Philosophy

Three main research approaches have been adopted in employee empowerment research. The most prominent approach is positivism and it is typically associated with quantitative study design (Abdul Aziz et al., 2011; Boudrias et al., 2010; Fock et al., 2013; He et al., 2010; Mohsin & Kumar, 2010; Randolph, 2011; Raub & Robert, 2013; Ryan, 1995). An interpretivism approach usually employs qualitative methods in their research (Greasley et al., 2008; Greasley et al., 2005; Hui, Au, & Fock, 2004; Wengel, McIntosh, & Cockburn-Wootten, 2019). More recently, there has been a growing emphasis on the adoption of a mixed-method approach where both quantitative and qualitative methods are combined in one study. For example, Cheung et al. (2012) and Ueno (2008) attempt to investigate employee empowerment using both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

The notion of a philosophical framework behind the study is crucial to address research questions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The philosophical concept allows the researcher to determine the most effective approach to investigate research questions by understanding the concepts of ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Holden & Lynch, 2004). Different terms, such as paradigm or view, are used to refer these concepts and they are generally regarded as research methodologies (Creswell, 2014). Research methodologies can be defined as “a basic set of beliefs that guide action”. They represent a paradigm of the researcher, the nature of the world, the role of the individual in it, and the spectrum of potential relationships with the world and its pieces (Guba, 1990, p. 17). In other words, the

researcher's philosophical orientation to the world or worldview, will influence how the study is conducted. The researcher's belief often influences his or her choice to embrace quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods approaches in the research (Creswell, 2014). The theoretical framework that the researcher uses not only determines how the analysis is formulated but also how the data is interpreted.

Several paradigms exist in the social science research area providing guidelines to link methods and shape inquiry, but no one approach can solve all research questions in particular research (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Goodson & Phillimore, 2012). Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that no paradigm is superior per se, but more importantly, one must decide which paradigm is more appropriate to achieve given research objectives. Thus the selection of a relevant paradigm is a basic precondition for a researcher to conduct research. Guba and Lincoln (1994) attempt to distinguish different paradigms and reflect their fundamental concepts with three questions: Ontological (what is the nature of truth? what is known about truth?), epistemological (what is the essence of the knower-known relationship?), and methodological (how is knowledge obtained?). Morgan and Smircich (1980) offer a continuum of basic philosophical assumptions concerning ontology, human nature and epistemology ranging from a purely objective view to a subjective view of reality as set out in Table 9.

Table 9: Assumptions Characterising Subjective-objective Debate within Social Science						
Objective: Reality is concrete			Subjective: Reality is in 'one's mind.'			
Ontological assumptions	Reality as a concrete structure	Reality as a concrete process	Reality as a contextual field of information	Reality as a realm of symbolic discourse	Reality as a social construction	Reality as a projection of human imagination
Human nature assumptions	Researcher as a responder	Researcher as an adaptor	Researcher as an information processor	Researcher as an actor, the symbol user	Researcher as a social constructor, the symbol creator	Researcher as pure spirit, conscious being
Epistemological stance	To construct a positivist science	To study systems, process, change	To map contexts	To understand patterns of symbolic discourse	To understand how social reality is created	To obtain phenomenological insight, revelation
Research Methods	Lab experiments, surveys	Historical analysis	Contextual analysis of Gestalten	Symbolic analysis	Hermeneutics	Exploration of pure subjectivity

Adapted from Morgan and Smircich (1980)

Since Kuhn (1962) works on *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, the worldwide researcher community, dominated by the Western researchers has been involved in on-going debates regarding research philosophy, framework and paradigms and how these shape the researcher's process and view of the world. Burrell and Morgan (1979) identify four paradigms that guide the research: functionalism, interpretivism, radical humanist, and radical structuralism. Furthermore, Creswell (2014) suggests four sets of paradigms regarding knowledge obtained in social science: post-positivism, constructivism, transformative and pragmatism. In tourism research, Jennings (2010) proposes six theoretical paradigms for tourism and hospitality research, namely positivism, interpretivism, feminism, postmodernism, critical theory and chaos theory. Table 10 sets out the fundamental beliefs of major paradigms.

Table 10: Basic Beliefs of Main Paradigms					
	Positivism	Post-positivism	Constructivism	Critical Theory	Pragmatism
Terms	Realist, 'hard science' researchers	A modified form of positivism	Gain understanding by interpreting subject perceptions	Create change to benefit those oppressed by the power	Focus on practical applied research,
Ontology Paradigms and assumptions in which researcher operates in search of knowledge. What is the nature of reality?	Belief in a single reality that can be measured and studied.	Recognised that nature can never be fully understood due to the hidden variables and lack of absolutes in nature.	Realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions and are dependent on the individual.	Human nature operates in a world based on a struggle for power, which leads to interactions of privilege and oppression.	Reality is constantly renegotiated, debated, interpreted in light of its usefulness in new unpredictable situations
Epistemology The process of thinking. The truth we believe as researchers. What is the relationship between the researcher and the subject?	Belief in total objectivity. There is no reason to interact with the subject.	Assume we can only estimate nature. Interaction with research subjects should be kept to a minimum.	A belief that people construct their understanding of reality. Findings are due to the interaction between the researcher and the subject.	A belief that knowledge can change existing oppressive structures and remove oppression. Research is driven by social structures, power and control.	The best method is one that solves problems. Finding out is the means, change is the underlying aim
Methodology The process of how we seek knowledge. What is the research process?	Belief in the scientific method and falsification principle.	Belief in the scientific method but question more due to the unknown variables involved in the research.	Belief in the naturalistic method. Hermeneutical and dialectical.	Belief in participatory research which empowers the oppressed to make changes. Dialogic.	Belief in research through design.
Axiology How researchers act based on the research. How is knowledge valued?	Knowledge is propositional and intrinsic value. Researchers remain distant from the subject	Knowledge is propositional and has intrinsic value. Researchers attempt to gain a better understanding of what is known as reality.	Knowledge and value are propositional which leads to positive changes for the oppressed.	Knowledge is propositional and has a value linked to social change emancipation.	Values are situational or relative and change according to the difference in time and space.

Adapted from Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) and Creswell (2014)

Most on-going management and social research are derived from two dominant paradigms, namely positivism and interpretivism, which represent the main traditions associated with research methodologies. There are different uses for positivism such as scientific, rationalistic, and empirical uses, while interpretivism is referred to as naturalistic, constructionist and the phenomenological (Henderson, 2011). It is suggested that a paradigm shift is occurring in the social sciences (Kuhn & Hacking, 2012). The devotion to positivist and quantitative approaches is questioned as to whether it needs to be the paramount approach to study a phenomenon (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Henderson, 2011). Positivism and interpretivism are used to categorise patterns in observations but with different hypotheses. The positivist believes that the reality is a separate part of a whole, that theory should be deductive and a priori, that logical causality is possible and that scientific research is objective (Henderson, 2011, p. 341). It is contrasted with the interpretivist's expectations of interpretation derived from multiple dimensions, the prospects of new theory, and subjective processes based on meanings and perceptiveness (Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, a solely positivist paradigm is rarely if ever undertaken in management and social research, which paradigm is usually reflected in actual experiments, (Henderson, 2011). On the other hand, strictly interpretivist approach, which is often concentrated on research questions is difficult to implement (McGuire, 1986).

Thus, a solely positivist paradigm is rarely if ever undertaken in management and social research, which paradigm is typically exhibited in true experiments, (Henderson, 2011). On the other hand, strictly interpretivist approach, which is usually concentrated on research questions, is challenging to execute (McGuire, 1986). Pragmatism has developed in the last few decades, however, and discussion has persisted along the lines that a theory or strategy is acceptable if it works (Creswell, 2014). The pragmatist paradigm exemplifies the operability and fitness of research approaches to the nature of research questions; and a mixture of different paradigms and methodological approaches can be enforced in a single study that can override the limitation of using only one paradigm and one research approach (Creswell, 2014).

The paradigm adopted for this research is, therefore based on pragmatism, which makes it possible to utilise more than one research paradigm and methodology in a single study. However, when selecting the methods to be adopted, the researcher must acknowledge and take into account the nature of the subject matter and objectives of a given study. Considering the practicalities required to complete this research, and generalising the findings in the context of East Malaysia, this study employs two research approaches as best suited for addressing the following research questions:

Research Question One: What are the East Malaysian hotel employees' perceptions of empowerment?

Research Question Two: What are the determinants of empowerment practices that influence hotel employee empowerment in the East Malaysia context?'

Research Question Three: What are the determinants of the perceived risk of empowerment that influence the relationship between empowerment practices and employee empowerment in the East Malaysia hotel industry context?

Research Question Four: What are the relative effects of empowerment practices on the perceived risk of empowerment and employee empowerment in the East Malaysia hotel industry context?

4.3 The Paradigm of Pragmatism

This study developed from the integration of different empowerment approaches and aligned with perceived risk theory that shapes and enhance the empowerment theory. The findings are then related to the culture of East Malaysia to develop the research framework. With these elements taken into consideration, this study adopts mixed-methods in the view of pragmatism. This approach offers an opportunity to develop a detailed understanding of social and human phenomena through the use of triangulation, derived from both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Pragmatism is the third research paradigm movement or 'third wave' in the research of social science in recent decades. Pragmatism incorporates both inductive and deductive research reasoning, makes good use of the advantages and disadvantages of both qualitative and quantitative research attributes, blurs the line between

paradigms and various research methods to address research problems and provides more proof for research findings (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009). Strong philosophical paradigm proponents such as Lincoln et al. (2011) have specified that they have no opposition to mixing approaches as long as no attempt is made to merge paradigms (Balakrishnan, 2017). Creswell (2014) promotes the adoption of a mixed-method model of pragmatism and argues it is the paradigm that offers the basic philosophical foundation for mixed-method study (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009). In addition, Teddle and Tashakkori (2009), as mentioned by Balakrishnan (2017) tie the pragmatic view with the claims of mixed-method research:

- (1) In a single study, the qualitative and quantitative approach can be used
- (2) The research problem is given primary importance — more than the method or the paradigm theory that underlies the method
- (3) A rejection of the dichotomy of positivism and constructivism
- (4) That the sense of realism should also be discarded, using philosophical terms like ' fact ' and ' reality '
- (5) That the view and theory of practical and applied research should direct methodological choices

Forerunners in pragmatism dismissed the empirical notion that social inquiry could reach the truth about the real world by a single scientific method alone (Saunders et al., 2015). However, other mixed-method researchers philosophically align themselves with the ground-breaking paradigm that breaks current scientific paradigms and overturns one paradigm for another (D. L. Morgan, 2007; Saunders et al., 2015). A mixed-method method could be combined with any approach since the pragmatic paradigm mainly concentrates on the research issue and uses any methods to understand the problem (Creswell, 2014). Pragmatist researchers choose methods and techniques available in the way they collect, evaluate and interpret data that fits the research goals (Tashakkori & Teddle 2009). The pragmatic approach is, therefore, important for the adaptation of a mixed-method approach to data inquiry with both qualitative and quantitative assumptions (Creswell 2014).

To address the research questions, this study adopts an exploratory sequential mixed-methods strategy, which starts by obtaining and assessing qualitative data. It then uses the findings to develop quantitative research instruments. The purpose of this strategy is to build measurements with specific samples of populations to see if data from the qualitative phase can be generalised to a larger sample of data (Creswell, 2014). However, before conducting mixed-methods, a paradigmatic issue needs to be addressed, as several researchers fail to grasp the concept of pragmatism in this approach. Bryman (2007) reveals that some researchers seem not to dwell on the ontological and epistemological problems associated with mixed methods.

Pragmatism is usually viewed via epistemological and methodological stances, not as a whole integrated paradigm by ignoring the ontology aspect of the pragmatic philosophy (Lohse, 2017; Maarouf, 2019; Pratt, 2016). However, Morgan (2007) states that it is possible to detach the metaphysical facets of ontology from epistemological and methodological issues. The pragmatist approach does not ignore the relevancy of the philosophy of knowledge concept, rather, it rejects the top-down principle of the ontological assumptions and proposes that epistemological and methodological issues should be detached from ontology. Kivinen and Piirainen (2006) also propose that the researcher should concentrate on methodological issues, dropping metaphysical assumptions, and replacing them with operationalisable research questions. From the epistemological point of view, a pragmatic researcher, uses any research method that meets the research objectives based on the method's practical value, regardless of its underlying philosophy (Maarouf, 2019).

There are three different approaches on how a researcher can deal with the philosophical debate of mixed-methods: the paradigmatic stance, the single paradigm approach and the multiple paradigm approach (Hall, 2013; Maarouf, 2019). According to Hall (2013), the paradigmatic stance disregards the philosophical debate based on the notion that methodology is independent of epistemology. In other words, when choosing research methods, the researcher does not depend on paradigms, so both quantitative and qualitative methods can be used under any research paradigm (Saunders et al., 2015). The single paradigm approach states that both quantitative and qualitative methods can be combined under a single

paradigm as long as the paradigm can be integrated to answer critical research questions (Maarouf, 2019). The multiple paradigm approach claims that paradigms are not only compatible but also complementary (Hall, 2013). Creswell (2014) also states that multiple paradigms can be used in mixed-methods research and that they are best suited to mixed-methods designs.

In this study, the researcher applied the most appropriate methods to achieve accuracy in predicting employee empowerment. This study uses the mixed-methods approach from the multiple paradigm stance, i.e. the researcher uses multiple paradigms or worldviews to answer the research questions. Shifting between paradigms implies that at different research steps, the perspective can change to develop a more in-depth understanding than could be achieved by using one paradigm (Finkbeiner, 2016).

To best answer answers the research questions, the researcher applied methods that epistemologically offer both objective and subjective viewpoints depending on the stage of the research cycle (Finkbeiner, 2016). Methods of a constructivist and positivist nature are applied to get as close to reality as possible (Creswell, 2014). These methods require different interaction with the participants involved. This research starts with the interview approach, which dwells within the constructivist paradigm. The relationship between the researcher and participants differs from the objective perspective of a hypothesis-testing survey. The survey approach is used later in this study.

Thus, based on the epistemological viewpoints, pragmatism acknowledges a subjective and objective truth and prefers theories that best achieve desired results. Researchers gather data in a way that answers research questions that give both objective and subjective insights, and researchers employ both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study (Bryman, 2007; Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2015; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

The mixed-methods approach is the most suitable to examine research problems, as it allows an adequate exploration of research questions through qualitative research, which is further enhanced through quantitative research (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative approach attempts to incorporate the systematic collection of data through observation or from the participants' viewpoint, developing into an

interpretation of a particular phenomenon in a specific setting (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

In comparison, the quantitative approach aims to use established tool-based questions, defining correlations between variables, and testing particular hypotheses. Within this study, the quantitative approach is initially determined by the findings in the first qualitative research phase. In Table 11, three methodologies are evaluated based on philosophical assumptions, approaches, processes, and procedures. This study utilises the mixed-methods approach from the pragmatic worldview and adopts both constructivist and positivist paradigm, applies the sequential research design, and employs predetermined or fixed approaches of both qualitative and quantitative analysis practices.

Table 11: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed-methods Approach			
	Qualitative method approaches	Quantitative method approaches	Mixed-methods approach
Philosophical assumptions	Constructivist	Positivist	Pragmatic
Strategies	Subjectivist; create findings	Objectivist; finding true through Surveys	Problem-centred; Sequential exploratory research design
Methods	Open-ended questions, emerging approaches, text or image data	Closed-ended questions, predetermined approaches, numeric data	Both open- and closed-ended questions, both emerging and predetermined approaches, and both quantitative and qualitative data and analysis
Practices of research as the researcher	Position researcher within the context Collects participant meanings Focuses on a single concept or phenomenon Bring personal values into the study Studies the context of the setting of participants Validate the accuracy of findings Makes interpretations of the data Created an agenda got to change or reform Collaborated with the participants	Test or verifies theories or explanations Identifies variables to study Related variables in questions or hypotheses Uses standards of validity and reliability Observe and measure information numerically Uses unbiased approaches Employs statistical procedures	Collects both quantitative and qualitative Develops a rationale for mixing Integrate the data at different stages of inquiry Presents visual pictures of the procedures in the study Employs the practices of both qualitative and quantitative research

Adapted from Creswell (2014, p. 18)

4.4 Principles for Designing a Mixed-methods Approach

Campbell and Fiske (1959) initiated the mixed-methods design derived from the multi-method matrix for their psychological feature validation study. Although they concentrated on collecting multiple quantitative data, their work has been influential in facilitating the use of different methods and the gathering of numerous data types in a single study and in creating the concept of triangulation (D. L. Morgan, 2007). Triangulation is an approach to research that uses a combination of more than one research strategy in a single study (Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012). This indicates that various operationalism as a validation process is required, and more than one approach is employed to guarantee that the explained variance is the outcome of the underlying phenomenon. The concept of triangulation was then used to recommend interdependence between quantitative and qualitative results (Zakaria, 2011).

Bryman (2007) suggests that researchers conducting mixed-method research are more prone to choose methods related to their underlying research goals and issues, rather than some predetermined assumptions about which research paradigm would dominate social science research. The justification for combining quantitative and qualitative data in one study is based on the assumption that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods alone are adequate to capture patterns and specifics of a situation. The use of both types of data would allow more rigorous research, reaping the benefits of the strengths of each method (Creswell, 2014). Several researchers state that the combined method will provide more valuable, rich and relevant data to tackle a research problem (Ryan, 1995; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). In addition, it was suggested that effective research designs also integrate compatible techniques leading to a triangulation of principles, data and methodologies. D. L. Morgan (2007) also implies that the mixture of techniques enables new ways of thinking to be instigated by addressing the paradoxes that take shape from the two sources of data.

Creswell (2007) stresses that mixed-method designs can be either fixed or emergent, depending on the choice of the researcher. According to Creswell (2014) fixed mixed methods designs are predetermined and planned at the start of the research process, and the procedures are implemented as planned. Emergent mixed-methods designs result when a second approach, either quantitative or qualitative, is added

after the study is underway because the first method is found to be insufficient. Typically, the researcher predetermines and applies qualitative and quantitative approaches at the planning stage for specified mixed methods and executes them appropriately (Zakaria, 2011). If due to the inadequacy of a single methodology, there is a problem during the research process requiring the addition of another technique, either quantitative or qualitative, the approach is regarded as a modern mixed-method design (Balakrishnan, 2017). Thus, for the above reasons, a fixed mixed-method design is adopted in this study.

This research uses a diverse approach as a mixed-method design relies on the mechanism that analyses and integrates various research design elements rather than highlighting the selection of a suitable design from the present ontology (Creswell, 2014). When designing mixed-method research, five mechanisms should be considered: the intent of the study; theoretical framework; research questions; methodologies; and validation concerns (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009).

It is important for this study to illustrate the research questions and to link them to a pragmatic view and the use of fixed mixed-methods. The research questions required the exploration of the concept of empowerment from the perspectives of hotel employees and the elements that affect their empowerment, and the perceived risk of empowerment that could influence the empowerment of employees. The framework is developed and enhanced by merging the background literature and real-life views of the hotel employees that are working in the luxury hotel sector in East Malaysia. The study's aims required the framework to be predetermined and tested to uncover the employee empowerment components, hence the qualitative approach leading to a quantitative approach to achieve the desired research objectives. This study uses a sequential exploratory research design encompassing the research method which integrates the qualitative approach leading to a quantitative approach to achieve desired research goals

The strategies for data collection and analysis are determined by making sure that the research question is the focal point that provides an understanding of the problem without any theoretical emphasis on research. The pragmatic view is considered to be rather versatile opposed to other approaches, as it incorporates several methodologies that allowed the researcher to initiate the research from different points of view especially when reviewing the literature, the developing the

research framework and during qualitative and quantitative data collection. Consequently, through the lens of a pragmatist, this study employs multiple methods, different paradigms, different assumptions, and numerous methods of data collection and analysis in the mixed-methods research design (Creswell, 2014).

4.5 Mixed-Methods Design

According to Creswell (2014), there are three main models found in the mixed-methods area, namely convergent parallel, explanatory, and exploratory sequential approaches. Within this study, exploratory sequential mixed-methods are applied. Creswell (2014) explains that, as noted above, exploratory sequential mixed-methods starts with the qualitative research phase to explore the participants' understandings. Then, after data are analysed, the information derived from the qualitative research phase is used to develop instruments for the subsequent quantitative phase.

The aim of this mixed-method research structure is to combine qualitative and quantitative research approaches to gain a better sense of a research question than could be achieved by either research approach individually (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Consequently, the sequential mixed-method approach enables the researcher to investigate participant perceptions and use the findings to create a research instrument. (Creswell, 2014). Figure 7 demonstrates the mixed-method approach flow with a sequential design that was adapted for this research.

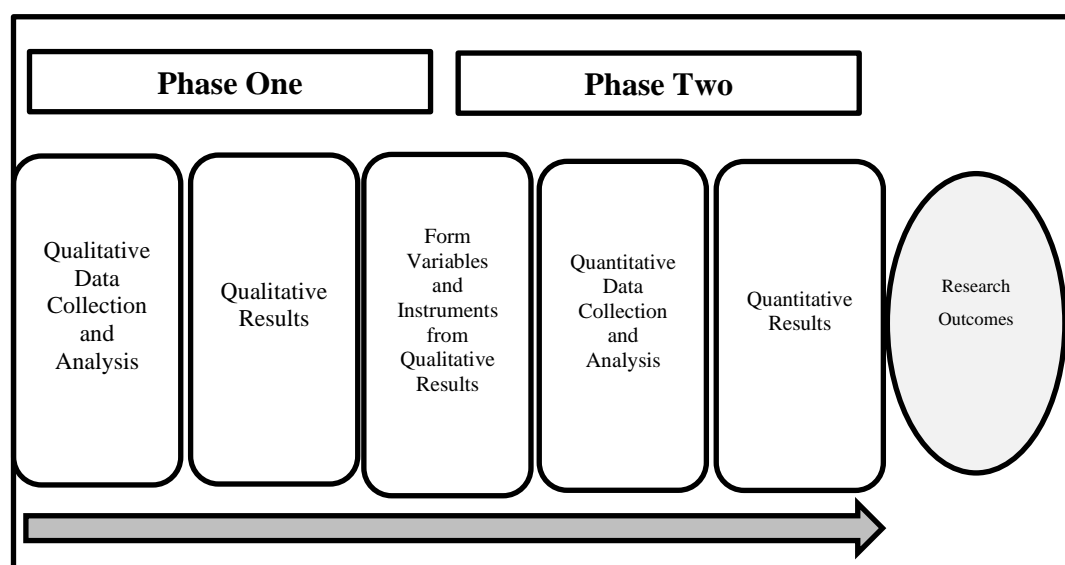


Figure 7: The Mixed-Methods Approach with Exploratory Sequential Design

As employee empowerment has not previously been studied from the perspective of perceived risk, this research requires an exploratory stage. The hotel employees' perceptions should be gathered, so that the influences of perceived risk components can be analysed. Phase one of this study employs a qualitative method to address the following research questions:

Research Question One: What are the East Malaysian hotel employees' perceptions of empowerment?

Research Question Two: What are the determinants of empowerment practices that influence hotel employee empowerment in the East Malaysia context?'

Research Question Three: What are the determinants of the perceived risk of empowerment that influence the relationship between empowerment practices and employee empowerment in the East Malaysia hotel industry context?

Phase one results and observations on empowerment practices and the perceived risk of empowerment described from the qualitative method and as well as previous studies, are used to create a survey questionnaire to address:

Research Question One: What are the East Malaysian hotel employees' perceptions of empowerment?

Research Question Four: What are the relative effects of empowerment practices on the perceived risk of empowerment and employee empowerment in East Malaysia hotel industry context?

The analytical unit explains the study's level of analysis and how it gathers the data. It may be categorised as organisations, agencies, working groups, individuals or even artefacts (Balakrishnan, 2017). Particularly during the process of defining research rationale, it is important to define the unit of analysis at the beginning of the study because this affects the process of classifying variables in the theoretical framework, methodology of data collection and sample. In both phase one and two, this research focuses on the individual unit of analysis. It is represented by employees working in the hotel industry in the Sabah and Sarawak states of East

Malaysia. This thesis embraces and alters the procedures required to incorporate Creswell (2014) exploratory sequential research design, as illustrated in Figure 8.

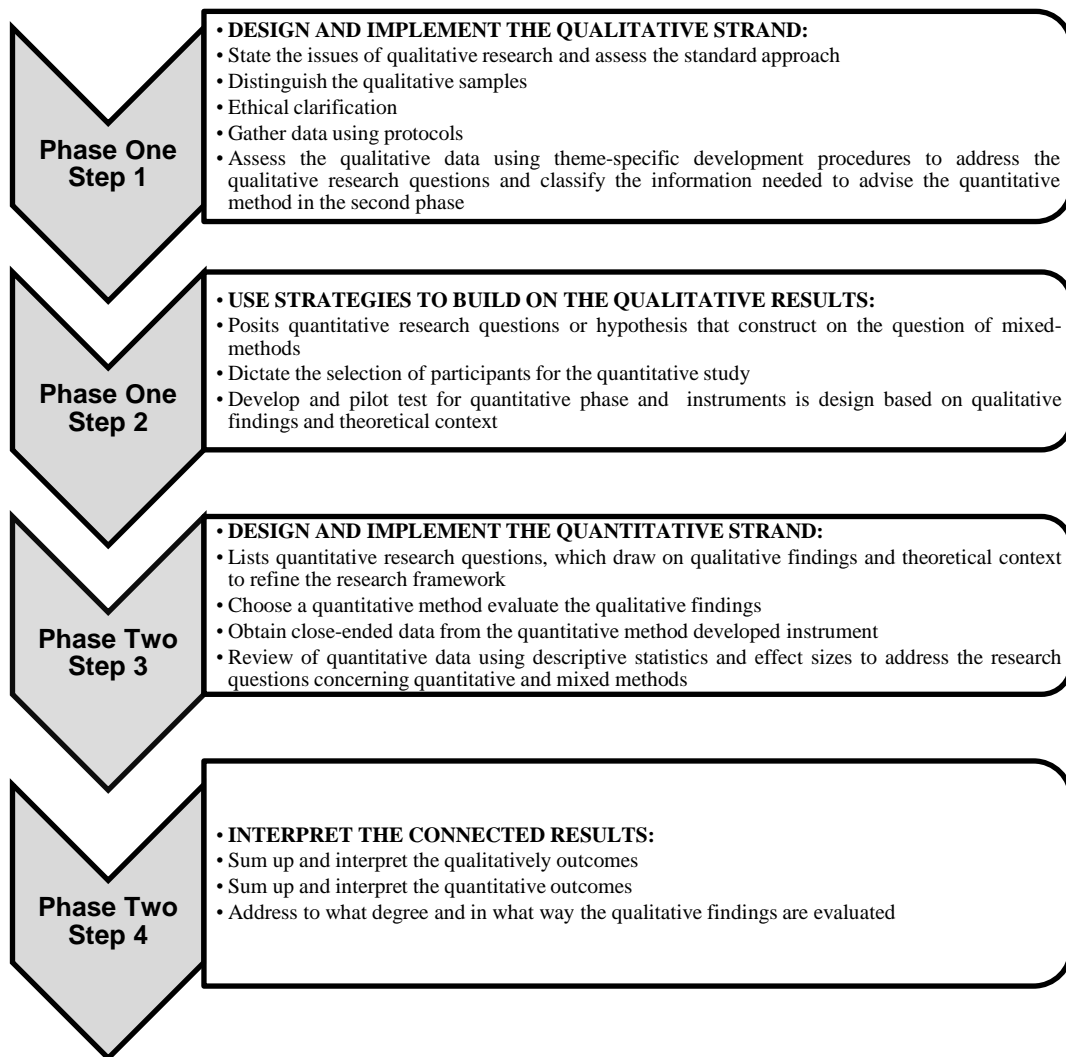


Figure 8: The Exploratory Sequential Research Design

4.6 Qualitative Phase: A Constructivist Epistemology

This study attempts to determine the notion of empowerment, the determinants of empowerment practices and the perceived risk of empowerment in the East Malaysia hotel industry context. Constructivist epistemology is adopted in conducting qualitative research at the initial phase. Constructivists view the world as multiple realities and believe that truth exists in the participant's mind. The idea of constructivism came from works of researchers such as Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Berger and Luckmann (1967) who believes that participants engage in the sense of the world in which they reside and then build a contextual context of their

thoughts and feelings aimed at specific phenomena (Creswell, 2014). The interpretation of a particular phenomenon is thus influenced by the subjective views of the participants, their social relationships with one another and their personal background. Researchers can utilise the perceptions of participants when adopting constructivism to create themes, patterns, and generate a theory that explains how participants interpret the phenomenon.

Ontologically, constructivists believe that there is no single truth that can explain reality as truth occurs in the shape of multiple psychological constructs and depend on the minds of those who believe them (Lincoln et al., 2011). Moreover, epistemologically, constructivism is based on subjectivism, in which there is a certainty that individuals create their sense of truth and findings are associated with the interaction between the researcher and participants. Consequently, only close interactions with participants can allow researchers to understand the phenomenon (Lincoln et al., 2011). The contribution of this worldview is to develop a profound understanding of the subjective interpretations of a particular phenomenon, generating valuable data that can uncover truths about the source of interpretations as construed by researchers and participants (Creswell, 2014; Lincoln et al., 2011).

As mentioned earlier, the first phase of this study employs qualitative methods to address the research questions. This procedure is more relevant to the investigation of the notion of empowerment, the determinants of empowerment practices and the perceived risk of empowerment by the participants. When little is known about the research environment, conducting qualitative research before a quantitative process is considered a suitable technique for the design of exploratory sequential mixed-methods research (Balakrishnan, 2017). The qualitative process enables the researcher to investigate, define and explain the types of variables that need further study. By utilising participant perceptions, the qualitative approach provides a detailed overview of the phenomenon of interest. The qualitative data are then subjectively interpreted to raise questions about generalizability and rigour of the data (Balakrishnan, 2017; Yin, 2011).

To acquire details of phenomena such as thoughts, feelings, and emotions that are complicated to interpret through more recent research, qualitative method is the best alternative for researchers to use (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Since the qualitative analysis of the notion of empowerment, the determinants of empowerment practices

and the perceived risk of empowerment are the objectives of this research, the qualitative approach is appropriate for this purpose.

Qualitative research aims to record the attitudes, perceptions and thoughts of the participants in their own sense and includes a variety of forms of analysis that can be used. (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). Complexity and fullness characterise qualitative data, and definitions are built based on phrase and language used by participants. It is therefore important to explain the words carefully because words can have several meanings (Saunders et al., 2015). In addition, qualitative data are not consistent with the criterion of category classification, and the study is carried out using conceptual frameworks. Bryman and Bell (2011) propose three qualitative research attributes. First, qualitative research is an inductive interpretation of the theory-research relationship. Second, it is an epistemological stance which has been identified as an interpretivist. Third, a qualitative position is ontologically identified as constructivist. As qualitative research is about expressions rather than numbers, researchers and participants must establish methods of communication (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Denzin and Lincoln (2013) suggest that the four critical traditions of qualitative research are naturalism, ethnomethodology, emotionalism and postmodernity. In particular, qualitative research has six main methods of research that include ethnography, participant reflection, interviews, focus groups, language-based approaches and qualitative analysis, and document and text collection. (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In addition, recently emerging methods including artefact-based methods and visual methods, have gained become increasingly popular in tourism and hospitality research (Barry, 2017; Ryan, 2015; Wengel et al., 2019).

Hence, a qualitative approach is deemed appropriate to achieve the objectives as described earlier. This approach is pertinent to the investigation of the structural, psychological, leadership and perceived risk of empowerment. Moreover, Yin (2011) claims that the methodology should concentrate more on the process of the research rather than on the findings. The mechanisms of this type of approach suggest that the transition is a persistent and continuing part of the research. Saunders et al. (2015) also consider that the researcher is likely examining how individuals communicate with one another, how certain questions are responded to the interpretations individuals give to specific statements and behaviour, and how attitudes are translated into behaviour. The qualitative researcher has tendency to

evaluate their data inductively when interpreting the qualitative data and the findings from the induction process in this analysis have been used to establish the next quantitative research phase.

Golafshani (2003) notes that in qualitative research, consistency is associated with trustworthiness and bias in data analysis. This is because the essence of the qualitative approach varies from the quantitative approach, so the validity and reliability aspects of qualitative research may prevail (Shenton, 2004). Qualitative research is often linked to data analysis that is not standardised, so reliability is not considered relevant (Dousin, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Nevertheless, Sandelowski (2000) suggests the triangulation approach as one way to boost the reliability of the qualitative analysis, namely, triangulation of participant, and sources of data.

4.7 Quantitative Phase: A Positivist Epistemology

This study attempts to investigate how the perceived risk of empowerment influences the relationship between empowerment practices and employee empowerment in the East Malaysia hotel industry context. Therefore, a positivist epistemology is adopted in conducting quantitative research after the qualitative phase. The positivist's researcher's worldview is grounded in the scientific method of investigation (Neuman, 2006). Observation, experimentation and reason based on experience ought to be the basis for understanding human behaviour (Comte, 2015). The approach is used to search for cause and effect relationships in nature (Saunders et al., 2015). A positivist tries to interpret observations of measurable entities, by deductive logic, formulating hypotheses, testing those hypotheses, providing operational definitions, and forming conclusions (Creswell, 2014).

Ontologically, a positivist believes that the world is external and that there is a single objective reality to any research phenomenon regardless of the researcher's perspective or belief (Kumar, 2014). Thus, he or she takes a controlled and structural approach in conducting research by identifying a precise research topic, constructing appropriate hypotheses and by adopting a suitable research methodology (Creswell, 2014; Kumar, 2014). Epistemologically, a positivist researcher is based on objectivism, and remains detached from the research respondents by creating a distance, which is essential in remaining emotionally

neutral so as to be able make clear distinctions between reason and feeling (Scandura & Williams, 2000). This means that the researcher would undertake research, as far as possible, in a value-free way (Saunders et al., 2015). A positivist's epistemology is claimed to be external to the process of data collection as there is little that can be done to alter the substance of the data collected. The idea behind this worldview is to assess the phenomena and, the relationship between variables for causal inferences as the result of experimental designs (Pham, 2018).

This study employs quantitative methods to address main research questions of this research, which is *"How does the perceived risk of empowerment influence the relationship between empowerment practices and employee empowerment?"*. The previous qualitative findings help to determine the variables for empowerment practices and the perceived risk of empowerment's dimensions. The quantitative phase is more pertinent in developing a theoretical model and to investigate the mediating effect of the perceived risk of empowerment on employee empowerment practices and employee empowerment. The quantitative process enables the researcher to use existing theory to develop hypotheses to be tested during the research process. The quantitative approach is appropriate for developing a conceptual framework for employee empowerment by integrating the structural, leadership and psychological theory of empowerment and introducing the mediating variable of the perceived risk of empowerment.

4.8 Statement of Ethical Consideration

The following paragraphs outline the ethical considerations of this study.

The researcher conducts this research in ways that respect the ethical standards of the University of Waikato. This research is likely to involve human participants and therefore, it is subject to ethical review. Full ethical approval for this research is attached.

Participants in this research are employees from four and five rated star hotels in East Malaysia, who voluntarily and willingly to take part in the research. Participants have the right to refuse, to withdraw from the study at any moment, including withdrawal of any information provided. The semi-structured and full survey responses will be used for statistical analysis only and treated only in

aggregate form. All the data are treated confidentially. No names or other identifying characteristics are reported in the research.

4.9 Summary

This chapter explores the pragmatic research paradigm, which guided the integration of mixed-method design for this research. It explains the assumptions of the mixed-method design and the reasons for implementing the sequential mixed method design. In the first phase, a qualitative research design utilised semi-structured interviews to examine the notion of empowerment, empowerment practices and perceived risk of empowerment from the viewpoint of hotel employees in the context of East Malaysia. The findings from Phase one (see Chapter five) are used to design variables and instruments by utilising a quantitative research design and data is gathered through survey questionnaires (see Chapter six).

CHAPTER FIVE: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

5.1 Qualitative Phase: Research Objectives

This chapter addresses the nature and rationale of qualitative research, research techniques and data analysis methods. This phase investigates how employees perceived the notion of empowerment, the components of empowerment practices and the elements of the perceived risk of empowerment. The qualitative phase's objective is, therefore, to empirically establish the employee empowerment framework and particularly, assess the perceived empowerment risk.

5.2 Qualitative Phase: Data Collection Method

5.2.1 The Semi-structured and In-depth Interviews

To explore the notion of empowerment, the determinants of empowerment practices and the perceived risk of empowerment, semi-structured in-depth interviews were performed. A semi-structured in-depth interview refers to an interaction in which participants are interviewed to examine possible triggers, opinions, desires, attitudes and feelings on a topic under discussion (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). This approach is focused on a dialogue between participants and researchers, with an emphasis on the inquiries of the interviewer and the responses of the participant (Malhotra and Birks, 2007). The in-depth interview strives to define the sense of meanings rather than reality and facts from the interpretations of the interviewee. The focus should, therefore, be more on comprehending the significance of the interviewee's perspectives (Malhotra and Birks, 2007). Saunders et al. (2015) note the value of credibility, since it ought to be encouraged by discussing pertinent information issues with participants prior to the interview session. The discussion involves the degree of understanding, theme creation, and providing the interviewee with the necessary information, and the right environment for the interview.

This study is based on face-to-face interviews to collect information via oral investigations and observation (Kumar, 2014). In-depth face-to-face interviews using a semi-structured format were organised with hotel employees to analyse and grasp in-depth interpretations of the relationships between the notion of empowerment of employees' determinants of empowerment practices and

perceived empowerment risk. In this type of an interview, the researcher and participants collectively decide on the direction of the interview and choose the most suitable way to achieve the objectives of the exploratory phase (Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2015). The researcher should provide a suitable environment that is safe, relaxed and private, which can help participants to engage and respond (Saunders et al., 2015).

Semi-structured interviews, as a sequential approach of data collection, have several benefits (Creswell, 2014). First, interviews are designed for discussing perceptions, beliefs, opinions and motivations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Second, Interviews ensure that the participant cannot be influenced by others when constructing their answer. Semi-structured interviews incorporate the benefits of structured as well as unstructured interview techniques which can alleviate bias (Balakrishnan, 2017; Kumar, 2014).

The semi-structured format is preferred if researchers have particular attention for interviewing which is within the scope of the research. Creswell (2014) also notes that the semi-structured interview is the best alternative when the interviewer has to ask a list of questions. More significantly, it allows for flexibility in asking any additional questions during the interview that might be needed to clarify the research goals and make the interview more conversational and open (Dousin, 2017; Saunders et al., 2015). The interview schedule is intended to cover the following research questions within the framework of this study:

Research Question One: What are the East Malaysian hotel employees' perceptions of empowerment?

Research Question Two: What are the determinants of empowerment practices that influence hotel employee empowerment in East Malaysia context?

Research Question Three: What are the determinants of the perceived risk of empowerment that influence the relationship between empowerment practices and employee empowerment in East Malaysia hotel industry context?

5.2.2 Research Location and Participation Criteria

The study was structured to ensure the participation of luxury hotels in East Malaysia. Luxury hotels in this study are classified as the four and five-star-rated hotels registered under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture Malaysia in 2017.

The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia enforces the official hotel classifications, which is a mandatory system to be followed by all hotel organisations operating in the country. According to the Malaysian Association of Hotels (2018), the Malaysian hotel and accommodation rating is based on Star rating for hotels (from 1 to 5 Stars), Star-rating for apartment hotels (from 3 to 5 Stars), and Orchid-rating for other hotels (from 1 to 3 Orchids). Table 12 displays the number of accommodations in East Malaysia based on the ratings classified as in 2017 (Malaysian Association of Hotels, 2018).

Table 12: Accommodation in East Malaysia's Ratings 2017					
Star Rating - Hotels					
5-Star	4-Star	3-Star	2-Star	1-Star	Total
16 (5,380 rooms)	28 (3,904 rooms)	83 (8,157 rooms)	72 (8,983 rooms)	78 (5,983 rooms)	277 (62,461 rooms)
Star Rating - Apartment Hotels					
	5-Star	4-Star	3-Star	Total	
	0	1 (196 rooms)	1 (215 rooms)	2 (411 rooms)	
Orchid Rating - Other Hotels					
	3-Orchid	2-Orchid	1-Orchid	Total	
	71 (2,180 rooms)	73 (1,559 rooms)	91 (1,532 rooms)	235 (5,271 rooms)	
Grand Total			571 (68,143 rooms)		

Source: Key Performance Indicators 2017 (Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board)

Phase one of the study was carried out in the capital cities of Sabah (Kota Kinabalu) and Sarawak (Kuching). The researcher initially contacted the Malaysia Association of Hotel (MAH) as the gatekeeper for the industry to gain support for the data collection. The Human Resource Department of each hotel was then approached to seek approval and to facilitate access to participants for the interviews. Next, the interview questions were provided to prospective participants. The researcher approached them to arrange face-to-face interviews. There are 44 luxury hotels in Sabah and Sarawak, and two hotels willingly participated in this

study. Phase two took place in all the principal cities of East Malaysia, such as Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan, Kuching, and Miri.

Participants for this research were chosen based on snowball sampling techniques. Snowball sampling begins with the researcher selecting a few participants who meet the study's inclusion criteria and requesting them to suggest others who meet the criteria (Saunders et al., 2015). The selection criteria were: (i) participants working as hotel employees in the operation department such as front office, housekeeping, and food and beverage, and (ii) participants who had worked in the states of Sabah and/or Sarawak, East Malaysia for at least six months. The principal advantages of these sampling methods are: (i) may prevent bias in sample selection and (ii) a sampling process must classify the relevant employee to be recruited, and this may improve the selection of participants. Saunders et al. (2015) further state that often, the strategy might be the only way to recruit hard-to-reach participants

5.2.3 Data Collection

During the qualitative data collection stage, the study adopted two triangulation techniques to improve trustworthiness and efficiency. Firstly, it adopted the triangulation of the participants. Shenton (2004) recommends that the experiences of the different employees who participated in the interview process should be valued as their interactions provide a constructive framework for reviewing a detailed description of perceptions, desires or behaviours. Various considerations were specified in this study to ensure that participants come from diverse hotels (namely, chain hotels and independent hotels) and various organisational levels (namely, lower-level employees, supervisors, managers). This is to make sure the data reflects the population at large (Zakaria, 2011).

The study also applied a triangulation of settings. The recruitment of prospective participants from various star-rated hotels and areas will help improve the study's credibility (Shenton, 2004). There are 44 luxury hotels in Sabah and Sarawak registered under MOTAC. Several of the participants were contacted on the advice of other participants. Participants interviewed ranged from those who served in luxury hotels in East Malaysia for one year, less than two years, from two to 9 years, and for more than ten years to obtain a wide range of perspectives. During the

interviews, with the participants' permission, the researcher recorded the data by making handwritten notes and audiotaping.

5.2.4 Interview Procedure

After the participating hotel selected participants based on the participants' criteria which was emailed to the hotel earlier, the researcher acquired contact details of the participants and contacted each person by email and telephone to clarify the study and its intent and explain the interview procedure. At this point, arrangements are made for the interview meetings. Some participants asked if they could see a copy of the questions before the interview. A copy of the interview plan was given to each participant before the interview, along with the participant information sheet and consent form.

Interviews were carried out by the researcher at the participants' place of work at agreed date and times, which already decided during the initial encounter. The participant is informed about the interview procedure at the start of each interview and interviewees were assured that their responses would be kept strictly confidential. The researcher sought permission to record the interview using a tape recorder and took notes for those who were not willing to be recorded. If only brief answers were given, the researcher has attempted to inquire more answers. For instance, the researcher used methods such as restating questions in everyday language and citing examples. It is noted that communication between the researcher and participants tends to be formal; which may be due to the setting and environment. Because of the participants' busy schedules, the HR departments asked the researcher to limit each interview session for each participant to a strict maximum of one hour. The interviews at all hotels lasted from 30 to 60 minutes.

However, only two out of forty-four hotels contacted willing to participate in this study. The researcher had to seek help from a few participants and former colleagues for the potential participants' contact details that meet the criteria. The researcher had contacted each participant clarified the study and its intent and the interview procedure. At this point, arrangements were made for interviews to be conducted in a public setting such as a restaurant and cafe. A copy of the interview plan was given to each participant before the interview, along with the participant information sheet and consent form. The communication between the researcher

and participants tends to be informal compare to the previous hotel setting. Overall the interview duration at all hotels lasted from 45 to 80 minutes.

5.2.5 Data Analysis

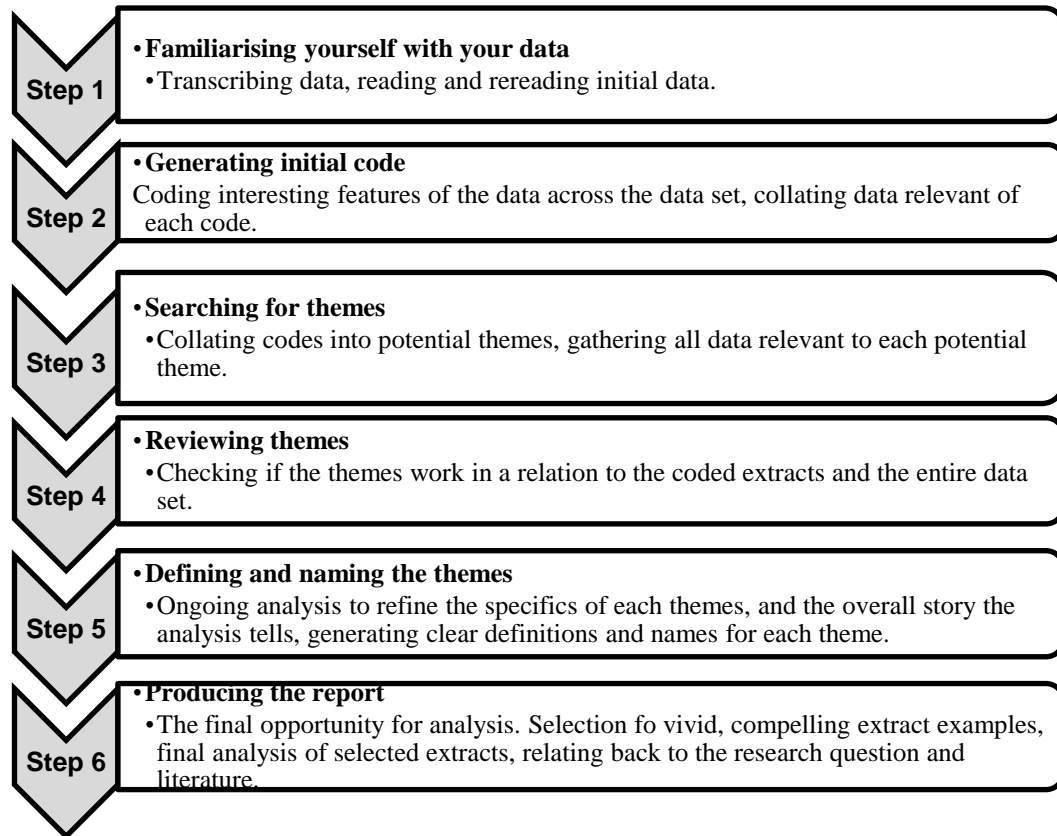
Large sample is not a prerequisite in qualitative research, interviews are conducted until repetition and saturation occur in participants' responses (Lincoln et al., 2011). In other words, the number of interviews depends on the saturation point of the interview; that is where data repetition occurs, and the themes become obvious. The researcher stops interviewing at this stage as the presence of additional data does not make any discrete to an interpretation of the phenomenon (Silverman, 2011). Thematic analysis is preferred as it permits the revealing of rich contextual data through communication and discussions between researchers and participants (Creswell, 2014).

According to Kahn and Cannell (1957, p. 149), thematic analysis is a “conversation with a purpose”. To make sure both researcher and participants are focused, there should be some base of pre-determined themes associated with the research questions, but the researcher still explores and asks questions that might explain and clarify a particular subject (Patton, 2002). Further, questions during interviews should use a common language so that participants can create their expression of empowerment; the more open the questioning is, the better, although prompts such as asking ‘can you give an example’ are commonly requested to elicit more specific themes and sub-themes. The thematic interview questions can be altered to ensure that participants are following the researcher’s interview path.

Thematic analysis requires more involvement and interpretation from the researcher, especially the development of cultural models (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). Thematic analysis focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data which refer as themes. While codes are then typically developed to represent the identified themes and applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis. There are few issues regarding to reliability, as the analysis may or may not include comparing code frequencies, identifying code co-occurrence, and graphically displaying relationships between codes within the data set. However, the reliability is of greater concern with thematic analysis than with word-based analyses because more interpretation goes into defining the data

items as well as applying the codes to chunks of text. Thematic analysis is still the most useful in capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set. It is also the most commonly used method of analysis in qualitative (Guest et al., 2012)

Figure 9: The Data Analysis for Qualitative Method



Source: Braun and Clarke (2006)

The mode of data analysis, as illustrated in Figure 9, followed six-step data analysis recommended by (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first step is to organise and prepare the data for analysis. The data from the interview were transcribed and arranged accordingly by individual questions. The researcher then scanned through the data to get a general sense of the details and to draw on its overall expression. The text was read again to ensure familiarity with the contents, and then the researcher began a data analysis based on the thematic analysis phases of Braun and Clarke's (2006), which is also generally referred to as a framework study for the extraction of main themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The coding process generates descriptions and themes for analysis (Saunders et al., 2015). Bryman and Bell (2011) suggest that thematic analysis is an excellent option if the data is small and the researchers are aware of the issues they are looking into. Thus, with only twenty interviews on predetermined topics, it is assumed that thematic analysis would be beneficial for

this research. To ensure the data validity, the researcher took the transcription back to the participants to ensure the data and interpretation represent the participants' meaning. The last stage in the data analysis is the generation of an interpretation of the findings. These findings are compared with the existing literature and theories.

The predetermined themes in the study are the notion of the empowerment, determinants of empowerment practices, and the perceived risk of empowerment. To ensure that these correlate to the research questions, a code pattern comprising the themes is created. Next, the researcher integrated and classified similar trends into three-level sub-themes. Under each predetermined theme, those at the first level prevailed, whereas the second level appeared under the first sub-themes and so on. Table 17 on page 111 illustrates a final code template is then constructed by assessing the existence of multiple sub-themes that occurred during the classification phase. Ultimately, the thematic concepts are defined, and potential interactions and patterns are discussed. Subsequent sections use participant's quote to illustrate each finding. This is one of the most popular tools used to convey qualitative data findings (Creswell, 2014).

5.2.6 Participant Characteristics

Twenty hotel employees were interviewed in this phase. Twelve were entry-level employees from housekeeping, front office and food and beverage departments. There were eight managerial level employees of which four were supervisor, and four is from top management. Pseudonyms were used to preserve confidentiality (Yin, 2011) and hotels are also not named to ensure privacy. Table 13 shows the characteristics of hotel employees that participated in the in-depth interviews.

No.	Pseudonyms	Position	Hotel	Profile of Participants
1	Siti	Front office Executive	4-star hotel, international chain hotel	Female, 25
2	Edy	Front Office Director	4-star hotel, international chain hotel	Male, 45
3	Jiniah	Front Office Manager	4-star hotel, international chain hotel	Female, 40
4	Peter	Front Office Executive	5-star hotel, international chain hotel	Male, 25
5	Lily	Front Office Supervisor	5-star hotel, international chain hotel	Female, 30
6	Janet	Housekeeping Room Attendant	4-star hotel, independent hotel	Female, 23

7	Elly	Housekeeping Supervisor	4-star hotel, independent hotel	Female, 27
8	Ng	Housekeeping Manager	4-star hotel, independent hotel	Male, 43
9	Dana	Executive Housekeeper	5-star hotel, independent hotel	Female, 50
10	Josh	Food and Beverage Server	5-star hotel, international chain hotel	Male, 25
11	Lorna	Food and Beverage Supervisor	5-star hotel, international chain hotel	Female, 32
12	Ann	Food and Beverage Manager	4-star hotel, independent hotel	Female, 37
13	Din	Front Office Executive	5-star hotel, international chain hotel	Male, 28
14	Angel	Front Office Manager	5-star hotel, international chain hotel	Female, 35
15	Zue	Front Office Executive	4-star hotel, international chain hotel	Female, 23
16	Charles	Housekeeping Supervisor	4-star hotel, international chain hotel	Male, 28
17	Vivian	Housekeeping Room Attendant	4-star hotel, international chain hotel	Female, 22
18	Azwan	Housekeeping Supervisor	4-star hotel, international chain hotel	Male, 29
19	Lydia	Executive Housekeeper	5-star hotel, international chain hotel	Female, 48
20	Bakri	Food and Beverage Server	5-star hotel, international chain hotel	Male, 23

5.3 Qualitative Findings: Notion of Empowerment

Research objective one examines the hotel employees' perceptions of empowerment. The relevant interview question is created to answer the research question is:

What does the term empowerment mean to you?

The thematic analysis was conducted to answer the research question above uncovered four themes. The following subsections identify these themes.

5.3.1 Overall View

The study reveals that 'decision-making' is the predominant theme mentioned about the meaning of empowerment. Sixteen out of 20 participants expressed a similar view in defining empowerment. This indicates that most of the hotel employees perceive empowerment as a tool to allow decision-making, which refers to the cognitive level as well as the outcomes of empowerment. The following quotes express this theme.

*“...everyone used that word, but no one fully understands what the hell that was. It was one of the buzz words. For me, it is straightforward, it just an ability to **decide** without having to consult the boss”. (Janet, Housekeeping Room Attendant, 4-star independent hotel)*

*“Empowerment is to decide at the point. The point of the problem or whatever if you need to make a **decision**.” (Lorna, Food and Beverage Supervisor, 5-star international chain hotel)*

*“Empowerment simply means you **decide** without referring to your manager.” (Jiniah, Front Office Manager, 4-star international chain hotel)*

Apart from ‘decision-making’, ‘authority’ was raised in exploring the meaning of empowerment. Fourteen participants stated their definition of empowerment in terms of authority.

*“Empowerment refers to the approval of **authority**” (Peter, Front Office Executive, 5-star international chain hotel)*

*“Empowerment is to give a certain **authority** and **power** so that it will allow for faster decision making, rather than need to refer to a higher **authority** every time we need to make a decision”. (Dana, Executive Housekeeper, 5-star independent hotel)*

To investigate the notion of empowerment further, the empowerment definition is explored based on the employee’s position in the hotel organisation. Employee empowerment can be viewed from different perspectives. Ergeneli, Ari, and Metin (2007) report that there is a positive influence of job position on empowerment; different managerial levels tend to have a different view of employee empowerment. For this study, employees are classified as management level, supervisory level and entry-level employees. The researcher classed directors and managers as the management level, supervisors as supervisory level employees and the remainder as rank and file employees.

5.3.2 Management's View

It is worth noting that, when the term 'authority' is used, the term 'delegation' and 'responsibility' are often mentioned by the hotel managers and directors when expressing their view of empowerment.

*"It is all about **delegation of authority**, which comes with **responsibility** and **accountability**." (Ann, Food and Beverage Manager, 4-star independent hotel)*

*"Empowerment is more about **delegation**, which is the **authority** given to you for what you can do on your own." (Lydia, Executive Housekeeper 5-star, international chain hotel)*

*"Empowerment is about **delegation of authority** in decision making, from top to bottom in the organisational hierarchy." (Angel, Front Office Manager 5-star international chain hotel)*

The fact that the term 'delegation' is used prominently with the term 'authority' by the hotel management in defining empowerment indicates that these participants view empowerment not just as an authority, but rather as a delegating authority for employees, acknowledging the sharing of authority between manager and employee. This definition is similar to Bowen & Lawler's (1992) view of empowerment as an individual's authority in relation to another individual in the organisational hierarchy. Many researchers agree on the significance of sharing power or authority in initiating empowerment practices in the organisation (Zakaria, 2011; Zhang, Ye, & Li, 2018). For example, Lashley (2001) argues that to achieve empowerment, employees must have the authority to make their own decision in order to solve operational problems. Huq (2016) confirms this by stating that it is essential that leaders create an empowered climate that grants employees the formal authority they need to make responsible decisions.

5.3.3 Supervisor's View

Most of the hotel supervisors in this study use the term 'trust' to explain their understanding of empowerment as the following comments:

*Empowerment is not only the freedom to work on our own, but it relates to **trust**, which involves building trust with the manager and employees". (Lily, Front Office Supervisor, 5-star international chain hotel).*

*"You must have **trust** before you delegate anything to other people. Empowerment must always come together with trust. Especially when you are in the middle, as **supervisor**, I have a manager to report to and colleagues to work with and staffs to supervise, we cannot do everything under the sun, need to trust each other to do the job, plus all the eyes are looking at me to execute this well...". (Elly, Housekeeping Supervisor, 4-star independent hotel).*

*"If you are given the **power** to do something.... management has got faith..., **trust** in you..., they feel you are capable to carry out that job..the I just do it.. it is responsibility after all.". (Azwan, Housekeeping Supervisor, 4-star international chain hotel).*

Taking into account that all supervisors mentioned trust, it could be a key factor affecting empowerment from the perspective of those at the supervisory level. These expressions often indicate the value of interactions between managers and employees, and the need to establish mutual understanding between managers and employees to cultivate empowerment in the organisation. The greater the trust that a manager has in employees, the more likely it is that employees feel empowered, particularly in view of the role of the supervisors as an intermediary between top management and employees (Zakaria, 2011). These outcomes are aligned to empirical assumptions that trust is associated with empowerment (Appelbaum et al., 2014; Cheung et al., 2012; Fabre, 2010; Honold, 1997).

Organisations have to assign authority to the front-line employee for service responsiveness, and this transaction requires trust from top to bottom of the hierarchy (Cheung et al., 2012; Dewald & Sutton, 2000). To establish empowerment, it is essential to create mutual trust among employees across the organisational levels. It is trust instilled self-efficacy that enables empowerment. Trust is a psychological contract between employer and employee if the transfer of what one gives and receives in return meets the desires of management in return (Scandura & Pellegrini, 2008).

In addition to the term ‘trust’, two of the supervisors mentioned ‘career’ as their motivation when expressing their views of empowerment. Researchers have revealed that career enhancement opportunity is one of the tools to motivate employees to become empowered in their workplace (Grier-Reed, Skaar, & Parson, 2009; London, 1993). London (1993) indicates that career development is related to the immediate supervisor's support to the degree that the supervisor supports career development and establishes job structures that allow employees to monitor their work.

*“Empowerment is all about trust. You must **trust** them to carry out the duties, and of course, you have to give them authority. Even though I am a supervisor, I still need to do a similar job with my staff just plus more paperwork. So, I think empowerment is important for me, for my daily job and my **future career** as well, to show that I am capable of leading a team”. (Charles, Housekeeping Supervisor, 4-star international chain hotel).*

*“My mentor was my manager...Jen and she is really good. She took me under her wing, and she had taught me a lot of things since day one. She brought me everywhere she goes. I help her with her job as she said learning those things will help my **career** one day, sometimes I kind of felt like her personal assistant and I am good with it shows that she **trusts** me to do the stuff...she does encourage me to be empowered, but I will still ask her opinions to show my respect”. (Lorna, Food and Beverage Supervisor, 5-star hotel chain hotel)*

Thus, supervisory-level hotel employees view empowerment as a trust relationship between leader and employee in doing their daily operational work and as a tool for future career development by showing their credibility and potential in their path to becoming a manager.

5.3.4 Rank and File Employees’ View

Five out of eight of the rank and file employees attempt to define empowerment using the term ‘power’, as the following comments illustrate:

*“Empowerment is about **power**, the power to make their own decisions without the boss’s interference.” (Siti, Front Office Executive, 4-star international chain hotel)*

*“Empowerment to me is to make decisions, based on the **power** given to me by the higher level above”. (Vivian, Housekeeping Room Attendant, 4-star international chain hotel)*

*“To have the **power** to make a decision, the power or authority is given to us to handle the operational stuff” (Zue, Front Office Executive, 4-star international chain hotel)*

*“Even the root word of empowerment is **power**, so is all about the power to make decisions based on our judgement on what best for the guest and the hotels.” (Din, Front Office Executive, 5-star international chain hotel)*

Many academics relate empowerment to the concept of power (Ahearne et al., 2005; Conger & Kanungo, 1988). This is in line with the claim that power is seen as the possession of formal authority or control over organisational resources within the sense of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995).

However, the finding also reveals that some employees recognise the term empowerment but are not sure of its real meaning. Some even denied the existence of the term and referred it to a ‘fancy word’ that results in additional work. For example:

“I am not sure about the actual meaning of empowerment, maybe about the power, I guess.” (Josh, Food and Beverage Server, 5-star international chain hotel)

“I heard it before, but I don’t think it exists though, it is just a fancy word that so calls giving power but not really, it is just another fancy term to allow the management to give us extra work.” (Bakri, Food and Beverage Server, 5-star international chain hotel)

These findings are similar to those of Cierniak-Emerych and Piwowar-Sulej (2017). They reveal that almost 80% of their participants are not able to express their definition of empowerment, but the concepts of power and authorisation delegating were understandable to the participants. They also claimed that empowerment exists in many forms, and the lack of expression of the term itself is because there

are few instances of the application of the principle in different organisations' management practices.

5.3.5 Conclusion

One of the objectives of the qualitative phase of this study is to examine East Malaysian hotel employees' perceptions of empowerment. Table 14 displays similarities and differences among hotel employees' definition of empowerment. It is clear that most define empowerment simply as the ability to make their own decisions. According to Zimmerman (1995), employee decision making is the interactional mechanisms as the transaction between employees and the organisation structure that enable them to develop the decision-making skills necessary for day-to-day operations. It is an important responsibility of the employee to exercise the elements of empowerment. To be able to enforce decision-making, formal authority need to be imparted by the management.

Table 14: Similarity and Differences among Hotel Employees' Perceptions of Empowerment.			
Theme	Management	Supervisor	Rank and File Employee
Decision-making	<i>"Empowerment simply means you decide without referring to your manager." (Jiniah, Front Office Manager, 4-star international chain hotel)</i>	<i>"Empowerment is to decide at the point. The point of the problem or whatever if you need to make a decision." (Lorna, Food and Beverage Supervisor, 5-star international chain hotel)</i>	<i>"...everyone used that word, but no one fully understands what the hell that was. It was one of the buzz words. For me, it is straightforward, it just an ability to decide without having to consult the boss". (Janet, Housekeeping Room Attendant, 4-star independent hotel)</i>
Authority	<i>"Empowerment is to give a certain authority so that it will allow for faster decision making, rather than need to refer to a higher authority every time we need to make a decision". (Dana, Executive Housekeeper, 5-star independent hotel)</i>	<i>"Empowerment is the authority given to make decisions". (Elly, Housekeeping Supervisor, 4-star independent hotel).</i>	<i>"Empowerment refers to the approval of authority" (Peter, Front Office Executive, 5-star international chain hotel)</i>
Delegation	<i>"Empowerment is more about delegation which is authority giving to you for what you can do on your own". (Lydia, Executive Housekeeper 5-star, international chain hotel)</i>		
Trust		<i>Empowerment is not only the freedom to work on our own, but it relates to trust, which involves building trust with the manager and employees". (Lily, Front Office Supervisor, 5-star international chain hotel).</i>	
Career		<i>"Empowerment is all about trust. You must trust them to carry out the duties, and of course, you have to give them authority. Even though I am a supervisor, I still need to do a</i>	

		<i>similar job with my staff just plus more paperwork. So, I think empowerment is important for me, for my daily job and my future career as well, to show that I am capable of leading a team". (Charles, Housekeeping Supervisor, 4-star international chain hotel).</i>	
Power			<i>"Empowerment is about power, the power to make their own decisions without the boss's interference." (Josh, Food and Beverage Server, 5-star international chain hotel)</i>

In academic literature, authority is often correlated with empowerment (Zakaria, 2011). For example, Conger and Kanungo (1988) perceive empowerment as formal authority or influence over organisational possessions. Orgambídez-Ramos and Borrego-Alés (2014) have a similar view and portray empowerment as the transfer of certain administrative, responsibility or employee capability. While different definitions are found in academic literature regarding empowerment, still, one of the most popular expressions used to describe empowerment is authority (Ahearne et al., 2005; Menon, 2001)

Although most of the hotel employees shared the same perceptions of empowerment, some perceived it slightly differently. Employee empowerment practices are based on the impression that within the organisation, all employees have similar interests and values (Lincoln et al., 2002). This accounts not only for discrepancies between management and employees but also for gaps between employees and managers. Lincoln et al. (2002) suggest that the different level of employees within organisations produces different meaning of empowerment.

The finding indicates that management-level employees view empowerment as a delegation tool, which is related to the early definition of empowerment associated with the delegation of authority (Lashley, 2001). According to Stevenson (2010), to delegate is to authorise. The early definition of empowerment by Burke (1986, p. 51), who defines empowerment in this way: "to empower implies the granting of power-delegation of authority". This definition is similar to the description is given by Randolph (1995) view of empowerment as a power transfer from the managers or supervisors to the employees. Management level employees use the word 'delegation', which implies that they are willing to share certain powers with

employees to enable them to make their own decisions. It would appear that employees at all management levels recognise the sharing of authority between supervisor and employee (Zakaria, 2011). Thus, the role of sharing authority in empowerment practices by transferring jurisdiction previously restricted to employees further down the hierarchy is deeply rooted in the concept of empowerment by these hotel employees.

There is a noteworthy finding that discloses the notion of empowerment as ‘trust’. This term was mentioned by supervisory managers. Supervisory managers usually middle management who are the link between management level and rank and file employees in the organisational hierarchy. Their position is unique as they are the one who communicates the management’s mandate to employees and report back to the management, back and forward. At the same time, they are also responsible for directing the rank and file employees to perform daily routines. To sum up, supervisors view empowerment as a trust to perform their regular job.

Additionally, the finding also reveals that some employees do recognise the term empowerment but are not sure what of its real meaning. However, later, after some discussion, they can relate to concepts such as ‘power’.

Idris et al. (2018) suggest that there is a mismatch between Malaysian managers and their employees in terms of the level of workplace empowerment and the sense of accomplishment they gain from it. Senior managers positively perceive empowerment and feel strongly empowered and are, as a result, very happy with their work. Nevertheless, the perception of empowerment by other employees is slightly negative compared to top management views. This can be clarified as the trend slowly falls from one level to another, top to bottom, there is also a distinct central control of information and decision-making authority at the top level of the organisation to the lower-level employees. This institutional hierarchy-based division of powers is a prevalent socio-cultural phenomenon in Malaysia. Humborstad and Perry (2011) note that employee empowerment is not adequately practised in high-power distance cultures due to their propensity to retain power at the top levels of the organisation. Growing demand for commitment, involvement and empowerment will slowly replace the conventional servile mindset of employees.

5.4 Qualitative Findings: Determinants of Empowerment Practices

Research objective two examines the empowerment practices that influence hotel employee empowerment in the East Malaysia context. To address this objective, interview questions were developed, such as:

What are the determinants/factors that influence your willingness to become empowered?

The thematic study of the responses to the question above reveals three themes with regards to participants' view of empowerment practices that influence employee empowerment. The themes are discussed in the following subsections.

5.4.1 Relevant Information

This study reveals that 'information' is the predominant theme for empowerment practices. Most participants expressed similar views stating that having relevant 'information', 'experiences' and 'knowledge' related to their works are the main determinants which enable them to make own decisions, and thus, to become empowered. The following quotes illustrate this theme.

*"To become empowered, you have to have **information** to make the right decisions and avoid making mistakes It was shared throughout the hotel through our core value, what we stand for, and through the standard of procedure."* (Angel, Front Office Manager 5-star international chain hotel)

*"**Knowledge** and **experience** that I required since I joined the industry had helped me to become empowered. All the knowledge and experience provide me with **information** that I need to make daily operational decisions. Even the system was set up to help us to make decisions. To know the process and procedure is very important, especially the reward if making the right decision, for example, when I am upselling rooms, got extra pocket money."* (Zue, Front Office Executive, 4-star international chain hotel)

*"The hotel had provided all the support and **information** needed for us to become empowered, all the information regarding the standard of procedures and guidelines help me to decide in my routine job as front office executive."* (Din, Front Office Executive, 5-star international chain hotel)

*“To become empowered is the ability to make their own decision and to make a good decision, **information** is needed. This concept applied in the working environment as well; the employee needs to be equipped with the relevant **knowledge** and **information** needed, such as the hotel policy and SoP for them to become empowered.” (Ann, Food and Beverage Manager, 4-star independent hotel)*

*“With everything I’ve learned, if it’s related to my job, you know, I can gather all that **information** and all that **knowledge** and **information** that I’ve acquired over the years and I can, I think, make a pretty good decision about my work.” (Janet, Housekeeping Room Attendant, 4-star independent hotel)*

This theme is parallel with Kanter’s structural empowerment dimension in 1977, which is access to information. Kanter (1977) states that by having the relevant information (technical knowledge is essential to finish the job and an understanding of organisational goals, policies, the standard of procedures, guidelines and decisions) is one of the key factors that encourage employee empowerment and decreases their uncertainty.

Empowerment is strengthened by employees accessing knowledge, resources, materials and facilities needed to do their work (Yukl, 2010) effectively. Employees who have access to information may experience greater empowerment.

5.4.2 Formal Power

Apart from ‘information’, ‘power’ is frequently raised in exploring the determinants of empowerment practices. Twelve participants expressed their view of empowerment practices in terms of ‘power’, and most of the time, the terms ‘authority’ and ‘delegation’ were also used to describe the determinants of empowerment practices.

*“Just like the definition of empowerment, the main factor in becoming empowered is literally to have the **power** to make decision....” (Josh, Food and Beverage Server, 5-star international chain hotel)*

*“First and foremost, as an employee, I need to have the relevant **authority** or **power** to make a decision that was granted by the boss of course...without the*

delegation of authority by the boss, I don't want to be 'memandai-mandai'(get smart), especially in regards to significant matters that beyond my control, but for a small matter, usually my boss doesn't really bother." (Azwan, Housekeeping Supervisor, 4-star international chain hotel)

*"To become empowered, the upper management need to share their **authority** and **power**, grant some flexibility and give their trust to the staff to be independent, make their own decision. If the work matter is in our work boundaries, then we have the authority to execute it."* (Charles, Housekeeping Supervisor, 4-star international chain hotel)

*"Most important factor is to be recognised as the staff who hold that position and have official **authority** to make decisions regarding work-related matters. You need to have the **power** to make that decision, to be empowered, if not, mind your own business"* (Vivian, Housekeeping Room Attendant, 4-star international chain hotel)

This theme is very similar to Kanter's structural empowerment construct of formal power. Kanter (1977) refers to formal power as it pertains to tasks that are relevant and important in the organisation, with precision, creativity and versatility. Employees are properly equipped with formal power by granting the employee autonomy for job-specific decision-making and to ensure the visibility of the employee in the organisation.

In organisations, empowerment can be enhanced by fostering the power-sharing climate among employees. This practice includes diffusing organisational decision-making downwards in the hierarchy. Problem-solving actions synonymous with empowerment are typically kept outside of regular work structures, particularly in the service industry. In the East Malaysia hotel industry context, this is still one of the main concerns of empowerment due to the nature of high-power distance in the culture of the country. Thus, formal power in this study is defined by the formal authority assigned to the employees in the organisation, which is essential, especially when decisions are being made.

5.4.3 Empowering Leader's Role

The literature review and the qualitative study show that an empowering leader plays an essential role in boosting employee empowerment. Fourteen of the 20 hotel employees in this study used the terms 'leader', 'boss', 'manager', 'supervisor' and linked them to words such as 'trust', 'sharing', 'guide' and 'support' to explain their determinants of empowerment practices as the following comments:

*"The organisational structure is developed in a way that encourages empowerment, but the one who responsible for implementing and influencing the success or failure of empowerment is the employees, especially the **leaders**. Leaders are the one who should **support** and **guide** their employee on how to be independent and enable them to make their own decision."*
(Vivian, Housekeeping Room Attendant, 4-star, international chain hotel)

*"The **manager's support** is important to encourage empowerment. I remembered when I just joined this hotel, my manager **supports** me a lot, even when I make a mistake, **guide** me and today I can say that I able to do my work with less supervision and less mistake, of course, he builds the confidence in me, others as well."* (Lily, Front Office Supervisor, 5-star international chain hotel)

*"My **mentor** was my manager...Jen and she is really good. She took me under her wing, and she had taught me a lot of things since day one. She brought me everywhere she goes. I help her with her job as she said learning those things will help my career one day, sometimes I kind of felt like her personal assistant and I am good with it shows that she **trusts** me to do the stuff...she does encourage me to be empowered, but I will still ask her opinions to show my respect."* (Lorna, Food and Beverage Supervisor, 5-star hotel chain hotel)

The participants' view is similar to the findings of Konczak et al. (2000) regarding critical elements in empowering leadership. Whereas the organisational structure does not directly influence the leadership role, mostly it is the leaders who decide the employee decision-making realm (Zakaria, 2011). It may be that, due to the unwillingness or inability of the managers to delegate or share decision-making

authority, employees will not feel motivated under a decentralised type of organisation. This means that leadership holds a more crucial role in the empowerment process than other prominent factors (Zakaria, 2011). The power-sharing and encouragement assistance demonstrate the leader behaviours of delegating, sharing information, promoting action and supporting effectiveness, while the development support process expresses guidance attitudes.

Empowerment is in many ways a matter of leadership (Ahearne et al., 2005; Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015; Hu et al., 2018). Leaders' attitudes and behaviours toward empowerment play an important role in fostering empowerment in the organisation. Empowering leaders should give freedom and foster employees' ability to make independent decisions (Slåtten, 2009).

*“For me, the **bosses** play an important role in encouraging empowerment; they need to support and **trust** us as their staff to **share** responsibility. My previous **boss** is a problematic one, did not trust us and monitored our moves, the current one much better, more freedom, more **trust** and less stress. At least I don't have the fear to do my work and sometimes do a bit more for the guest”*
(Siti, Front office Executive, 4-star international chain hotel)

Another notable finding is the leader's perspective of empowerment; they mention 'trust' and explain that there is some difference in the degree to which they empower their employees. For instances,

*“As a manager, one of the most important determinants for empowerment is be able to **share** the authority, and with the employees, I supervised and **trust** them, **guide** them to do the work accordingly. However, trust does not come easy; it must be gain, through performance and consistency.”* (Jiniah, Front Office Manager, 4-star international chain hotel)

*“The most important thing in empowerment is **trust**; my manager has confidence in me to run the daily operation of the department and share his authority and coach me if needed. I do the same to my staffs, I trust them, give them flexibility in their work-related matters. But I have to say; the trust level is quite different among the staff that I supervise. Some are quite experienced*

and rarely create a problem, but some need more attention than others.” (Elly, Housekeeping Supervisor, 4-star independent hotel)

*“I would say how the **boss’s attitude** towards empowerment, some quite supportive, some quite rigid, but in the end, they have to learn to **trust** us if not, they won’t have time to do other things.” (Peter, Front Office Executive, 5-star international chain hotel)*

Previous researchers commonly agree that the leader’s behaviour that shows support and trust in their employees are keys to the effectiveness of empowerment (Boudrias et al., 2009). Trust is believed to be a requirement for empowerment practice, as it attempts to improve the employee's efficacy. Gómez and Rosen (2001) define trust as a belief held by an individual or group on which the word or promise of another individual or group can be relied upon. Leaders play a critical role in fostering employee empowerment. Effective power transfer and authority to lower levels of the organisation depend largely on the confidence of managers that employees can be trusted (Konczak et al., 2000). When the word empowerment is initially introduced, compared to employees, managers are stuck on the horns of a dilemma as they can comprehend the connotation for it but cannot see themselves making a legitimate contribution to the new arrangement of empowerment (Lowe, 1994). For instance:

*“The hotel already provides guidelines and SoP to support empowerment, but the leaders, I mean all the **managers and supervisors need to walk the talk**, practice as it should be, **share** their power and authority, not just talk, for example, information, they need to share relevant information with us for us to be competent. However, the different boss has a different style, and my previous one is quite good, the current one is too much, too micromanaging.” (Janet, Housekeeping Room Attendant, 5-star international chain hotel)*

5.4.4 Conclusion

One of the objectives of the qualitative phase of this study is to gain insights into hotel employees’ perception of the determinants of empowerment practices that influence their empowerment, and thus to develop the research framework. This subchapter presents various elements that are considered to comprise

empowerment practices. The three significant components from these outcomes that support the research framework are shown in Table 15.

Table 15: Statement Derived from the Thematic Analysis of the Qualitative Phase	
Dimensions	Statements
Relevant Information	Access to relevant information to make the right decisions
	Access to relevant information to avoid making mistakes
	Access to relevant information to improve the work process and procedures
	Access to relevant information on how to work objectives are going to be achieved
Formal Power	Have formal authority to make decisions on daily operations
	Have formal authority to make decisions that improve work processes and procedures
	Assigned formal authority to develop own solutions to a work-related matters
Empowering Leader's Role	The leader encourages employees to express their opinions
	The leader encourages employees to make their decisions
	The leader guides employees to be empowered
	The leader explains rules, regulations and standard of procedures to the employees
	The leader encourages employees to develop their solutions to a work-related problem
	The leader focuses on corrective action rather than the mistake
	The leader trusts employees to do their tasks

5.5 Qualitative Findings: The Perceived Risk of Empowerment

Research question three determines the elements of the perceived risk of empowerment that influence the relationship between empowerment practices and employee empowerment in the East Malaysia hotel industry context. To address this, interview questions were developed, such as:

What are the risks that influence empowerment?

What is your primary concern regarding employee empowerment?

The thematic analysis of the responses to the above reveals three themes with regard to participants' view of the perceived risk of empowerment. Those themes are discussed further in the following subsections.

Since the 1960s, the perceived risk concept has been used to interpret customer behaviours in decision-making. Bauer (1964) was one of the first researchers to

examine perceived risk in the context of consumer decision-making to characterise this concept as a fusion of two elements namely the probability of loss and the subjective sense of the importance or adverse consequence related to the loss.

Mitchell (1999) suggests that perceived risk explains the actions of consumers as consumers are more likely to avoid errors than to optimise their utility in purchasing. This is applied in an empowerment context as there is a similar decision-making pattern with risk and consequences for employee. Thus, the perceived risk of empowerment is defined as an employee's belief about the possible ambiguous negatives outcomes from being empowered.

5.5.1 Financial Risk

The literature review and qualitative study show that financial risk is one of the main concerns for hotel employees when exercising empowerment. Twelve of the 20 hotel employees in this study used the term 'pay', 'money', 'cost', 'financial' to explain their perceived risk as to the following comments:

*"I believe one of the main concerns to be empowered is the consequences involved. This is mainly to the risk of having to **pay** from your pocket if the employee makes the wrong call, especially during service recovery. To be frank, our pay in this industry, especially in Sabah is one of the lowest."* (Jinia, Front Office Manager, 4-star international chain hotel)

*"Most of us is getting pay on minimum wages, we are trying hard to get by, and wrong decisions will **cost** us, that is why we are cautious on making a decision, we are not really trying to take the risk, we only decide when it is certain."* (Bakri, Food and Beverage Server, 5-star international chain hotel)

"There are guidelines and SoP in this hotel to be followed. It is clearly stated they do and don't, to what extent a staff can give discounts or complimentary gifts base on their position. If the staff fail to follow the rule, then there is a penalty, either in term of warning or salary deduction so that they won't repeat the mistake." (Dana, Executive Housekeeper, 5-star independent hotel)

*“One of the risks **financial** issue if we make not so wise decisions. We are accountable to our choice and action, the consequences good or bad, we need to be responsible so that we don’t repeat it and a warning to others as well.”*
(Janet, Housekeeping Room Attendant, 4-star independent hotel)

*‘The main fear of empowerment would be consequences later, especially if it involved **money**. I remembered last time my salary was deducted because I give extra to the guest, but that time I am a newbie, lack of experience. Now I tried will be more cautious not to make mistakes. The pay in this industry is not that much; I really cannot afford to lose more.’* (Azwan, Housekeeping Supervisor, 4-star hotel, international chain hotel)

*“My main concern as a supervisor regarding empowerment if it relates to the money issue. We do give some freedom to frontline staff to make their own decisions, especially regarding guest problems. But it is quite sensitive if it concerning **money and cost**, the accountability, I prefer them to ask me first when they relate to money.”* (Lorna, Food and Beverage Supervisor, 5-star international chain hotel)

The main concerns of participants are the possibility of incurring a financial loss due to making the wrong decision when executing empowerment. This is due to the consequences that come with the wrong decision in daily operations. But there are two sides of the coin, it is a risk but is also an opportunity for employees to gain more income as well. For example, if the receptionist can up-sell the rooms, they will benefit.

*“... the system was set up to help us to make decisions. To know the process and procedure is very important, especially the reward if making the right decision, for example when I am **upselling rooms, got extra pocket money**.”*
(Zue, Front Office Executive, 4-star international chain hotel)

Researchers follow the work of Fischhoff, Watson, and Hope (1984) in arguing that risk perception arises from a mixture of uncertainty and the seriousness of penalties. One of the common risks mentioned in the literature is financial risk, which is sometimes known as economic or monetary risk (Stone & Grønhaug, 1993). From a hotel employee point of view, financial risk represents the possibility

of monetary loss arising from empowerment activities. Financial risk is perceived when employees perceive their decisions may cause them monetary loss.

5.5.2 Time Risk

This study uncovers ‘time risk’ as one of the main themes of the determinants of the perceived risk of empowerment, as the following quotes illustrate.

*“For me, empowerment is just a **waste of time**. I will only do what I should, not more than that. I do not want an extra workload to do any reporting, better refer to the supervisor if there is a problem.” (Siti, Front office Executive, 4-star international chain hotel)*

*“one of my main concerns to empowerment is **time**. I agree that empowerment will shorten the service delivery, but decision-making is quite complicated and taking time, it will be more simple if I asked my boss to make all the difficult decisions, especially when it regards to the problematic guest, it will solve the matter faster, the problematic guest always ask for manager anyway.” (Peter, Front Office Executive, 5-star international chain hotel)*

*“according to my experience, one of the risks is **time wasted**. I read and remembered all sop and guideline so that I can be on my own, be empowered, but I learnt that when we are dealing with a human, you have to rely on your instinct on making decision...” (Vivian, Housekeeping Room Attendant, 4-star hotel international chain hotel)*

Perceived time risk is discussed in most of the literature as a factor that may influence an individual’s decision. The hotel employee perceived time risk is the possibility that employees lose time and inconvenience incurred due to empowerment activities (Stone & Grønhaug, 1993). Time risk is perceived when employees perceived uncertainty on making the decision as it may take extra time. Some of the participants are only willing to be empowered within their job scope or ordinary daily work-related activities; they are reluctant to go the extra mile for their work or their guest. This is shown with this statement:

*“Empowerment is sometimes wasting my time, especially if the boss does not like what I do and must follow their way. Better do their way from the beginning, save my **time**. Plus, the paperwork after that, all the report... time-consuming. Better just my regular job, **do not do extra**...” (Lorna, Food and Beverage Supervisor, 5-star international chain hotel)*

5.5.3 Social Risk

This study reveals ‘social risk’ as one of the themes of the perceived risk of empowerment, as the following quotes show.

*“Usually, I will only empower myself when it relates to my work scope, it if more than that, I will keep silence, the **others** do not really like staff who are outstanding or outspoken, I don’t want to be an outcast.” (Josh, Food and Beverage Server, 5-star international chain hotel)*

*“My main concern is my **relationship with my boss**; sometimes she doesn’t agree with how I handle things, better ask her first, just in case.” (Elly, Housekeeping Supervisor, 4-star independent hotel)*

*“I need to respect my manager; I usually will ask for his opinion before making a decision, it is quite risky if I do not get his approval as I will be accountable later if there is a problem. **I don’t want to look disrespectful**” (Charles, Housekeeping Supervisor, 4-star international chain hotel)*

Social risk is also known as self-image risk. It may lead to embarrassment or discomfort when a choice leads to a perceived loss of social image or relationship. Social risk is related to the social identity of an employee and hence is subject to their workgroup perception. Another view of this risk is the probability of the empowerment resulting in others (the employee’s managers, colleagues, and guests) thinking negatively of the employee (Lim, 2003).

5.5.4 Conclusion

One of the objectives of the qualitative phase of this study is to gain insights into the hotel employees’ perception of risk that influence empowerment. This subchapter presents various elements that influence employees’ perceived risk

of empowerment. The three significant components from these findings that contribute to the research framework are shown in Table 16.

Table 16: Statement Derived from the Thematic Analysis of the Qualitative Phase through Interview.	
Dimensions	Statements
Financial Risk	Making wrong decisions can involve financial consequences
	My salary might get deduct if I make wrong decisions
	Empowerment can influence my income
Time Risk	Doing extra than my job scope is wasting my time
	Making decisions is difficult and time-consuming
	Doing extra acquire of my time
Social Risk	Making my own decisions may result in disapproval by my manager
	Making my own decisions may result in disapproval by my colleagues
	Making decisions may influence my relationship with my manager

5.6 Summary

This chapter addresses the nature and rationale of qualitative research, the research techniques and data analysis methods. It presents an analysis of the qualitative data gathered through the semi-structured interviews, which were designed to address the following research questions:

Research Question One: What are the East Malaysian hotel employees' perceptions of empowerment?

Research Question Two: What are the determinants of empowerment practices that influence hotel employee empowerment in East Malaysia context?'

Research Question Three: What are the determinants of the perceived risk of empowerment that influence the relationship between empowerment practices and employee empowerment in East Malaysia hotel industry context.

The participants were twenty hotel employees from different four and five star-rated hotels in East Malaysia. The qualitative data was subjected to thematic analysis, and the structure is formulated following the research questions. Regarding the organisational demographic information, the hotel employees were represented equally from different positions and departments

The thematic analysis relating to the first research question, which aimed to uncover the hotel employee's understanding and definition and revealed their notion of empowerment, is shown in Table 17. The finding shows that all participants defined empowerment as a decision-making process, and is aligned with the nature of empowerment cognitively in encompassing meaning, competence, self-determination and impact in order to make a decision (Abel & Hand, 2018; Boudrias et al., 2004; Spreitzer, 1996). Thomas and Velthouse (1990) view the psychological approach to empowerment as the internal motivation in these four dimensions and represent the attitude of the employees towards their job. Instead of stressing the idea of power as well as the structural approach, the psychological approach represents the mindset employees have towards their empowerment (Ergeneli et al., 2007; Spreitzer, 1995; Zakaria, 2011).

Table 17: Statement Final Code Template				
No	Predetermined Themes	Sub-theme first level	Sub-theme second level	Description
1	The notion of empowerment (Overall)	Decision-making	Choice, Judgement,	Participant's understanding of the meaning of empowerment
		Authority	Power, Control	
1.1	The notion of empowerment (Management's view)	Delegation	Delegation of authority, the delegation of responsibility, power-sharing	
1.2	The notion of empowerment (Supervisor's view)	Trust	Relationship between leaders and employees	
		Career	Career opportunity, development, enhancement	
1.3	The notion of empowerment (Rank and file employees' view)	Power		
		Not sure	Not exist, uncertain, not sure	
2	Empowerment practices	Relevant information	Knowledge, experience, the standard of procedures, guidelines	Identification of the determinants of empowerment practices by the hotel employees
		Formal Power	Official authority, formal authority, relevant power	
		Empowering leader's role	Leader's support, guidance, trust, mentoring, attitude	
3	The perceived risk of empowerment	Financial risk	Pay, cost, financial issue, money	Identification of the perceived risk of empowerment by the hotel employees
		Time risk	Waste of time	
		Social risk	Relationship with the leader, employee and colleagues	

Participants also link authority with empowerment, which indicates that their interpretation is consistent with the structural empowerment approach. This

approach typically highlights the idea of authority-sharing between managers and employees (Ahearne et al., 2005; Ergeneli et al., 2007; Menon, 2001). Thus, the descriptions provided by all participants are considered appropriate.

Meanwhile, the findings of the notion of empowerment also reveal the perception of participants based on their position in the organisation. Managers perceived empowerment as a delegation of authority which is affiliated with the structural approach of empowerment. This seen to suitable with the management's hierarchy in the organisation as empowerment was a tool to share authority or power among their employees to run the daily operation of the hotel, so managers could concentrate on strategic level decision for the organisation (Orgambídez-Ramos & Borrego-Alés, 2014).

Supervisory-level employees view empowerment as a trust relationship between top management and their direct employees. Due to their position in the middle management, supervisors have to deal with top management for instruction and rank and file employees for orders. To make this relationship work, trust is essential (Kim et al., 2012; Scandura & Pellegrini, 2008). Trust is the product of a psychological contract between parties when the negotiation of what one provides and obtains in exchange corresponds to the other standards of return (Scandura & Pellegrini, 2008). Employees also perceive empowerment as a tool or opportunity for their career development (London, 1993; Strauser, 2014). Researchers have revealed that career enhancement opportunity is one of the tools to motivate employees to become empowered in their workplace (Grier-Reed et al., 2009; London, 1993).

The rank and file employees also have a slightly different view in defining their notion of empowerment. Most of them able to describe empowerment based on the root of the word, power. Some participants show uncertainty when defining empowerment but able to give their idea after some explanation. Nevertheless, some participants denied the existence of empowerment and referred to it as just a 'fancy word'. Empowerment appears in many contexts, and a lack of understanding of the term will cause confusion for the lower-level employee who may perceive it as a burden, or extra responsibility (Fabre, 2010).

Moreover, the findings also reveal the determinants of empowerment practices. Participants identified relevant information, formal power, and the empowering leader's role. Both relevant information and formal power are affiliated with a structural approach which fits with the theory of this study. Relevant information such as standard of procedure and guidelines are essential to enhance employees' competency in work-related matters (Hasani & Sheikhesmaeili, 2016). Formal power is also essential for employees to become empowered. In the East Malaysia hotel industry context, this is still one of the main concerns of empowerment due to the nature of high-power distance of the country (Idris et al., 2018). The empowering leader's role was also identified as one of the important determinants of empowerment practices. This is supported by the leadership approach of empowerment. A leader's role in supporting empowerment, by providing guidance and displaying trust is identified as a factor for the employee to become empowered.

With the perceived risk of empowerment, participants identified financial, time and social risks. Participants perceive financial risk as financial loss as one of the consequences if a wrong decision is made. When the financial issue is involved, employees tend to be more alert and reluctant to become empowered. Perceived time risk is discussed in most of the literature as influencing an individual's decision, and this is consistent with the findings. The hotel employees perceived time risk as the possibility that they lose time and incur inconvenience due to empowerment-related activities (Stone & Grønhaug, 1993). Time risk is perceived when employees perceive uncertainty in making a decision as this will take extra time and they prefer to only perform tasks within their job scope. Social risk is also known as self-image risk. It may lead to embarrassment or discomfort when the choice made leads to a perceived loss of social image or relationship. Participants also view social construct as one of the risks of empowerment. Social risk is related to the social awareness of an employee and hence is subject to their workgroup perception. For this study, it refers to the relationship of an individual with their managers, employees and colleagues.

5.7 Research Reflexivity

Research employing qualitative methods allowed the researcher to investigate a phenomenon that takes place in the 'real world' without excluding its complexities. (Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas, & Caricativo, 2017). The interpretive position

posits knowledge as a social and cultural structure and, thus, the researcher must take into consideration how their perceptions and beliefs influence the research process and how the realities associated are interpreted (Finlay, Gough, & Wiley, 2003). This means it is vital to keep in mind the role of the researcher in constructing the interview, and in communicating their observations and perspective to the participants (Balakrishnan, 2017). Reflexivity expects researchers to be observant and aware of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, ideological roots and voice of both of researcher and participants (Finlay et al., 2003; Patton, 2002).

During this study, the researcher kept a diary which comprises reflection on the data collection process, the role of the researcher in the research and the preliminary underlying interpretations produced. During the data analysis phase, the researcher also used the diary to represent the selection of interpretations affecting the findings (Cunliffe, 2004).

In fact, it is the researcher's belief that the culture of a multi-racial nation such as Malaysia may have affected what the employees were willing to share in the interviews. The identity of the researcher as a native Sabah was better received by the hotel organisations in Sabah compared to hotel organisations in Sarawak. As a result, there were a large number of participants from Sabah compared to Sarawak. In addition, it was relatively easy to break the awkwardness of the interview when the ethnicity and religiosity of the researcher was the same as some of the participants especially in Sabahan, and particularly when the researcher introduced Sabah slang in the Malay language. Overall, the participants were quite keen to share their personal knowledge and perception about their experiences and were frequently genuinely happy to discuss their experiences. If the interviews had conducted by another researcher of different ethnicity and religion, these participants may have revealed less about their personal experiences and concentrated more on the formal information of their work.

In particular, it is also important to consider the potential impact of the researcher's beliefs and perceptions on how the data is presented. The structure of interactions is based on personal experiences, social settings, academic training and theoretical beliefs of a researcher, and this can have an effect on the research findings (Holloway & Biley, 2011).

Nevertheless, Weick (1995) states that ontological complexities are an essential part of creating sense, as we act within multiple realities; no one can be an ontological purist. Therefore, while the researcher acknowledges that the findings might have been affected by her perspective and personality, the researcher is assured that the way the data are obtained prevents bias or prejudice and that the analyses are a valid representation of the data.

CHAPTER SIX: QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH AND RESULTS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the quantitative phase of the study. It presents the research hypotheses and final research framework established by integrating the findings of the qualitative analysis with the initial research model that originated from chapter three literature review. This chapter employs this integrated model to finalise the research model that centres on employee empowerment in the context of hotel organisation, which incorporated the empowerment practices, perceived risk of empowerment and employee empowerment. The research model and hypothesised relations are illustrated in Figure 10 on page 124. Specifics regarding the hypothesised relationships among the independent, dependent, and mediating variables are addressed after the research model is explained.

This chapter also outlines the development of the survey instrument and describes how the survey instrument was examined (prior to data collection) by employing a range of testing techniques such as expert review and reliability tests. It also describes the sampling, recruitment and data collection procedures. The data analysis process and results are explained in detail.

6.2 The Final Research Model

The qualitative study's findings explored the determinants to empowerment practices and perceived risk of empowerment specific to hotel employee context. Centred on the initial research model in the literature review and the findings of the qualitative, a combined model is developed. The qualitative findings also address the research question of the study to explore the determinants of empowerment practices as well as the perceived risk of empowerment in a hotel organisation. Prior to the quantitative field data collection is carried out, two hotel managers are contacted for further discourse to help ratify and finalise the confirmatory phase of the study. Expert validation is an essential factor that could evaluate the overall empowerment framework (Balakrishnan, 2017). As illustrated in Figure 10, the final research model portrays the variables and the theoretical hypothesised relationships examined between the predictor and the predicting variables. The determinants of empowerment practices derived from the literature and qualitative

findings, are relevant information, formal power, and empowering leader's role, and are identified as independent variables of the perceived risk of empowerment that directly and indirectly influence employee empowerment. The finalised research model has a one-dimensional construct due to the exploratory nature of this study, which refers to the perceived risk of empowerment.

A researcher must differentiate respectively two distinct measurement models; the principal factor model and the latent variable composite model (Wong, 2013b). The principal factor model is a reflective model in which the relationship shifts from the construct to measures with measurable indicators and reflective indicators suggest that the same model represents high correlation. (Balakrishnan, 2017). Hence, the reflective indicators are congruent, signifying that excluding an indicator from the model will change the construct's significance. All the variables in the present study have reflective multi-item scales developed from past research and integrating qualitative-phase findings (Miguel, Ornelas, & Maroco, 2015; Spreitzer, 1995). Miguel et al. (2015) attempt to validate psychological empowerment by testing reflective and formative measurement models and the findings indicated that a reflective model better fits the data than formative. Table 18 presents the variables and their definition used in this study.

Table 18: Operational Definition of the Variables	
Variable	Definition
Relevant information	Task-related information to enable employees to become empowered and perform in their job. i.e. standard of procedure, guidelines (Bowen, 2005)
Formal power	Employees are equipped with more formal authority to enhance employee empowerment (Baird & Wang, 2010; Kanter, 1979).
Empowering leader's role	Leader's role in facilitating employee empowerment by providing support, guideline and trust (Fong & Snape, 2015; Konczak et al., 2000)
Perceived risk of empowerment	An individual's multiple risk judgements of empowerment which is the combination of financial, time and social risk
Employee empowerment	A cognitive state that employees experience of their competence, meaning, self-determination, and impact. (Menon, 2001; Spreitzer, 1995)

6.3 Hypotheses Development

The constructing model phase is performed following the exploratory study. Hypotheses are centred on Stimulus Organism Response (S-O-R) theory. Based on

the findings from the exploratory study and existing literature, the hypothetical model is designed as described in the next sub-sections.

6.3.1 H1: Relevant Information as an Independent Variable

Relevant information is claimed to have influence employee empowerment by researchers in the various discipline (Alraja & Alomiam, 2013; Boudrias et al., 2009; Kuo, Ho, Lin, & Lai, 2010; Mohsin & Kumar, 2010; Orgambidez-Ramos & Borrego-Alés, 2014). Having access to relevant information and knowledge in the workplace, such as technical knowledge required to complete the task. The comprehension of the organisational goals, policies, the standard of procedures, guidelines and decisions is one of the key determinants that encourage employee empowerment and decrease their uncertainty. Given the previous literature and findings from the qualitative phase of this study, it is hypothesised that there is a positive relationship between the perceived relevant information and employee empowerment.

Without pertinent information, the employee is likely to perceive empowerment as a risk and reluctant to make decisions (Kwok et al., 2015; Mitchell, 1999). Due to the risk-averse culture in Malaysia (Kidd & Richter, 2004), the employee needs to have sufficient information to avoid making bad decisions. Consistent with literature and the qualitative study, the higher the employee perceived relevant information they have, their perceived risk of empowerment would be lower. Thus, the relevant information is expected to influence the perceived risk of empowerment, and employee empowerment and hence, the following hypotheses:

H1a: Perceived relevant information has a negative relationship with the employee's perceived risk of empowerment

H1b: Perceived relevant information has a positive relationship with employee empowerment

6.3.2 H2: Formal Power as an Independent Variable

Researchers such as Bowen and Lawler (1992) study the empowerment trend in service industry identified that one of the critical ingredients of empowerment is are the authority sharing with employees by enabling them to determine how

resources are administered. They claim that empowerment of employees is a service provision approach that allows managers to formally share the power to make decisions that affect organisational performance (Cho & Faerman, 2010; He et al., 2010). Formal power is granted for the employee to execute jobs which are suitable and relevant in the workplace and have precision, novelty and versatility. Thus, employees are adequately equipped with formal power to have the flexibility to decide on work-related matters and become empowered. Derived from the previous literature and the findings from the qualitative stage of this research (Maccoby, 1992; Martinette & Dunford, 2004).

Besides, in the East Malaysia context, without the formal power or authority given, the employee likely to make a decision only in their safe territory and unlikely to do beyond, and reluctant to be empowered (Abdul Aziz et al., 2011; Raquib et al., 2010). Especially if the risk is involved, which will influence their financial, time and social (Dewald & Sutton, 2000). Consistent with literature and the qualitative study, the higher employee perceived formal power they own, their perceived risk of empowerment will be lower. Thus, the perceived formal power is expected to influence the perceived risk of empowerment, and employee empowerment and hence, the following hypotheses:

H2a: Perceived formal power has a negative relationship with the employee's perceived risk of empowerment.

H2b: Perceived formal power has a positive relationship with employee empowerment

6.3.3 H3: Empowering Leader's Role as an Independent Variable

As stated in the literature review, empowering leader's behaviour can enhance or decrease employee empowerment (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015; Men & Stacks, 2013; Raub & Robert, 2013). Leadership behaviour is assumed to add value to empowerment framework to the degree that it can impact the perception, competence, self-determination and impact of an individual, which refer to the four dimensions of psychological empowerment originated by Spreitzer (1995). Leaders play a vital role in empowering workers and leaders who have been able to influence whether or not employees are offered the chance to become empowered

and the shape of empowerment that they preferred. (Greasley et al., 2008; Zakaria, 2011).

Various researches suggest that leadership can play a significant role in enabling psychological empowerment in employees by proving that empowering leadership positively relates to all four indicators of psychological empowerment (Bester et al., 2015; Connolly, Jacobs, & Scott, 2018; Marič et al., 2017). An empowering leader may foster a sense of *meaning* by demonstrating faith or acknowledging the importance of the employee's contributions towards achieving the organisation's goals. By recognising confidence in employees' ability and by providing feedback, a manager may also improve their *self-efficacy* (Ahearne et al., 2005). Besides, including employees in decision-making can improve the sense of *self-determination* among employees. Higher participation in decision-making may also provide employees with an enhanced sense of *impact* in their organisation (Raub & Robert, 2010; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). In the qualitative findings, employees continuously emphasise that a leader's support and trust is significant in exercising empowerment. Drawn from the previous literature and findings from the qualitative phase of this study, it is hypothesised that there is a positive relationship between the perceived empowering leader's role and employee empowerment.

In Malaysia, the notion of leadership is referred to as leading hierarchical relationships in the organisation (Ansari, Ahmad, & Aafaqi, 2004). Leaders in a high context culture such as Malaysia usually have to devote more time establishing personal connections that can elevate in the organisation. Abdullah (2005) claims the existence of an unspoken rule that regulates relations and differentiates colleagues, managers and employees. Harmonious relationships are emphasised and Malaysian is therefore claimed to be collectivist culture (Hofstede, 2001), wherein maintaining relationships is essential than performing a task (Ansari et al., 2004). Thus, perceived risk, the especially social risk is considered to be crucial in investigating the relationship between empowering leader's role and employee empowerment.

Therefore, empowering leader's role is postulated to influence the perceived risk of empowerment, and employee empowerment and hence, the following hypotheses:

H3a: Perceived empowering leader's role has a negative relationship with the employee's perceived risk of empowerment

H3b: Perceived empowering leader's role has a positive relationship with employee empowerment

6.3.4 H4: The Perceived Risk of Empowerment and Employee Empowerment as a Dependent Variable.

The conceptualisation of the perceived risk of empowerment is intended to determine how employee perceived risk impact employee empowerment. Perceived risk has been studied in various disciplines such as in the psychology field, which has centralised risk perception and management cognitive dimensions and tries to address the issue-who fears what and why? (Stone & Grønhaug, 1993).

Most of the literature derived from this study are from consumer behaviour literature (Bhukya & Singh, 2015; Hsin Chang & Wen Chen, 2008; Stone & Grønhaug, 1993). Perceived risks are associated with consumer decision making in purchasing and the researchers identifying this construct as a mixture of two components: the possibility of a loss and the subjective feeling of the importance attributed to that loss (Cunningham et al., 1996). The majority of marketing risk research considered risk unfavourable. Bauer (1964) argues that the consumer perceives risk in the way that any intervention will lead to unfavourable outcomes which he or she can not foresee. So, considering the deriving perceived risk to employee empowerment context, it is hypothesised that:

H4: Perceived risk of empowerment has a negative effect on employee empowerment

6.3.5 H5: The Mediating Role of Perceived Risk of Empowerment

In the literature, it has explained on the complex nature of perceived risk and how has it been analysed in a different context and currently, however, this concept is not integrated into the employee empowerment context. The perceived notion of risk can be applied almost universally, and its flexibility has been shown in a variety of applications from economics to consumers behaviour (Mitchell, 1999). Bhukya and Singh (2015) propose that perceived risk is more potent at enlightening an

individual's action as people usually have a higher tendency to avoid mistakes than to maximise utility in empowerment. This is supported by the fact that Malaysians are considered as a risk-averse society, where a decision is made cautiously (Hofstede, 2001; Kidd & Richter, 2004). In fear of potential negative repercussions from their actions, most Malaysians would prefer to avoid getting empowered. Therefore, for this study, the effect of empowerment practices on the perceived risk of empowerment and overall employee empowerment is explored.

The qualitative findings reveal three indicators of the perceived risk of empowerment by East Malaysia hotel employees. A summary of these indicators exercised to assess the perceived risk of empowerment as a unidimensional construct for this study is described in Table 19.

Table 19: Perceived Risk of Empowerment Indicators	
Financial Risk	The possibility of monetary loss arising from empowerment
Time Risk	The possibility that individuals lose time due to empowerment
Social Risk	Individual's concern when empowerment leading to the perceived loss of social relations in the workplace.

Previous researchers have been widely studied the concept of perceived risk and Bauer (1960) is one of the first researchers defines the perceived risk as individual's perception of risk associated with the possibility of economic loss, dissatisfaction, lack of desired value, physical harm or negative social judgment. The perceived risk differs between culture and culture and between individuals (Zheng, Favier, Huang, & Coat, 2012). Perception is as the mechanism of choosing, coordinating and analysing information to build one's image of truth. (Lim, 2003). According to S-O-R theory, perception relies not only on physical motivation but also on the relationship with its climate and consumer intrinsic state. The perceived risk, therefore, relies on how a person perceives a situation and its connection with it, and factors influence perception of risk for this study is financial, time and social risk.

Financial risk comprises employees' concern on possible wealth and economic loss due to empowerment (Cunningham, 1967). To avoid financial risk, employees reluctant to make decisions concerning their work. Social risk includes conditions in which an undesirable finding will make employees, colleagues and managers

uncomfortable or disapproved. When considering social risk, employees contemplate how empowerment may damage or affect their relationship in their workplace. Thus, employees become more cautious when making decisions in their daily operations. Time risk involves the loss of time resulting from empowerment. When employees perceived empowerment as time-consuming, and reluctant to do extra miles in their daily operation. Furthermore, in the consumer behaviour literature indicates that the relationship of perceived risk and purchase intention is still in debate. However, several researchers found out that perceived risk can effect purchase intention as the mediators which is parallel to S-O-R Theory (Bauer, 1964; Bhukya & Singh, 2015; Cocioc, 2017).

Baron and Kenny (1986) describe mediator as the third variable in a research framework, portraying the transformative instrument in which the independent focal variable can affect the relevant dependent variable. The effect of a mediating variable is characterised statistically as an interaction (Cohen, 2013). The relationship of empowerment practices on employee empowerment has frequently been investigated, however, nothing is mentioned about the mediating role of perceived risk on this relationship. Therefore, the employee view of empowerment practices through the perceived risk of empowerment can be tested as a mediating factor influencing employee empowerment. Thus, the perceived risk of empowerment as a mediating factor is hypothesised:

H5: Perceived risk of empowerment mediates the relationships between empowerment practices and employee empowerment.

Figure 10 demonstrates a full description and rationale of the research framework and the relationships of each variable. Based on the S-O-R Theory, environmental stimuli – S (Relevant information, formal power, and empowering leader's role) stimulate the reaction – O (Perceived risk) and affects employees' response -R (Employee empowerment). The following chapter describes the next phase of this study which is the quantitative data collection and its mechanism.

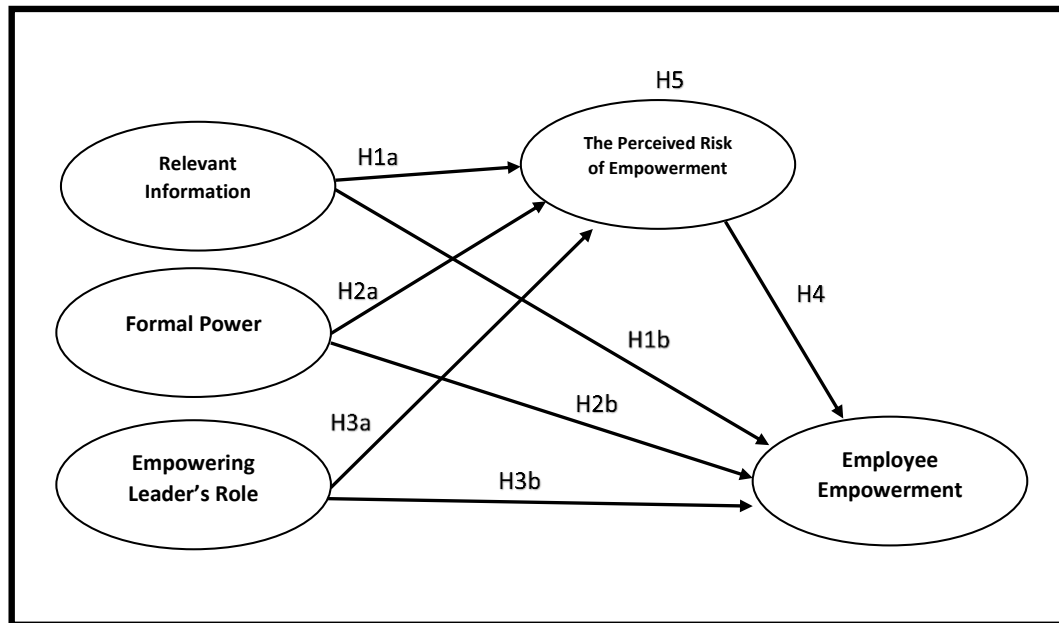


Figure 10: The Final Research Model

6.4 Survey Questionnaire Development

This phase of the study utilised a survey methodology. Data were collected from respondents using questionnaires. A survey questionnaire was chosen for the following reasons. Saunders et al. (2015) state that the aim of a questionnaire approach is to generalise the behaviour of the population which derives from the sample. As the purpose of this study is to investigate assumptions on hotel employees in East Malaysia setting, the questionnaire method is assumed to be the best course of action to address research question four:

What are the relative effects of empowerment practices on the perceived risk of empowerment and employee empowerment in East Malaysia hotel industry context?

In addition, questionnaires are often used to assess variables that are critical to human resource management and development, namely, behaviour, attitudes, values, characteristics and expectations of the respondents (Creswell, 2014). Questionnaires are a reasonably economic data collection technique, enabling comprehensive coverage at a relatively low cost.

Moreover, there was restricted access to the respondents as the hotels stipulated that the researcher have limited contact with the respondents to prevent any disturbance to their daily operations. The questionnaire method meets these criteria. It ensures limited interaction with the respondent and is an appropriate platform to accomplish the highest possible exposure in a limited time. In addition, questionnaires provide a sense of privacy and provide a platform for anonymous responses which could improve the participation rate for the study (Saunders et al., 2015).

There are aspects of the questionnaire method (besides the high non-response rate) which the researcher has no influence over. For instance, after the questionnaire has been distributed, the researcher has no control over the way respondents construe the questions. (Balakrishnan, 2017; Creswell, 2014). Several researchers highlighted the importance of the development of questionnaires in dealing with these issues by ensuring the questionnaire is easy to understand, direct and brief (Saunders et al., 2015). Thus, the research questionnaire for this study is specifically constructed based on the recommendations above.

The purpose of the quantitative phase of the research is to investigate employees' perception of empowerment and how the relationships of the empowerment practices influence the perceived risk of empowerment, and employee empowerment in an East Malaysia hotel industry context. The researcher has cross-referenced the final research framework using extensive analysis of relevant literature and the empirical results derived from the qualitative process, then operationalised variables and outlined their relationships. Even so, the trustworthiness of a piece of research depends on the development of comprehensive measurement scale and operationalisation of the relevant variables correctly and consistently to analyse the observed variable's covariance (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Creswell, 2014). Most of the survey items concerning the perception of empowerment, empowerment practices and employee perceived risk of empowerment are constructed and adapted grounded on the empirical findings from qualitative research findings and previous literature.

The questionnaire comprises three main sections (see Appendix 4). Section one aims to measure the employees' perception of their definition of empowerment. Section two is intended to measure employee perceptions about empowerment practices such as perceived relevant information, formal power, the empowering

leader's role, employee's perceived risk of empowerment, and employee empowerment. Section three collects demographic information of the respondent. To fulfil the university ethical committee's criterion, a respondent information sheet (refer Appendix 2) and consent form (refer Appendix 3) are attached with each questionnaire. The respondent information sheet contains a survey summary, details of the research process, study dissemination information, a confidentiality guarantee and contact details of the researcher. Respondents were asked to authorise their participation by signing the consent form.

The questionnaire has two versions, English and Malay. To ensure that the translation for both versions is accurate, the researcher consulted a senior lecturer at the language faculty of a public university in East Malaysia. Furthermore, to ensure the consistency of the Malay version translation, a back-translation process was used to examine whether the original expression of scale items was maintained after the original text had been translated and retranslated into the original language (Gilliden-Tracey & Greenwood, 1997).

Another issue when designing the questionnaire is the selection of scaling, which is considered appropriate for this study. Scaling is the method for allocating figures to constructs by setting a scale value for each statement (Creswell, 2014). The Likert (1932) scale is one of the most prominent instruments used for assessing respondent's perception, behaviour and choice compared to the nominal, interval and ratio type of scale (Dousin, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The Likert scale is designed to assess attitudes so that they can be methodically accepted and validated (Joshi, Kale, Chandel, & Pal, 2015). The initial Likert scale is a compilation of elements proposed for research in actual or conceptual conditions, and respondents are questioned to convey their level of agreement with the specified items on a numerical scale (Joshi et al., 2015).

Likert (1932) initially explores the unlimited number of determinable perceptions that occur in a particular individual with the prospect of organising them into categories of expression and generating the assumption that can be concluded and interpreted at the same time. By utilising this scale, respondents are able to select a range of specific alternatives that represent their perception based on the arrangement of the items and scale (Dousin, 2017).

For this study, a 7-point Likert scale is selected. Joshi et al. (2015) note in a given context which aims to segmentalize attitudes, taking into account the consistency of the survey respondents' responses, the 7-point scale could be better than the 5-point scale by selecting items on a scale that are specific to the survey. Russell and Bobko (1992) claim that the 7-point scale offers a wider range of choice that can increase the chances of attaining the respondent's perceived reality, as well as the ability to uncover a better expression of the respondent's motive and therefore, apparently attractive to the respondents (Joshi et al., 2015). Researchers also agree that this scale contributes to achieving higher levels of reliability for the analysis process (Joshi et al., 2015; Kumar, 2014). For this study, most of the instrument items are based on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 which represents strongly disagree to 7 which represents strongly agree, except for the items related to demographic data. The latter is descriptive in nature and better suited to a categorical scale. Other research reveals that the 7-point scale is considered an appropriate scales to be used, in the sense of scientific accurateness, perceived precision and the ease of application (Finstad, 2010). In conclusion, seven-point Likert items are considered more accurate, convenient, and able to reflect a respondent's evaluation compare to other alternatives, thus are suitable for this study.

6.5 Survey Instrument Pre-testing

Pre-testing or a survey method is typically performed before the actual survey to reduce potential survey errors. It is also valuable for obtaining more accurate, consistent and objective outcomes since it can expose a wide range of flaws related to respondents' confusion about questions or identify questions that respondents are reluctant to answer (Zhang, Kuchinke, Woud, Velten, & Margraf, 2017). Expert opinion is one of the pre-testing methods that aim to uncover early developmental issues with the questionnaire (Creswell, 2014). During the final stage of evaluation of the survey instrument, a pilot study is highly advised. This study mixture of these survey pre-testing, which includes expert review and a pilot study to validate the survey instruments.

6.5.1 Expert Review

The expert review process begins with the review of the questionnaire by suitable experts in the field to assess the measurement scales, and the flow of the instruments

that should represent respective variables. For this study, the researcher approached three hotel employees with extensive experience and two academics with a hotel background. The experts used their theoretical and practical knowledge and experience to evaluate the questionnaire for possible mistakes in terms of understanding, rigour, logic, importance, and repetition of items (Zhang et al., 2017). The experts' input and recommendations are greatly beneficial in constructing the best possible wording for survey items and in structuring the overall design for precision and pertinence of the data gathered. After the expert evaluation, the repetitive items derived from the qualitative stage were excluded. Experts also agree that in the Malay version of the questionnaire, the term 'empowerment' should remain in English. This is due to the translation of empowerment in Malay as *pemeriksaan*, or *pemberdayaan*. These terms are rarely used in daily routine or operations and may confuse the respondents.

6.5.2 Pilot Study

After the expert's review, the next stage for this study is a pilot test with a minimal number of respondents in the field to improve the questionnaire by reducing additional problematic items, if needed (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). In addition, the pilot study can also be a platform to acquire minimal data to assess the validity and reliability of the questionnaire (Saunders et al., 2012). Nevertheless, Kumar (2014) highlights a few issues with self-completed questionnaires such as the time duration to complete, clarity of instructions, transparency and ease of answering, layout and format.

Hence, a pilot study comprising 30 hotel employees in Kota Kinabalu was conducted before the actual survey to ensure the appropriateness of questionnaire design, terminology and measurement scales used. The pilot test shows that there are no noticeable problems with the instruments and on average, respondents can complete the questionnaire within 10–15 minutes. The researcher made minor changes in term of the design and layout to decrease the number of pages and make the document easier to read and complete. These changes are necessary to reduce the completion time to attain a better response.

6.5.3 Reliability Test

After obtaining data from the pilot study stage, the researcher was able to perform reliability analysis to ensure the consistency of the initial data (Saunders et al., 2012). It is a critical requirement for quantitative researchers to define and assess the quality of the research, as it implies the accuracy of the measurement to assess the stability, internal reliability, and consistency of the data. Stability refers to constancy of the measurement even after some time to ensure that the outcomes are indifferent between the chosen respondents. Internal reliability encompasses reliability of indicators and consistency among indicators (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Reliability also refers to the capability of the measurement to continually represent the construct in various circumstances (Creswell, 2014). Malhotra and Birks (2007) state that based on the questionnaire design, reliability aims to measure random error-free data to ensure that the outcomes are accurate. Cronbach's alpha α is the most popular reliability measurement to evaluate how well a group of items measures a single one-dimensional latent construct. According to Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, and Mena (2012), reliability refers to the degree to which the measurement of the homogeneity and coherence of items in survey mechanisms is consistent by utilising the Social Science Statistical Package (SPSS) software. Coefficient alpha is the most widely known suggested measurement to evaluate internal consistency and should be the initial test run to determine the efficiency of the survey instrument. Coefficient alpha is designed to detect the homogeneity of the instrument items and to show the similar central structure by measuring the average correlations of the items with the requirement of true errorless scores during analysis process (Creswell, 2014; Cronbach, 1951).

Generally, the score should surpass 0.70 for a satisfactory in term of criterion. However, Nunnally (1978) proposes the score in the range of 0.50 to 0.60 is adequate for exploratory and early stages of research. It is suggested that the score can be increased by removing items with near-zero correlations or increasing the number of items.

Table 20 shows the SPSS result for the Cronbach alpha score of the pilot study. All the variables show a score which is higher than 0.70. It indicates that at this stage, all constructs have an acceptable alpha coefficient score. Thus, all items are

assumed to fall under relevant dimensions. As the survey instruments are a mixture of existing and validated instruments, qualitative research findings, supported by a review of input from experts, the pilot study's reliability test reveal an alpha score that is appropriate for the research's exploratory nature.

Table 20: Reliability Test				
No.	Variable	No. of items	Likert scale type	Cronbach Alpha
1	Relevant information	5	Seven-point	0.827
2	Formal power	3	Seven-point	0.896
3	Empowering leader's role	6	Seven-point	0.847
4	Perceived risk of empowerment	9	Seven-point	0.944
5	Employee empowerment	12	Seven-point	0.956

The Cronbach's alphas scores are reported between 0.827-0.956, showing significant evidence of the reliability of all the constructs. Thus, the questionnaire is considered ready for the next stage and suitable for further data analysis. The data analysis employs Statistical Package for Social Science version 25 for reliability and descriptive analysis, and Partial Least Square-Structure Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), specifically SmartPLS version 3.0 and confirmatory factor analysis. The final survey items, measurement type and the references for the source of each survey items are presented in Table 21.

Table 21: Finalised Survey Items			
Variable	Item Code	Survey Items	Reference
Relevant Information	RI1	The management provides information on how its objectives are going to be achieved	Adapted from Cho and Faerman (2010) and developed based on findings from the qualitative stage
	RI2	The management provides relevant information to avoid bad decision-making	
	RI3	The management provides relevant information to improve the work process and procedures	
	RI4	The management has an efficient way to disseminate relevant information to all levels of employees	
	RI5	The management provides relevant information for me to become empowered	
Formal Power	FP1	The management assigned formal authority to make decisions on daily operations	Adapted Matthews et al. (2003) and developed based on findings from the qualitative stage
	FP2	The management assigned formal authority to develop my own solutions to work-related matters	
	FP3	The management assigned formal authority to improve my work routine	
Empowering Leader's Role	ELR1	My leader encourages me to express my opinions	Adapted from Konczak et al. (2000), Arnold et al. (2000) and developed based on findings from the qualitative stage
	ELR2	My leader encourages me to make my own decisions regarding my work	
	ELR3	My leader explains the rule, regulations and standard of procedure of my work	
	ELR4	My leader focuses on corrective action rather than my mistakes	
	ELR5	My leader trusts me in doing my job	
	ELR6	My leader encourages me to become empowered	
Perceived Risk of Empowerment	PR1	Empowerment can involve financial consequences	Developed based on findings from the qualitative stage
	PR2	My salary might get deduct if I make wrong decisions	
	PR3	Empowerment can influence my income	
	PR4	Empowerment sometimes is a waste of time	
	PR5	Empowerment is difficult and time-consuming	
	PR6	Empowerment may acquire extra of my time	
	PR7	Empowerment may result in disapproval by my leader	
	PR8	Empowerment may result in disapproval by my colleagues	
	PR9	Empowerment may influence my relationship with my leader	
Employee Empowerment	EE1	The work I do is very important to me	Adapted from Spreitzer (1995) and revised to fit employees' context.
	EE2	My job activities are personally meaningful to me	
	EE3	The work I do is meaningful to me	
	EE4	I am confident about my ability to do my job	
	EE5	I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my job activities	
	EE6	I have mastered the skills necessary for my job	
	EE7	I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job	
	EE8	I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work	
	EE9	I have considerable opportunity for freedom in how I do my job	
	EE10	My impact on what happens in my department is large	
	EE11	I have a great deal of control over what happened in my department	
	EE12	I have significant influence over what happened in my department	

6.6 Data Collection: Survey Questionnaire

6.6.1 Respondent Criteria

The survey was administered from June to November 2017. Prospective hotels were contacted through the Malaysia Associations of Hotel (MAH), the gatekeeper and the prospective hotel's approval. The human resource manager of each hotel was approached to help distribute the questionnaires to their employees. However, respondents needed to meet two specific criteria. The respondents must work full-time and in a front-line role in an operational department such as the front office, housekeeping or food and beverage department. Frontline employees were chosen due to the consequences for organisational performance and its relevant aspect to empowerment concepts as they are an essential instrument for organisations to create interaction with their guests and for delivering service (Namasivayam, Guchait, & Lei, 2014; Proenca et al., 2017). Both criteria were included in the questionnaire for screening purposes.

6.6.2 Data Collection Procedure

Questionnaires were sent out in November 2017. Respondents were given about two to three weeks to respond. E-mail notifications were sent to the human resources manager of all hotels involved. After three weeks, the number of employees agreeing to participate in this study was relatively small, and a second e-mail with a follow-up call occurred during the fourth week. E-mail reminders are necessary to achieve a better return rate (Saunders et al., 2015). The survey lasted for nine months to finish due to the low return rate from all locations, especially from Sarawak, as the researcher is not familiar with the state

Various measures were used to resolve the problem of a low and slow return rate. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses to enhance the success rate and adhere to standard ethical practices. It is essential that the respondents feel at ease and can give their honest opinions when completing the survey questionnaire (Creswell, 2014). In addition, since the Malaysian Association of Hotel (MAH) supported this research, a supportive letter from MAH was attach to e-mails to human resource managers of four and five star-rated hotels in Sabah and Sarawak. Moreover, the importance of the study was also mentioned

in the cover letter. Respondents' anonymity was highlighted in the letter and during the phone conversation. These measures helped to increase the response rate. The best measure in the East Malaysia context in order to increase the response rate was to utilise personal contact as Malaysians prefer to respond if a relationship occurred and will be more truthful in completing the questionnaire.

6.6.3 Survey Feedback

Obtaining respondents and reliable feedback for the survey is a challenge as data is collected in the hotel setting. Of the 30 four and five-star hotels in Kota Kinabalu, Tawau, Sandakan, Kuching and Miri approached, only 20 hotels agreed to participate. Around 420 sets of survey questionnaires were distributed to those hotels.

The data screening process is performed for validation purposes. Respondents are screened based on characteristics such as demographics to fulfil the condition for the initial objectives (Malhotra and Birks, 2007). The process helps to exclude respondents who do not fulfil the criteria set earlier. Therefore, this study eliminated respondents who were not full-time employees or not working in the front office, housekeeping, food and beverage departments. A total of 250 usable surveys were available for the data analysis stage after the data screening procedure. This indicates a 59.52% response rate. Table 22 shows the details of the response rate.

Table 22: Response Rate				
District	Total Questionnaires distributed	Total Questionnaire Received	Total Usable Questionnaire	Percentage (%)
Kota Kinabalu	180	143	104	57.78
Sandakan	60	42	30	50.00
Tawau	30	22	19	63.33
Kuching	120	90	77	64.17
Miri	30	24	20	66.67
Total	420	321	250	59.52

6.6.4 Data Cleaning: Missing Data and Outliers

In social science research, missing data is frequently viewed as one of the inevitable issues (Kumar, 2014; Nunkoo, 2018). Numerous factors may cause missing data, and some factors are out of the researcher's control, for instance respondents' failure

to answer certain items in the questionnaire or a refusal to provide sensitive information (Zakaria, 2011).

Researchers must identify the problem systematically and come up with a potential solution as missing data may influence the data analysis outcome (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). To handle missing data, some of the possible solutions that have been suggested by researchers include of listwise and pairwise deletion and imputation (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Hair et al., 2010). However, the most common approach is the deletion of cases which can convey the significant loss of cases and may generate outlier for correlations and eigenvalues (Hair et al., 2010; Zakaria, 2011). This study utilises Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 25.0 as a method for data input and preliminary reliability analysis. During the data entry stage, missing values were checked manually, and there are no missing data reported for this study.

Other issues during the preparation of data analysis are outliers. Basically, outliers are observations of data that vary noticeably from other observations (Hair et al., 2010). The presence of outliers should be deleted as it may imply incorrect data entry or that missing values occurred. (Hair et al., 2010). In this study, a small number of outliers are predicted, and the researcher used box plots, mean scores and standard deviation to uncover outliers in the data set. This process has revealed five outliers and all the outliers were removed from all data analysis.

6.7 Data Analysis: Partial Least Square- Structural Equation Modelling

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a multivariate statistical method of data analysis frequently used in social science research to test structural relationships, specifically to analyse linear and cause and effect models (Kumar & Purani, 2018). It taking into account the requirement to assess patterns of causality by taking the process beyond the conventional multiple regression (Ryan, 2020). Multiple regression is considered as a robust statistical method to determine the degrees of variance found in a determined variable and it is directly measured between determined and determining variables, however, it does not measure the relationship between each of the determining variables and fails to consider the contribution each of the determining factors and SEM able to provide more details

regarding the statistical relationships between all the variable in a model (Ryan, 2020).

Structural equation modelling (SEM) has become the standard method for analysing cause-effect relationships between latent variables (Cheah, Sarstedt, Ringle, Ramayah, & Ting, 2018; Mikulić & Ryan, 2018) mainly when researchers aim to test complete theories and concepts. It aims to investigate the relationships among that can quantitatively assess a theoretical model that researchers have hypothesised (Hair et al., 2017).

In other words, SEM is a mixture of factor and multiple regression analysis and evaluates the interaction of measured variables and latent constructs (Streukens & Leroi-Werelds, 2016). All equations demonstrate the interrelations between variables in the analysis, namely independent and dependent indicators. These combinations of analysis also enable the researcher to visually observe the interaction among the variables and this has attracted researchers primarily in the business field to utilise SEM. SEM can test different models and determine how the variables establish frameworks and how the frameworks connect to one another (Ramayah, Cheah, Chuah, & Memon, 2017). There are two basic types of variables: latent variables that are not directly measured and observed variables that are a set of variables to infer the latent variables (Hair et al., 2017).

In fact, SEM is a general term that describes a number of statistical models, and Covariance-Based SEM (CB-SEM) is the most commonly used method and researchers simply refer to CB-SEM as SEM. Nonetheless, research has proposed other options for SEM methods. The most commonly known method is Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which has increasingly drawn the attention of a wide variety of fields such as human resource management, marketing, hospitality and tourism (Hair, Hollingsworth, Randolph, & Chong, 2017).

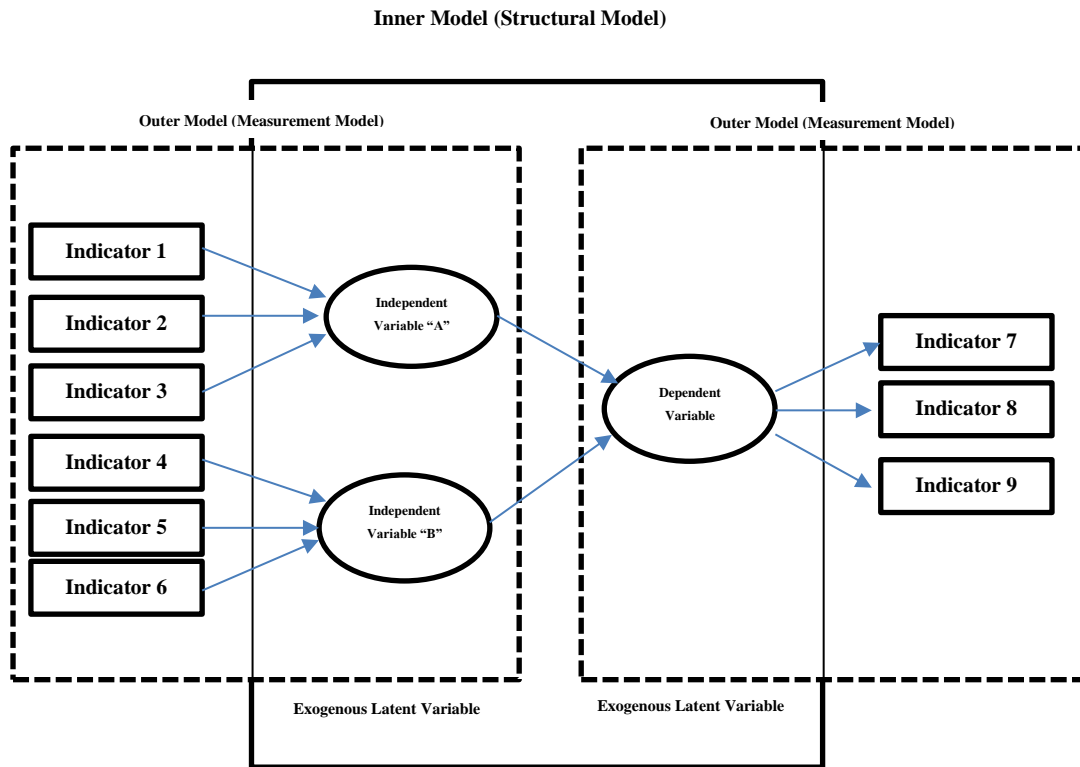


Figure 11: The Inner vs Outer Model in SEM Diagram

In SEM, there are two sub-models, one is the inner model that stipulates the relationship between the independent and dependent latent variables, whilst the outer model determines the relationship between the latent variables and their observed indicators., as illustrated in Figure 11. Figure 11 shows the variables in SEM can be either exogenous or endogenous. The exogenous variable has outward paths and none leads to it, whereas, the endogenous variable shows at least one path leading to it and at the same time, it represents the impacts of another one or more variables (Hair et al., 2017; Kumar, 2014).

There are numerous different approaches to the structural equation model. One of the most common approaches is CB-SEM using software packages such as AMOS, MPlus, EQS and LISREL (Wang, 2012). Another approach is PLS-SEM, which concentrates on analysing variance typically using SmartPL, PLS-Graph, WarpPLS, and WarpPLS. Some researchers often use the PLS module in the R statistical software package for this approach (Ramayah et al., 2017; Wong, 2013b). Another unique approach of SEM is a component-based structural equation model known as Generalized Structured Component Analysis (GSCA) which is applied using a web-based application called GeSCA or VisualGSCA (Deal, 2010; Tenenhaus,

2008). Another alternative approach to execute SEM is the Nonlinear Universal Structural Relational Modeling (NEUSREL) which utilise the NEUSREL's Causal Analytics software (Kumar & Purani, 2018). When evaluating different path modelling approaches, researchers must consider their benefits and drawbacks in selecting a suitable approach for their research.

Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modelling (CB-SEM) has been commonly applied in the social science setting for several decades and is still the accepted technique to analyse data and validate or refute hypotheses via relevant analysis. This approach is suitable when there is a large sample size, the data is normally distributed, and the theoretical framework is specified appropriately (Wong, 2013b). However, numerous researchers claim that a data set that satisfies such criteria is often difficult to collect (Hair et al., 2012).

Partial Least Square of Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) is a more versatile modelling method compare to CB-SEM. PLS-SEM has no assumptions required regarding the distribution of data (Kumar & Purani, 2018; Wong, 2013b). This method is suitable if the research objective is exploratory, and researchers have little information on the relationships between variables. This approach is appropriate if the sample size is small, the theory is less explored, statistical precision is crucial, the right model specification cannot be guaranteed (Wong, 2013b). Therefore, if the above conditions are met, PLS-SEM is considered as an ideal replacement for CB-SEM. However, in practice, PLS-SEM is not suited for statistical analysis of all kinds. High-valued structural path coefficients are necessary if the sample size is small as issues such as multicollinearity may occur (Streukens & Leroi-Werelds, 2016). According to Wong (2013b), this is due to the model's undirected correlation as the arrows are always single-headed. In addition, lack of sufficient consistency in results on latent variables can lead to a distorted component evaluation, loadings, and path coefficients. Also, it may generate significant mean square errors in the assessment of path coefficient loading (Ramayah et al., 2017). Regardless of these drawbacks, PLS-SEM is useful for modelling structural equations in research, particularly where there are a small number of respondents and the distribution of data is not normal or skew (Streukens & Leroi-Werelds, 2016).

Generalised Structured Component Analysis (GSCA) is preferred when overall model fit measures are necessary or where non-linear latent variables occur and are required (Hwang, Malhotra, Kim, Tomiuk, & Hong, 2010). If the data collected shows significant nonlinearities, and there is a moderating effect within variables, NEUSREL is considered an ideal technique (Wong, 2013b). Nevertheless, both NEUSREL and GSCA are fairly new methods in SEM; currently, there is limited literature available. Researchers will find it difficult to find enough examples to comprehend how these evolving SEM methods can be applied in various business research settings (Kumar & Purani, 2018; Wong, 2013b).

Thus, considering the advantages and the overall objective of this study, PLS-SEM is deemed to be suitable to assess the proposed theoretical model and hypotheses for the following reasons (Chin, 1998; Lohmöller, 2013; Ryan, 2020; Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010).

- The phenomenon to be investigated is fairly new, and the measurement models need to be newly formed.
- The structural equation model is based on a large number of latent variables and indicator variables.
- Relationships between the indicators and latent variables have to be displayed in different modes.
- The settings associated with sample size, independence, or normal distribution are not fulfilled.
- Indicators to construct consist of both reflective and formative.
- Prediction is more critical than parameter estimation.

The PLS-SEM algorithm is based on Wold's early research on the principal component analysis (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010; Wold, 1985). Building on Wold's research, numerous researchers have developed and refined the algorithm (Chin, 1998; Lohmöller, 1989). PLS-SEM is based on two sets of linear equations, namely the inner model, which refers to the structural model and the outer model which refer to the measurement model (Lohmöller, 1989). An exogenous variable is called

a latent variable which never appears as a dependent variable. Variables other than that is known as the endogenous variable. Therefore, the PLS model consists of the mixtures of inner and outer models (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010).

PLS-SEM consists of two types of outer models, namely, reflective and formative measurement models (Diamantopoulos, Riefler, & Roth, 2008). The reflective model has cause and effect from the latent variable to the manifest variables in the framework and each manifest variable is projected to be created as a linear function of its latent variables. The formative measurement model has causal relationships from the manifest variables to the latent variable (Hair et al., 2012; Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010).

In conclusion, PLS-SEM permits the analysis of the research model that has been developed through the qualitative stage and literature review. The benefits of PLS-SEM allow researchers to be able to visually observe the interaction among variables to strategize when the existence of both formative and reflective indicators and the data is not normally distributed. This study aims to evaluate the relationship of the determinants of empowerment practices and perceived risk of empowerment which derived from the qualitative findings and a minimal application of available theory. Thus, this criterion is matched with the PLS-SEM approach. Furthermore, the final research model for this research is considered as exploratory to analyse the integrated the empowerment practices on the perceived risk of empowerment, and employee empowerment that developed from the qualitative phase. The study is primarily obliged to analyse causality relationships between latent constructs, and this does not require a precise model condition (Hair et al., 2012). The fulfilment of the criteria above supports the application of PLS-SEM for this study.

PLS-SEM enables researchers to assess desired hypotheses and theories (Hair et al., 2012). The PLS-SEM path analysis model is a well-founded technique of predicting complicated cause-effect-relationship frameworks, especially in business studies (Balakrishnan, 2017). The final research model is explored using SmartPLS version 3.2, a well-known software platform for SEM, which incorporates PLS path modelling. Smart PLS. SmartPLS 3.2 is a Java-based program which probably is the most extensively used PLS-SEM software in tourism and hospitality research (Kumar & Purani, 2018; Mohsin, Lengler, & Chaiya, 2017; Ryan, 2015). This software also offers various options for algorithms, namely, resampling method

data metrics, maximum iterations, and weighting schemes (Temme, Kreis, & Hildebrandt, 2006). One of the best features of SmartPLS 3.2 that fit this study is that this PLS-SEM software requires a minimal extra calculation to assess both structure and measurement models.

PLS primary goal is a prediction, the theoretical underpinnings of a model are determined by the intensity of each structural trajectory and the cumulative efficiency of its exogenous structures (Balakrishnan, 2017; Hair et al., 2017). Anderson and Gerbing (1988) proposed a two-stage modelling approach developed and widely applied by researchers worldwide. Their work provides a foundation for meaningful interference about theoretical constructs and their relations. Two fundamental components characterise SEM-PLS: the measurement model and the structural model. These components can be considered as separate stages. The first stage, the measurement model, is designed to show estimated statistics and assess the validity of variables and their respective indicators. It is considered valid if the items are arranged to enable each variable for assessment (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 23: Guideline for PLS Applications		
Applications	Propositions	Fulfilment of requirement
Measurement scale	Avoid using a categorical scale in endogenous constructs.	Continuous scale
Value for outer weight	Use a uniform value of 1 as a starting weight for the approximation of the latent variable score.	Fulfilled
Maximum number of iterations	300	Fulfilled
Bootstrapping	The number of bootstraps 'samples' should be 5000, and the number of bootstraps 'cases' should be the same as the number of valid observations.	Fulfilled
Inner model evaluation	Optional use of goodness-of-fit (GoF) Index.	Reported (GoF) = 0.514
Outer model evaluation (reflective)	Report indicator loadings.	Indicator loadings are reported using composite reliability. 0.70 or higher is preferred. If it is exploratory research, 0.4 or higher is acceptable.

Outer model evaluation (formative)	Report indicator weights. To test the outer model's significance, report t-values, p-values and standard errors.	t-value, p-value and standard errors are reported (Figure 12)
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Source: Wong (2013a)

The measurement model also determined the reliability for each construct to ensure the items posited to measure a construct were sufficiently related to be reliable. The measurement model also examines the goodness of fit for each measure by showing how satisfactorily each variable of the proposed model fitted the accumulated data. During the next stage of SEM-PLS, the overall goodness-of-fit of the proposed structural model and the collected data is analysed. The model suggested in this study, which involves five constructs and their underlying indicators, is assessed based on the outcome of the measurement model stage. The results for the structural model uncover the relationship between the constructs and the explained variance. The present study fulfils the guidelines concerning PLS applications. Table 23 shows guidelines for the PLS application (Hair et al., 2012).

6.7.1 Sampling Size Requirement

Before determining the sample size requirement, it is essential to relate it to the data analysis methods and platforms selected prior. Sample size recommendations for PLS-SEM initially based on the properties of Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression and researchers may revert to differentiated rules of thumb (Hair et al., 2012). This study utilised the PLS-SEM analysis and the minimum sample size needed for analysis purpose is at least ten times the number of structural paths pointed at a variable in the structural model (Hair et al., 2012). Hence, by fulfilling this rule, a power analysis will likely yield a higher power of hypothesis test. Thus, this study refers to Cohen's (2013) suggestion for the multiple regression model in order to establish the sample size required. Table 24 demonstrates the recommended sample size to detect R^2 values for a statistical power of 80%. This suggestion by Cohen (1992) is frequently referred to for sample size determination.

Table 24: Sample Size Recommendation in PLS for a Statistical Power of 80%												
Maximum number of Arrows pointing at a construct	Significance Level											
	1% minimum R2				5% minimum R2				10% minimum R2			
	0.10	0.20	0.5	0.75	0.10	0.20	0.5	0.75	0.10	0.20	0.5	0.75
2	158	75	47	38	110	52	33	26	88	41	26	21
3	176	84	53	42	124	59	38	30	100	48	30	25
4	191	91	58	46	137	65	42	33	111	53	34	27
5	205	98	62	50	147	70	45	36	120	58	37	30
6	217	103	66	53	157	75	48	39	128	62	40	32
7	228	109	69	56	166	80	51	41	136	66	42	35
8	238	114	73	59	174	84	54	44	143	69	45	37
9	247	119	76	62	181	88	57	46	150	73	47	38
10	256	123	79	64	189	91	59	48	156	76	49	41

The sample size required to determine the minimum R^2 value of 0.25 from Table 24 is based on the requirement suggested by Hair et al. (2017) and measurement models with loadings over the standard threshold of 0.70 or 0.40-0.60 for exploratory items.

Figure 12 illustrates the final research model. There are eight paths in the model which signify the relationship between relevant information, formal power, the empowering leader's role, perceived risk of empowerment and employee empowerment. Table 24 shows that 84 observations are the minimum for a statistical power of 80% to detect the R^2 value of 0.25 and with a 5% chance of probability of error. All measurement items in the final measurement models for this study display loadings ranging from 0.724 to 0.888. Thus, all four conditions are met for statistical power analysis. The sample size of this study was 250, so the minimum requirements to employ PLS-SEM are fulfilled based on the ten times rule of thumb and power analysis.

6.7.2 Preliminary Evaluation

A preliminary assessment is carried out to coordinate the data for the analysis of the measurement and structural models. Data analysis procedures are conducted

which include an image check of the data to identify and correct data set anomalies, detection of missing data, and screening for violations of statistical assumptions such as outliers and the data distribution, normal or skewed. As mentioned earlier, data were gathered through survey questionnaires from 250 hotel employees. The questionnaire is developed only to accept perfect data entry, no missing data or outliers. Hence, it is concluded that there were no significant issues in the data set consists of 250 responses.

Table 25: Descriptive Analysis and Normality Test						
		Relevant Information	Formal Power	Empowering Leader's Role	Perceived Risk	Employee Empowerment
N	Valid	250	250	250	250	250
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.6544	3.7180	3.4780	4.2271	3.8153
Std. Deviation		0.60937	0.71239	0.63114	0.75091	0.69067
Skewness		-0.638	-0.004	-0.154	0.146	-0.151
Kurtosis		2.573	-0.369	0.806	-0.521	-0.092
Kolmogorov-Smirnova		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Shapiro-Wilk		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001

Evaluating the valid basis for statistical analysis when employing multivariate techniques is important in order to prevent inaccurate assessments (Hair et al. 2012). Table 25 presents the descriptive analysis and the normality test for the data. Skewness and Kurtosis values of the items are not in the standard range (± 1.96) and both Kolmogorov-Smirnova and Shapiro-Wilk Test shows p-value less than 0.5. Thus, the test shows that distributions of the items are not normal.

Generally, to proceed for further analysis, it is recommended that the data should be normal. Nevertheless, PLS-SEM analysis does not oblige for a normally distributed data set (Kumar & Purani, 2018; Ramayah et al., 2017). Thus, when there are a small number of respondents and the data distribution is not normal and skew, PLS-SEM is the best option available (Streukens & Leroi-Werelds, 2016).

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is used in this research, instead of exploratory factor analysis (EFA), as the aim of the quantitative stage is to assess established relationships from the finalised research model and relevant hypotheses, instead of using the exploratory method to classify the factor mechanism of observed variables.

When a study has detailed assumptions backed by literature and empirical support of the fundamental considerations, assessment of the conceptualised framework that suits the data, it is more appropriate to execute CFA instead of EFA (Russell & Bobko, 1992). In comparison, CFA is a more comprehensive method than EFA, and it is regarded as more suitable as the analysis focuses on establishing and exploring interpretation of the fundamental variables. Thus, CFA is employed as the relationship among the variables and hypotheses, (which based on theory, empirical findings in the qualitative stage, and past literature) can be evaluated statistically.

In addition, Standen and Rothmann (2008) suggest that EFA analyse the scale's construct validity and is applied mainly as a tool to reduce the number of variables or to assess patterns of correlations among variables (Wong, 2013b; Zakaria, 2011). Decisions on the number of variables are therefore based on pragmatic conditions rather than theoretical ones (Standen & Rothmann, 2008). Standen and Rothmann (2008) also propose selecting CFA instead of EFA when the goal is to realise the most suitable theoretical model.

Thus, this study utilised CFA instead of EFA to ensure construct validity, internal consistency and discriminant validity (Wong, 2013b). All the indicators report a factor loading of above 0.70 and error variances of less than .50, which indicates adequate reliability of the indicators in measuring the constructs.

6.8 Results: Descriptive Analysis of Respondents Profile

Demographic data are valuable for obtaining an accurate view of the survey's characteristics, and are shown in Table 26. Sixty-six percent of the respondents are female, most respondents are 19 to 45 years old and there is an equal distribution of marital status. Most of the respondents are educated at Malaysian Higher School Certificate or commonly known as STPM (Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia) or Diploma level. Most of the respondents work for international chain and the hotels are mainly 4-star rated. The distribution of respondents from the front office, housekeeping and food and beverage departments is in balance, and most of the respondents are in entry-level position rather than higher-level positions.

Table 26: Respondent Profile			
Respondents Characteristic		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	86	34.4
	Female	164	65.6
Age	19 to 25 years old	104	41.6
	26 – 35 years old	103	41.2
	36 – 45 years old	40	16
	More than 56 years old	3	1.2
Marital Status	Single	109	43.6
	Married	141	56.4
Education Level	SPM/O Level/Certificate	21	8.4
	STPM/Diploma/A Level	100	40
	First Degree	97	38.8
	Master's degree	31	12.4
	PhD	1	.4
Length of Experience	Less than 1 year	28	11.2
	2 – 5 year	130	52
	5 – 10 year	65	26
	11 – 15 year	27	10.8
Type of Hotel	International Chain	179	71.6
	Locally-owned	71	28.4
Hotel Star-rating	Four stars	147	58.8
	Five stars	103	41.2
Department	Front Office	86	34.4
	Housekeeping	76	30.4
	Food & Beverage	88	35.2
Position	Entry-level	193	77.2
	Supervisory level	39	15.6
	Managerial level	12	4.8
	Top management	6	2.4

6.9 Results: The Definition of Empowerment

One of the research objectives of this study is to uncover the hotel employees' perception of empowerment in the East Malaysian context. Five empowerment statements are identified from the qualitative findings and are incorporated into the survey questionnaire to assess the overall view of empowerment. Table 27 shows the description of each definition as well as the number of respondents who chose each option.

Table 27: Definition of Empowerment		
Description	Frequency	Percentage
Empowerment is a delegation of authority and enables me to make decisions	53	21.2
Empowerment is a management tool to motivate career development	27	10.8
Empowerment is about power and control with extra responsibilities	106	42.4
Empowerment is another contemporary managerial term to add workload	33	13.2
Not sure	31	12.4

Many (42.2%) of the respondents view empowerment as involving power and control and extra responsibilities, while 21.2% of the respondents' see empowerment as a delegation of authority that enables them to make decisions. The other two definitions of empowerment (as a career motivation tool and a managerial term to add workload) share similar percentages, and 12.4% of respondents were not sure of the meaning of the term. It is quite interesting to consider the employees' opinions based on their position in the organisation. Table 28 shows that most of the entry-level employees view empowerment as power and control. Those at the supervisor level perceived empowerment as a career development tool while managerial and top management share the same view of empowerment as a delegation of authority. Other demographic variables such as age and gender show little or no difference on how the respondents view empowerment (refer to Appendix 5).

Table 28: View of Empowerment based on the Employee's Position			
Level	Definition	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Entry	Delegation of authority	29	15.0
	Career Development	10	5.2
	Power and control	95	49.2
	Add workload	32	16.6
	Not sure	27	14.0
Supervisory	Delegation of authority	9	23.1
	Career Development	16	41.0
	Power and control	10	25.6
	Not sure	4	10.3
Managerial	Delegation of authority	9	75.0
	Career Development	1	8.3
	Power and control	1	8.3
	Add workload	1	8.3
Top Management	Delegation of authority	6	100

6.10 Results: Relationships of Empowerment Practices, Perceived Risk of Empowerment and Employee Empowerment.

This subchapter shows the result of the quantitative phase. As suggested by Cohen (1988) there are two stages of data analysis when utilising PLS-SEM. The first stage, which is known as measurement model, aims to assess the validity of the data while the second stage, the structural model, is intended to present the relationships among the variables.

6.10.1 Measurement Model Validation

The reliability and validity of the measurement model are verified through factor loadings, convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted), internal consistency (composite reliability), and discriminant validity utilised Cross loading (see Appendix 2) or Fornell and Lacker's Criterion or HTMT Criterion (Hair et al., 2012). Table 29 shows that all item loadings exceeded the recommendation of 0.708 (refer to Appendix 1) except FP2=0.699 and this is deleted from the model. The AVE values of all constructs also exceed the minimum requirement of 0.5, which means that all constructs are valid. The AVE scores are used to assess the quality of the measurement model, and the results show the AVE values for all constructs range between 0.592 to 0.694, which is higher than the recommended value of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

The composite reliability of all the constructs is satisfactory ($CR > 0.7$ to 0.9) except for the perceived risk of empowerment (0.953) and employee empowerment (0.961) which is considered undesirable because it indicates that the indicator variables are assessing similar phenomena. Thus, it is doubtful to be a valid measure of the construct. However, some researchers suggest that above 0.9 is acceptable as it affirms unidimensionality of the items in the scale (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Perceived risk of empowerment is an exploratory construct and is treated as a unidimensional construct. The employee empowerment construct will be unidimensional as well, as supported by the literature (Boudrias et al., 2004).

In order to ensure an acceptable discriminant validity, it is a requirement for PLS-SEM that the construct in the model should have shared a higher variance with its own measurements compared with other constructs (Balakrishnan, 2017). Table 29

indicates that all constructs exhibit sufficient or satisfactory discriminate validity based on Fornell and Lacker's criterion, where the square root of AVE, for the diagonal items is higher than the correlations, which are the off-diagonal items for all the reflective constructs.

Table 29: Discriminant Validity using Fornell and Lacker Criterion					
	Employee Empowerment	Empowering Leader's Role	Formal Power	Perceived Risk of Empowerment	Relevant Information
Employee Empowerment	0.867				
Empowering Leader's Role	0.488	0.752			
Formal Power	0.327	0.248	0.789		
Perceived Risk of Empowerment	-0.642	-0.549	-0.336	0.833	
Relevant Information	0.407	0.503	0.296	-0.492	0.769

Multicollinearity issues need to be tackled before progressing to the evaluation of the structural model and hypotheses testing. Multicollinearity between variables may cause an issue as the statistically significant correlation in segmentation variables can overpower one or more fundamental constructs. Hair et al. (2010) note that multicollinearity relates to the assessment to search for inter-correlation between independent variables and is apparent when the correlation between the exogenous variables achieves 0.90. A high multicollinearity score could lead to bias on coefficient regression in that standard errors and confidence intervals will be massive and low, respectively.

Hair et al. (2010) propose that the researcher should compare with conclusions derived from the tolerance values and variance inflation factor (VIF) scores in order to analyse multicollinearity. They further state that these processes permit the assessment of the magnitude of dependencies among variables and its explanation. A more stringent value for acceptable VIF is <3.3 (Ramayah et al., 2017), while a more versatile value is <10.00 (Hair et al. 2010), which implies the absence of collinearity. Initial analysis of the indicators of the constructs shows a VIF value ranging from 1.321 to 11.818, meaning that the constructs have some multicollinearity issues (refer to Appendix 7 for initial collinearity assessment test). Two items are removed (EE1, EE2) to solve the multicollinearity issue, and Table 31 shows the collinearity assessment has reduced. Apart from that, inner VIF values

have also been interpreted for all independent construct for lateral multicollinearity. Table 32 shows the result of inner VIF values, which are less than 10, 5 and 3.3. Thus, lateral multicollinearity is not a concern.

Table 30: Measurement Model Results			
		Outer Loadings	CR
Relevant Information			0.879
RI1	The management provides information on how its objectives are going to be achieved	0.764	
RI2	The management provides relevant information to avoid bad decision-making	0.717	
RI3	The management provides relevant information to improve the work process and procedures	0.835	
RI4	The management has an efficient way to disseminate relevant information to all levels of employees	0.752	
RI5	The management provides relevant information for me to become empowered	0.776	
Formal Power			0.831
FP1	The management assigned formal authority to make decisions on daily operations	0.784	
FP2	The management assigned formal authority to develop my own solutions to work-related matters	0.699	
FP3	The management assigned formal authority to improve my work routine	0.862	
Empowering Leader's Role			0.887
ELR1	My leader encourages me to express my opinions	0.726	
ELR2	My leader encourages me to make my own decisions regarding my work	0.775	
ELR3	My leader explains the rule, regulations and standard of procedure of my work	0.730	
ELR4	My leader focuses on corrective action rather than my mistakes	0.794	
ELR5	My leader trusts me in doing my job	0.751	
ELR6	My leader encourages me to become empowered	0.737	
Perceived Risk of Empowerment			0.953
PR1	Empowerment can involve financial consequences	0.846	
PR2	My salary might get deduct if I make wrong decisions	0.872	
PR3	Empowerment can influence my income	0.811	
PR4	Empowerment sometimes is a waste of time	0.843	
PR5	Empowerment is difficult and time-consuming	0.851	
PR6	Empowerment may acquire extra of my time	0.806	
PR7	Empowerment may result in disapproval by my leader	0.809	
PR8	Empowerment may result in disapproval by my colleagues	0.833	
PR9	Empowerment may influence my relationship with my leader	0.826	
Employee Empowerment			0.959
EE1	The work I do is very important to me	0.832	
EE2	My job activities are personally meaningful to me	0.805	
EE3	The work I do is meaningful to me	0.765	
EE4	I am confident about my ability to do my job	0.834	
EE5	I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my job activities	0.842	
EE6	I have mastered the skills necessary for my job	0.820	
EE7	I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job	0.787	
EE8	I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work	0.848	
EE9	I have considerable opportunity for freedom in how I do my job	0.807	
EE10	My impact on what happens in my department is large	0.820	
EE11	I have a great deal of control over what happened in my department	0.820	
EE12	I have significant influence over what happened in my department	0.856	

Table 31: Collinearity Assessment After Items Reduces	
	VIF
EE10	3.532
EE11	3.555
EE4	2.124
EE5	3.837
EE6	3.701
EE7	3.08
EE9	3.561
ELR1	1.381
ELR2	2.025
ELR3	1.558
ELR4	2.195
ELR5	1.774
ELR6	1.655
FP1	1.666
FP2	1.411
FP3	1.321
PRF1	3.6
PRF2	4.745
PRF3	4.546
PRS7	3.008
PRS8	3.292
PRS9	4.152
PRT5	4.17
PRT6	2.936
RI1	1.644
RI2	1.469
RI3	1.941
RI4	1.643
RI5	1.702

Overall, three items are deleted, including PRT4, EE1, EE2.

Table 32: Interpret the result of Inner VIF values					
	Employee Empowerment	Empowerin g Leader's Role	Formal Power	Perceived Risk of Empowerment	Relevant Information
Employee Empowerment					
Empowering Leader's Role	1.6			1.357	
Formal Power				1.112	
Perceived Risk of Empowerment	1.577				
Relevant Information	1.468			1.394	

6.10.2 Structural Model Assessment and Hypothesis Validation

After the reliability and validity confirmation of all constructs, the next phase is to determine the Goodness-of-Fit (GoF) to estimate model fit. The GoF is used to compute the ratio of the sum of the squared differences between the observed and reproduced matrices to the observed variances (Ramayah et al., 2017).

As PLS results do not generate overall GoF indices, measuring R^2 is the key to assess the exploratory construct of the framework (Hair et al., 2010). Tenenhaus, Vinzi, Chatelin, and Lauro (2005) developed a diagnostic tool named GoF index to assess the model fit. The GoF measure employs the geometric way of the average communality and average R^2 , specifically for endogenous constructs. The suggested threshold values to assess the results of the GoF analysis are as follows: the rule of thumb of in interpreting the result is $GoF_{small} = 0.1$; $GoF_{medium} = 0.25$; $GoF_{large} = 0.36$. For this study, the GoF value is 0.514, which implies a good model fit. The results are presented in Table 33.

Table 33: Goodness of fit index (GoF)		
	AVE	R^2
Relevant information	0.592	
Formal power	0.726	
Empowering Leader's Role	0.566	
Perceived Risk of Empowerment	0.694	0.385
Employee Empowerment	0.679	0.444
Average scores	0.6514	0.406
AVE* R^2	0.2615	
(GoF = Sqrt (AVE x R^2))	0.514	

The next process is to assess the hypothesised relationships in the structural model. Figure 12 portrays the result after the analysis. The R^2 state in Figure 12 implies to the exploratory power of the predictor variables (Kuhn & Hacking, 2012). Chin et al. (2008) suggest that the rule of thumb in describing the effect is to refer to R^2 values of endogenous latent constructs in the inner model, which usually is labelled as substantial (0.67), moderate (0.33) or weak (0.19). Hence, The R^2 result of this study is 0.385 which indicates that 38.5% of the variance in perceived risk of empowerment is explained by the independent variables which include relevant information, formal power, and the empowering leader's role. Thus, based on Hair's et al. (2010) criterion, the explained variance of the perceived risk of empowerment can be interpreted as significant. The structural model also explains

the considerable amount of 44.4% ($R^2 = 0.444$) of the variation in employee empowerment.

There are two measures of f^2 that determine the standard criteria of the structural model. Initially, by referring to Cohen (1992), the effect size of the structural model is determined. The effect size is assessed as the increase in R^2 compared to the ratio of variance that is not explained in the predictor variable. The f^2 effect size evaluates the relevant impact the predictor variable has on the R^2 values of an endogenous construct (Balakrishnan, 2017). An f^2 value of 0.02 is regarded as small, 0.15 is considered as medium and 0.35 is regarded as large in term of the effect sizes of the predictive variables (Cohen, 2013). Table 34 shows the result of an assessment of f^2

Table 34: Assessment of f^2			
Effect	β	F^2	Size
Relevant Information → Perceived Risk of Empowerment	-0.252	0.073	Small
Formal Power → Perceived Risk of Empowerment	-0.157	0.04	Small
Empowering Leader's Role → Perceived Risk of Empowerment	-0.382	0.174	Medium
Perceived Risk of Empowerment → Employee Empowerment	-0.474	0.249	Medium
Relevant Information → Employee Empowerment	0.044	0.002	Small
Formal Power → Employee Empowerment	0.124	0.024	Small
Empowering Leader's Role → Employee Empowerment	0.174	0.034	Small

Note: β - path coefficient

Table 35 demonstrates the direct inference outcomes assessing the relationship between empowerment practices as independent variables and perceived risk of empowering proposed as the mediating variable for this study. These results show that perceived relevant information, formal power, and the empowering leader's role negatively contribute to explain the variance in perceived risk of empowerment. In assessing the relevance of the significant relationship between the three exogenous constructs with the perceived risk of empowerment, the results show that the empowering leader's role ($\beta=-0.382$) has a relatively higher impact on the perceived risk of empowerment, relevant information ($\beta=-0.252$) and formal power ($\beta=-0.157$) the least impact. This highlights the significance of taking into account empowerment practices (relevant information, formal power, and empowering leader's role) as significantly influencing the perceived risk of empowerment. Thus, this result provides evidence for significant negative consequences for all hypothesised relationships.

Table 35: Structural Coefficient: Hypothesis Testing: Relationship Between Empowerment Practices and Perceived Risk of Empowerment						
Hypotheses	Path	β^a	Std. Error	t-value	Sig.	Decision
H1a	Relevant Information → Perceived Risk of Empowerment	-0.252	0.069	3.627	0.00***	Supported
H2a	Formal Power → Perceived Risk of Empowerment	-0.157	0.051	3.089	0.002***	Supported
H3a	Empowering Leader's Role → Perceived Risk of Empowerment	-0.382	0.071	5.374	0.000***	Supported
R^2		0.385				

Note:

a β : path coefficient

b t-statistics >2.58 are significant at $p<0.01$ ***, t-statistics >1.96 are significant at $p<0.05$ **, t-statistic >1.645 are significant at the 0.10* ns– not significant

Table 36 shows a summary of the structural coefficient hypothesis testing results evaluating the relationship between empowerment practices as independent variables and the outcome of employee empowerment as the dependent variable. Concerning the hypothesis relationships, the conclusion offers support for significant positive consequences for formal power and the empowering leader's role in employee empowerment. However, the relevant information is revealed to be not statistically significant ($P=0.601$, $t\text{-value}=0.503$) with employee empowerment. The results demonstrate that only perceived formal power and the empowering leader's role are positively significant in explaining the variance in employee empowerment.

Table 36: Structural Coefficient: Hypothesis Testing: Relationship Between Empowerment Practices and Employee Empowerment						
Hypotheses	Path	β^a	Std.	t-value	Sig.	Result
H1b	Relevant Information → Employee Empowerment	0.044	0.083	0.523	0.601 ^{ns}	Not Supported
H2b	Formal Power → Employee Empowerment	0.124	0.048	2.59	0.01***	Supported
H3b	Empowering Leaders' Role → Employee Empowerment	0.174	0.069	2.52	0.012** *	Supported
R^2		0.313				

Note:

a β : path coefficient

b t-statistics >2.58 are significant at $p<0.01$ ***, t-statistics >1.96 are significant at $p<0.05$ **, t-statistic >1.645 are significant at the 0.10*

ns– not significant

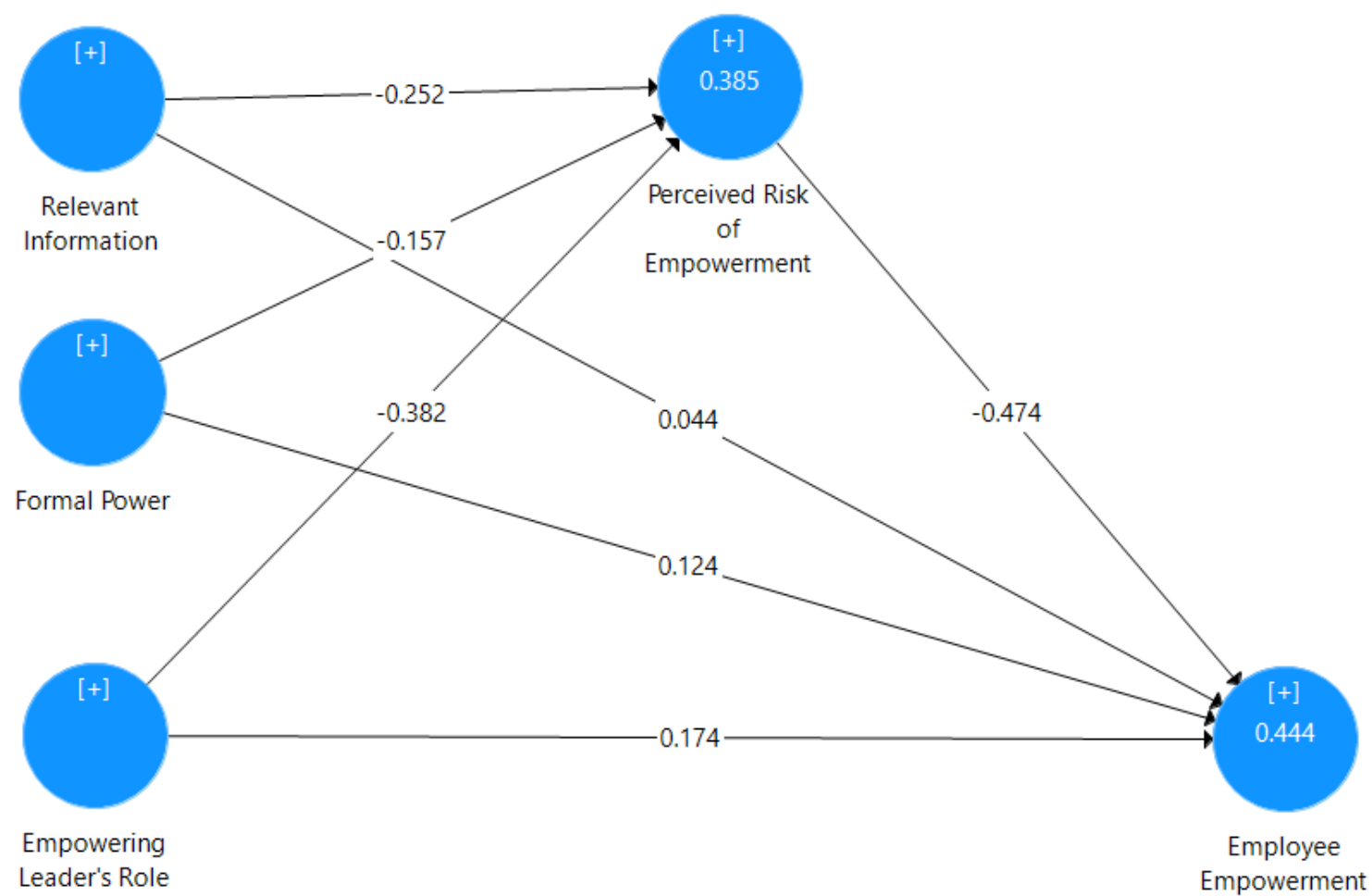


Figure 12 The Structural Path Model

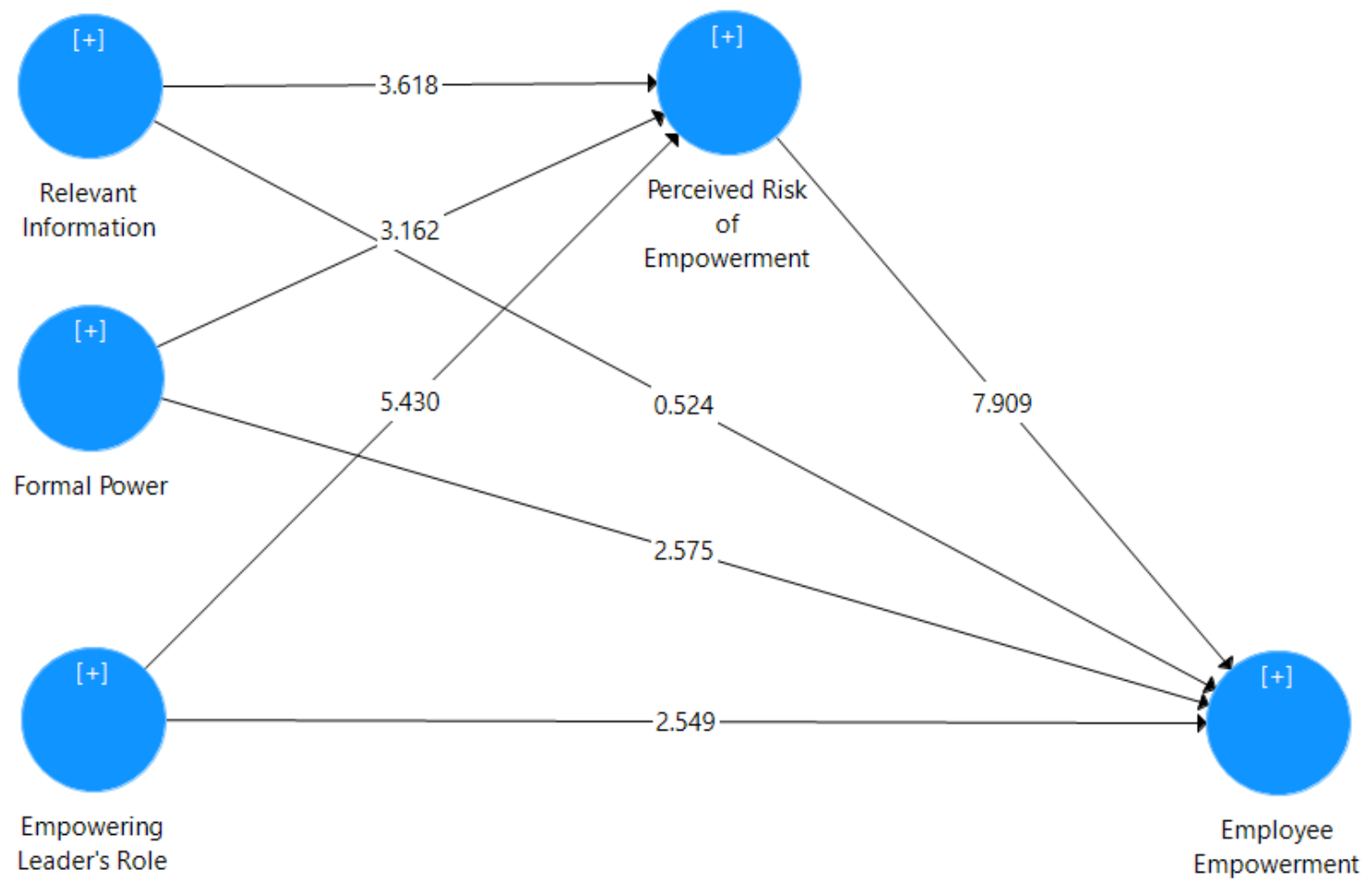


Figure 13 The Bootstrapping Result

For the direct relationship of the perceived risk of empowerment and employee empowerment, Table 37 shows the result of the perceived risk of empowerment has a negative relationship with employee empowerment with a coefficient of more than 0.5 ($\beta=-0.474$, $t\text{-value}=7.736$) signifying a substantial effect, significant at a level of $p < 0.00$.

Table 37: Structural Coefficient: Hypothesis Testing: Relationship Between Empowerment Practices and Employee Empowerment						
Hypotheses	Path	β^a	Std. Error	t-value	Sig.	Decision
H4	Perceived Risk of Empowerment → Employee Empowerment	-0.474	0.061	7.736	0.00***	Supported
R^2		0.414				

Note:

a β : path coefficient

b t-statistics > 2.58 are significant at $p < 0.01$ ***, t-statistics > 1.96 are significant at $p < 0.05$ **, t-statistic > 1.645 are significant at the 0.10*

n.s– not significant

6.10.3 Mediation Analysis

Mediation analysis is performed to analyse the mediating effect of the perceived risk of empowerment on empowerment practices and employee empowerment using Zhao, Lynch, and Chen's (2010) procedures. Referring to Figure 14, the mediation model is derived based on the impact of the independent variable (X) or known as predictor construct, on the mediator (M) is signified by 'a'. Then the influence of the mediator on the dependent variable (Y) is signified by 'b'. M is referring to as another variable which can intervene in the relationship between (X) and (Y). Therefore, the indirect effect is referred to as the sum of ($a \times b$). Furthermore, the total effects of the independent and dependent variable's relationship are the direct effect of X on Y denoted by 'c', and the indirect effect of the independent on dependent variable through the mediating variables are referred to as ($a \times b$). Hence, the total effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable is signified by ' $c' = (a \times b) + c$ ' (Balakrishnan, 2017). Figure 11 illustrates the diagram of the mediating effects of the perceived risk of empowerment between empowerment practices and employee empowerment.

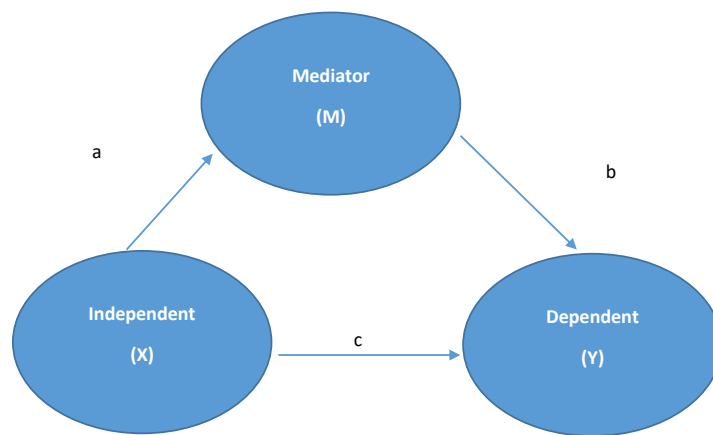


Figure 14 Three-variable Non-recursive Causal Model

The criterion that needs to be fulfilled in order to execute a mediation analysis is that the indirect effect of ' $a \times b$ ' has to be significant in a non-recursive causal model as portrayed in Figure 14 (Zhao et al., 2010). This has addressed the limitation of Baron and Kenny's (1986) requirement to assess the mediation effect by suggesting that the indirect effect of ' $a \times b$ ' is sufficient to perform a mediation analysis thus disregarding the requirement for the 'X-Y' test criterion. As Baron and Kenny (1986) criterion demanded the 'X-Y' relation should be signed before the mediator is included in the model for testing. If the requirement is not fulfilled, there is no need for further assessment of the mediating effect of (M).

Yet, there is a statement on the commencement that a significant effect of 'X-Y' is actually not a crucial precondition to analyse mediation and the analysis should change from focusing on the significance of X-Y relation to assessing the mediator as it is. This claim is derived from the rationale that the direct effect ($a \times b$) is comparable to the variance between the total and direct effect (Balakrishnan, 2017; Nitzl, Roldan, & Cepeda, 2016; Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

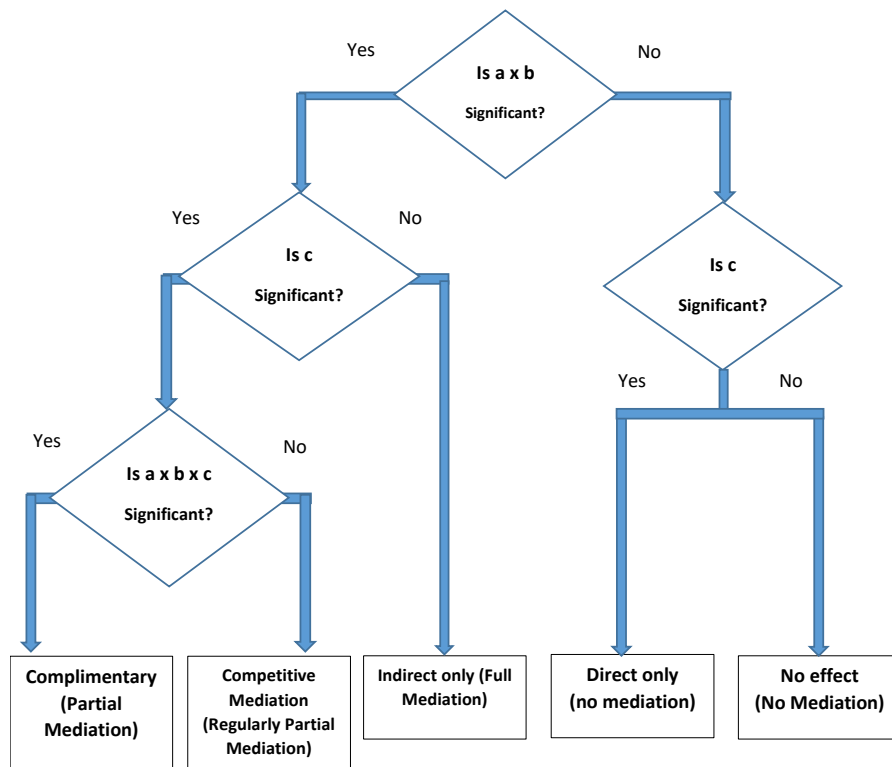


Figure 15 The Flowchart for Mediation Analysis Establishment

Zhao et al. (2010) also suggest that the researcher consider three criteria for mediation testing. First, the researcher shall take in to account the size of the indirect effect to calculate the strength of the mediation effect. Next, the researcher needs to determine if the mediating effect has the significance of an indirect effect ($a \times b$). Finally, the researcher needs to execute a bootstrap analysis to assess the significance of the indirect path ($a \times b$). Figure 15 shows the flowchart for this process.

Consequently, in order to determine whether it is a mediation or non-mediation classification, the researcher the indirect effect $a \times b$ should be significant. The PLS-SEM result shows the indirect effect, of $a \times b$, determines the indirect effect, path coefficients, 'a', 'b' and 'c' and their significance. Hair et al. (2014) mention that the result ($a \times b$) from the path model is not generated in PLS-SEM, the calculation is performed discretely. The organisation of mediation typology by Zhao et al. (2010) is chosen to decide the nature of mediation or non-mediation as stated by Balakrishnan (2017)

- Complementary mediation occurs if the indirect effect (a x b) and direct effect 'c' have a significant relationship and have the similar directions.
- Competitive meditation occurs if the indirect effect (a x b) and direct effect 'c' both have a significant effect and have different directions.
- Indirect-only mediation occurs if the indirect effect (a x b) has a significant relationship, but no significance of 'c'.
- Direct-only non-mediation occurs if direct effect c has a significant connection, but no significant indirect effect of (a x b).
- No-effect non-mediation occurred if both direct c and indirect effect (a x b) have no significant relationship.

The size of the indirect effect is evaluated by computing the value of Variance Accounted For (VAF) or path significance. VAF indicates the proportion of the indirect effect on the total effect (Hair et al. 2014). The formula that is used to calculate VAF as suggested by Helm et al. (2010) is shown below where 'a x b' implies to indirect effect and '(a x b) + c' refer to the total effect. Table 37 shows that the perceived risk of empowerment has a complementary mediating effect on the relation between empowerment practices and employee empowerment.

$$VAF = \frac{a \times b}{(a \times b) + c}$$

Table 38: Direct and Indirect Effects of Perceived Risk of Empowerment on Empowerment Practices and Employee Empowerment									
Path	Direct effect model				Indirect effect		Total effect (c')	VAF	Type of mediation
	β	Se ^b	t-stat	(a x b)	Se ^d	t-stat	(a x b) + c		
Relevant Information → Employee Empowerment (X → Y) _c	0.044	0.083	0.523^{ns}	0.119	0.036	3.344***	0.163	0.73**	Indirect only (Full Mediation)
Formal Power → Employee Empowerment (X → Y) _c	0.124	0.048	2.335**	0.074	0.025	2.977***	0.198	0.37*	Complementary (Partial Mediation)
Empowering Leader's Role → Employee Empowerment (X → Y) _c	0.174	0.069	2.52**	0.181	0.044	4.151***	0.355	0.51**	Complementary (Partial Mediation)
Direct effect model									
Perceived Risk of Empowerment → Employee Empowerment (M → Y) or (b)	-0.474	0.061	7.736***						
Relevant Information → Perceived Risk of Empowerment (X → M) or (a)	-0.252	0.069	3.627***						
Formal Power → Perceived Risk of Empowerment (X → M) or (a)	-0.157	0.051	3.089***						
Empowering Leader's Role → Perceived Risk of Empowerment (X → M) or (a)	-0.382	0.071	5.374***						

The non-parametric bootstrapping procedure was performed to test the significance of the PLS path modelling results

β = path coefficient

The indirect effect of a variable X on employee empowerment (Y) was calculated by multiplying the coefficient for that variable towards the perceived risk of empowerment (X→M) and the coefficient of the perceived risk of empowerment towards employee empowerment (M→Y).

Total effects of a variable X on employee empowerment (Y) were calculated by summing the direct and indirect path coefficients of that variable.

* t-statistics >2.58 are significant at p<0.01***, t-statistics >1.96 are significant at p<0.05**, t-statistic >1.645 are significant at the 0.10*

*VAF>0.8*** are full mediation, VAF>0.2-0.8** are partial mediation, VAF<0.2* are zero mediation

Table 38 shows the significant negative impacts of perceived relevant information, formal power, and the empowering leader's role on the perceived risk of empowerment. Moreover, there is also a significant positive relationship of the empowerment practices of formal power and the empowering leader's role on employee empowerment, except for perceived relevant information ($\beta=0.044$, and $t\text{-stat}=0.523$).

Both indirect and direct effects for perceived formal power and the empowering leader's role are significant. Thus, a complementary partial mediation is formed. This specifies that the effect of perceived formal power and the empowering leader's role partially mediates effects on employee empowerment by the perceived risk of empowerment. The VAF value also confirms this with values in the range of 20 to 80%. In a complementary partial mediation, the direct effect c' and indirect effect $a \times b$ point in the same (positive or negative) direction (Baron & Kenny, 1986). This complementary mediation hypothesis implies that the intermediate variable describes the possibly confounds or falsifies the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The complementary partial mediation is usually known as the positive confounding or a consistent model (Zhao et al., 2010). In other words, complementary mediation asserts that the perceived risk of empowerment accounts for some, but not all of the relationships between perceived formal empowerment, the empowering leader's role and employee empowerment.

In the case of perceived relevant information, there is a significant indirect effect on employee empowerment with the mediating effect of the perceived risk of empowerment. However, it is revealed that there are no significant direct effects between perceived relevant information and employee empowerment. Hence, the perceived risk of empowerment is fully mediating the relationship between relevant information and employee empowerment. Full mediation occurs in the case where the direct effect c' is not significant, while the indirect effect $a \times b$ is significant. In other words, the indirect effect via the mediator occurs. However, the researcher has to exercise some caution when talking about full mediation, especially if the sample is small (Nitzl et al., 2016). Hence, the researcher needs to ensure that the sample size is satisfactorily large so that the necessary power of 80% for an α level of 0.05 for detecting effects in a PLS path model is attained. This study fulfilled

this requirement ($n=250$, >84 in the case of sample size power of 80% for α level of 0.05).

6.11 Conclusions

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis of the final research model. Path modelling PLS-SEM is utilised to assess the effect of empowerment practices (perceived relevant information, formal power and the empowering leader's role) on the perceived risk of empowerment and employee empowerment. The measurement model was assessed via CFA on the basis of proven reliability and validity standards and exhibited satisfactory results. Built on the assessment of the measurement model, the structural model of empowerment practices on the perceived risk of empowerment and employee empowerment are assessed and established. Furthermore, the path coefficients are assessed for the significance of hypothesised relationships. The model is evaluated for predictive relevance and mediating effects as shown in Table 39. The following chapter discusses the outcomes by addressing research questions

Table 39: Summary of Results of Hypothesis Testing		
Hypotheses		Result
H1a	Perceived relevant information has a negative relationship with the employee's perceived risk of empowerment	Supported
H1b	Perceived relevant information has a positive relationship with employee empowerment	Not Supported
H2a	Perceived formal power has a negative relationship with the employee's perceived risk of empowerment	Supported
H2b	Perceived formal power has a positive relationship with employee empowerment	Supported
H3a	Perceived empowering leader's role has a negative relationship with the employee's perceived risk of empowerment	Supported
H3b	Perceived empowering leader's role has a positive relationship with employee empowerment	Supported
H4	Perceived risk of empowerment has a negative effect on employee empowerment	Supported
H5	Perceived risk of empowerment mediates the relationships between empowerment practices and employee empowerment	Supported

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study and integrates those findings with the literature on employee empowerment, empowerment practices, and the perceived risk of empowerment. The chapter also revisits the research questions and the research methodology before discussing the key findings of this study. The key findings relating to the perceived risk of empowerment that contributes to the theoretical perspective are reviewed. The relative and significant relationship between empowerment practices, perceived risk of empowerment and employee empowerment are explained. The novel contributions of this study to theoretical and managerial perspective are highlighted and the limitations of this study and potential future research opportunities are discussed.

7.2 The Purpose of this Study

Empowerment is extensively perceived as a dynamic concept to enhance hotel service and operational efficiency (Abdul Aziz et al., 2011; Mohsin & Kumar, 2010). However, the best ways of empowering employees are still in dispute. This study is designed to investigate empowerment within the under-researched setting of the hotel industry in East Malaysia. Specifically, it explores the Western concept of empowerment from the hotel employees' perspective. The study also addresses research questions that identify and investigate the determinants of empowerment practices from the hotel employee's point of view. It explores their perceived risk of empowerment; how empowerment practices influence perceived risk of empowerment and subsequently employee empowerment as an outcome. The critical research questions fill a gap in the current determinants of empowerment, perceived risk of empowerment, and employee empowerment literature. *How does the perceived risk of empowerment influence the relationship between empowerment practices and employee empowerment?* The four sub-research and the findings of the mixed-methods approach are discussed in the following sections. Figure 16 illustrates the relationships between all the research variables.

7.3 Research Methodology Revisited

A mixed-methods approach was used to answer the following research questions:

Research Question One: What are the East Malaysian hotel employees' perceptions of empowerment?

Research Question Two: What are the determinants of empowerment practices that influence hotel employee empowerment in the East Malaysia context?

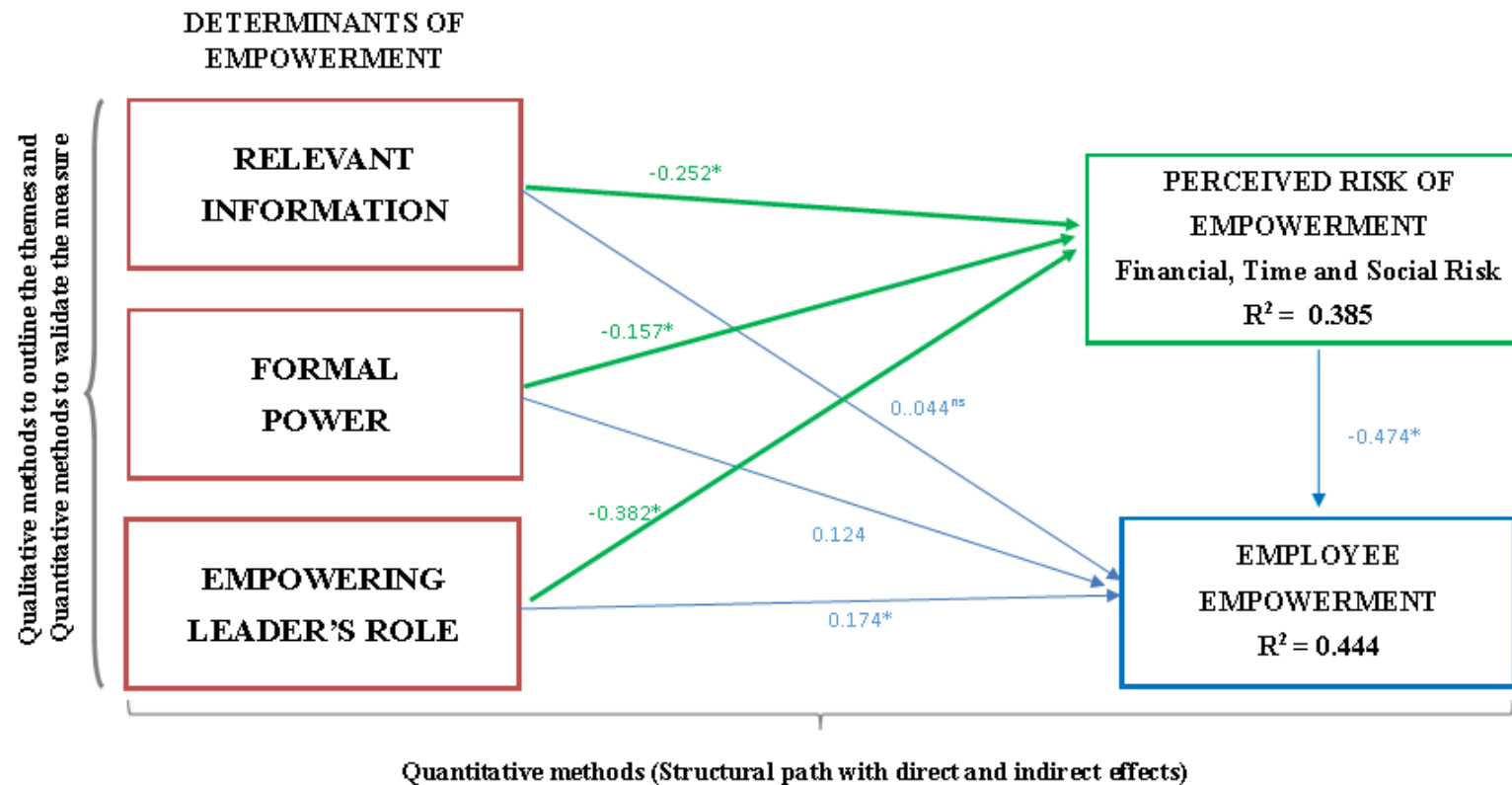
Research Question Three: What are the determinants of the perceived risk of empowerment that influence the relationship between empowerment practices and employee empowerment in the East Malaysia hotel industry context?

Research Question Four: What are the relative effects of empowerment practices on the perceived risk of empowerment and employee empowerment in the East Malaysia hotel industry context?

This study was conducted in two phases. In phase one, a qualitative method was used to address research questions one, two, and three. Between June 2015 and January 2016, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 hotel employees in East Malaysia. The data was examined by utilising the coding and thematic analysis methods. This qualitative phase, and particularly the methodology employed, is outlined in chapter four. The findings from the qualitative phase became fundamental to addressing research questions two and three and were further strengthened by hypotheses testing, as discussed in Chapter Six.

In phase two, a quantitative method (survey questionnaire) was developed. The survey was based on Phase One's core findings and derived mainly from the qualitative findings of the empowerment practices and perceived risk of empowerment components. Selected scales derived from existing literature were adapted and altered to create survey items to assess employees' intention, attitude, and performance. Survey questionnaire data collection was conducted between June to November 2018 and 250 data sets obtained. The quantitative data was analysed using SPSS for data entry and to examine the reliability of variables during the pilot testing stage. Partial Least Square-Structured Equation Modelling was used for CFA and hypotheses testing.

Conclusions were based on the key findings, and the implications of this study for the hotel industry in East Malaysia were discussed.



Note: *significant $p < 0.50$, ns = not significant

Figure 16 The Relationships between Empowerment Practices, Perceived Risk of Empowerment and Employee Empowerment

7.4 The Perception of Empowerment

For research question one, which centred around the notion of empowerment from the perspective of East Malaysian hotel employees five themes were revealed by respondents when describing their perception of empowerment: decision, authority, delegation, power and trust. By integrating the qualitative findings and the literature, five statements of empowerment perception are formed, as shown in Table 26.

Table 26: Definition of Empowerment		
Description	Frequency	Percentage
Empowerment is a delegation of authority and enables me to make decisions	53	21.2
Empowerment is a management tool to motivate career development	27	10.8
Empowerment is about power and control with extra responsibilities	106	42.4
Empowerment is another contemporary managerial term to add workload	33	13.2
Not sure	31	12.4

About one-fifth of the employees view empowerment as '*a delegation of authority and enables me to make decisions*'. This statement is derived from the literature and qualitative findings. In the various fields of empowerment literature, authority is commonly used when describing empowerment. For instance, Boudrias et al. (2009) proposed that empowerment is a collection of practices which gives employees power, control and authority. Menon (2001) discusses empowerment in a more specific way, as decision-making authority shifting down the organisational hierarchy and giving employees the ability to influence organisational outcomes. The respondents' tendency to express empowerment as authority is relatively consistent with the literature.

In another perspective, Conger and Kanungo (1988) identify power as the possession of formal authority or control over organisational resources within the framework of empowerment. Empowerment is viewed as the distribution of power and decision-making authority is also known as the structural empowerment approach (Ahearne et al., 2005; Menon, 2001). This approach is embedded in the organisational setting and typically views empowerment as actions to share power and decision-making within organisations.

Table 27: View of Empowerment based on the Employee's Position			
Level	Definition	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Entry	Delegation of authority	29	15.0
	Career Development	10	5.2
	Power and control	95	49.2
	Add workload	32	16.6
	Not sure	27	14.0
Supervisory	Delegation of authority	9	23.1
	Career Development	16	41.0
	Power and control	10	25.6
	Not sure	4	10.3
Managerial	Delegation of authority	9	75.0
	Career Development	1	8.3
	Power and control	1	8.3
	Add workload	1	8.3
Top Management	Delegation of authority	6	100

Another statement that has a similar meaning but expressed in a more negative way is that empowerment is *'about power and control with extra responsibilities'*. Intriguingly, compared to 21.2% of employees who choose the first statement, 42.4% of respondents chose this definition instead. It is noteworthy that 95 of 250 respondents who chose this statement were entry-level employees. Most of the entry-level employees view empowerment as an extra responsibility which is consistent with literature that finds that employees often perceive empowerment as an additional responsibility and they worry about being blamed for making bad choices (Idris et al., 2018). Researchers claim that when exercising empowerment, there is a dispute over how much autonomy should be granted or permitted to employees. This is particularly pertinent to the issue of the risks of making wrong decisions which can devolve the employee empowerment (Yukl, 2010).

Power and control are essential requirements for individual self-efficacy, with the preference to increase control, access to resources, flexibility in the workplace, and autonomy. Baird, Su, and Munir (2018) indicate that the process of empowerment usually starts with the increase of consciousness of employees as they recognise that they are in a role that may enhance their work-climate.

These findings are consistent with researchers' claims that relate to the cultural components of power distance in expressing the way power relations influence decision-making processes (Humborstad & Perry, 2011; Kanter, 1993). As mentioned earlier in the literature, Hofstede (2017) defines power distance as the distribution of power within organisations and communities where people perceive

inequality as justifiable. Some of the characteristics of high-power distance societies include great respect for elders and leaders, and organisations tend to be bureaucratic and centralised (Hofstede, 2017; Kanter, 1993). Humborstad et al. (2008) observe that rigidly enforced segregation of powers and centralisation causes a society to prioritise bureaucracy and this influences empowerment practices, as managers in countries that score highly in the power distance index are reluctant to empower their employees.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Malaysia's power distance index is among the highest in Asia. This phenomenon can be traced back to Malaysia's history as a British colony from the eighteenth to the twentieth century and its constitutional monarchy system where, every five years, the leaders of the nine states elect a King to form one of their number (Idris et al., 2018). These factors have influenced the way the society in Malaysia operates, for instance, Abdullah (2005) reveals that Malaysian employees value rank, status and have high respect for authority. Thus, Malaysia's traditional value of high-power distance indicates that power relations between higher and lower levels of the organisational hierarchy may influence an employee's notion of empowerment (Idris et al., 2018).

It is noted that 27% of the respondents view empowerment as a '*management tool to motivate career development*', and 41% of that group were at a supervisory-level. This result is consistent with the qualitative findings in Chapter five, as most of the supervisors view empowerment as trust that given by a leader to their employees to demonstrate their potential for career advancement.

"Empowerment is all about trust. You must trust them to carry out the duties, and of course, you have to give them authority. Even though I am a supervisor, I still need to do a similar job with my staff just plus more paperwork. So, I think empowerment is important for me, for my daily job and my future career as well, to show that I am capable of leading a team". (Charles, Housekeeping Supervisor, 4-star international chain hotel).

Trust has often been acknowledged as crucial to empowerment (Gao, Janssen, & Shi, 2011; Yang, Pang, Liu, Yen, & Michael Tarn, 2015). In particular, states that empowerment is achievable when managers and employees have a high degree of mutual trust. Earlier studies also verified the important relationship between trust

and empowerment (Ergeneli et al., 2007; Zakaria, 2011). The finding in this study shows that trust is one of the themes of empowerment and further corroborates earlier findings that trust is a crucial condition for employee empowerment.

7.5 Empowerment Practices: Determinants and its Influences

The qualitative stage of this study explores and identifies the practices relevant to empowerment specific to an East Malaysia hotel employee setting. As part of the sequential design of this study, the detailed findings are discussed in Chapter five. The determinants of empowerment practices are derived from the second research question which serves as the independent variable for the research framework, as presented in Structural Path Model (Figure 13, page 156).

Relevant information was one of the empowerment practices that influences employee empowerment through the perceived risk of empowerment as the mediator. Relevant information is derived from the qualitative findings and literature reviews, and Table 39 shows the statement and factor loading of each statement. The quantitative results showed that the hypothesis that relevant information has a significant positive relationship with employee empowerment is not supported ($\beta = 0.059$, $t\text{-stat} = 0.523$). This means that there is no relationship of perceived relevant information with employee empowerment. This contradicts the literature which maintains that having access to relevant information is a critical antecedent to employee empowerment (Kanter, 1979). This contradiction can be explained by the fact that this study was conducted in the context of hotel employees in East Malaysia context. The respondents perceived that relevant information does not contribute to empowerment. Qualitative findings are revisited and reveal that employees tend to associate empowerment with their knowledge and experience rather than information provided by management. This might explain the insignificant relationship between relevant information and employee empowerment.

*“**Knowledge and experience** that I required since I joined the industry had helped me to become empowered. All the knowledge and experience provide me with **information** that I need to make daily operational decisions. Even the system was set up to help us to make decisions. To know the process and procedure is very important, especially the reward if making the right*

decision, example when I am upselling rooms, got extra pocket money.” (Zue, Front Office Executive, 4-star international chain hotel).

Even though there is no relationship between relevant information and employee empowerment, the quantitative findings highlight that perceived relevant information has a negative relationship with the perceived risk of empowerment ($\beta=-0.252$, $t\text{-stat}= 3.627$). Table 40 shows the statement and factor loading of each statement. This proposes that when an employee has relevant information regarding their work, their perceived risk will decrease, and they are likely to become empowered. Similarly, when an employee perceives that there is not enough information, this will increase their perceived risk and they are less likely to become empowered. This is consistent with Stone and Grønhaug's (1993) argument that when people have more information, their perceived risk will be decreased and thus they have a higher tendency to become empowered.

Table 40: Element of Relevant Information	
Relevant Information	Factor Loadings
The management provides information on how its objectives are going to be achieved	0.764
The management provides relevant information to avoid bad decision-making	0.717
The management provides relevant information to improve the work process and procedures	0.835
The management has an efficient way to disseminate relevant information to all levels of employees	0.752
The management provides relevant information for me to become empowered	0.776

Another determinant of empowerment practices is the employee's perceived formal power. Both qualitative and quantitative findings show that hotel employees expressed the importance of having formal power or authority to become empowered. Perceived formal power revealed to have a significant negative relationship with the employee's perceived risks of empowerment ($\beta=-0.157$, $t\text{-value}=3.089$). This is similar to the result of hypothesis testing for perceived formal power and employee empowerment that was shown to be positively significant ($\beta=0.124$, $t\text{-value}=2.335$). Table 41 shows the statement and factor loading of each

statement. Therefore, the formal power of the determinants of empowerment practices as the employees obtained authority assigned by the management formally and stated explicitly in their job scope to decide for their work-related matter. The quantitative results confirmed this as perceived formal power was found to significantly influence employee empowerment and the perceived risk of empowerment. In academic literature, the expression of formal authority is often associated with empowerment (Zakaria, 2011). Power in the sense of structural empowerment is seen as the presence of formal authority over organisational resources (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Sharing a similar perception, Menon (2001) proposes that power is the driving force of structural empowerment and considers the approach as the granting of power and decision-making authority across the organisation, using the accelerated delegation of authority in the organisation's chain of command.

Table 41: Element of Formal Power	
Formal Power	Factor Loadings
The management assigned formal authority to make decisions on daily operations	0.784
The management assigned formal authority to develop own solutions to work-related matters	0.699*
The management assigned formal authority to improve my work routine	0.862

Note: *item deleted, factor loadings <0.7

Another critical determinant of empowerment practices that derived from the qualitative findings and literature and is supported by the quantitative study is the empowering leader's role. Table 42 presents the statement and factor loading of each statement. The empowering leader's role is one of the empowerment practices that influence perceived risk of empowerment ($\beta=-0.157$, $t\text{-stat}=3.089$) and employee empowerment ($\beta=-0.174$, $t\text{-stat}=2.52$). Researchers claim that leadership behaviour corresponds to empowerment insofar as it can influence the interpretation of a person in terms of meaning, competence, self-determination and impact (Boudrias et al., 2009). Ahearne et al. (2005) suggest that leadership is an essential motivator to facilitate employee empowerment and leaders have the ability to affect whether employees are given a chance to become empowered and the shape of that empowerment.

Table 42: Element of Empowering Leader's Role	
Empowering Leader's Role	Factor loadings
My leader encourages me to express my opinions	0.726
My leader encourages me to make my own decisions regarding my work	0.775
My leader explains the rule, regulations and standard of procedure of my work	0.730
My leader focuses on corrective action rather than my mistakes	0.794
My leader trusts me in doing my job	0.751
My leader encourages me to become empowered	0.737

Conventional leadership styles are believed to apply only partially to empowered structures because they may not include the specific behaviours needed for effective leadership that foster employee empowerment in that specific context (Arnold et al., 2000; Fong & Snape, 2015; Konczak et al., 2000; Özarallı, 2015). Therefore, a new type of leadership behaviour that is adaptive to the demands of empowered environments has been created (Arnold et al., 2000). This is where empowering leadership has a part to play which is perceived as suitable for the the empowered climate. (Ahearne et al., 2005).

Although leaders may consciously grant employees power, empowerment can only occur when employees are motivated. This can be achieved by shifting employees' perception so that they feel they are in control, can influence their job and make it relevant within the organisations (Allen, Winston, Tatone, & Crowson, 2018). Leaders who share information, power, support and responsibility as partners with the employee will likely achieve outstanding performance. Also, taking the lead on tasks, communicating with and internalising organisational objectives is a strong indicator of when employees are self-motivated be accountable. The individual decides whether to feel empowered, to concentrate on shared-value goals rather than controls and to commit to meaningful activities. Thus, leaders must give meaning and remove barriers to facilitate employee performance. If employees feel that their managers share decision-making authority and are supportive, they feel more empowered (Marič et al., 2017).

Some managers fear that if they share all their information, they are likely to lose control, thus, may agree with the notion of empowerment only in theory and are

unlikely to make it a reality. Many employees often try to prevent to make decisions when they realise that they will be held responsible (Randolph, 1995).

Routines and attitudes have to change to facilitate the shift to empowerment in an organisation. It means adopting a value-oriented method to enhance accountability and depending on mechanisms to facilitate the process of empowerment. Knowledgeable employees and managers need to collaborate in goal-setting to make tasks and responsibilities clear and to avoid confusion. People cannot behave responsibly without information and trust is created through the sharing of information. Therefore, employees are only taking risks within a system of trust (Randolph, 1995).

7.6 Perceived Risk of Empowerment: Determinants and Influences

The nature of the research questions of this study is exploratory, thus, it relies on qualitative exploration as a crucial method to identify the perceived risk of empowerment from the hotel employees' perspective. The emerged experiences are used as indicators of the perceived risk of empowerment for the quantitative phase. Chapter five outlines the detailed findings of the perceived risk of empowerment.

This study concludes the perceived risk of empowerment is the summation of risk that hotel employees feel while executing empowerment in their daily jobs and routines. Findings from the qualitative phase revealed multiple risks in the perceived risk of empowerment including financial, time and social risk. The inclusion of each perceived risk theme is used to build indicators of the perceived risk of empowerment in the quantitative stage of this research. All variable as reflective indicators and formative indicator and measurements items are derived from the qualitative research stage. The multiple perceived risks of empowerment from the hotel employees' view are presented in Table 43.

In this study, perceived risks of empowerment, namely financial risk, time risk and social risk, are very specific to hotel employees in an East Malaysia setting. The specific aspect of the perceived risk of empowerment based on the qualitative findings strengthens Mitchell's (1999) view that perceived risk is context-specific. Hence, it is concluded that perceived risk is dynamic and will be constructed specially for different risk by an individual. The contextual exploration of perceived

risk in this study supports the employee empowerment literature that suggests the employee in decision making is a consequence of the systemic integration of resources, involving multiple actors and resources (Chandler & Lusch, 2015).

Table 43: Element of Perceived Risk of Empowerment	
Perceived Risk of Empowerment	Factor Loadings
Empowerment can involve financial consequences	0.846
My salary might get deduct if I make wrong decisions	0.872
Empowerment can influence my income	0.811
Empowerment sometimes is a waste of time	0.843
Empowerment is difficult and time-consuming	0.851
Empowerment may acquire extra of my time	0.806
Empowerment may result in disapproval by my leader	0.809
Empowerment may result in disapproval by my colleagues	0.833
Empowerment may influence my relationship with my leader	0.826

The quantitative results show that the perceived risk of empowerment influences employee empowerment ($\beta=-0.474$, $t=7.736$) and explain 45.3% ($R^2=0.453$) of the variance in employee empowerment. This means when an employee perceives that empowerment has a profound influence in term of their financial, time and social situation, they are likely to feel empowered and vice versa. Thus, this study emphasises the significance of understanding and facilitating the perceived risk of empowerment as it impacts employee empowerment. This result supports the claim of Lim (2003) that people tend to perform when risk is minimised.

The quantitative results also reveal the mediating effect of the perceived risk of empowerment between empowerment practices (perceived relevant information, formal power, and empowering leader's role) and employee empowerment. The type of mediation is presented in Table 44. From the quantitative results, it is disclosed that there is no relationship between employees perceived relevant information and employee empowerment ($\beta=-0.474$, $t\text{-value}=7.736$) but at the same time, relevant information has a negative relationship with the perceived risk of empowerment ($\beta=0.044$, $t\text{-value}=0.523$). Through the result of mediation analysis, it is brought to light that there is an indirect effect between relevant information and employee empowerment. Thus, the perceived risk of empowerment is revealed to be fully mediated between the relationship between relevant information and employee empowerment. This means that the perceived risk of empowerment has a complete intervention on both variables of relevant information and employee empowerment. In East Malaysia hotel employee context, the access to perceived

relevant information is not considered as a determinant to become empowered, but information becomes critical when the perceived risk occurs.

Table 44: Type of Mediation	
Mediating Effect of Perceived Risk of Empowerment	Type of Mediation
Relevant Information → Employee Empowerment	Indirect only (Full Mediation)
Formal Power → Employee Empowerment	Complementary (Partial Mediation)
Empowering Leader's Role → Employee Empowerment	Complementary (Partial Mediation)

Moreover, the employee's perceived risk of empowerment also partially mediates the relationship between perceived formal power and the empowering leader's role with employee empowerment as a complementary effect. Thus, when employees perceive they have relevant formal power and their leader's play their role in encouraging empowerment, the employee's perceived risk of empowerment will be reduced, and they will subsequently become empowered.

Empowerment means promoting risk-taking among employees within guidelines and employees must have the opportunity to ask relevant questions, no bet afraid to fail. (Yang et al., 2015). The relationship between perceived risk and empowerment is parallel as an employee's intention to become empowered is influenced by their perceived risk. However, the relationship between perceived risk and the employee is complicated, and initial employee empowerment may change with time and employees' experiences.

The perceived risk may also have a different effect on employee empowerment in the later stage of employee tenure. Other perceived risks, such as security risk may become a more significant factor in influencing employee empowerment. Therefore, the formation of employee empowerment may be based on the level of different perceived risk related to the situation.

As a broad measure, perceived risk is typically regarded to be an expression of the uncertainty about possible adverse impacts of employee empowerment. When employees are able to forecast the possibility of failure on the basis of information

and their experience in executing their daily operational tasks, their fears and uncertainties can be minimised and they consequently become empowered. A lower level of perceived risk may, therefore, be associated with a higher level of trust as perceived risk is shown to be the essential mediator of empowerment practices and employee empowerment.

7.7 Theoretical Contribution

Theoretically, the way the perceived risk of empowerment has been designed and tested in this study distinguishes it from the prior research. In contrast to previous studies, this research suggests that the concept of employee perceived risk is a factor in employee empowerment and is a mediator between the empowerment practices and employee empowerment. Thus, the outcomes of the study show a holistic and integrated state employee empowerment and the perceived risk of the component. These enriched aspects constitute the study's principal theoretical contribution and enrich employee empowerment literature specifically in the East Malaysian context.

There are growing convictions that empowerment is a western product and its schemes are claimed to be beneficial. However, the concept is not certainly fully accepted in every social and cultural setting (Hui et al., 2004; Spreitzer, 1995). Hui et al. (2004) suggest the significance of researching empowerment across cultural and national boundaries. Thus, keeping in mind that the research setting of this study is East Malaysia which comprises with a multicultural and ethnicity background, and obviously different from Western countries, so it is quite valuable to find the answer on to what extent products of Western culture specifically empowerment impact employee behaviour in East Malaysian organisations. This research, therefore, reinforces the existing literature by placing East Malaysia's definition of empowerment, which has grown and evolved in Western settings, into perspective. Numerous findings from this study are congruent with the existing literature and previous studies, which aids the development of practical application of empowerment in East Malaysia within a distinct cultural setting.

The notion of the perceived risk of empowerment derived from the literature review and qualitative process, and then integrated into the research model, is the key theoretical contribution of this study to the development of employee empowerment literature. One of the key contributions of this study is the incorporation of financial,

time and social risk into the conceptualisation of the perceived risk of empowerment to strengthen the notion of empowerment. These incorporations reinforce the conceptualisation of perceived risk in East Malaysia hotel employee context. Based on the findings from the qualitative phase, this study develops a reliable and valid survey questionnaire instrument and items for financial, time, and social risk construction that can be adopted or adapted by another researcher in the future. Table 45 shows the instrument and items relating to the perceived risk of empowerment.

Table 45: Inclusion of Perceived Risk of Empowerment	
Perceived Risk of Empowerment	Factor Loadings
Financial Risk	
Empowerment can involve financial consequences	0.846
My salary might get deduct if I make wrong decisions	0.872
Empowerment can influence my income	0.811
Time Risk	
Empowerment sometimes is a waste of time	0.843
Empowerment is difficult and time-consuming	0.851
Empowerment may acquire extra of my time	0.806
Social Risk	
Empowerment may result in disapproval by my leader	0.809
Empowerment may result in disapproval by my colleagues	0.833
Empowerment may influence my relationship with my leader	0.826

The overall outcomes of the study's contribution can also be extended to the existing integration of empowerment theory. The integrative approach takes into consideration the structural, leadership and psychological approaches when reflecting on empowerment, hence, discussing the effect that framework has on employees. In other words, the notion of empowerment cannot be attained except when employees feel empowered, and it is intrinsic and a state of mind. The integration of empowerment provides more precision to the overall view of empowerment.

In addition to the integration of empowerment theory, this study also contributes to the existing environmental and psychological literature, specifically regarding the Stimulus Organism Response (S-O-R) theory by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). S-O-R theory was widely used in consumer behaviour and marketing literature and is adopted in employee empowerment literature to explain the overall interaction of the variables in this study. In the conventional S-O-R model, a stimulus is described

as those forces which affect an employee's inner states of mind and can be conceptualised as the factor which stimulates an employee. In S-O-R theory, S-stimuli refers to the environmental stimuli which influence O-organism, an employee's processing of environmental signs received or emotional state (Balakrishnan, 2017). The employee's emotions then motivate an employee's various R-response in terms of approach or avoidance behaviours (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In other words, the S-O-R model comprises stimulus as the independent variable, organism as the mediator, and response as the dependent variable. Specifically, for this study, the stimuli refer to empowerment practices (employee's perceived relevant information, formal power, and empowering leader's role) as they affect the cognitive responses of the employee.

A noteworthy finding of this study is that the perceived risk of empowerment serves as a perfect mediator (perceived relevant information) and partial mediator (perceived formal power and empowering leader's role) in the relationship between empowerment practices and employee empowerment. The perceived risk of empowerment had not only a direct but also an indirect effect. This supports the notion that an employee relies highly on their perceived risk of empowerment to become empowered.

7.8 Managerial Implications

Empowerment is widely known as a crucial orchestrator to enhance the performance of employees in the hotel industry. The difference between employee perception of empowerment and management perception will create a gap that may hinder empowerment. This is particularly apparent if empowerment is seen purely as a management tool that results in a higher workload for employees. However, Lashley (1996) claims that regardless of how empowerment is implemented, there are likely to be some tensions among staff at a different levels of the organisation. To lessen the tensions, both upper, middle and entry-level employees need to have a similar perception of empowerment.

The collective and high-power distance culture in East Malaysia could facilitate empowerment practices. However, policies and practices to encourage employee empowerment still need to strengthen. Most of the hotel, especially the international-chain hotels, already have structures in place and empowerment

practices have been incorporated in their standards of procedure. However, the implementation needs to come from within, the employee must be willing to become empowered. Thus, an employee empowerment framework that has been customised specifically for the East Malaysian context by recognising the perceived risk of empowerment may help hotel management to understand their employees and what hinders them from becoming empowered.

Moreover, management practitioners recognise empowerment as implementing structural interventions, while little is known about empowerment as a psychological process experienced by employees. For these reasons, the findings of this study will provide valuable insights to increase managerial confidence to empower their employees or to improve their empowerment programmes to include measures to influence employees' perceived risk of empowerment of financial, time and social risk in their work. Management practitioners can start by reducing the employee's perceived risk of empowerment, including financial, time and social risk. Management needs to be more flexible on punishment, especially in term of monetary penalties, and focus on corrective measures to reduce employees' perceived risk of employment. Furthermore, management needs to instil the concept of exceptional guest service among their employees to reduce their perception of empowerment as time-consuming and to encourage them to take time and focus on service delivery.

A relationship is significant in Asian culture, and East Malaysia is no different. East Malaysian employees have a concern about how others perceive them individually and tend to engage in groupthink and are afraid to voice their opinions out of respect for their colleagues and bosses. In addition, the leader is also sometimes reluctant to share or delegate their authority and prefers a micromanagement approach that discourages empowerment. The implementation of empowerment needs to go two ways, top to bottom (leader to the employee) and bottom to top (employee to leader) to ensure that employee empowerment can be realised in the organisation and bring all the benefits of empowerment to a hotel industry context.

In addition, management should ensure that empowering leadership is practiced at all levels of the organisation. It is crucial as this will make employees feel valued and they will be more dedicated to work towards achieving the organisation's goals. Empowerment is an essential means for the survival of the hotel industry.

Empowered employees are able to respond to guest needs and to other changes in the environment. Earlier studies note that adaptiveness is a notion that tied to flexibility in decision-making, which eventually leads toward employee empowerment (Abel & Hand, 2018; Proenca et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2018). The leader should be actively involved in fostering employee empowerment and understand that it is a dynamic process that needs to be taken seriously, supervised, cultivated and strengthened especially in the hotel industry (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Managers of different organisations must recognise that empowering individual employees is equal to empowering the whole organisation. Managers should therefore continually empower employees to improve job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and minimise employee turnover. Managers who stick with the conventional ways of managing employees have to change, they have to support their workers and share their control and authority with employees to ensure empowerment can be implemented. The manager needs to adapt and see empowerment as an opportunity rather than a challenge to the organisation. Managers should coach their employees so that employees have a fair chance to participate in decision-making that contributes significantly to the operations and management of the organisation. This process of coaching involves training and supporting an employee with the necessary resources, especially information. Management should remove potential obstacles which inhibit employees' ability and willingness to become empowered. Such obstacles include monetary resources, lack of training, and lack of leader's support. Management should, therefore, ensure that employees are adequately compensated and receive responsibility, acknowledgement, and appreciation (Venton, 1997).

As noted earlier, the doubts of leaders about empowerment are centred on perceived risks that tasks will not be accomplished on time, that the quality of the job performances may be inadequate or that errors will be made that will cost time and money to correct. The concerns of leaders are probably based on their interpretations of the employees' actions. In this context, it cannot be explained that the observed behaviour is partly due to the involvement of the leaders. Such involvement sends subtle signals to employees that quality of service is the responsibility of the leader not the responsibility of the employee.

This study also has implications for the hotel industry, especially for international hotel chains. Most of the international hotel chains have properties in overseas locations, which are frequently managed by expatriate rather than local general managers. This study offers an insight into how they could manage their local employees (in countries that are similar to East Malaysia) by understanding their concerns about empowerment.

One of the basic assumptions of empowerment is that employees willingly become empowered if the opportunity is given. In this context, managers should foster opportunity by having a well-defined, unambiguous, shared psychological agreement with employees in order to meet management expectations of service quality and performance. As discussed earlier, such agreements are useful to reduce the leader's perceived risk of empowerment.

Information is an essential requirement for empowerment. Clearly, to become empowered, employees need to have a clear understanding of their job and how the job is related to the organisation's mission. Apart from conveying mission, managers need to express their confidence and trust in their employee. Equipping employees with sufficient information and skill through training is another effective way to reduce the perceived risk of empowerment (Williams & Noyes, 2007). Professional training in human resource management principles such as delegation, coaching, is beneficial for managers to understand their role as a leader in order to ensure empowerment, which can be implemented in reality, not only in theory. Managers can also gain by mastering common sense "know-how" such as how to "read" employees to ensure that they are prepared to be empowered. Moreover, the employee can also be trained to be aware of the meaning, essence, and consequences of empowerment. This will allow employees to go through self-discovery to enable them to understand themselves better and will work to enhance their self-efficacy and progress towards empowerment.

Nevertheless, by objectifying risk, leaders can also minimise perceived risk (Venton, 1997). These include measuring the probability of error, the damage costs generated from the mistake, and the future estimated value of the damage cost. This allows managers to take calculated risks instead of merely relying on guts or experience. The underlying theory of this is that decisions based on sense tend to overstate low-probability risks. Another measurement method is to calculate the

provision of services in pilot projects with the empowered condition and corrective measures taken to improve empowerment. Managers can find a different alternative to test employees' decision-making ability by creating an artificial situation close to the real situation. Roleplay is a technique that is typically used in the service industry. This method enables employees to explore a realistic situation. Thus, leaders can reduce their risks by determining the situation and acceptable risks in empowering employees.

To implement empowerment in the organisation requires continuous effort and perseverance of all the employees in the organisation, from top to bottom. The organisation needs to have a clear direction and strategy to achieve desirable results, with the anticipation of challenges that came along with changes. Venton (1997) states the big bang approach of 'there you are, I have empowered you all, given you, lots of choices' should be avoided as it will bring more harm to the organisation. This is because, in making a decision, fully empowered without any constraints will be worse. Hence, the organisation needs to plan and set up an appropriate platform to facilitate empowerment carefully. Although empowerment grants employee freedom, however, a transparent leader-employee relationship needs to be established, especially in the initial phase of empowerment. Another issue that needs to be addressed is to what extent is autonomy allowed. In truth, there are no standard rules or clear guidelines on empowerment. It is not unusual for an organisation to claim that employees are the most important asset in the organisation, but their actions may contradict the statement. Thus, a commonly shared type of empowerment practices needs to be in place.

Empowerment is not a management practice that can be implemented quickly. It requires a substantial cultural change in the organisation, which will take time and continuous commitment. The introduction of empowerment will require a significant cultural shift in the organisation. It can only be successful if it is related to the values of the organisation, the principles for which employees need to feel a meaningful measure of control. The values that are consistent with empowerment generally include customer service, teamwork, and two-way communication. For empowerment to work effectively, the employee needs to feel that they are valued, and that their job is meaningful and contributing to guest satisfaction, business objectives, and adding value to services.

When empowerment is in place, it can lead to continuous improvement with employees motivated to evaluate and enhance their way of doing what they're doing. Empowerment has enormous potential for managers to make the most of their employees, to unlock their abilities, and improve personal development. Organisations cannot evolve without the development of their employees.

7.9 Limitations and Recommendations

This study has shown that, in an East Malaysia hotel industry context, determinants of empowerment practices have a negative influence on the perceived risk of empowerment and subsequently influence employee empowerment positively. However, some limitations need to be addressed. The data collected for this study relates to the hotel industry in East Malaysia. Compared to Peninsular Malaysia, there are some distinct differences between the two parts of Malaysia, especially in term of economy and culture. The data is collected from a single industry and location; hence, the outcomes of this study are limited to the East Malaysian hotel industry context. To evaluate the effectiveness of the employee empowerment framework suggested in this study, further empirical evidence is needed by replicating this study in other location such as Peninsular Malaysia, or even countries that are similar to Malaysia, such as developing countries or countries with high power distance or risk-averse culture. The employee empowerment framework also should be evaluated in other service-oriented industries such as banking, marketing, and education. It will be valuable to expand this research to better understand employee empowerment globally.

Also, the data for this study were gathered in a cross-sectional style, indicating that the perceptions on the empowerment practices, perceived risk of empowerment, and employee empowerment relate to a specific time frame. The situation and impact of this study may change over time. A longitudinal research design would provide a better understanding of the relationships between the constructs assessed, specifically to comprehend the variations in the empowerment determinants interaction and perceived risk of empowerment. Longitudinal research should be performed to evaluate the long-term changes in perceptions of empowerment, for instance, assessment of empowerment before and after the organisational intervention, which allow assessing the extent to which organisational transformation generates changes in employee empowerment. It is recommended

that future research should explore movements and transformation overtime to give further evidence of employee empowerment in the long run.

This study utilised a mixed-methods approach to study employee empowerment. Chapter four outlined and explained the rationale of employing the approach, but other approaches may give a better interpretation of employee empowerment. It is recommended to use an in-depth qualitative method such as ethnography or phenomenology to examine the multifaceted dynamics of the employee empowerment concept. An online survey questionnaire may also provide a better response rate and a larger data set. It will be interesting to collect data from Peninsular Malaysia and compare the difference, if any, with East Malaysia.

The concept of the perceived risk of empowerment in this research is assessed as a construct with pertinent indicators reflected by the financial, time and social risk of the employee. Nevertheless, there are other perceived risks of empowerment such as personal risk or psychological risk that can be further investigated. The potential role of the perceived risk of empowerment as a moderator in affecting the relationship between the empowerment practices and employee empowerment is worth attention.

In addition, the empowerment practices in this research are measured by employees perceived relevant information, formal power, and leader's empowering behaviour. However, the perceived relevant information is found to be not significant with regards to employee empowerment. After revisiting the qualitative findings, it will be interesting to observe how the employee's knowledge and experience affected employee empowerment.

Moreover, this study utilised the S-O-R theory from the individual or employee perspective and did not extend the theory to the organisational level. Cheung, Baum & Wong (2011) looked at how empowerment can be relocated as a management concept in Asia. The results of the study indicate that empowerment in Asian cultures relates much more to the individual and his/her merits, in contrast to organisationally driven empowerment in Western countries. Yukl (2010) stresses that one reason for looking at empowerment from the psychological state is to help to clarify when and why attempts to empower employees are likely to succeed. Employee empowerment needs to come from within, an employee must be willing

to become empowered, only then can employee empowerment practices be applied in the organisational context. However, the researcher does acknowledge that the outcome of employee empowerment eventually leads to an improvement in organisational performance. Thus, it is interesting to adopt this theory from another perspective; for instance, the response can opt for organisational outcomes such as job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

This study utilises the employee empowerment scale by Spreitzer (1996), which has been validated in previous research. However, there are other measurements such as Menon's (2001) that can be employed to measure employee's psychological empowerment. It will be interesting to explore the different dynamics in the research model and findings.

7.10 Conclusion

Empowerment is an important strategy that assists organisations in achieving performance, especially in the service context. It is an essential area of human resource management that has received substantial attention from researchers, academics, consultants, organisations, management, and employees. The core research question of this research is, *"How does the perceived risk of empowerment influence the relationship between empowerment practices and employee empowerment?"*. This study explores the research question through a pragmatic lens and utilises the mixed-methods approach by adopting a sequential exploratory research design among hotel employees in the East Malaysian hotel industry.

The perceived risk of empowerment is derived from the consumer behaviour literature and qualitative findings of this study. The research model was finalised and tested by incorporating the empirical findings from qualitative research and the principles from literature. This study concentrates on considering the influence of the perceived risk of empowerment in the employee empowerment context, and empirically utilises the S-O-R theory through analysing the relationships between empowerment practices (perceived relevant information, formal power and empowering leader's role) and employee empowerment. This study assesses the in-depth meaning and expression of empowerment concepts through employee perception. The statistical results indicate the research outcomes, which confirm the theoretical value of the perceived risk of empowerment in influencing employee

empowerment. The perceived risk of empowerment is discovered to mediate the relationship between the empowerment practices and employee empowerment. The relationships revealed in this study emphasise the importance for managers to reconsider their employee empowerment practices and procedures.

Due to the expansion and development of the hotel industry, there will be a constant change in the service setting. Nevertheless, the challenge will persist in managing employees and implementing empowerment. This study provides relevant suggestions for the perceived risk of empowerment-related research in the future and the feasibility of the concept of empowerment in various industries, cultures and countries.

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APPENDIX 1: Interview Guideline for Qualitative Phase

Interview No :

Date :

Part 1 : Participants' Background

Age :

Gender :

Position :

Department :

Hotel Info :

Topic	Objective, lead questions and probing questions
Opening	Introduction/ <i>Pengenalan</i>
Definition of Empowerment	<p><u>Objective:</u> To explore and understand the notion of employee empowerment</p> <p><u>Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What does the term empowerment mean to you?• What does the term empowerment mean to you?• How do you define empowerment?• How is empowerment defined at your hotel?• <i>Apakah yang anda faham mengenai terma 'empowerment'?</i>• <i>Apakah makna 'empowerment' kepada anda?</i>• <i>Bagaimanakah anda mengenalpasti makna 'empowerment'?</i>• <i>Bagaimanakah 'empowerment' ditakrifkan di hotel anda?</i>
Empowerment Practices	<p><u>Objective:</u> To explore, identify the determinants of empowerment practices</p> <p><u>Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the determinants/factors that influence your willingness to become empowered?• What you consider is the most important determinants/factor of employee empowerment?• Why would you considered it to be important?• <i>Apakah penentu / faktor yang mempengaruhi kesanggupan anda untuk mempraktikkan empowerment?</i>• <i>Apakah penentu / faktor yang paling penting dalam empowerment pekerja?</i>• <i>Kenapakah anda menganggap ianya penting?</i>

Perceived Risk of Empowerment	<p><u>Objective:</u> To explore and identify the perceived risk of empowerment</p> <p><u>Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the risks that influence empowerment? • What is your primary concern regarding employee empowerment? • <i>Apakah risiko yang mempengaruhi empowerment?</i> • <i>Apakah kebimbangan utama anda mengenai empowerment pekerja?</i>
Conclusion	<p>Any other points you would like to add about the topics we've talked about today?</p> <p>Thank you</p> <p><i>Adakah anda mempunyai pendapat lain mengenai topik yang kita bincangkan hari ini?</i></p> <p><i>Terima Kasih</i></p>

APPENDIX 2: Participant's Invitation Details



INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Project Title: Employee Empowerment in Luxury Hotels in East Malaysia

Researchers:

Andi Tamsang Andi Kele, PhD Candidate, Waikato Management School, The University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

Associate Professor Dr Asad Mohsin, Lecturer, Waikato Management School, The University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

Associate Professor Dr Jorge Lengler, Lecturer, Business School, Durham University, United Kingdom

Professor Chris Ryan, Lecturer, Waikato Management School, The University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

Dear participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by the Waikato Management School, The University of Waikato. Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate

Who is involved in this research project? Why is it being conducted?

The investigator is a PhD student enrolled in the Waikato Management School, The University of Waikato. The research project is being supervised by Associate Professor Dr Asad Mohsin, Associate Professor Dr Jorge Lengler and Professor Chris Ryan. This aim of this survey is to investigate empowerment in East Malaysia. Specifically, it explores the Western concept of empowerment from the hotel employees' perspectives, examines the determinants of empowerment practices and the perceived risk of empowerment and their relation to the empowerment. This research project has been approved by the University of Waikato Ethics Committee.

Why have you been approached?

You have been approached to participate in this research because the researchers believe your position as hotel employees directly relates to East Malaysia's Hotel industry as suggested by the HR department and approved by Malaysia Association of Hotel (MAH) who helped us to identify the suitable participants for this study. You have been individually and personally selected by the researcher. It is important to note, official permission has been granted to distribute survey questionnaires among hotel employees by the hotel management. Your participation is still voluntary and you are entitled to decide not to participate in this research.

What is the project about? What are the questions being addressed?

This study aims at understanding and evaluating employee empowerment in East Malaysia context. The research aim above will be achieved by the following objectives

1. To examine East Malaysian hotel employees' perceptions of empowerment.
2. To examine the determinants of empowerment practices that influence hotel employee empowerment in East Malaysia context.

3. To determine the elements of the perceived risk of empowerment that influence the relationship between empowerment practices and employee empowerment in East Malaysia hotel industry context
4. To investigate the influence of the perceived risk of empowerment on empowerment practices and employee empowerment in East Malaysia hotel industry context

Four and five star-rated hotels in Sabah and Sarawak was selected for this research and each

organisation is kindly requested to provide employees as primary participants for the study. Each primary participant will be involved to complete one survey questionnaire.

If you agree to participate, what will you be required to do?

If you agree to participate, you will be required to complete one survey. The survey will take about 10 – 15 minutes of your time to complete. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will be only accessed by the researcher. You are not required to reveal your identity at any stage within this survey. In completing the survey questions, please read the given instructions carefully as there are several different response formats in the attached survey document. There are **NO** right or wrong answers for any question. Completing this survey is simply a matter of reading and circling a response that comes closest to your situation. Once you finished the survey, please return it to the HR Manager in your organisation.

What are the possible risks or disadvantages?

The only disadvantage is a loss of time, but your participation will make a valuable contribution to this research. All participants will remain strictly confidential and will not be able to be identified by any comments made.

What are the benefits associated with participation?

Your organisation will receive a final report containing a summary of the project. In the report, you will find valuable insights on the employee empowerment in East Malaysia hotel industry. Besides, the outcome of this research could provide a better understanding and insights as well as possible solutions to solve these challenges. These will be beneficial for long-term human resources management and development plans in your organisation.

What will happen to the information you provide?

Confidentiality and privacy will be strictly maintained during all stages of the research. No information you provide will be directly passed on to your organisation. Only codes or numbers will be used to represent participants and their organisations in reporting results, which will be made public in the forms of thesis and papers published in journals or conferences. Any information that you provide can be disclosed only if (1) it is to protect you or others from harm, (2) if specifically required or allowed by law, or (3) you provide the researchers with written permission. All electronic data will be stored on password-secured university network systems. Hard copy data will be kept securely for 5 years after publication, before being destroyed. Please note that due to the nature of data collection, we will be requesting written informed consent from you.

What are your rights as a participant?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. There are no penalties if you decide not to participate. As a participant, you have the right:

- to withdraw from participation at any time
- to have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed, provided it can be reliably identified
- to be de-identified in any photographs intended for public publication, before the point of publication; and
- to have any questions answered at any time.

JEMPUTAN UNTUK MENGAMBIL BAHAGIAN DALAM PROJEKKAJIAN

Tajuk Projek: *Empowerment* Pekerja di Hotel-Hotel Mewah di Malaysia Timur
Penyelidik:

Andi Tamsang Andi Kele, Calon PhD Waikato Management School, The University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

Profesor Madya Dr Asad Mohsin, Pensyarah, Waikato Management School, The University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

Profesor Madya Dr Jorge Lengler, Business School, Durham University, United Kingdom

Profesor Chris Ryan, Pensyarah, Waikato Management School, The University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

Peserta yang dihormati,

Anda dijemput untuk mengambil bahagian dalam projek penyelidikan yang dijalankan oleh Waikato Management School, The University of Waikato. Sila baca lembaran ini dengan berhati-hati dan memahami kandungannya sebelum memutuskan sama ada untuk mengambil bahagian dalam projek ini.

Siapa yang terlibat dalam projek penyelidikan ini? Mengapa ia dijalankan?

Penyelidik adalah calon PhD yang berdaftar di Waikato Management School, The University of Waikato. Projek penyelidikan dibawah seliaan Profesor Madya Dr Asad Mohsin, Profesor Madya Dr Jorge Lengler dan Profesor Chris Ryan. Tujuan kajian ini untuk menyelidik *empowerment* pekerja di Malaysia Timur. Khususnya, ia menerokai konsep *empowerment* dari barat daripada perspektif pekerja hotel, mengkaji faktor *empowerment*, risiko *empowerment* dan hubungannya dengan *empowerment* pekerja. Projek penyelidikan ini telah diluluskan oleh Jawatankuasa Etika Universiti Waikato.

Kenapa anda telah dijemput untuk mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini?

Anda telah dijemput untuk mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini kerana penyelidik percaya bahawa latar belakang anda sebagai pekerja hotel berkaitan secara langsung dengan industri hotel di Malaysia Timur seperti yang dicadangkan oleh Bahagian Sumber Manusia (HR) dan disokong oleh Persatuan Hotel Malaysia (MAH) yang membantu kami mengenalpasti peserta yang sesuai untuk kajian ini. Untuk makluman anda, pihak pengurusan hotel telah memberi kebenaran secara rasmi kepada penyelidik untuk membuat tinjauan soal selidik di hotel anda. Walau bagaimanapun, penyertaan anda adalah secara sukarela dan anda berhak membuat keputusan untuk tidak mengambil bahagian dalam penyelidikan ini.

Apakah projek ini? Apakah soalan yang perlu dibincangkan?

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk memahami dan menilai *empowerment* pekerja dalam konteks di Malaysia Timur. Matlamat penyelidikan di atas akan dicapai melalui objektif berikut

1. Untuk mengkaji persepsi pekerja hotel di Malaysia Timur mengenai *empowerment*.
2. Untuk mengkaji faktor *empowerment* yang mempengaruhi *empowerment* pekerja hotel di konteks Malaysia Timur.
3. Untuk mengenalpasti unsur-unsur risiko *empowerment* yang mempengaruhi hubungan antara faktor *empowerment* dan *empowerment* pekerja dalam konteks industri hotel di Malaysia Timur.
4. Untuk menyiasat risiko *empowerment* yang mempengaruhi faktor *empowerment* dan *empowerment* pekerja dalam konteks industri hotel di Malaysia Timur.

Untuk kajian, hotel bertaraf empat dan lima bintang di Sabah dan Sarawak telah dipilih dan setiap satu organisasi akan diminta untuk mengenalpasti pekerja untuk terlibat dengan kajian ini. Setiap peserta yang terlibat akan mengisi satu borang soal selidik.

Sekiranya anda bersetuju untuk menyertai, apa yang perlu anda lakukan?

Sekiranya anda bersetuju untuk mengambil bahagian, anda dikehendaki untuk melengkapkan satu borang kaji selidik yang mengambil masa kira-kira 10 - 15 minit untuk dilengkapkan. Maklumbalas anda akan dirahsiakan dan hanya akan diakses oleh penyelidik sahaja. Identiti anda tidak akan didedahkan. Dalam proses mengisi borang soal selidik,, sila baca arahan yang diberikan dengan teliti kerana terdapat beberapa format tindak balas yang berbeza dalam borang yang dilampirkan. Tiada jawapan yang betul atau salah untuk sebarang soalan. Cara untuk mengisi borang soal selidik ini hanyalah dengan melalui pembacaan dan menandakan jawapan yang paling dekat dengan pendapat anda. Sebaik sahaja anda melengkapkan borang soal selidik ini, sila kembalikan kepada Pengurus Sumber Manusia di organisasi anda.

Apakah risiko atau kekurangan yang bakal berlaku?

Satu-satunya kekurangan adalah penggunaan masa anda, tetapi penyertaan anda akan memberi sumbangan yang berharga terhadap penyelidikan ini. Semua data peserta adalah sulit.

Apakah faedah yang diperolehi dari penyertaan?

Organisasi anda akan menerima ringkasan laporan akhir projek. Di dalam laporan tersebut, anda akan memperolehi maklumat berguna mengenai *empowerment* pekerja di industri hotel di Malaysia Timur. Selain itu, hasil kajian ini dapat memberikan pemahaman yang lebih jelas serta penejelasan mengenai isu ini. Ini akan memberi manfaat kepada pengurusan sumber manusia dan pelan pembangunan jangka panjang dalam organisasi anda.

Apa yang akan berlaku kepada maklumat yang anda berikan?

Kerahsiaan dan privasi akan dijaga di setiap peringkat penyelidikan. Maklumat anda tidak akan diberikan secara terus kepada organisasi anda. Hanya kod atau nombor yang akan digunakan untuk mewakili peserta dan organisasi mereka dalam melaporkan hasil yang akan dijadikan sebagai maklumat am dalam bentuk tesis yang diterbitkan dalam jurnal atau persidangan. Apa-apa maklumat yang anda berikan hanya boleh didedahkan jika (1) untuk melindungi anda atau orang lain daripada bahaya, (2) jika dikehendaki atau dibenarkan secara khusus oleh undang-undang, atau (3) anda memberikan keizinan bertulis kepada penyelidik. Semua data elektronik akan disimpan dengan kata laluan melalui sistem rangkaian universiti. Data fizikal akan disimpan dengan selamat selama 5 tahun selepas penerbitan dan akan dimusnahkan selepas itu. Sila ambil perhatian bahawa, untuk tujuan proses pengumpulan data, kami akan meminta kebenaran bertulis daripada anda.

Apakah hak anda sebagai peserta?

Penyertaan anda dalam penyelidikan ini adalah secara sukarela. Tiada penalti jika anda memutuskan untuk tidak mengambil bahagian. Sebagai peserta, anda mempunyai hak:

- untuk menarik diri dari penyertaan pada bila-bila masa
- untuk menarik balik dan memusnahkan sebarang data yang tidak diproses, dengan syarat ia boleh dipercayai dikenalpasti
- untuk tidak dikenal pasti dalam mana-mana gambar yang dicadangkan untuk penerbitan awam, sebelum sumber penerbitan; dan
- untuk menjawab setiap soalan pada bila-bila masa.

APPENDIX 3: Participant's Consent Form



PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT FORM

Name of Participant: _____

Project Title:

Employee Empowerment in Luxury Hotel in East Malaysia

1. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the information sheet
2. I agree to participate in the research project as described
3. I agree:
 - to be interviewed
 - that my voice will be audio recorded
4. I acknowledge that:
 - I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied (unless follow-up is needed for safety).
 - The project is for the purpose of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
 - The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.
 - The security of the research data will be protected during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to me upon request. Any information which will identify me will not be used.

Participant Consent

Participant's Signature : _____

Date : _____

BORANG PERSETUJUAN PESERTA

Nama Peserta : _____

Tajuk Projek:

Empowerment Pekerja di Hotel-Hotel Mewah di Malaysia Timur

1. Saya telah diterangkan mengenai projek tersebut, dan saya telah membaca maklumat yang dinyatakan
2. Saya bersetuju untuk mengambil bahagian dalam projek penyelidikan seperti yang dinyatakan
3. Saya bersetuju:
 - Untuk ditemuramah
 - Bahawa suara saya akan dirakam secara audio
4. Saya mengakui bahawa:
 - Saya faham bahawa penyertaan saya adalah secara sukarela dan saya bebas untuk menarik diri daripada projek ini pada bila-bila masa dan mengeluarkan semua data yang tidak diproses sebelum ini (kecuali tindakan susulan diperlukan untuk faktor keselamatan).
 - Projek ini adalah untuk tujuan penyelidikan. Ia mungkin tidak memberi sebarang faedah kepada saya.
 - Privasi maklumat peribadi yang saya berikan akan dilindungi dan hanya didedahkan dengan persetujuan saya atau seperti yang dikehendaki oleh undang-undang.
 - Keselamatan data penyelidikan akan dilindungi semasa dan selepas kajian dijalankan. Data yang dikumpulkan semasa kajian boleh diterbitkan, dan laporan hasil projek akan diberikan kepada saya atas permintaan. Sebarang maklumat yang akan mendedahkan identiti saya tidak boleh digunakan.

Persetujuan Peserta

Tandatangan Peserta : _____

Tarikh : _____

APPENDIX 4: Survey Questionnaire



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WAIKATO MANAGEMENT SCHOOL THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO, NEW ZEALAND

EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT IN LUXURY HOTELS IN EAST MALAYSIA

This survey contains the following sections:

- Section I : Definition of empowerment
- Section 2 : Employee empowerment constructs
- Section 3 : Participant's profile

**ALL INFORMATION WILL REMAIN STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL
& ONLY USED FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSE.**

Employee Empowerment in Luxury Hotels in East Malaysia

The purpose of this research is to assess employees' perception and understanding of empowerment in East Malaysian luxury hotels. To achieve this, with management's permission, a research survey is being undertaken in your hotel. All responses are confidential, and you will not be identified in any way. Please take a few minutes to respond to this survey questionnaire.

SECTION 1

Some statements of empowerment are given below. Choose **only the one** that represents your opinion of empowerment and indicate by placing a (✓) in the box to the right of the statement

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. Empowerment is a delegation of authority and enables me to make decisions | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Empowerment is a management tool to motivate career development | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Empowerment is about power and control with extra responsibilities | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Empowerment is another contemporary managerial term to add workload | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Not sure | <input type="checkbox"/> |

SECTION 2

For each of the following questions, please indicate your level of agreement with each statement using the following scale. Please circle the number that best represents your opinion:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

The management provides information on how its objectives are going to be achieved	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The management provides relevant information to avoid bad decision-making	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The management provides relevant information to improve the work process and procedures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The management has an efficient way to disseminate relevant information to all levels of employees	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The management provides relevant information for me to become empowered	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The management assigned formal authority to make decisions on daily operations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The management assigned formal authority to develop own solutions to work-related matters	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The management assigned formal authority to improve my work routine	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My leader encourages me to express my opinions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My leader encourages me to make my own decisions regarding my work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My leader explains the rule, regulations and standard of procedure of my work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My leader focuses on corrective action rather than my mistakes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My leader trusts me in doing my job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My leader encourages me to become empowered	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Empowerment can involve financial consequences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My salary might get deduct if I make wrong decisions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Empowerment can influence my income	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Empowerment sometimes is a waste of time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Empowerment is time-consuming	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Empowerment may acquire extra of my time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Empowerment may result in disapproval by my leader	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Empowerment may result in disapproval by my colleagues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Empowerment may influence my relationship with my leader	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The work I do is very important to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My job activities are personally meaningful to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The work I do is meaningful to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am confident about my ability to do my job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my job activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have mastered the skills necessary for my job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My impact on what happens in my department is large	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have a great deal of control over what happened in my department	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have significant influence over what happened in my department	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

SECTION 3: PARTICIPANT'S PROFILE

Please tick (✓) which applies to you

1. Gender

Male	
Female	

2. Age

Under 18 years old	
19 to 25 years old	
26 to 35 years old	
36 to 55 years old	
More than 56 years old	

3. Marital Status

Single	
Married	

4. What is your level of education?

PMR	
SPM/O Level/Certificate	
STPM/Diploma/A Level	
First degree	
Master degree	
PhD	
Other (please specify)	

5. How long have you been working in the hotel industry? _____

6. What is the ownership type of your hotel?

International Hotel Chain	
---------------------------	--

Locally-owned Hotel	
---------------------	--

7. What is the official star rating of your hotel?

Four-star	
Five-star	

8. Department

Front Office	
Housekeeping	
Food & Beverage	
Human Resource	
Sales and Marketing	
Accounting & Finance	
Engineering & Maintenance	
Safety and Security	
Other (Please specify)	

9. Current position

Entry Level	
Supervisory Level	
Managerial Level	
Top Management Level	
Other (Please specify)	

10. Current work status

Full-time employee	
Part-time employee	
Other (please specify)	



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Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

**WAIKATO MANAGEMENT SCHOOL
THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO, NEW ZEALAND**

***EMPOWERMENT* PEKERJA DI HOTEL-HOTEL MEWAH
DI MALAYSIA TIMUR**

Kajian ini mengandungi beberapa bahagian seperti berikut:

Bahagian I: Definisi *empowerment*

Bahagian 2: Maklumat *empowerment* pekerja

Bahagian 3: Profil peserta

**SEMUA MAKLUMAT ADALAH SULIT
& DIGUNAKAN UNTUK TUJUAN AKADEMIK SAHAJA.**

Empowerment Pekerja di Hotel-hotel Mewah di Malaysia Timur

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menilai persepsi dan pemahaman pekerja mengenai *Empowerment* di hotel-hotel mewah di Malaysia Timur. Untuk mencapai tujuan ini, dengan kebenaran pihak pengurusan, kajian penyelidikan ini akan dijalankan di hotel anda. Semua maklum balas anda adalah rahsia dan anda tidak akan didedahkan dalam apa jua cara. Sila ambil masa beberapa minit untuk memberi maklum balas dalam kajian soal selidik ini.

BAHAGIAN 1

Beberapa kenyataan telah disenaraikan di bawah. Sila pilih satu jawapan yang anda rasa adalah yang paling tepat yang menggambarkan persepsi anda terhadap *Empowerment*. Sila tandakan (✓) di dalam kotak di sebelah kanan setiap kenyataan di bawah.

1. *Empowerment* adalah pemindahan kuasa dan membenarkan saya untuk membuat keputusan
2. *Empowerment* adalah sebuah alat untuk memotivasikan pembangunan kerjaya
3. *Empowerment* adalah mengenai kuasa dan kawalan dengan tanggungjawab tambahan.
4. *Empowerment* adalah terma pengurusan untuk menambah beban kerja
5. Tidak pasti

BAHAGIAN 2

Bahagian ini adalah untuk mengenalpasti pendapat anda mengenai tahap kepentingan setiap kenyataan berikut dengan menggunakan skala di bawah. Sila bulatkan nombor yang mewakili pendapat anda:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sangat tidak setuju	Tidak setuju	Agak tidak setuju	Neutral	Agak setuju	Setuju	Sangat setuju

Pihak pengurusan menyediakan maklumat bagaimana objektif akan dicapai	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pihak pengurusan menyediakan maklumat yang relevan untuk mengelak membuat keputusan yang salah	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pihak pengurusan menyediakan maklumat yang relevan untuk meningkatkan proses dan prosedur bekerja	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pihak pengurusan mempunyai cara berkesan untuk menyebarkan maklumat yang relevan kepada semua pekerja	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pihak pengurusan menyediakan maklumat yang relevan kepada saya untuk menjadi <i>empowered</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pihak pengurusan memberikan kuasa secara rasmi untuk membuat keputusan bagi pekerjaan operasi harian	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pihak pengurusan memberikan kuasa secara rasmi untuk membuat keputusan sendiri dalam hal yang berkaitan dengan pekerjaan	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pihak pengurusan memberikan kuasa secara rasmi untuk meningkatkan kerja rutin seharian saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ketua saya menggalakkan saya untuk saya membuat keputusan	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ketua saya menggalakkan saya untuk membuat keputusan sendiri berkenaan kerja saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ketua saya menerangkan mengenai peraturan , syarat dan garis panduan pekerjaan saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ketua saya memfokuskan untuk tindakan pembetulan berbanding kesalahan saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ketua saya mempercayai saya untuk melakukan kerja saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ketua saya menggalakkan saya untuk menjadi <i>empowered</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Empowerment</i> berkemungkinan boleh melibatkan kewangan	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Gaji saya boleh dikurangkan apabila saya membuat keputusan yang salah	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Empowerment</i> boleh mempengaruhi pendapatan saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Empowerment</i> kadang-kadang membazir masa	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Empowerment</i> adalah mengambil masa yang lama	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Empowerment</i> akan mengambil lebih masa saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Empowerment</i> akan menyebabkan ketua saya menolak saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Empowerment</i> akan menyebabkan rakan sekerja saya menolak saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Empowerment</i> akan memberi kesan kepada perhubungan saya dengan ketua saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Kerja yang saya lakukan adalah penting pada saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Aktiviti kerja saya adalah bermakna secara peribadi kepada saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Kerja yang saya lakukan adalah bermakna bagi saya							
Saya yakin dengan kemampuan saya dalam melakukan kerja	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Saya yakin mengenai kemampuan saya dalam melakukan aktiviti pekerjaan saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Saya telah menguasai kemahiran yang diperlukan dalam pekerjaan saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Saya mempunyai kuasa yang signifikan dalam menentukan bagaimana saya melakukan kerja saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Saya boleh memutuskan keputusan sendiri tentang bagaimana melakukan suatu pekerjaan	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Saya mempunyai peluang untuk berdikari dan bebas dalam melakukan perkerjaan saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Kesan saya terhadap apa yang berlaku organisasi adalah besar	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Saya mempunyai kawalan yang baik dengan perkara yang berlaku dalam jabatan saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Saya mempunyai pengaruh tertentu terhadap apa yang berlaku dalam jabatan saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sangat tidak setuju	Tidak setuju	Agal tidak setuju	Neutral	Agak setuju	Setuju	Sangat setuju

BAHAGIAN 3: PROFIL PESERTA

Sila tandakan (√) bagi yang berkenaan dengan anda

1. Jantina

Lelaki	
Perempuan	

2. Umur

Bawah 18 Tahun	
19 hingga 25 tahun	
26 hingga 35 tahun	
36 hingga 55 tahun	
Lebih daripada 56 tahun	

3. Status Perkahwinan

Bujang	
Berkahwin	

4. Tahap pendidikan anda:

PMR	
SPM	
STPM/Diploma	
Ijazah Pertama	
Ijazah Sarjana	
PhD	
Lain-lain (Sila nyatakan)	

5. Berapa lama anda sudah bekerja dalam industri perhotelan: _____

6. Apakah jenis pemilikan hotel anda

Rangkaian Hotel Antarabangsa	
Tempatan- Hotel milikan sendiri	

7. Apakah taraf hotel anda?

Empat Bintang	
Lima Bintang	

8. Bahagian

Pejabat Hadapan	
Pengemasan	
Makanan dan minuman	
Sumber Manusia	
Pemasaran	
Kewangan	
Penyelenggaraan dan Kejuruteraan	
Keselamatan	
Lain-lain (sila nyatakan)	

9. Jawatan terkini

Pekerja bawahan	
Penyelia	
Pengurus	
Pengurusan Atasan	
Lain-lain (sila nyatakan)	

10. Status pekerjaan terkini

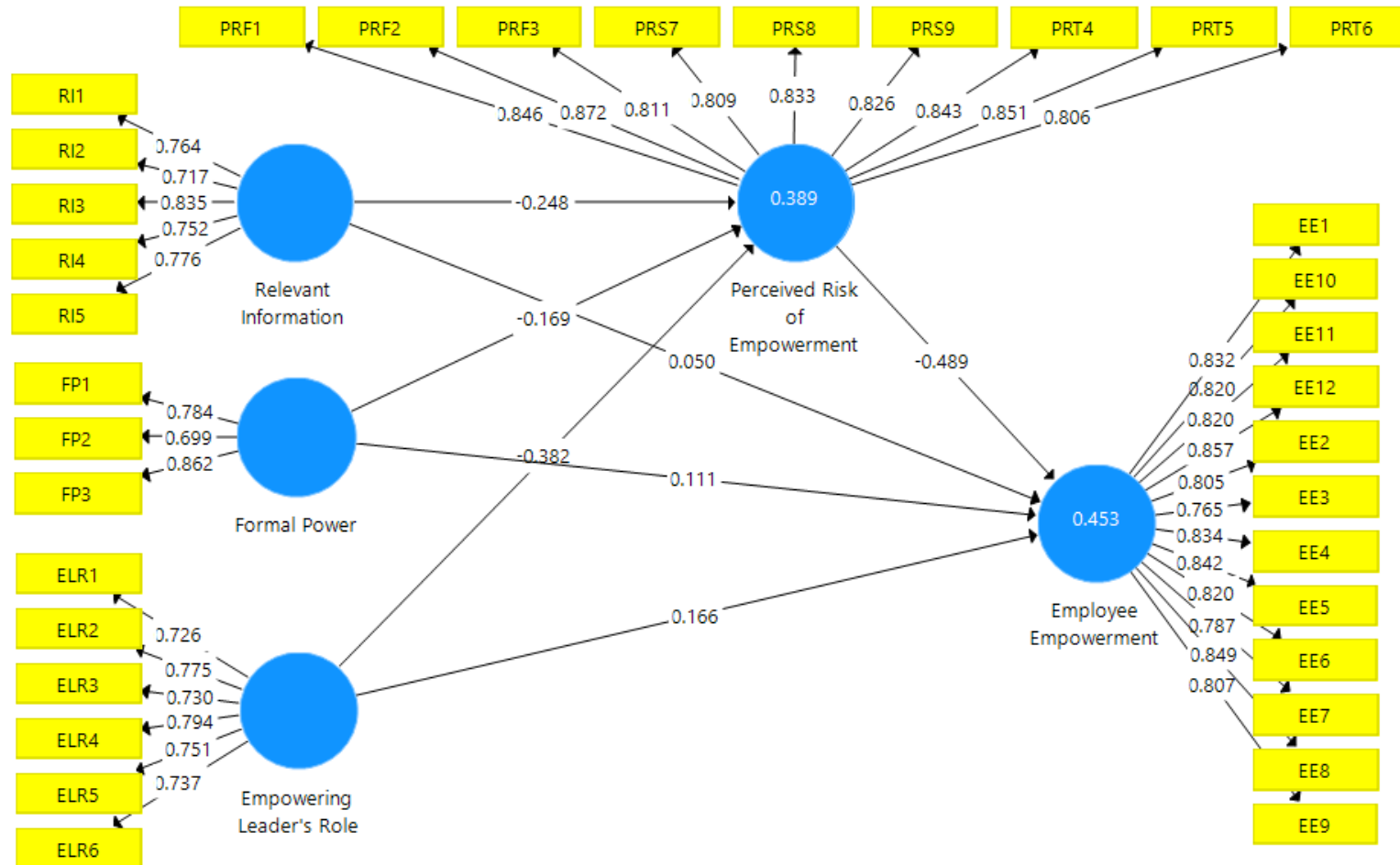
Pekerja tetap	
Pekerja sepekerja masa	
Lain-lain (sila nyatakan)	

APPENDIX 5: View of Empowerment Based on Employees' Gender and Age

View of Empowerment based on the Employee's Gender			
Level	Definition	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	Delegation of authority	18	20.93
	Career Development	9	10.47
	Power and control	37	43
	Add workload	9	10.47
	Not sure	13	15.12
Female	Delegation of authority	35	21.34
	Career Development	18	10.96
	Power and control	69	42.07
	Add workload	24	14.63
	Not sure	18	10.98

View of Empowerment based on the Employee's Age			
Level	Definition	Frequency	Percentage (%)
19-25	Delegation of authority	17	16.3
	Career Development	8	7.7
	Power and control	56	53.8
	Add workload	13	12.5
	Not sure	10	9.6
26 - 35	Delegation of authority	24	23.3
	Career Development	16	15.5
	Power and control	38	36.9
	Add workload	13	12.6
	Not sure	12	11.7
36-55	Delegation of authority	12	30.0
	Career Development	3	7.5
	Power and control	9	22.5
	Add workload	7	17.5
	Not sure	9	22.5
More than 56	Power and control	3	100

APPENDIX 6: Initial Structural Path Analysis with all item



APPENDIX 7: Cross Loadings Results

	Employee Empowerment	Empowering Leader's Role	Formal Power	Perceived Risk of Empowerment	Relevant Information
EE10	0.796				
EE11	0.838				
EE12	0.873				
EE3	0.791				
EE4	0.854				
EE5	0.818				
EE6	0.803				
EE7	0.808				
EE8	0.868				
EE9	0.788				
ELR1		0.725			
ELR2		0.775			
ELR3		0.73			
ELR4		0.795			
ELR5		0.751			
ELR6		0.737			
FP1			0.749		
FP3			0.944		
PRF1				0.845	
PRF2				0.872	
PRF3				0.812	
PRS7				0.809	
PRS8				0.833	
PRS9				0.826	
PRT4				0.843	
PRT5				0.851	
PRT6				0.806	
RI1					0.762
RI2					0.715
RI3					0.835
RI4					0.753
RI5					0.778

APPENDIX 8: Initial Collinearity Assessment

Initial Collinearity Assessment	
	VIF
EE1	11.818
EE10	7.405
EE11	5.16
EE12	7.175
EE2	11.594
EE3	5.544
EE4	7.506
EE5	10.431
EE6	7.059
EE7	5.569
EE8	8.076
EE9	4.466
ELR1	1.381
ELR2	2.025
ELR3	1.558
ELR4	2.195
ELR5	1.774
ELR6	1.655
FP1	1.666
FP2	1.411
FP3	1.321
PRF1	4.951
PRF2	4.832
PRF3	4.561
PRS7	3.682
PRS8	3.294
PRS9	4.175
PRT4	5.257
PRT5	4.188
PRT6	2.947
RI1	1.644
RI2	1.469
RI3	1.941
RI4	1.643
RI5	1.702