Relationship among Salespersons’ Psychological Empowerment, Job Satisfaction and Engagement in Energy Industry

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Abstract: When assuming the salespersons’ psychological empowerment, engagement and job satisfaction as the independent variable, dependent variable and intervening variable respectively, it’s been figured out that there exists a positive correlation among these variables and the job satisfaction functions partly as a mediator. In other words, the psychological empowerment’s impact of work, autonomy and work meaning functions prominently to predicate employees’ job satisfaction, and the salary, self-development and work environment of job satisfaction are significant predictors to personal engagement. And among those four factors of psychological empowerment, only the work meaning can predict engagement remarkably.

Keywords: energy industry; salesperson; psychological empowerment; job satisfaction; engagement

1. Introduction

Since the discretion of employees’ job satisfaction and engagement significantly affects the smooth development of the energy companies, researches on ways to improve the employees’ job satisfaction and engagement have been carried out by scholars abroad in the middle of the 20th century. And after the 1980s, researches on employees’ psychological empowerment have been conducted by scholars, expecting to provide practical assistance for business management. But for some specific industries, researches on relationship among different types of employees’ psychological empowerment, job satisfaction and engagement are so few that lots of problems remain unsolved.

Based on this situation, sales staffs of energy industry have been chosen as the investigation object. And aided by relatives and friends, questionnaires have been distributed in the way of “snowball”. From May 1, 2014 to September 30, among the distributed 500 questionnaires and an open or structured interview with 13 sales staffs and 10 business managers, 362 effective questionnaires were gathered, mak-
ing the effective recovery rate 72.4%. By processing the statistical data through SPSS17.0 and setting the psychological empowerment as the independent variables, the engagement as the dependent variable and the job satisfaction as the intermediary variable, relationships among salespersons’ psychological empowerment, work satisfaction and professional degree in the energy industry are explored.

2. Literature Review

In 1995, a view that employees’ psychological empowerment is a kind of perception consisting of working meaning, self-efficacy, self-determination and impact has been proposed by Spreitzer, receiving widespread acknowledgement. And the psychological empowerment’s influencing factors can be divided into personal and organizational parts, in which the former mainly includes gender, age, degree and work experience, etc while the latter consists of job, working environment and interpersonal relationship, etc. Meanwhile, Janssen (2005) discovered that the psychological empowerment has affected the business performance through its impact on employees’ innovative behaviors, and the higher the level of psychological empowerment is, the better the innovative ability will be. Besides, Analysis & Commentary some researches taking the psychological empowerment as the independent or dependent variable have been conducted. In 1999, research from Spreitzer et al. (1997) showed that middle-level managers’ psychological empowerment exerts a positive impact on the innovation, effectiveness and coherence of management. Liu and Shi (2010) found that psychological empowerment plays an intermediary role in the organizational creative climate and employees’ innovative behavior. As to the psychological empowerment measurement, a four-dimensional scale aiming at the psychological empowerment developed by Sereitzer in 1995 has been widely applied in current researches.

In 1997, Xu Guangzhong has classified employees’ job satisfaction into three types as follows: the first one is the synthesizing type with the representatives of Locke (1969) and Kreitner and Kinichi (1995), defined as the employees’ opinions and attitudes to their work; the second one is the gap type represented by Porter and Lawler (1968) with the definition of cognitive gap of employees’ expectancy and actual award; and the last one is the reference type defined as the employees’ emotional responses to all the aspects relating to their work (Smith et al., 1969). Individual and job are the influential factors of satisfaction and the representative theories regarding to this include the two-factor theory, equity theory, expectation the
ory, demand theory, three-factor theory, etc. The Job descriptive index developed by Brayfield and Rothe has been widely applied to measure employees’ job satisfaction.

Schaufeli and Bakker (2001) has developed Utrecht work Engagement Scale, and at the same time, Gallup consulting company has developed a measuring scale, which is widely used in further studies (Christian and Slaughter, 2007). According to Harter et al. (2002), the employees’ engagement is positively relevant to business income.

3. Research design

3.1 The theoretical model
Based on a summarization of literature review, Spreitzer’s definition of psychological empowerment has been adopted as the independent variables, taking Macey’s definition of Employees’ engagement as dependent variable, and employees’ job satisfaction defined by reference type as the intermediate variable to get the research model in Figure 1.

3.2 Hypotheses
Since it’s been widely accepted that there exists a positive correlation between employees’ job satisfaction and psychological empowerment, current researches involve both analysis on the relationship between psychological empowerment and employees’ job satisfaction and that between the whole psychological empowerment and employees’ job satisfaction. Researches have proved that employee’s perception to the work meaning, work autonomy and work influence have positive effects on job satisfaction. By taking nurses as research object, He and Hou (2010)
and others have shown that each part of psychological empowerment has a positive effect on employees’ job satisfaction. And in China, since researches on relationships between employees’ psychological empowerment and job satisfaction in different industries and categories have important values, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H1: psychological empowerment is positively correlated with employee job satisfaction

H11: the dimensions of psychological empowerment are positively correlated with job itself

H12: the dimensions of psychological empowerment are positively correlated with interpersonal relationships

H13: psychological empowerment are positively correlated with work environment

H14: the dimensions of psychological empowerment are positively correlated with remuneration

H15: the dimensions of psychological empowerment were positively correlated with self development Foreign scholars have some controversy about the relationship between employees’ work satisfaction and employees’ engagement. Hazer (2006) and others hold that there exists no or very negligible relationship between employees’ satisfaction and engagement. However, Mak (2001) and Frederick have proved that there is a significant positive correlation between some dimensionality of employees’ work satisfaction and employees’ engagement by means of empirical research. But few empirical domestic researches have been obtained in China, thus the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: there is a positive correlation between employee engagement and employee job satisfaction.

H21: the work is positively related with employee engagement;

H22: there is a positive correlation between employee engagement and interpersonal relationship;

H23: employee engagement and working environment have a positive correlation;

H24: there is a positive correlation between employee engagement and remuneration;

H25: there is a positive correlation between employee engagement and self development;

Most foreign researchers have studied the relationship between one dimension of psychological empowerment and employees’ engagement.
For example, Kahn (1990) finds that employees’ engagement will be improved when they get more benefits from the corporations, or it will be low. Nevertheless, it’s worth exploring whether the four dimensions of psychological empowerment will affect employees’ engagement. Therefore, the following suppositions are proposed:

H3: psychological empowerment and employee engagement have a positive relationship.

H31: there is a positive correlation between work meaning and employees’ engagement;
H32: there is a positive correlation between self-efficiency and employees’ engagement;
H33: autonomy and employee engagement have a positive correlation;
H34: work impact and employees’ engagement have a positive correlation;

Based on analysis above, it’s clear that psychological empowerment has a positive correlation to the improvement of work satisfaction and work satisfaction positively promotes the employees’ engagement. Thus, here provides a supposition.

H4: work satisfaction serves as a mediator between psychological empowerment and employees’ engagement.

3.3 Questionnaire

The questionnaire includes two parts. One is the personal information involving age, sex, education, work seniority and monthly profit and the other is the main section including empowerment in heart (refer to four-dimensional scale of empowerment in heart developed by Spreitzer), the work satisfaction of employee (refer to “Job Descriptive Index”), the employee engagement (refer to “Gallup Workplace Audit”). The topic of the questionnaire is expressed with Likert summated rating scale.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Sample analysis

The statistics show the following characteristics: most of the salespersons working in energy industries aged 35 and younger; the male proportion is larger than that of female; the education degree are concentrated in specialized subject and bachelor degree; working years mainly focus on six years and below; the average monthly
After testing the mean value and the standard deviation of sales staff psychological empowerment, work satisfaction, engagement degree, the mean value of psychological empowerment is 3.3063, and the mean values of work meaning, work autonomy, self-efficacy and work influence are 3.2581, 3.0212, 3.5475, 3.0053 respectively, while the mean value of the job satisfaction is 3.292, the mean value of the work itself, interpersonal relationship, work environment, remuneration and self-development are 3.242, 3.144, 3.232, 3.311, 3.123 respectively. And the mean value of the employee’s dedication is 3.281.

Thus, it’s clear that the average score of the psychological empowerment and the four-dimension is between 3 and 4, while the score of job satisfaction and five-dimension are bigger than 3 but smaller than 4, and the score of the employee dedication arrives at the middle level, which means there’s still much improving room for employees’ psychological empowerment, work satisfaction and engagement.

4.3 Reliability and validity analysis
In this study, the Cronbachh’s α coefficient has been adopted to test the reliability.
and the factor analysis method as well as the questionnaire structure has been applied to test the validity.

According to the test, the Cronbach’s α coefficient of psychological empowerment questionnaire is 0.882, being bigger than 0.80, and the load capacities of each factors are larger than 0.50, with the cumulative explanatory variable being 80.334%. The Cronbach’s α coefficient of job satisfaction questionnaire is 0.882 being bigger than 0.80, and the load capacities of each factors are larger than 0.50, with the cumulative explanatory variable being 73.115%. The Cronbach’s α coefficient of employee engagement questionnaire is 0.819, being bigger than 0.80, and the load capacities of each factors are larger than 0.50, with the cumulative explanatory variable being 54.456%. Thus it can be seen that the survey questionnaire satisfied all the reliability and validity test.

4.4 Demographic characteristics

Through the single factor variance method, the age, education background, working years and average monthly income are compared with psychological empowerment, job satisfaction and employee dedication. The T test method is used to analyze whether there is a significant difference among gender and other three items.

The results show that (1) employees with the highest psychological empowerment perceptibility, job satisfaction and engagement are those from 31 to 35 years old, possessing bachelor degree, working for 6 to 10 years and owning average monthly income of 6001 or above; (2) employees with the lowest psychological empowerment perceptibility are those below 30 years old, possessing senior high school degree or below, working for 3 years or less and owning average monthly income of 3000 or below. (3) employees with the lowest job satisfaction are those age from 36 to 40, possessing senior high school degree or below, working for 10 years or above and owning average monthly income of 3000 or below; (4) employees with the lowest employee dedication are those age below 30, working for 10 years or above and possessing average monthly income of 3000 or below; (5) the psychological empowerment, job satisfaction and dedication of male staff are higher than that of female staff with a significant difference; (6) there is no significant difference between the education background and employee dedication.

4.5 Correlation analysis

The first step is to analyze the correlation between psychological empowerment and staff’s job satisfaction, revealing that work meaning of psychological empowerment, self-efficacy and job influence contain significant positive correlation with
the job satisfaction composed of job, working environment, salary and self-development, but have negligible correlation with interpersonal relationship dimensions and psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment’s self-efficacy obtains significant positive correlation with the work, job impact dimension and job satisfaction, but has indistinctive correlation with interpersonal relationship, salary and psychological empowerment. Meanwhile, the correlation between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction is significant. Thus, it can be concluded that H1, H11, H13 and H15 make sense while H12 not and H14 are partly workable.

The second step is to analyze the correlation between job satisfaction and employee engagement, with the result that each dimension of psychological empowerment exists significant positive correlation with employee engagement. During which, the correlation between salary and engagement is the highest, arriving at 0.899, and the job satisfaction obtains significant correlation with employee engagement. It can be concluded that H2, H21, H22, H23, H24, H25 are reliable.

The final step is to analyze the relationship between psychological empowerment and employee engagement, with the result that each dimension of psychological empowerment contains significant positive correlation with employee engagement.

During which, the correlation between the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment and the employee engagement is the highest, reaching 0.701. Psychological empowerment and the employee engagement also contain significant correlation. It can be concluded that H3, H31, H32, H33, and H34 could make sense.

From those above, it’s clear that the positive correlation exists in the relationship not only between employee job satisfaction and employee engagement, psychological empowerment and employee engagement, but also between psychological empowerment, employees’ job satisfaction and employee engagement. To be more specific, the significant positive correlation of the four dimensions of psychological empowerment exists among work itself, working environment, salary, self-development of employee job satisfaction, but with the dimension of interpersonal relationship.

There exists no significant positive correlation between self-efficacy dimension of psychological empowerment and salaries dimension of employee job satisfaction.

4.6 Regression analysis
The first one is the regression analysis of psychological empowerment and employ
ee job satisfaction. By taking various dimensions of job satisfaction as dependent variable, various dimensions of psychological empowerment as independent variables, with stepwise regression, it’s reliable that among the four dimensions of psychological empowerment, only regression of work influence and job satisfaction steps in the regression model. The regression equation is: the work itself = 0.511 × work influence, explaining the 17.6 percent of the employee job satisfaction variance.

The second one is the regression analysis of employee job satisfaction and employee engagement. With the employee engagement being dependent variable, various dimensions of employee job satisfaction being independent variables, as well as the stepwise regression, it’s clear that among the five dimensions of employee job satisfaction, only three dimensions, i.e., salary compensation, self-development and work environment are in the regression model. The regression equation is: employee engagement = 0.488 × pay + 0.336 × self development + 0.217 × work environment, explaining the 55.79 percent of the employee engagement variance.

The next one is the regression analysis of psychological empowerment and employee engagement. Regarding the employee engagement as dependent variable and the dimensions of psychological empowerment as independent variable, through regression mode, it’s reliable that only the dimension of work significance is in the regression model among the four dimensions of psychological empowerment. Regression equation: employee engagement = 0.439 × work significance, explaining the 32.68% of the employee engagement variance.

The last one is to verify the intermediation effect of the employee job satisfaction. Taking the employee engagement as dependent variable, psychological empowerment and employee job satisfaction as independent variables, it is shown that the regression of psychological empowerment and employee engagement reaches the significant level, explaining 22.4% of the total variance. Meanwhile, the regression of psychological empowerment and employee job satisfaction reaches a significant level explaining 15.9% of the total variance. And the regression of employee job satisfaction and employee engagement reaches a significant level explaining 48.7% of the total variance. When the regression of psychological empowerment and employee job satisfaction are processing at the same time with the employee engagement, the regression coefficients of psychological empowerment and employee job satisfaction both become smaller, but still keep the significant level. It illustrates that employees’ job satisfaction partly plays a role in mediation, making the H4 workable.

Based on the analysis above, it can be obtained as follows: (1) The working im-
pact, autonomy and working significance of psychological empowerment and employee engagement degree have distinct predictive effect. (2) The working conditions, salary and self-development of job satisfaction have direct and positive effects on the employees’ engagement, but work itself has no significant functions in predicting interpersonal relationships and employees’ engagement. (3) Among the four dimensions of psychological empowerment, only the working significance has direct effects on employees’ engagement.

5. Conclusions

Therefore, for corporations in the energy industry, business managers can improve the working environment of sales employees, promote their recognition about work meaning, and enhance their work autonomy, work satisfaction as well as work engagement by founding complete salary and welfare system, post duty assessment and post promotion mechanism, and outstanding staff incentive system in the practice of business management, and then to achieve the harmonious development of staff’s career and corporations’ business in the end.

Works Cited


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