

Exploring the Role of Psychological Empowerment in Enhancing Career Satisfaction among Academics Staff: A Pilot Study in Malaysian Research Universities

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Abstract

The study examines the influence of psychological empowerment on career satisfaction among academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities. 101 respondents were involved in this study collected from, and a questionnaire was used to collect the data. Next, the data was analysed using SPSS and Smart PLS Software statistical software. The findings showed that there is a positive and significant impact of psychological empowerment on academics staffs career satisfaction. The result signified that empowering practice fosters relational interactions that cultivate mutual trust, meaningful work, and delegation of power and thus increasing the sense of personal consequences of academics at work. As a consequence, implementation of empowerment boosts the best interest to satisfy academics staff careers. Hence, the higher institutions of learning can develop strategies to increase career satisfaction by identifying suitable empowerment practices.

Keywords: Psychological Empowerment, Career satisfaction, Education Sector.

Introduction

Empowerment has gained significant attention in various organisations (Macário *et al.*, 2020) as empowerment is deemed a logical plan of action for developing an excellent service (Bae *et al.*, 2021). Empowerment practices should be implemented in the workplace so that employees can actualize their career advancement objectives and experience job satisfaction (Tharanganie & Perera, 2021). In Malaysia, empowerment has been implemented for a considerable time (Ahmad *et al.*, 2021). However, according to Muda and Fook (2020), academics staff in public universities in Malaysia are not fully empowered and they are under

much greater pressure to succeed in order to compete with other public higher education institutions (PHEIs). In addition, public higher education institutions lost 1,662 academic between 2015 and 2019, according to Malaysia Educational Statistics (2020).

According to a recent survey conducted by the talent firm Randstad among 2,500 Malaysian workers, 96% of those surveyed perceived flexible work arrangements to be beneficial, and 87% of Malaysian workers emphasised the significance of non-monetary benefits, which enhance work-life balance and job satisfaction (Chan, 2023). Furthermore, according to a study by Amzat and Idris (2012), academics staff in public universities in Malaysia are less empowered due to their extremely limited participation opportunities in university policy and decision-making. Moreover, there has been a dearth of research examining empowerment in Malaysia (Ahmad *et al.*, 2021). Based on Eljaaidi (2016), despite having extensive research on the concept of empowerment in various field such as political science, sociology, psychology and management, but still researchers found a varying perspectives empowerment.

In addition, early research has been concentrated primarily on structural empowerment (resource sharing and delegation of authority as management practices) (Ahmad *et al.*, 2021). The psychological empowerment of individuals in the workplace was the subject of subsequent research, which centred on the experience of empowerment by the individual (Ahmad *et al.*, 2021). Based on Erer (2021), practicing empowerment in workplace will potentially employees to realize their career progression process and to be satisfied with their career. Career satisfaction represent individuals attitudes towards their selected professions, which stem from accumulated work experiences and activities relating to their career choices over a long term (Carvajal *et al.*, 2021). However, Yunus and Pang (2015), reported that academics at a Malaysian research university were departing from several critical courses as a result of dissatisfaction with their career advancement delays. Those delay due to academics must perform rigorous research such as promote discoveries, teach and mentor, submit research funding requests, and manage administrative activities in order to increase their career progression.

Additionally, career development caused anxiety for 22.1% of academics staff in Malaysia Research Universities (MRUs) (Awang *et al.*, 2021). Academics staff encounter further obstacles in the form of obtaining research grants and completing paperwork that requires an extended period to be approved, which further complicates an already difficult journey (Yap, 2021). Also, while it used to be sufficient to publish articles in SCOPUS journals, scholars now need to publish in ISI-indexed Q1 and Q2 journals in order to improve their careers (Yap, 2021). Kraimer *et al* (2019), agree with Bedeian (1996), that a significant number of publications or citations is a crucial sign of academic success. In order to accommodate the substantial responsibilities of lecturers, universities set a high priority on the lecturers' careers. One of the components of the career development of a lecturer is that lecturers become more proficient in performing their responsibilities as educators (Yusuf *et al.*, 2022). Consequently, academic professions involve immense responsibilities (Hamjah, 2020), which can lead to low productivity among academics staff in MRUs and subsequently impact the QS World University Rankings of the university.

The rankings of five MRUs according to the QS World University Rankings are displayed in Table 1. As of 2023, all five universities are ranked among the top 500 universities worldwide.

Mohammad (2020), report that the government has utilised MRUs as their "engine" to drive national economic growth and transition the nation into a knowledge-based economy. As stated by Abu Said et al (2015), MRUs' activities from 2007 to 2012 served as a solution provider for industry, agencies, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), generating over RM1.2 billion as an outcome of the university and industry's collaboration in compliance with the Malaysia Education Development Plan 2015-2025. MRUs growth advances the idea of becoming a regional educational hub and focusing on research and commercialization (Abu Said *et al.*, 2015). This would help establish a brand and image that captures and keeps top local and international students (Sheriff, 2017).

Table 1
QS World University Rankings (2023)

World Rank	Institution
70	Universiti Malaya
123	Universiti Putra Malaysia
129	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
143	Universiti Sains Malaysia
203	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

Source: www.topuniversities.com

Hence, the Malaysian higher education system fulfils the requirement of globalization, leading to increased responsibilities for academics staff (Basarudin *et al.*, 2016). Nevertheless, not only in Malaysia, the European higher education system has undergone significant transformations in a relatively short period (Kwiek & Antonowicz, 2015). Also, universities in China were confronted with numerous challenges that have significantly transformed university culture (Mudrak *et al.*, 2018). Thus, the education sectors of Asian nations, including Malaysia, have been the subject of a restricted quantity of research examining psychological empowerment toward career satisfaction. Thus, the present study's principal aim was to fill the research void identified in previous investigations. Subsequently, the following discussion reviews the literature that leads to research hypotheses.

Literature Review

Brief Overview of Psychological Empowerment

One of the concepts that has been suggested for the advancement of human resources is employee empowerment (Abdulrab *et al.*, 2017). Empowerment is the act of granting employees the chance and utmost level of autonomy and freedom in conducting business, undergoing decision-making, and establishing objectives (Alwedyan *et al.*, 2023). Engaging in empowerment practices enhances employees' creativity, work-life quality, spirit of teamwork and organizational effectiveness (Vu, 2020). Psychological empowerment refers to the psychological viewpoint regarding empowerment (Abdulrab *et al.*, 2017). Psychological empowerment is founded upon Bandura's (1977), Self-efficacy Theory, which has been endorsed by Lee and Koh (2001). According to this theory, employees have confidence in their abilities to execute tasks successfully. This belief elucidates the capacity of individuals to respond to challenges encountered in their lives in order to fulfil the requirements and prerequisites for attaining success.

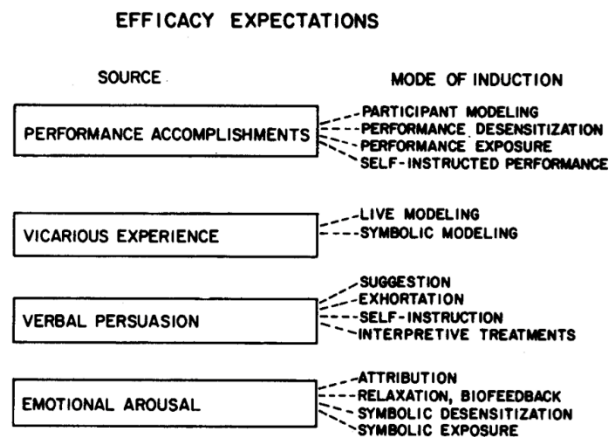


Figure 1 Major sources of efficacy information and the principal sources through which different modes of treatment operate (Source: Bandura., 1977: 195)

Self-efficacy does not arise spontaneously; individuals rely on information sources to evaluate their self-efficacy (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). Bandura (1977), proposed four main reasons for the formation of self-efficacy. First, performance accomplishments are the most reliable source because they refer to an individual's previous successful experiences or expertise in handling similar activities (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). The second is vicarious experience or modeling, which is the concept that individuals can attain success by observing and emulating the behaviors and attitudes of successful persons (Yilmaz, 2023). Third, emotional arousal pertains to the physiological condition of an individual, which can lead to either positive or negative impacts on self-efficacy (Cassia & Magno, 2021). Lastly, verbal persuasion involves either motivating or demotivating an individual by providing feedback on their talents and performance related to a particular job (Cassia & Magno, 2021).

Psychological empowerment, which is an intrinsic motivational state, signifies whether or not employees perceive themselves as having authority over their work within the organisation (Spreitzer, 2008). This theory emphasises the significance that employees attribute to their perception of their freedom in managing workplace situations and individuals. Furthermore, it effectively facilitates productive feedback, goal-oriented environments, and transparent communication in order to enhance commitment and satisfaction (Darus *et al.*, 2016). Assigning employees the authority to perform tasks and granting them greater responsibility to express opinions and make decisions at work can foster a sense of empowerment (Darus *et al.*, 2016). Conversely, employees may experience a sense of insufficient empowerment when they are granted fewer opportunities, powers, and responsibilities. Spreitzer (1995) implemented an empirical test in order to formulate the psychological empowerment construct and defined it primarily as a motivational perception manifested through four cognitions—mean, competence, self-determination, and impact—which represent an individual's work orientation.

The first dimension is meaning, which pertains to the congruence between the obligations, roles, and duties of the position within the organisational setting and the employee's values, beliefs, objectives, attitudes, and conduct (Demirer, 2020). Second, competence is defined as the conviction that an individual is capable of carrying out their professional obligations and responsibilities with proficiency and in accordance with the anticipated standards (Bağcı &

Camgöz, 2019). Third, self-determination pertains to the autonomy and feeling of control that an employee has over the manner in which they carry out their job responsibilities (Erer, 2021). Lastly is impact, refer as the degree to which a task or conduct alters the work environment (Iqbal *et al.*, 2020). As a result, numerous scholarly investigations (Meng & Sun, 2019; Iqbal *et al.*, 2020; Supriyanto *et al.*, 2023) combine the four subscales of psychological empowerment in order to construct a comprehensive measure of psychological empowerment as a whole (Loes & Tobin, 2020). Subsequently, discussion regarding career satisfaction will explain in detail.

Brief Overview of Career Satisfaction

Career satisfaction is defined as the degree to which employees consider the advancement of their careers to be consistent with their professional aspirations and personal values, in addition to the degree of contentment they derive from their chosen profession (Jabeen & Isakovic, 2018). An individual whose professional trajectory is fulfilling demonstrates qualities such as enthusiasm, productivity, commitment, and diligence and becomes the most valuable asset of an organisation (Chowdhury *et al.*, 2022). One might hypothesise that engaging in self-rewarding activities, such as teaching or research, achieving professional milestones (e.g., publication, research presentations, receiving professional awards or honours), and remaining motivated for further education might all lead to professional gratification and, consequently, career satisfaction (Hojat *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, the current body of research has solely employed the concept of "career satisfaction" as a measure of subjective career success (Judge *et al.*, 1995). Prior research has employed career satisfaction as an indicator of subjective career success (Spurk *et al.*, 2015, 2019; Zacher *et al.*, 2019).

Subjective career success refers to the emotional evaluations made by individuals regarding their professional achievements (Kraimer *et al.*, 2019). In contrast, failing to achieve subjective career success is associated with detrimental outcomes such as disengagement, turnover intentions, and counter-productive worker behaviors (Hu *et al.*, 2022). Accordingly, subjective career success is defined in the current study as the perception of success in one's work and career. This study favored the Career Success Model as it is associated with the Career Satisfaction Scale by Greenhaus *et al.* (1990), which used a comprehensive, unidimensional concept of subjective career success (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008). Also, career satisfaction scale is the most frequently used measure of self-referent subjective career success evaluations (Hofmans *et al.*, 2008) with good construct validity (Ng *et al.*, 2005; Hofmans *et al.*, 2008; Spurk *et al.*, 2011). The four sorts of managers described by Sturges (1999) in his Career Success Model are climbers, experts, influencers, and self-realisers (Burke, 2007).

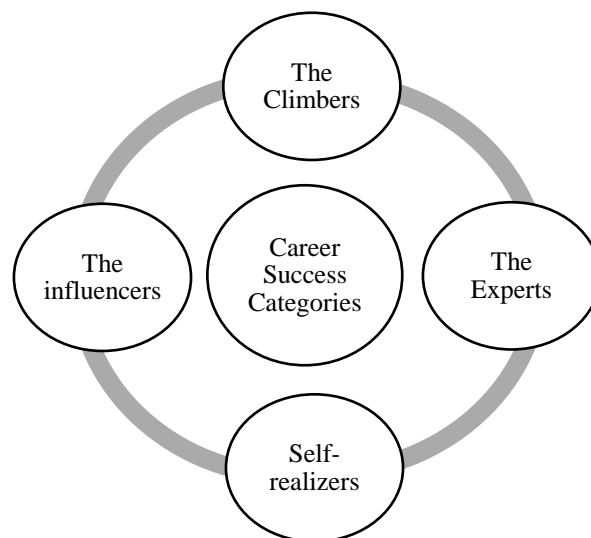


Figure 2 Career Success Categories (Source: Sturges, 1999: 245)

The first climbers are individual who describe their success in terms of external criteria including salary and promotions (Sahraoui Bentaleb, 2016). The second type of individual is the expert, whose success is measured by reaching a high level of competency at their job and being recognised personally (Raubenheimer & Ngulube, 2019). Third, self-aware individuals who focus on striking a balance between their personal and professional lives realise success as an internal idea (Raubenheimer & Ngulube, 2019). Last but not least are the influencers, who, regardless of their standing in the hierarchy, are capable of taking actions at work that have a noticeable and beneficial impact on the organisation (Raubenheimer & Ngulube, 2019). Furthermore, understanding people's contentment and well-being requires a grasp of subjective career success. For these reasons, it is advantageous for companies to know what influences employees' subjective career success and how they feel about it (Smale *et al.*, 2019).

The Impact of Psychological Empowerment on Career Satisfaction

A research investigation conducted in China involving teacher revealed a noteworthy correlation between psychological empowerment and career satisfaction (Sun *et al.*, 2022). When teachers have a high level of psychological empowerment, they will see their work as meaningful and worth their effort, thereby increasing their psychological resources and improving their career satisfaction (Sun *et al.*, 2022). Boonyarit *et al.* (2010), and Karatepe and Karadas (2015) makes a similar point in his which psychological empowerment is a concept that encourages employees to believe in the purpose of their occupations, their ability to fulfil their responsibilities, their sense of self-determination, and their impact on affecting the results of their work. Along the same lines, Biemann *et al.* (2015), subsequently argued that once individual believes that they are capable navigating their careers, evaluations of predicted career advancement will tend to be more positive.

An investigation of psychological empowerment and career satisfaction (Blais *et al.*, 2020) found that psychological empowerment influences career satisfaction. Saira (2019), sees empowerment through leadership that provides subordinates with a feeling of significance in their job and helps them feel understood and appreciated. This, in turn, leads to increased

levels of satisfaction with their work and more opportunities for professional advancement (Yang *et al.*, 2022). Supporting this view, Lee *et al.* (2019), writes that individual who have positive meaningful work hence to have greater career satisfaction as meaningful work provides subordinates with a sense of job value, purpose, and motivation towards their work. In the same vein, Guo and Cheng (2021), notes that employees are more likely to accept challenging work and benefit from organisation if the organisation provides a distribution of power among employees. This because it will increase the employees' confidence regarding their future career prospects and enhance their expectations regarding career growth.

Joo and Nam (2019), reported that there is a positive correlation between psychological empowerment and career satisfaction. They demonstrated that employee's career progression satisfaction will be influenced by the empowering circumstance and method. Oliveira *et al.* (2023), suggest that promotes flexibility and decision-making capacity of the through the sharing of power, information and autonomy for decision-making and active participation of all its members is one of the circumstances of empowerment in the workplace. In addition, it was discovered in a study of career satisfaction and psychological empowerment (Namasivayam *et al.*, 2014; Blais *et al.*, 2020; Safari *et al.*, 2020) that career satisfaction is influenced by psychological empowerment. Employees who feel empowered have a greater willingness to participate in the goal-setting process in order to align their professional trajectories with their selves further (Kim & Beehr, 2017).

The research conduct by Türe and Akkoç (2020), among employees who worked in a university hospital at Turkey has found a positive correlation between psychological empowerment and career satisfaction. Based on their study, psychologically empowered employees are confident in their abilities, have control, and are aware of their business requirements, values, and beliefs. Agreed by Schermuly *et al.* (2022), employees will gain a better understanding of their job and their position in the organization as a whole. If worker are satisfaction with their work, they intend to have high career satisfaction (Boštjančič & Petrovčič, 2019). The present study posits, on the basis of empirical research, that psychological empowerment has a substantial impact on career contentment. Hence, hypothesis was developed and assuming that psychological empowerment will influence career satisfaction.

H_a. There is an effect of Psychological Empowerment on Career Satisfaction among academics staff at Malaysian Research Universities.

Methodology

Sample

The empirical portion of this paper was carried out with a sample of 101 academics staff members from five research universities in Malaysia. A survey was adapted to determine whether or not academics at Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia, and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia are satisfied with their careers. In collaboration with the Chancellery Department of each university, a cross-sectional pilot study was implemented, utilizing self-administered online distribution.

Measurement

In assessing the psychological empowerment construct, this study used the 12 items from the multidimensional questionnaire developed by Spreitzer (1995), which is called the Psychological Empowerment Scale (PES). The questionnaire's scale is divided into four subdimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. The instrument's consistency reliability was 0.96 (Saleh *et al.*, 2022). For the measuring of Career Satisfaction, five items were adapted from Greenhaus *et al.* (1990), namely the Career Satisfaction Scale (CSS). The instrument's consistency reliability was 0.91 (Tahiry & Ekmekcioglu, 2023). For both questionnaires, participants were instructed to rate the statement on five points ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The collected data was assessed utilizing Smart PLS 4.0. SmartPLS is a multivariate technique capable of simultaneously managing various things, including response variables to explanatory variables (Purwanto & Sudargini, 2021). Before continuing, a method to test the model will be utilized by applying structural equation modeling (SEM) as an inferential statistical analysis technique to test the research hypothesis (Indarti *et al.*, 2017). Generally, structural equation modeling (SEM) involves the evaluation of two models: a measurement model and structural model which are explained in the following sub-topic (Purwanto & Sudargini, 2021).

Analyses and Findings

Demographic

Regarding demographic information for 101 respondents in the current study, the analysis results indicate that 38.6% respondents are male and 61.4% are female. The age group from 41 to 49 years is the largest group of academics staff from five research universities in Malaysia; it reached about 35.6% respondents. Furthermore, Malay was the most numerous race, with 59.4% respondents. Regarding job tenure, most respondents work less than five years, which is 44.6% respondents. As for income, 59.4% respondents out of 100% received RM 3,071.00 to RM 11,831.00 per month. In terms of educational attainment, mostly respondent which is 94.1% of them held a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

Measurement Model Analysis

Based on recommendations of Hair *et al.* (2017), the measurement model was an assessment by two aspects including convergent validity and discriminant validity. In convergent validity, must retain the items that achieve loading more than 0.70, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability should be more than 0.7 and average variance extracted (AVE) should be more than 0.5 (Hair *et al.*, 2014). However, AVE for psychological empowerment is 0.347. AVE and composite dependability can be improved by removal factor loading between 0.40 and 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2014). Thus, the lowest factor loading was eliminated, which could not exceed 20% of the total indicator (Ramayah *et al.*, 2018). After PE2, PE3, and PE5 were removed, AVE increased to 0.407 which is acceptable if composite reliability is more than 0.6 which supported by (Huang *et al.*, 2013). Table 3 shows the results of convergent validity analysis, and it achieved the minimum requirement suggested by (Hair *et al.*, 2017). Thus, all latent constructs in the current study are valid and reliable.

Table 3

Factor Loadings (FL), Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Cronbach's Alpha (CA) Summaries for Each Variable

Construct	Indicator	FL	CR	AVE	CA
Psychological Empowerment (PE)	PE1	0.415	0.835	0.407	0.811
	PE4	0.411			
	PE6	0.505			
	PE7	0.739			
	PE8	0.767			
	PE9	0.709			
	PE10	0.697			
	PE11	0.697			
	PE12	0.677			
	Career Satisfaction (CS)	CS1			
CS2		0.826			
CS3		0.833			
CS4		0.878			
CS5		0.797			

Regarding the discriminant validity, Table 4 shows the results based on cross-loadings, Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT). According to the rule of thumb, cross-loading is significant when two or more components have a loading value greater than 0.1 (Ngah *et al.*, 2018) which show in Table 4 indicate all indicators loaded on the construct were higher than others, confirming its distinction. As for Fornell-Larcker criterion, Table 5 indicate that AVE value to exceed all associated correlation so that it can be concluded that the model has met discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Moreover, to assess PLS discriminant validity, Henseler *et al.* (2015), suggested using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) correlation ratio also instead of the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings only. HTMT should be below 0.90 and Table 6 indicate HTMT values of 0.625 for psychological empowerment were acceptable in this study (Kumar, 2022). Thus, all latent constructs in the current study are valid and reliable.

Table 4

Cross Loading

Item	Career Satisfaction (CS)	Psychological Empowerment (PE)
CS1	0.854	0.445
CS2	0.826	0.447
CS3	0.833	0.524
CS4	0.878	0.520
CS5	0.797	0.392
PE1	0.216	0.415
PE4	0.247	0.411
PE6	0.186	0.505
PE7	0.399	0.739
PE8	0.313	0.767
PE9	0.405	0.709
PE10	0.428	0.697
PE11	0.450	0.697
PE12	0.416	0.677

Table 5

Fornell-Larcker's Criterion

	Career Satisfaction	Psychological Empowerment
Career Satisfaction	0.838	
Psychological Empowerment	0.561	0.638

Note. The diagonal figures (in bold) represent the square root of the AVE, while the off-diagonals represent the correlations among the variables.

Table 6

HTMT.85 Criterion

	Career Satisfaction	Psychological Empowerment
Career Satisfaction		
Psychological Empowerment	0.625	

Structural Model Analysis

Structural model assessment includes the collinearity issues, path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), the predictive relevance (Q^2) and effect size (f^2) (Hair *et al.*, 2014). According to Hair *et al.* (2009), the collinearity issue arises when there is a high correlation between a pair of predictors. The variance inflation factor, often known as VIF, should be less than five (Hair *et al.*, 2011) and Table 7 shows there is no potential collinearity problem in this study as no VIF is higher than five.

Table 7

Collinearity Assessment via VIF

	Career Satisfaction	Psychological Empowerment
Career Satisfaction	1.00	
Psychological Empowerment		

Subsequently, using the Bootstrap function in SmartPLS 4.0, the structural model coefficient analysis is utilised to ascertain which relationships in question have a substantial impact. Table 8 shown reveals that the p-values were 0.000, and the t-value was greater than 1.96 which full fill the requirement p-value has to be less than 0.5 and the t-value must be greater than 1.96 according to (Hair et al., 2017). Hence, based Hair et al (2017), the relationship is considered significant.

Table 8

Path Analysis

	Original Sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)	t statistics (O/SD)	p values
Psychological empowerment → Career Satisfaction	0.561	0.584	0.086	6.507	0.000

Table 9 indicates that the coefficient of determination (R^2) value for the endogenous latent variable (Career Satisfaction) is 0.314, categorised as weak as the value is > 0.25 (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2014). If R^2 more than 0.75, it consider as substantial and moderate if the value is > 0.50 (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2014). Next, Table 10 indicate the value of effect size (f^2) in the current study was 0.459, which consider as large effect. Lastly, Table 11 contains the predictive relevance (Q^2) results. The career satisfaction value shown in Table 11 for the blindfolding test is 0.250, which is greater than zero. Therefore, based on Hair et al. (2017) the predictive relevance of the path model is positive and thus, these results indicate the structural model developed in the current study has predictive accuracy.

Table 9

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

	R^2	R^2 adjusted	Level
Career Satisfaction	0.314	0.307	Weak

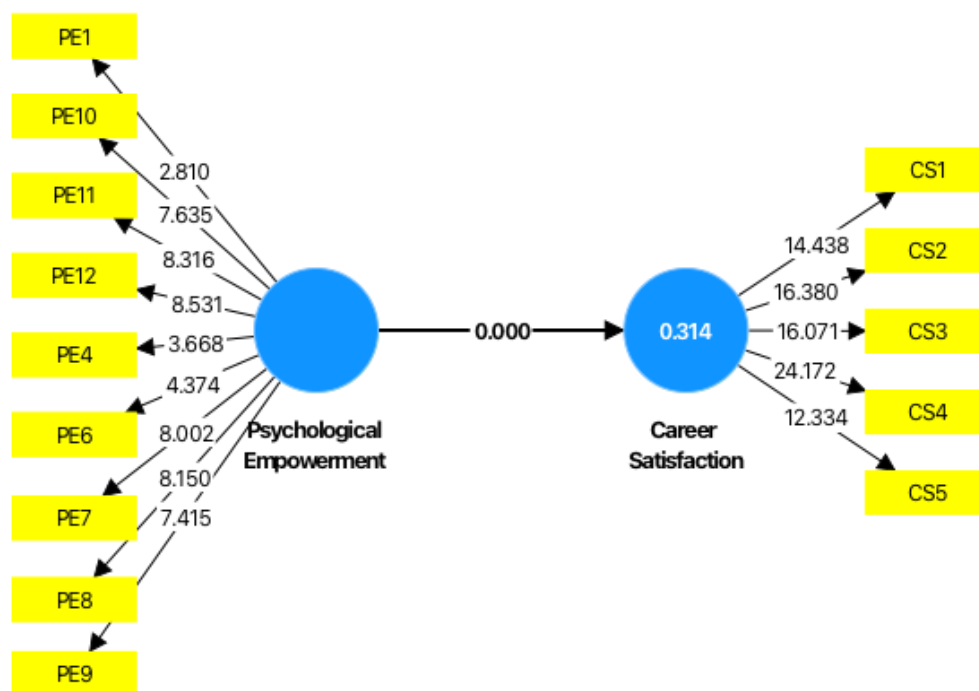
Table 10
Effect Size (f^2)

	Career Satisfaction	Psychological Empowerment
Career Satisfaction		
Psychological Empowerment	0.459 (large)	

Table 11
Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

	Q^2
Career Satisfaction	0.250

Figure 3 displays the complete result of the structural model estimation through the PLS Algorithm, which shows the path coefficient value between the construct variables. The result indicates a p-value (<0.05) and t-statistics test (> 1.96), implying the statistical significance of the path from psychological empowerment to career satisfaction. Subsequently, the interpretation of the findings is described in the following sub-topic, including recommendations, limitations, and significance of study.



PE= Psychological Empowerment; CS = Career Satisfaction

Figure 3 Structural Model Assessment

Discussion

The primary objective of this research endeavour is to enhance comprehension regarding the fundamental process that connects psychological empowerment and career satisfaction among Malaysian academics. According to the findings of this research, psychological empowerment significantly increased career satisfaction in academia. An effective

empowerment initiative is an essential element in enhancing academics' career contentment, which allows academics to envision a feasible future and maintain a sense of individual development by aligning their actions with their predetermined objectives. Vu (2020) argues that demonstrating one's authority, or ownership, can serve as the impetus for an increased sense of empowerment. Psychological empowerment among academics staff in China contributed to greater career satisfaction by instilling in them a sense that their work is valuable and significant (Sun *et al.*, 2022). These emotions ultimately contributed to increased career satisfaction.

Çankaya and Eriş (2022), posit that implementing employee empowerment practices within organizations can enhance personnel satisfaction by instilling a sense of efficacy and competence. Implementing empowerment practices within organizations facilitates the alignment of employees' values with both the job and the organization, thereby enhancing career progression opportunities. Lee and Koh (2001), concur that psychological empowerment results from Bandura's (1977), self-efficacy theory, in which employees are assured of their work performance. An additional study by Türe and Akkoç (2020), discovered that psychological empowerment significantly influences career satisfaction. The outcome suggests that empowerment fosters a sense of authority and accountability among all organizational personnel. Employees are more likely to demonstrate advantageous behaviors that benefit both the organization and the individuals employed when they perceive themselves as more significant and assume greater accountability.

Furthermore, Smithikrai (2022), who examined employees of both public and private organizations in Thailand, presented consistent evidence that corroborated the current study's findings. This is because delegating a reasonable degree of autonomy and discretion regarding their work responsibilities will increase their sense of self-determination and inspire them to feel professional and organizational pride. In addition, current findings is consistent with that of Bodine Al-Sharif *et al* (2021), who found out that within higher education specifically, empowerment has emerged as a significant factor in employee satisfaction. These results corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous work in (Joo & Nam, 2019). Based on them, employees who possess psychological empowerment at work are more likely to experience career advancement satisfaction within their current organization (Joo & Nam, 2019). These results corroborate the present study.

The present research analyses confirm that academics staff with a high level freedom in implement task, which in turn to a higher level of career satisfaction. This is consistent with the results of (Aydogmus, 2019), which indicate that psychological empowerment has a significant positive correlation with career satisfaction. Incorporating opportunities for challenge, accountability, and decision autonomy into the work environment can significantly enhance employees' psychological well-being and increase career satisfaction. The findings of the present study also indicate that providing employees with opportunities for self-directed decision-making, exposure to active mastery experiences, and personal advancement prospects will increase their career satisfaction, which is consistent with the research of (Blais *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, by increasing psychological empowerment, organizations can positively impact not only the career satisfaction of their employees but also their daily lives.

Limitation and Recommendation

It is essential to acknowledge that this exploratory study has several limitations. Workers from various industries may offer differing perspectives on the results. Future studies should examine responders from various higher education institutions or other industries. Future research should link the current variable with mediating variables that could strengthen the relationship on employee career satisfaction to ensure the result becomes more credible. Future research may show that some career satisfaction among academics staff is unrelated to empowerment. However, other factors like pay and working circumstances may also impact career satisfaction levels. Lastly, the current study only considered one predictor—psychological empowerment. Future research should consider various work-related factors, such as managerial behaviours, personality traits like perfectionism, or job crafting predictors.

Conclusion

To summarize, results indicate that psychological empowerment is a potentially innovative frame to enhance academic career satisfaction. Psychological empowerment is an internal stimulator to motivate the behavior and performance of employees. For example, the autonomy given to employees will form independence in work, which expedites the work process (Putra *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, academics can reach enormous achievements such as publishing high-impact journals and high-quality lecturing. The results add to the literature by providing empirical support for empowerment that postulates the consequences of sharing and transferring power from leaders to employees (Helland *et al.*, 2020). Based on the outcome, this research provides helpful guidance for the management and development of higher learning institutions. Instead of controlling the organizational structure of their institutions, higher institution learning needs to engage with empowering academics in managing their work by investing in relational interaction that promotes mutual trust and meaning found in work, encourages self-determination, enhances self-efficacy, and increases the sense of personal consequences of academics at work. Those acts create the best interest for happier academics and, thus, society in general.

The study is significantly important from the theoretical perspective as it helps extend the growing literature on psychological empowerment and career satisfaction. Specifically, it helps bridge the literature gap by examining psychological empowerment toward career satisfaction, whereby there are various empowerment practices that will generate optimal performance outcomes which affect personal growth and goal achievement. The findings of this study enhance the understanding of how empowerment contributes to the individual feeling of success in terms of achievement and career prospects, thus reporting a higher level of career satisfaction. Also, this study explores the connection career success model by Sturges (1999) with employees' career satisfaction. Thus, the indicator to boost individual career satisfaction can also become new knowledge toward the career success model by Sturges (1999), a theory utilised in this study. Hence, the novelty of the current study is in analysing the effect of psychological empowerment on career satisfaction.

On top of that, this investigation provides new empirical evidence that improves psychological empowerment and career satisfaction knowledge. The significance of this non-experimental, quantitative, correlational study is its ability to fill a gap in the research and literature, as improved knowledge of these characteristics may produce a healthier work environment within the education sector. This study is represented by the worthy and valuable instruction

expected to be offered to the leadership of Malaysian public universities. In other words, applying the study's expected findings will assist such universities in maintaining the academics' high level of work outcomes, which, in turn, enhances the performance and effectiveness of the public universities. Besides, this study can be a reference for future research on psychological empowerment and career satisfaction. The discovery of this study provides additional information and more concrete evidence on the relationship between psychological empowerment and career satisfaction in the context of Malaysian education.

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