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Employee Empowerment as a Predictor of Job Satisfaction: Examining the Mediating Effect of Employee Trust and Employee Value

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Abstract
The primary purpose of this study was to examine the effect of employee empowerment on employee trust and employee perceived value, and to investigate the mediating roles of employee trust and employee value in the relationship between employee empowerment and job satisfaction. The study targeted both academic and administrative staff of Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University and University of Balochistan, with a sample of 320 respondents. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using correlation and regression techniques. The findings revealed that employee empowerment significantly contributes to positive employee perceptions, particularly greater trust and a stronger sense of value within the organization. Furthermore, employee trust and perceived value positively influence job satisfaction and mediate the relationship between employee empowerment and job satisfaction. The findings have important implications for university management and higher authorities, suggesting that empowerment-oriented practices can enhance employee satisfaction and potentially improve overall organizational performance. The study recommends that higher education institutions strengthen empowerment practices to foster trust, recognition, satisfaction, and improved employee outcomes.

Keywords: Employee empowerment, job satisfaction, employee trust, employee value

Introduction

Singh & dixit (2011) define the term employee empowerment as "enlargement of an employee's job responsibility by giving him the authority of decision making about his own job without approval of his immediate supervisors". Employees feel as a part of the decision making process, working more efficiently, increases organization productivity and large number of organizations take different initiative in this regard (Lawle et al, 2001). Employee empowerment tool is pursued to full fill the need of work force competencies strategically abilities to compete in global business environment.

Two essential perspectives of employee empowerment are Psychological empowerment (Classical approach) and Social and structural empowerment. Most of research work was conducted by researchers on their dimensions and integration. Social exchange and social power are focused in Social and structural empowerment and means while employees sense and control to their work and how they experience their jobs are focused areas of Psychological Empowerment.

Researchers have extensively examined the relationship between employee empowerment, job experiences, individual well-being, and job satisfaction. Earlier research conceptualized empowerment from both social-structural and psychological perspectives, emphasizing that empowerment involves not only access to organizational resources and decision-making authority but also employees' perceptions of control and influence over their work. At both individual and team levels, four major dimensions of psychological empowerment have been identified: autonomy, meaningfulness, competence, and impact, reflecting employees' sense of choice, purpose, capability, and influence within the organization (Kirkman, 1999; Spreitzer, 1995). Individual characteristics, including self-esteem, educational level, organizational tenure, and employee rank, may also shape employees' perceptions of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995). More recent research supports the continuing importance of these dimensions. Slemp et al. (2021) found that organizational interventions supporting autonomy, competence, and relatedness can strengthen employees' psychological needs and promote more supportive workplace environments. Similarly, research on empowering leadership indicates that empowerment is positively associated with job satisfaction and organization.

The purpose of this study is to reveal the effect of employee empowerment on employee intrinsic feelings (employee trust and value), and contribution of these two factors towards job satisfaction through mediating role. Strong conceptualized relationship between supervisor and employee through Employee empowerment increases the feelings in employees about their respect and they perceive procedural and distributional justice in an organization. This empirical research addresses following questions:

How employee empowerment works to generate employee value and employee trust feelings?
What is the impact of employee trust and Employee value on job satisfaction?
What is the role of Employee value and Employee trust in Employee empowerment and job satisfaction relationship?

Literature Review

Employee Empowerment:

According to Vaget and Murrel (1990) "empowerment is the period of improving the decision making abilities of employees through cooperation, sharing, training, education and team work" and "It is a relational construct based on superior-subordinate authority sharing and a motivational construct that satisfies an individual's desire for self-determination and self-efficacy" (Elmes et.al, 2005).

Employee empowerment has been widely recognized as an important mechanism for strengthening employees' commitment toward their jobs and organizations. Its various dimensions can enhance employees' sense of responsibility, involvement, and attachment to their work (Westgeest, 2011). Empowered employees are also more likely to feel motivated to provide high-quality customer services and contribute toward the achievement of organizational goals (Chigozirim & Mazdarani, 2008). Through empowerment, employees can develop relevant skills, enhance their knowledge, and perform job-related tasks more effectively and innovatively (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, n.d). Empowerment has also been associated with self-motivation, proactive thinking, innovative behavior, and employees' willingness to take calculated risks (Keung, 2010). Furthermore, empowered employees may develop helping attitudes, engage more actively in organizational activities, and contribute to sustainable competitive advantage and organizational efficiency (Kahreh, Ahmadi, & Hashemi, 2011). Supporting this perspective, Ali et al. (2019) found that employee empowerment positively contributes to organizational commitment and employee performance, indicating that empowerment can strengthen employees' attachment to the organization while improving their work-related outcomes.

Employee Trust:

Employee's trust refers to "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another". Research study shows that employee's trust and empowerment are positively correlated (Findikli et al., 2010). Two types of trust exist in the organization. The trust which the managers have on the employees in obtaining the goals of the organization is called the managers's trust and the trust which the employees have on the managers is called employees trust. Employees performance and manager's trust on employees are positively associated (Leonard, 2007).

Employee participation in decision-making can enhance employees' trust in the organization, which may subsequently strengthen their commitment and contribute to improved organizational productivity. The relationship between trust and employee participation can be relevant across both public and private sector organizations (Hussain et al , 2012). Similarly, innovative organizational capabilities can strengthen employees' trust in their immediate supervisors while fostering a greater sense of empowerment (Erturk, 2012). Zeffane et al. (2011) found that effective communication among employees enhances organizational trust, while higher levels of trust are associated with stronger employee commitment. Supporting these arguments, Alajmi (2016) found that psychological empowerment was positively associated with employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment, while organizational trust played an important mediating role in these relationships. Overall, the literature suggests that participation, communication, empowerment, and trust are interconnected organizational processes that can strengthen employees' commitment and contribute to positive organizational outcomes.

Employee's Value

"Valuing is about appreciating the worth of something (someone) and of esteeming something (someone) highly. When we value employees, we appreciate them for who they are and what they bring to the organization" (Jelton, 2009). Self-respect and value feelings in employees increase employee retention. By providing career opportunities has strongest impact on employee loyalty (Vas & Maganck, 2009), in addition Employee perception that they are treated with respect and value also depends on supervisors interactional justice in rules implementation process. Employee empowerment works well when employees perceive that their suggestions are considered valuable and accepted where needed and they have great authority to use and opportunities are given (Shelton & T, 2002). Respect is useful indicator to generate employee value feeling. Different Psychological factors work to motivate people to divert their efforts to achieve common goal (Chaudhary & Bharti, 2012).

An organizational culture that neglects respect and dignity toward employees may experience adverse consequences, including reduced productivity, workplace incivility, low employee morale, increased turnover intentions, and weakened employees' sense of ownership toward the organization. Therefore, organizations should emphasize the effective implementation of organizational values that promote dignity, respect, fairness, and equal treatment among employees. Such values can contribute to a more positive and respectful workplace environment, strengthen employees' attitudes toward the organization, and support productive workplace relationships. In this regard, workplace civility, which reflects courtesy and respect for others, is closely associated with organizational culture and can contribute to the development of a healthy organizational climate ((Wanne, n.d ; Yan & Cao, 2019).

Job Satisfaction:

The literature indicates that job satisfaction is considered as an important factor for enhancing the performance of the organization and returns on stock therefore the HRM theories emphasize on job satisfaction (Edmans, 2012). Locke, (1976) defines job satisfaction as "job satisfaction is a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job and job experiences". On the basis of gender it is found that male employee's satisfaction level with their job is higher as compared to female employees (Akbar et al., 2011). The literature review showed that different studies has been conducted

in order to determine the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic benefits on the job satisfaction. The research indicates that extrinsic rewards have a greater influence on job satisfaction as compared to intrinsic rewards (Rafiq et al , 2012).
Employees' job satisfaction is significantly influenced by a combination of environmental, behavioral, and organizational factors. A supportive work environment characterized by manageable levels of stress, fair and equitable reward policies, and opportunities for participation in decision-making can enhance employees' satisfaction with their jobs (Wadhwa et al., 2011). Similarly, Muder and Tooksoon (2011) emphasized that positive and supportive human resource practices can improve employee efficiency and job satisfaction, which, in turn, can contribute to employee retention. Furthermore, providing employees with greater autonomy and freedom in selecting or performing their work tasks can strengthen job satisfaction and encourage higher-quality work outcomes (Munoz & Fernandez, 2005). Supporting this perspective, Maan et al. (2020) found that perceived organizational support positively influences psychological empowerment and job satisfaction, highlighting the importance of creating a supportive organizational environment that enables employees to feel valued, empowered, and satisfied with their work.

Theoretical Frame work

Impact of Employee Empowerment on Employee Value:

Empowered Employees feel that they are valued by organization more than an employee. they are valuable assets for organization and through investing in them, organizations want to make them valuable part of organization forever (Ellie & Gopal) , in return Internal sense of self value make them able to develop abilities, confidence to suggest and take risk .through four important components namely self-identity, self-value ,self-acceptance they become able to take actions in life . (Willey, 1997) How much employees perceive that they are respected and valued depends on team support activities, efforts for promoting communication, friendly environment and outcome can be experienced as stress alleviation at work place environment (Jouber & De Beer, ,2010).

Impact of Employee Value on Job satisfaction:

Immediate manager cooperative relationship with employee generate job satisfaction, furthermore communication between manger and subordinate, information sharing and discussion on job related issues lowers hindrances in employee performance. In manufacturing concern three factors contribute more towards job satisfaction are transformation of accurate information, timely information transformation and treatment of employees by supervisor with respect and dignity (research report by SHRM, 2010). Employees feel relaxed at work place with the supervisor support in interaction and communication. Supervisory support increases organizational commitment and results come in the form of job satisfaction and employee retention (Anis, Rehman, Rehman, Khan, & Hamayon, September 2011).

Impact of Employee Empowerment on Employee trust:

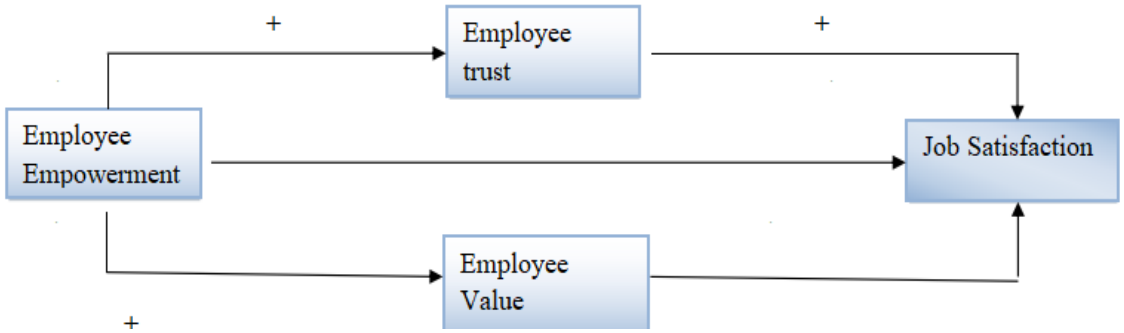
Literature indicates that employees trust can be enhanced if the organization empowered the employees. Employee empowerment will not only beneficial for the employee but also for the organization as a whole as the empowered employee's performance will be high and their dealing with customer will be appreciable. It is seemed that the quality of the ultimate product or service will be high (Tariq et al , 2011). Team work, organizational commitment, sharing .Team work, organizational commitment, sharing information, employee empowerment, organizational justice and motivation are the most important elements for establishing employee trust on the organization, managers and among the employees (yilmaz et al., 2009).

Impact of employee Trust on Job satisfaction:

Employee trust is an important organizational factor that shapes employees' attitudes, perceptions, and experiences at work. Trust reflects employees' willingness to rely on the organization, supervisors, and colleagues based on positive expectations regarding their intentions, fairness, competence, and reliability. In organizational settings, a trustworthy environment can reduce uncertainty and vulnerability, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and create a sense of security, which can positively influence employees' job satisfaction.
Empirical research consistently indicates a positive association between organizational trust and job satisfaction. Employees who perceive their organization and supervisors as trustworthy are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward their jobs because they feel respected, supported, and fairly treated. Trust can also encourage open communication, participation in decision-making, and cooperation, thereby improving employees' overall work experience. A meta-analysis by Akar (2018) found a substantial positive relationship between organizational trust and job satisfaction, indicating that trust is an important predictor of positive employee attitudes. The relationship between trust and job satisfaction is also supported by more recent empirical evidence. Biçer (2020), examining white-collar employees, found significant relationships between organizational trust, job satisfaction, and conflict-management practices. The findings suggest that constructive organizational relationships and trust-supportive practices can contribute to more favorable employee attitudes. Similarly, research among healthcare workers has examined organizational trust as an important factor associated with job satisfaction, demonstrating the relevance of trust within service-oriented work environments.
Literature review revealed that research has been done on the relationship between employee empowerment and employee trust, employee empowerment and employee value feelings, employee trust and job satisfaction, employee value and job satisfaction especially in corporate sector. The present study will fill this gap by integrating these four factors and by focusing

H1: Employee empowerment positively affects employee's value.
H2: Employee's value positively affects job satisfaction.
H3: Employee empowerment positively affects employee's trust
H4: Employee's trust positively affects job satisfaction.
H5: Employee's trust significantly mediates relationship between employee empowerment and job satisfaction.
H6: Employee's value significantly mediates relationship between employee empowerment and job satisfaction.

Theoretical Model of the study:
Figure 1 showing theatrical model of the study



Research methodology:
The study is descriptive and empirical in nature and adopts a quantitative, deductive research approach to examine the relationships among employee empowerment, employee trust, employee value, and job satisfaction. The target population comprises faculty members and administrative staff of two public-sector universities in Balochistan: Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University (SBK Women's University), Quetta, which is committed to promoting and expanding opportunities for female higher education in Balochistan, and the University of Balochistan, Quetta, the pioneer public-sector university in the province. A total sample of 320 participants following Khalid et al., (2021) will be selected for data collection, with 160 respondents from each university, comprising 80 faculty members and 80 administrative staff. Due to accessibility and time constraints, a convenience sampling technique will be employed to select the respondents. Primary data will be collected through a structured survey questionnaire consisting of close-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The questionnaire will be designed to quantify the respondents' perceptions of employee empowerment, employee trust, employee value, and job satisfaction. The collected data will be analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 22. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the characteristics of the data, while correlation analysis will assess the direction and strength of associations among the study variables. Regression analysis will subsequently be employed to determine the predictive relationships among employee empowerment, employee trust, employee value, and job satisfaction.

Results of the study:
Response rate from faculty member was 78.3% and from administrative staff 73% in SBKWU and response rate from faculty member was 65% and from administrative staff 80% in UOB.
Questionnaire was developed by taking questions for four variables. To measure internal consistency of questionnaire, Cronbach alpha test was applied.
1.To measure employee empowerment 12 Items likert scale was used adopted from Spreitzer (1995), ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) .
2.To measure employee's trust 12 Items likert scale was used adopted from Moye's (2003), ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).
3.To measure employee's value 9 Items likert scale was used, adopted from Niehoff and Moorman (1993), ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).
4.To measure job satisfaction 11 Items likert scale was used adopted from two sources namely D.J.Weiss, R.v.Dawis, G.W.England & L.H.Lofquis(1967) and Hackman and Oldham(1975), ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Table 1 showing Variables with Cronbach Alpha value

Variables	**Cronbach Alpha value**
Employee empowerment	0.89
Employee trust	0.78
Employee value	0.89
Job satisfaction	0.87

Greater values of alpha in table 1 exhibits that consistency exists among the items measuring variables.

Tables 2 showing mean standard deviation and Pearson correlation results of variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Age	30.14	5.46	1						
Work experience in an org	4.38	3.18	0.54**	1					
Total Work experience	6.31	4.42	0.56**	0.74**	1				
Employee empowerment	3.78	0.752	0.60	-0.20	-0.14	1			
Employee trust	3.34	0.552	-0.3	-0.12	-0.19	0.49**	1		
Employee value	3.45	0.639	-0.19	-0.27*	-0.34**	0.51**	0.63**	1	
Job satisfaction	3.56	0.675	-0.11	-0.14	-0.202	0.41**	0.58**	0.59**	1

**correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 showing regression results

Variables	B	t- value	p-value	R-square
Employee Empowerment ⟶ Employee trust	0.496	5.364	0.00	0.246
Employee Empowerment ⟶ Employee value	0.518	5.642	0.00	0.268
Employee trust ⟶ Job satisfaction	0.586	6.709	0.00	0.344
Employee value ⟶ Job satisfaction	0.599	6.932	0.00	0.358

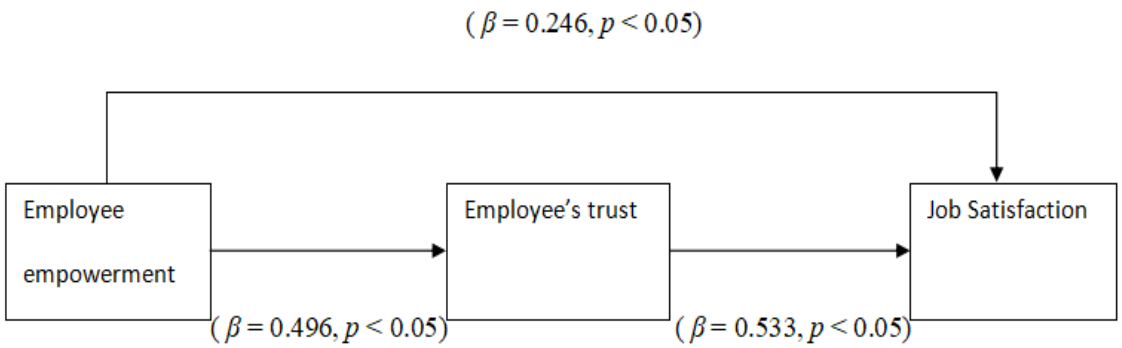
To test hypotheses, correlation and regression analysis were conducted. Result indicate significant positive predicted relationship .Employee empowerment perception regarding employee trust ($r = 0.504$, $p < 0.01$) proved significantly and positively correlated as well as with employee value($r = 0.517$, $p < 0.01$), in addition to this results exhibit that employee trust significantly and positively relates to job satisfaction ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$) and employee value also significantly and positively relates to job satisfaction ($r = 0.599$, $p < 0.01$).

Regression analysis was conducted to see the impact of employee empowerment on employee trust and value as well as to see the impact of employee trust and value on job satisfaction. By taking employee empowerment as independent variable ,statistically significant parameters estimates were found in results which shows employee empowerment has significant positive affect on employee trust($\beta = 0.496, t = 5.364, p < 0.05$) and employee value ($\beta = 0.518, t = 5.642, p < 0.05$) in addition to this by taking employee trust and value as independent variables, regression analysis indicates significant positive affect of employee trust on job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.345, t = 3.246, p < 0.05$) as well as employee value effect on job satisfaction($\beta = 0.379, t = 3.570, p < 0.05$) prove through statistically significant parameters estimates.

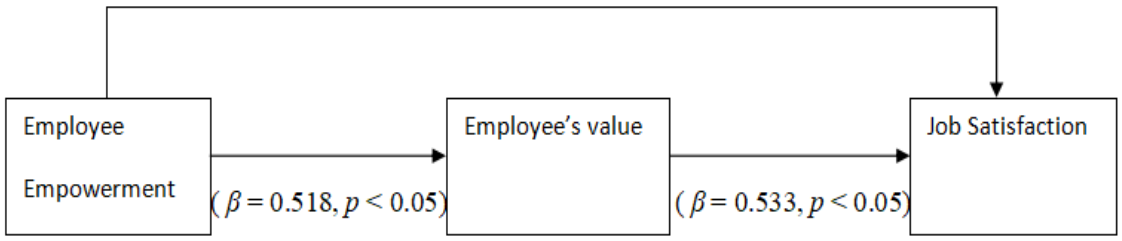
Employee empowerment brings approximately 25% variation in employee's trust and 27% in employee's value while employee's trust brings 34 % and employee's value brings approximately 36 % variation in job satisfaction.

Mediation results were taken from med graph programme. Results exhibits employee's trust total effect (c) 0.417, direct effect (c´) 0.246 and indirect effect of 0.276, with sobel Z-value 7.7246 with p- value 0.000001(less than 5%) ,which shows significant mediating effect of employee's trust between employee empowerment and job satisfaction.

Figures 2 and 3 showing mediation test results



Mediating results of employee's value shows significant mediation with total effect (c) 0.417, direct effect (c´) 0.246 and indirect effect 0.276, sobel Z-value 7.724 with p=0.000001(also less than 5%) .



Discussion

The present study aims to examine the relationships among employee empowerment, employee trust, employee value, and job satisfaction in the context of higher education, drawing on insights from previous empirical and conceptual research. All results support hypotheses. The discussion suggests that employee empowerment is an important organizational mechanism through which employees' perceptions of trust, personal value, and job satisfaction can be strengthened. In universities, where faculty members and administrative staff are required to exercise professional judgment, solve problems, participate in decision-making, and perform responsibilities with a considerable degree of autonomy, empowerment can provide an important foundation for positive employee attitudes and organizational outcomes.

Employee empowerment appears to have a significant influence on employee trust. When employees are provided with appropriate authority, competencies, autonomy, resources, and opportunities to participate in organizational decisions, they are more likely to perceive management as supportive and trustworthy. Yeh-Yun Lin (1998), in discussing the conceptual foundations of empowerment, identified three important elements for successful empowerment: style, skills, and staff. Style emphasizes self-management, team spirit, and accountability; skills involve communication and problem-solving capabilities; while staff relates to developing an organizational culture in which empowerment is continuously promoted and employees are encouraged to develop their capabilities. These elements indicate that empowerment is not simply the delegation of authority but a continuous organizational process involving employee development, participation, responsibility, and supportive management practices.

The relationship between empowerment and trust is also relevant to total quality management and organizational effectiveness. Empowered employees are better positioned to identify and address workplace problems, cooperate with colleagues, contribute innovative ideas, and participate actively in organizational improvement. Thamizhmanii and Hasan (2010) highlighted the importance of teamwork and employee empowerment in enabling managers to build trust, address employee concerns, promote cooperation, and encourage creativity and innovation. Similarly, effective delegation can strengthen trust when managers clearly communicate responsibilities, provide employees with adequate authority and resources, and demonstrate consistency in their decisions. Thus, empowerment can foster trust when employees perceive that management not only delegates responsibility but also provides the support and authority necessary to perform assigned tasks effectively.

Employee empowerment also contributes to employees' perceptions of their own organizational value. When universities invest in employees through professional development, participation, recognition, autonomy, and opportunities for growth, employees are more likely to perceive themselves as valued and important contributors to the institution. This perception can strengthen psychological ownership, organizational attachment, loyalty, and enthusiasm. From a psychological perspective, empowerment can reduce the negative consequences associated with excessive monitoring, disrespectful treatment, limited participation, lack of recognition, and exclusion from decision-making. Providing employees with a voice, autonomy, recognition, and meaningful responsibilities can therefore enhance their sense of competence, dignity, and personal and professional worth.

The relationship between empowerment and employee value is particularly important in higher education because faculty members and administrative staff often derive professional identity and motivation from opportunities to exercise expertise and contribute meaningfully to institutional objectives. Employees who feel that their knowledge, skills, and contributions

are recognized are more likely to develop positive perceptions of themselves and their roles within the organization. Conversely, persistent disregard for employees' contributions or exclusion from relevant decisions may generate psychological strain, emotional fatigue, and reduced organizational attachment. Therefore, empowerment can function as a mechanism for strengthening employees' perceptions that they are respected, recognized, and valuable members of the institution.

The literature further support that employee trust is an important determinant of job satisfaction. Trust in management and supervisors can create a supportive psychological environment in which employees feel secure about organizational decisions, treatment, rewards, and future opportunities. When employees believe that management acts fairly, keeps its commitments, considers their concerns, and provides appropriate resources, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward their jobs. Gill (2008) suggested that employee trust is closely associated with job satisfaction, indicating that higher levels of trust can contribute to more favorable workplace experiences. Similarly, Kumari (2011) emphasized that employees are more likely to experience job satisfaction when organizations address their concerns, provide opportunities for career development and challenging work, and demonstrate supportive and respectful supervisory behavior.

Trust may also influence job satisfaction through employee participation and autonomy. When employees perceive that managers trust their abilities and judgment, they may become more willing to express ideas, participate in decision-making, and independently perform their responsibilities. Guinot et al. (2021), based on data from 3,364 employees, found that participative decision-making was positively related to job satisfaction both directly and indirectly through employees' perceptions of being trusted. This finding strengthens the argument that trust is not merely an interpersonal attitude but can serve as an important mechanism linking participative management practices with employee satisfaction. In a university environment, therefore, allowing faculty members and administrative staff to participate in decisions affecting their work may simultaneously strengthen trust and improve job satisfaction. Further support for the relationship between trust and job satisfaction is provided by meta-analytic evidence. Tosun (2022), based on 33 studies, reported a strong overall relationship between organizational trust and job satisfaction. This finding indicates that employees' perceptions of trust are consistently associated with more positive work attitudes and experiences. Trust may operate at several levels, including trust in the organization, supervisors, and colleagues, and each level can contribute to employees' perceptions of security, fairness, support, and belonging.

Conclusion

The most important requirement for any organization to achieve its goals is its satisfied employees and especially in case of higher education institutes. The higher authorities of universities should take serious measures to empower the faculty members as empowerment will be beneficial in many aspects. Firstly it will increase their level of job satisfaction. Secondly it will make them to realize that university considered them important assets for the organization. Thirdly it will raise their trust on their organization in the sense that their organization would treat them fairly in all aspects and collectively empowerment, trust, value feelings and job satisfaction will improve their performance and they will be willing to devote their full energies for achieving the long term goals of the institutes. Especially it will decrease the faculty members' intention to leave the organization as now all the universities find it very difficult to attract and retain highly qualified faculty members. The results of the study proved that employee's empowerment has a significant positive impact on employees' trust and value feelings. The employees' empowerment will enhance the employees trust on the organization which will ultimately have a positive impact on the job satisfaction. Secondly the employees' empowerment also has a positive impact on the employees feeling of value within the organization. The feelings of the employees that they are being valued within the organization and they are considered the valuable assets of the organization will also enhance their level of job satisfaction. Employees' empowerment in the will have a significant impact on their job satisfaction through emphasis on enhancing employee's trust and value.

Research implication and future research recommendations

Employee empowerment, trust, and perceived employee value are interconnected rather than isolated organizational factors. Empowerment can strengthen employees' autonomy, competence, participation, and sense of value; these experiences can subsequently enhance trust in management and the organization. Greater trust and perceived value can, in turn, contribute to higher job satisfaction by creating a workplace characterized by fairness, recognition, support, participation, and meaningful work. The combined effect suggests that universities seeking to improve employee job satisfaction should not rely exclusively on financial rewards or conventional HR practices. Instead, they should develop an empowering organizational environment in which employees are trusted, respected, recognized, involved in decision-making, and provided with opportunities to exercise their knowledge and capabilities. In this respect, the purpose of empowerment extends beyond improving organizational performance; it also addresses employees' intrinsic needs for autonomy, recognition, dignity, competence, and meaningful participation in organizational life.

The findings of the current study provide a foundation for further research and suggest several directions for future investigation. Since the present study focused on both academic and administrative employees of higher education institutions, future researchers may extend the proposed model to employees in the corporate and other organizational sectors to examine whether similar relationships exist in different organizational contexts. Further research may also incorporate both public and private higher education institutions to facilitate comparative analysis of employee empowerment and its influence on job satisfaction across different institutional settings. Such studies could employ proportionate stratified sampling with a larger sample size to ensure more representative coverage of the target population and enhance the generalizability of the findings. Future research could additionally examine differences in the effects of employee empowerment across male and female faculty members and among employees working at higher, middle, and

lower management levels. Moreover, cross-cultural comparative studies involving organizations from two or more countries could provide valuable insights into variations in the relationships among employee empowerment, employee trust, employee value, and job satisfaction, as well as the contextual factors and antecedents that may explain these differences.

Strengths and limitations of the study

The present study has several notable strengths. First, it provides an empirical examination of the relationships among employee empowerment, employee trust, employee value, and job satisfaction within the higher education sector of Pakistan, thereby contributing to an area that has received comparatively limited empirical attention in the local context. Second, the study employs a structured questionnaire and systematic data-collection procedures that are consistent with the research objectives and enable empirical testing of the proposed hypotheses. The application of quantitative analytical techniques provides objective evidence regarding the relationships among the study variables. Third, the proposed relationships are grounded in relevant theoretical perspectives and are supported by findings reported in previous research, which strengthens the conceptual foundation of the study. Fourth, the study provides practical implications for higher education institutions by highlighting the importance of empowering employees, recognizing their organizational value, and developing trust-based workplace relationships to enhance job satisfaction among both academic and administrative staff. Since employee satisfaction is closely associated with positive organizational attitudes and performance, the findings may assist university management in developing more supportive and empowering workplace practices. Fifth, the inclusion of Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University provides a distinctive gender-related institutional context, with a substantial representation of female faculty members in the sample. Finally, the study contributes to the existing literature in organizational behavior and employee psychology by examining empowerment, trust, perceived value, and job satisfaction within the higher education environment and by providing a basis for future comparative and cross-sectorial research.

The study is limited by its focus on selected public-sector higher education institutions, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to private universities and other organizational sectors. The use of convenience sampling may also reduce sample representativeness. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design and self-reported questionnaire data limit causal interpretation and may be influenced by respondents' subjective perceptions. The study's specific geographical and institutional context, along with the high representation of female participants, may further restrict generalization to other regions, male employees, and mixed-gender institutions. Future studies should therefore use larger and more representative samples, include public and private institutions, and consider longitudinal or mixed-method research designs.

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