

Service Climate as a Mediator of Organizational Empowerment in Customer-Service Employees

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Abstract. The aim of this study is to examine the mediating role of the service climate between organizational empowerment (i.e., dynamic structural framework, control of workplace decisions, fluidity in information sharing) and service quality (functional and relational). 428 contact employees from 46 hotels participated in the survey. Correlations demonstrated that dynamic structural framework, control decisions, and fluidity in information sharing are related to both functional and relational service quality. Regression analyses and Sobel tests revealed that service climate totally mediated the relationship between all three dimensions of organizational empowerment and relational service quality. Implications for practice and future research are discussed.

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The latest economic changes, conditioned by a higher competitiveness in the international global economy, an increase in the demands of consumers and the current period of economic crisis, require new strategies and the transformation of management in the tourism sector. The price war has led to new offers of quality products and services which satisfy the customers' needs and expectations in a more personalized way (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). As a consequence, service quality as perceived by the customer has become a powerful competitive advantage (Peiró, Martínez-Tur, & Ramos, 1999): it influences the loyalty of customers, allows them to transmit a positive image of the company to other potential customers, and increases productivity and benefits.

Different models of quality management such as Servqual (Parasuraman et al., 1988) and others based on the quality triangle (Peiró et al., 1999) include customers' perception of quality as well as the perception of executives and contact employees. Service quality can hardly be understood without considering the critical role played by the latter (Moliner, Carrasco, Martínez-Tur, & Marzo, 2004). Hartline and Ferrell (1996) remark the relevance of contact employees in service companies where employee-customer interaction is required since the attitude and behavior of employees can affect the customers' perception of service quality.

On the other hand, Schneider, White, and Paul (1998) stress that a service climate guides employee effort and competency on delivering quality service, which in turn yield positive experiences for customers, as well as positive customer perceptions of service quality. Service climate refers to employees' shared perceptions of the practices, procedures, and behaviors that are rewarded, supported, and expected by the organization with regard to customer service and customer service quality (Schneider et al., 1998). In this sense, the quality of service perceived by customers can be understood in terms of functional and relational quality. The functional dimension describes the efficiency of the service offered and received, whereas the relation dimension concentrate on extras, empathy, and the emotional aspects of interaction between employees and customers (Sánchez-Hernández, Martínez-Tur, Peiró, & Ramos, 2009).

Due to the importance of contact employees on service quality, companies must make sure they have an adequate management of human resources in order to guarantee such quality. From a manager-employee perspective, Hartline and Ferrell (1996) suggest empowerment as a mechanism that can be used to control employees' behaviors and activities. Empowerment refers to a situation in which the manager gives employees the discretion to make day-to-day decisions about job-related activities (Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Empowerment is thought to be necessary because contact employees need the flexibility to make-on-the-spot decisions to completely satisfy customers (Hartline & Ferrell, 1996).

Service climate is built on organizational practices which are focused on customer service; these organizational practices can also empower contact employees.

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How employees react to these organizational practices is important to develop and understanding how service climate is built and shared amongst employees in a specific organizational setting. Drawing from these conclusions, we attempt to attain a better understanding of contact employee management by examining the mediating role of service climate between organizational empowerment (i.e., dynamical structure framework, control of workplace decisions, fluidity in information sharing) and service quality (functional and relational).

Organizational empowerment in service organizations

Empowerment has been considered the most effective measure in internal marketing in order to encourage contact employees to develop professional self-efficiency and innovative behaviors (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995). It is a process by which individuals learn to perceive a relationship between their goals and the perception of knowing how to reach them, as much as the relationship between their efforts and the results they obtain (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). In service companies, empowerment refers to employee discretion when providing a satisfactory service to customers, making decisions about activities related to the service and developing a proactive behavior known as servicing empowerment (Bowen & Lawler, 1992). These authors suggest that empowered employees feel better about their jobs and more enthusiastic about serving customers, with an end result of a quicker response to customer needs and increased customer satisfaction. In general, empowered employees express high levels of self-efficiency, take responsibility and control of their work, show more innovative behaviors (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997) and are also highly considered by other employees (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997).

A variety of studies have verified the positive effect that empowerment has on the professional output and productivity of service employees (Smith & Mouly, 1998; Wa & Lam, 2011) and also the existence of a direct relationship between empowerment and customers' perception of service quality (Sparks, Bradley, & Callan, 1997). Several studies show that organizational characteristics such as open information systems, supervisors' delegation of control or the existence of guidelines that favor employees decision-making foster staff outputs and improve service quality (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997; Wilkinson, 1998). Tordera, González-Romá, and Peiró (2008) specify that work-teams that offer quality services require the creation of a special organizational context that should be characterized by group-designed tasks and leadership styles that empower employees while supporting them and permitting their involvement within the company.

Lawler (1992) describes these exact characteristics as being directly related to empowerment.

In an attempt to make a comprehensive synthesis of the contextual and organizational elements involved in the empowerment experience, Matthews, Diaz, and Cole (2003) developed the organizational empowerment scale, which is based on three dimensions: dynamic structural framework, control of workplace decisions, and fluidity in information sharing. Dynamic structural framework (DSF) is conceptually defined as occurring when a company provides a clear set of guidelines that assists employee decision-making both procedurally and behaviorally in an evolving work environment. Control of workplace decisions (CWD) occurs when employees are allowed input into all aspects of their professional career. Contextual factors that are conceptually contrary to CWD include a lack of meaningful and significant goals set on the part of the employee/team, and a lack of clarity and input with regard to job responsibilities (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Wilkinson, 1998). Fluidity in information sharing (FIS) occurs when all information concerning the company is accessible to all individuals in the company. The intent of FIS is to insure that information dealing with the functioning of the company is shared. Considering the arguments and findings presented above, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1a. Organizational empowerment (i.e., dynamic structural framework, control of workplace decisions, fluidity in information sharing) will be positively related to functional service quality.

Hypothesis 1b. Organizational empowerment (i.e., dynamic structural framework, control of workplace decisions, fluidity in information sharing) will be positively related to relational service quality.

Psychological climate as mediator

Together with Tordera et al. (2008) and Lawler (1992), Bowen and Schneider (1988) suggest that service companies should reach an internal environment that brings about a positive impact on the attitudes and knowledge of contact staff and, consequently, also on customers' quality perceptions. Such internal environment in service companies was conceptualized by Schneider and colleagues (Schneider et al., 1998; Schneider, Salvaggio, & Subirats, 2002; Schneider & White, 2004;) as climate for service, which refers to employee perception of the procedures and expected/rewarded behaviors in relation with customer service. Several studies have proved that service climate is related with a more positive customer perception of service quality (Burke, Rapinski, Dunlap, & Davison,

1996) and that such relation can be found on a large variety of organizational such as banks branches, hotels and insurances (Schneider, Ehrhart, Mayer, Saltz, & Niles-Jolly, 2005; Schneider & White, 2004).

Schneider's longitudinal study (Schneider, Ashworth, Higgs, & Carr, 1996) suggests the existence of a relation of causality between employee and customer perception of given and received service quality respectively. Using Structural Equation Modeling, Gracia, Cifré, and Grau (2010) show that customer perception of service quality can be predicted from the climate for service of the organization and the staff's perception of the service they provide. Potocnik, Tordera, Martínez-Tur, Peiró, and Ramos (2011) confirmed that high service climate strength in managerial practices fosters a positive impact of managerial practices on customer service quality evaluations.

Finally, different authors have remarked the fact that climate for service as perceived by employees can affect customer satisfaction (Coelho, Augusto, Coelho, & Sá, 2010; Martínez-Tur, Tordera, Peiró, & Potocnik, 2011; Schneider et al., 1998). Salanova, Agut, and Peiró (2005) and Sowinski, Fortmann, and Lezotte (2008) also agree with the idea that engaged employees who share common perceptions of what service quality is in their interventions will have more possibilities to provide a quality service. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 2a: Service climate will be positively related to functional service quality.

Hypothesis 2b: Service climate will be positively related to relational service quality.

Thus, it is more probable that employees provide an excellent service to customers when the organization expects and rewards such behavior and when establish protocols for professional activity that favor offering a high quality service (climate for service). When the presence of organizational characteristics develop the skills and discretion of contact employees and allow them to make decisions on how to offer a service of quality (organizational empowerment), they are expected to perceive they are offering such quality, which is ultimately related to the quality perceived by customers, customers satisfaction and loyalty (Rust & Zahorik, 1993; Storbacka, Strandvik, & Grönroos, 1994).

Although there has been a lack of research on the relationship between service climate and organizational empowerment, there have been some studies on facets of organizational empowerment and service for climate. Research by Schneider et al. (1998) suggest that a climate for service rest on a foundation of fundamental support in the way of resources, training, managerial practices and the assistance required to perform effectively. The foundation issues include effort toward removing obstacles to work (Burke et al.,

1996), supervisory behavior (e.g., giving feedback and sharing information) (Schneider & Bowen, 1985), and human resources policies (Schneider, 1994). These foundation issues could be also seen as elements related to organizational empowerment: guidelines to assist decision-making, information accessible to all the members and control of workplace decisions.

In their study, Schneider et al. (1998) express that the foundation issues constitute a necessary but not sufficient cause of a climate for service. In this sense, Burke, Borucki, and Hurley (1992) argue that employees' perception of their work environment could be modeled in terms of two factors: a concern for employees, similar to the foundation issues or organizational empowerment, and a concern for customers, conceptualized as the climate for service by Schneider, et al. (Schneider et al., 1998). This author found that global service climate was correlated with the service practices and the foundation issues (i.e., managerial behavior, work facilitation), suggesting the foundation issues and the service policies and practices were important for a service climate; however, they were unable to directly test the mediation role between foundations issues, climate for service and customer perceptions of service quality. Salanova et al. (2005) accept that related empirical evidence is scarce and stress the need to conduct more tidies on relations possibly existing between the climate for service, employees' attitudes and behavior, organizational characteristics and service quality.

To sum up, there has been little research that has examined the links between climate for service and organizational empowerment. Yet an understanding of the work context that facilitates both organizational empowerment and service climate has important theoretical and practical implications. In this sense, the present study intends to analyze the possible relations between organizational empowerment and climate for service in relation to (functional and relational) service quality as perceived by contact staff. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 3a: Service climate will mediate the relation between the dimensions of organizational empowerment and functional service quality as perceived by employees.

Hypothesis 3b: Service climate will mediate the relation between the dimensions of organizational empowerment and relational service quality as perceived by employees.

Method

Participants

The sample of this study includes 428 contact employees from the reception (48.9%) and catering (51.5%) services

of 46 beach hotels (43.5%) and city hotels (56.5%) in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia (Spain). 55.3% of the sample were men. 52.8% of employees were under 29 years old, 31.3% were aged between 30 and 39, and 11.6% between 40 and 49. Only 4.3% of employees were over 50 years old. The distribution of the sample in relation with educational attainment levels was: illiterate (2.6%), primary education (18.5%), secondary education (25.6%), professional training (23.2%), and university education (30.1%). As for labor distribution, the mean of employment was 4.5 years ($SD = 2.83$). 41.5% of employees affirmed to have permanent contracts, 43.4% had temporary contracts, and the remaining 15% had seasonal contracts (only for the summer).

Measures

Organizational Empowerment

This variable was measured using Mendoza-Sierra's organizational empowerment scale (Mendoza, León, Orgambidez, & Borrego, 2009). The scale has 19 items grouped into three dimensions: dynamic structural framework (DSF, 7 items), control of workplace decisions (CWD, 7 items), and fluidity in information sharing (FIS, 5 items). All the items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 'completely disagree' (1) to 'completely agree' (7). The internal consistency (Cronbach Alpha) were .87, .81, and .78, for DSF, CWD and FIS, respectively. The internal consistency of organizational empowerment scale in this study was high ($\alpha = .93$). High scores in the three dimensions indicate a high presence of the employee-empowering organizational characteristics.

Climate for service

It was assessed by a reduced version that was translated and used by Moliner et al. (2004) of Schneider's global service climate scale (Schneider et al., 1998). The scale includes 4 items, with a 7-point answer format, where 1 means the respondent 'completely disagrees' and 7 means the respondent 'completely agrees'. Reliability analysis (α) yielded an internal consistency coefficient of .84. High scores reveal a high presence of a service oriented to obtain a service quality.

Service quality

It was measured using Sánchez-Hernández et al. (2009) service quality questionnaire. The scale includes 14 items distributed into two dimensions: functional (8 items) and relational (6 items). All the items were assessed using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 means that the respondent 'completely disagrees' and 7 means

the respondent 'completely agrees'. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients obtained were .88 and .86, respectively.

Procedure

For scale administration, the personnel in charge of data gathering went to each hotel on the arranged dates and personally gave each participant a copy of the battery of questionnaires and a self-adhesive envelope. Participants were informed about the purpose of research and the mechanism to guarantee the anonymity and confidentiality of their answers. Once completed, each participant introduced the questionnaire inside the envelope, sealed and put it inside an urn used for this purpose.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 18.0 statistical package for Windows. The reliability coefficients of dimensions and the correlations between the punctuations of the different instruments were obtained using Pearson's correlation coefficient and the coefficients of measurements, whereas Baron and Kenny (1986) procedure were used to obtain the mediation coefficients, and Sobel (1982) coefficient to test the direct/indirect effects. As a measure previous to the analysis of mediation, the variables were standardized and averaged so as to reduce multiplicity in the analysis and its subsequent statistical error in decision (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003).

Results

Preliminary analysis

First of all, before testing the regression models, we examined the measurement models with all study variables: dynamic structural framework, control of workplace decisions, fluidity in information sharing, service climate and service quality (functional and relational). This six-factor model yielded a good fit, $R^2(356) = 821.15$, $p < .001$; RSMEA = .06; TLI = .92 and CFI = .91. It fitted better to the data than a one-factor model, $\Delta R^2(5) = 1695.3$; $p < .001$, which suggest that common method variance did not significantly bias participants' responses (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Also, Harman's one-factor test was conducted to test the presence of common method effect. All the variables were entered into an exploratory factor analysis, using unrotated principal components factor analysis and forcing to extract one factor. The factor emerged accounted for less than 50% of the variance (35.1%). Thus, no general factor is apparent (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). While the results of these analyses do not preclude the possibility of common method variance, they do suggest that common method variance is not a great concern and thus is unlikely to confound the interpretation of results.

Descriptive statistics

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha coefficients, and intercorrelations of all study variables. Dynamic structural framework, control of workplace decisions, and fluidity in information sharing were positively related to both functional and relational service quality ($p < .01$), so that the higher the level of organizational empowerment, the higher both functional and relational service quality perceived by contact employees. Also, service climate was positively related to both functional and relational service quality ($p < .01$).

Testing the hypotheses

To test our hypotheses, we conducted a series of hierarchical regression analyses. Tables 2 and 3 show the variables included for functional and relational service quality. In support of Hypothesis 1a, we found dynamic structural framework, $F(1, 428) = 183.20, p < .01, R^2 = .30$, control of workplace decisions, $F(1, 428) = 140.42, p < .01, R^2 = .25$, and fluidity in information sharing, $F(1, 428) = 91.08, p < .01, R^2 = .18$, predicted functional service quality, with all the three dimensions positively related to and contributing to functional service quality ($\beta = .55, \beta = .50, \beta = .42$, respectively). Hypothesis 1b was also supported: dynamic structural framework, $F(1, 428) = 48.85, p < .01, R^2 = .10$, control of workplace decisions, $F(1, 428) = 39.57, p < .01, R^2 = .08$, and fluidity in information sharing, $F(1, 428) = 22.16, p < .01, R^2 = .05$, predicted relational service quality, with all the three dimensions positively related to and contributing to relational service quality ($\beta = .10, \beta = .08, \beta = .05$, respectively). Similarly, Hypotheses 2a – 2b were supported,

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha and correlations of all scales

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.FSQ	.86					
2.RSQ	.70	.88				
3.DSF	.56	.32	.87			
4.CWD	.50	.29	.79	.80		
5.FIS	.42	.22	.76	.74	.78	
6.SC	.72	.54	.55	.52	.47	.84
Mean	5.87	5.96	4.18	3.82	3.52	5.12
Standard error	.04	.04	.06	.06	.07	.06
Standard deviation	.83	.84	1.37	1.24	1.43	1.23

Note: FSQ = functional service quality; RSQ = relational service quality; DSF = dynamic structural framework; CWD = control of workplace decisions; FIS = fluidity in information sharing; SC = service climate.

Cronbach's alphas of the scale are on diagonal; remainder are Pearson correlations.

Correlations are significant, $p < .01$.

with climate for service predicting functional service quality, $F(1, 428) = 435.42, p < .01, R^2 = .52$, and relational service quality, $F(1, 428) = 174.09, p < .01, R^2 = .29$, and climate for service positively related to both functional ($\beta = .72$) and relational ($\beta = .54$) service quality.

Next, we tested our mediational hypotheses using the steps that Baron and Kenny (1986) put forth. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), four conditions should be upheld for mediation to occur. First, the independent variable must be related to the dependent variable. As previously shown, organizational empowerment dimensions (i.e., dynamic structural framework, control of workplace decisions, fluidity in information sharing) were related to both functional and relational service quality. Second, the mediator must be related to dependent variable. Our results showed that climate for service was related to both functional and relational service quality. Third, the independent variable must be related to the mediator variable. We found that dynamic structural framework, $F(1, 418) = 189.57, p < .01, R^2 = .31$, control of workplace decisions, $F(1, 418) = 173.15, p < .01, R^2 = .27$, and fluidity in information sharing, $F(1, 418) = 118.27, p < .01, R^2 = .22$, predicted service climate. The last step is that the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable must be non-significant when the mediator is included in the model. As Tables 2 and 3 show, all the conditions were satisfied only with reference to relational service quality.

To test the indirect effect of service climate on organizational empowerment and relational service quality, we also calculated the Sobel test. The Sobel test multiplies the under-standardized path coefficients and then divides the result by the standard error (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Sobel, 1982). The Sobel test produces a test statistic (Z), along with accompanying significant levels. We used Preacher and Leonardelli's interactive mediation tool (2003) to calculate the Sobel test. We found that the organizational empowerment dimensions (DSF, CWD, and FIS) had a unique indirect relation with relational service quality ($Z = 8.42, Z = 8.40, Z = 8.28, p < .01$, respectively), thus supporting Hypothesis 3b but not Hypothesis 3a.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to analyze the mediational role of climate for service between organizational empowerment and functional and relational service quality as perceived by employees. The data obtained support the mediational role of climate for service between the dimensions of organizational empowerment (i.e., dynamic structural framework, control of workplace decisions, fluidity in information sharing) and relational service quality, but not in relation to functional service quality.

Table 2. Hierarchical Regressions Results for Functional Service Quality

Variables	Regression 1: OE → SC		Regression 2: SC → FSQ		Regression 3: OE → FSQ		Regression 4: OE → FSQ	
	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
Independent								
DSF	.56	13.77			.55	13.53	.22	13.49
CWD	.52	12.49			.50	11.85	.17	4.42
FIS	.47	10.88			.42	9.54	.11	2.82
Mediator								
SC			.72	21.29			.60	15.18
SC							.63	16.24
SC							.67	17.60
F		189.57		453.42		183.02		255.57
		173.15				140.42		244.77
		118.27				91.08		232.80
Total R^2		.31	.52		.30		.55	
		.27			.25		.54	
		.22			.18		.53	

Note: OE = organizational empowerment (dimensions)

Correlations are significant, $p < .01$, except when *ns* (non significant) has been mentioned.

Functional quality is related to behaviors that refer to quality service itself (Sánchez-Hernández, Martínez-Tur, González-Morales, Ramos, & Peiró, 2009; Sánchez-Hernández, Martínez-Tur, Peiró et al., 2009). In this sense, the results obtained indicate that organizational empowerment and service climate directly affect functional service quality perceived by the employees, since in both cases they would

‘indicate’ how to provide an effective quality service using the appropriate protocols. Both, organizational empowerment and service quality describe the role of employees and guide them with precise information about what is expected by the organization in reference to quality through service climate. Additionally, they provide employees with the autonomy within an organizational structure that

Table 3. Hierarchical Regressions Results for Relational Service Quality

Variables	Regression 1: OE → SC		Regression 2: SC → RSQ		Regression 3: OE → RSQ		Regression 4: OE → RSQ	
	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
Independent								
DSF	.56	13.77			.32	7.01	.03 ^{ns}	0.53
CWD	.52	12.49			.29	6.29	.01 ^{ns}	0.30
FIS	.47	10.88			.22	4.71	.04 ^{ns}	0.87
Mediator								
SC			.54	13.19			.52	10.53
SC							.53	11.06
SC							.56	12.02
F		189.57		174.09		48.85		86.31
		173.15				39.57		86.13
		118.27				22.16		86.60
Total R^2		.31	.29		.10		.29	
		.27			.08		.29	
		.22			.05		.29	

Note: OE = organizational empowerment (dimensions)

Correlations are significant, $p < .01$, except when *ns* (non significant) has been mentioned.

promotes discretion and control over decisions that employees have to make when providing service.

The results obtained agree with previous studies conducted, the effect of service climate on individual and organizational variables is linked to labor and quality behaviors (Martínez-Tur et al., 2011; Peiró, Martínez-Tur, & Ramos, 2005; Schneider et al., 1998; Schneider et al., 2002; Sowinski et al., 2008; Tordera et al., 2008). It is more probable that employees provide an excellent service to customers (and also have such perception) when the organization expects and rewards professional practices that promote quality service. Internally, what happens within companies as far as the creation and maintenance of a service-quality influences employees' behavior in their interaction with customer and, given the relevance of contact staff for the image and quality of the company, this also influences customer perception of the service (Schneider et al., 2002).

When it comes to organizational empowerment, the direct positive influence of empowerment generating organizational characteristics on service quality is confirmed. The existence of clear working protocols, autonomy in decision making and an adequate transmission of information within the company would help to reduce the feeling of uncertainty and ambiguity of labor conditions endured by employees and would provide a clear and explicit definition of professional roles, which favor the psychological experience of empowerment. Higher levels of empowerment produce higher levels of self-efficacy (Spreitzer, 1995), which is translated into higher skills to face stressful situations and to offer a quality service (Hartline & Ferrell, 1996; Menon, 2001; Sparks et al., 1997).

As for relational quality, results support the mediational role of climate for service between organizational empowerment and relational service quality as perceived by employees. These results are coherent with the assumption of Schneider et al. (1998): the foundation issues constitute a necessary but insufficient cause of a climate for service. In this sense, one of the main effects of empowerment is the increase of self-efficacy in people (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). As employees gain autonomy at work, their levels of self-efficacy also increase, since they decide the best way to provide quality service. Employees become more adaptive and less constrained to the mere performance of the tasks which were formally established for their position and role (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1998), and they go further by developing emphatic and helpful behaviors of customer assistance.

These new behaviors should be developed with regard to relational quality through service climate, that is; the perceptions that employees have of the practices, procedures, and behaviors expected and

rewarded by the company in order to offer a quality service (Schneider et al., 1998). If employees perceive that quality is important in their company and they know how to provide it, customer-addressed behaviors not defined by the labor role might increase, which would improve the quality of the service these employees provide (Moliner et al., 2004).

This is coherent with the results obtained by various studies. Hartline and Ferrell (1996) pointed out that the lack of a negative relation between empowerment and role conflict in their study might have been due to the lack of a strong service climate in the organizations surveyed. Service climates as a meditational variable would explain apparently contradictory results. Wallace, Johnson, Mathe, and Paul (2011) concluded that it is not enough to have empowered employees. These employees should be also conscious and responsible of what is required by the company in terms of quality. One of the mechanism to stimulate such perceptions of quality in employees would be the presence of a strong, service-oriented, organizational climate.

Dimitriades and Maroudas (2007) also observed the existence of positive relations between psychological empowerment and climate for service provided by public finance service. Wei, Yuan, and Di (2010) argue that the combination of employee empowerment with an innovation-oriented, organizational climate results in a higher creativity in employees, which improves the service they provide. After analyzing, Yagil and Gal (2002) concluded that empowerment-oriented leadership styles in companies, together with the presence of a climate bound to service quality, influence employees' feeling of control and customer perception on service quality.

However, some limitations need to be taken into account when interpreting the results. First, the cross-sectional design does not allow us to draw conclusions on causal terms. We must take into account that the assumptions of our study imply a causal chain. The central idea was that organizational empowerment leads to service quality, which is partially mediated by climate for service. Nevertheless, other forms of relationship among variables, such as reversed and reciprocal causal influences, may also be plausible.

However, we based the proposed relationship among variables on earlier theory and empirical evidence (Schneider et al., 1998). Second, this study relies on self-reports, which might increase the risk of common method variance (CMV). Confirmatory factor analysis, however, indicated that CMV did not significantly influence our results. Third, the sample size, among others factors, may affect effect sizes and the power of the results. In this regard, the sample size seems to be adequate for testing mediation effects,

since Hoyle and Kenny (1999) found that in samples above 200, the power to detect mediation was at least .80. Finally, it would also be essential to collect responses from customers who have utilized the services to test the full model of relations between organizational empowerment, service climate and service quality perceived by both employees and customers.

To sum up, it can be concluded that service quality in hotels can be determined, to a large extent, through interventions on the organizational characteristics that promote empowerment. Through organizational empowerment and climate for service present in the organization, we can obtain on the one hand, empowered employees and, on the other hand, the presence of an internal working context that allows to develop both role and extra-role behaviors addressed to the achievement of functional and relational service quality. Access to information on the objectives of the company, its culture and vision or the meaning and relevance of quality for the company would allow to reduce ambiguity and to make professional roles explicit. Understanding the purpose of the organization and perceiving the company as an integrated whole would facilitate the making of decisions for employees and would raise a feeling of belonging to and identification with the company in them. As a consequence, effective and appropriate decision making increases confidence in employees and is in the benefit of service quality.

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