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# **Organization's Emotional Capital and Empowerment**

**Master Thesis**

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## **I. Introduction**

For many years the importance of emotions at work has been neglected and, according to Payne & Cooper (2004), a working environment has been considered as functioning on emotion-free, rational basis. Moreover, expressing any emotions at work was regarded as unacceptable and unprofessional behavior (Ginsberg & Davies, 2007). Such attempts to 'avoid emotions' were related also to theoretical and practical researches. As Mangham (1998, in Ginsberg & Davies, 2007: 32-33) argued, the reason of that lack of interest to the emotions was a commonly accepted vision that there should be no 'feelings' at the work place and in related to it studies, due to the ability of emotions to “cloud issues” in organizations.

However, since 1960s, according to Payne and Cooper (2004), there has been noticed an increasing interest in research on employees' emotions at work. That attention to emotions has mainly been caused by the increasing number of consequences of work-related stress (Payne & Cooper, 2004) and, hence, was studied in this context. Particularly, organizations with focus on service has become the most interested to research, studying the role and importance of employees' work-related and work-caused emotions, that has happened, due to their the most rapidly growing labor force, according to Ginsberg and Davies (2007).

Nowadays, front-line employees of service-oriented organizations are trained and required to express welcoming emotions with smiles, that in most cases leads to the 'emotional situations' when they show the emotions which are not felt and hide real ones. Such emotional performance is described with the notion of 'emotional labor' (Lashley, 2001). Moreover, according to Hochschild (1983), the effort which service employees make to suppress their real feeling or 'transform' it in a required one, can be defined as 'emotional work', while “wearing the organization's 'mask' according to the accepted 'display rules' for a particular organizational setting” is regarded as emotional labor.

Thereby, a 'stressful nature' of service jobs can lead to such consequences as problems with health, burn out at work, increased absenteeism or withdrawal (Lashley, 2001). In order to cope with such outcomes of emotional labor, there can be a change in employee's attitudes and behaviors, that according to Mann (1999), can be reflected in one of three emotional situations, such as emotional dissonance, emotional deviance or emotional harmony. As he explained, a state of emotional dissonance is the most common in service-related jobs, as it is about situations when employee express emotion which is in accordance with company's 'display rules' but is not the felt one. On the other hand, a state of emotional deviance and emotional

harmony are characterized with no need in performing emotional work. Indeed, emotional deviance occurs when the expressed emotion is in the match with experienced one, but is not in accordance with company's 'display rules and, thus this emotional state is not beneficial for the organization. While emotional harmony reflects a situation when employee shows the emotions which are genuinely felt and are the same as required emotions at the job.

Therefore, it is obvious, that for benefit of both, employee and company, state of emotional harmony is the most desirable, as it does not include emotional labor and in the same time allows the expression of required emotions at work.

Consequently, with acknowledgment of emotions' existence at work (Ginsberg & Davies, 2007), considering them as a very important element of organization's successful work obtained a new form. Organization's successful performance and results became regarded as being dependent on organization's emotional capital (Thomson, 1998 in Lashley, 2001). According to Lashley (2001), 'emotional capital' consists of its external and internal components. External emotional capital includes the attitude of external stakeholders, for instance, customers, partners, investors, to the organization, and is usually represented by 'brand value'. On the other hand, internal emotional capital encompasses 'emotions' of employees, the way in which they deliver organization's services to the external customers. And, as Thomson (1998, in Lashley, 2001) argued, physical capital of the organization can not fully 'serve' it needs without emotional capital, which is in particular true for service-oriented organizations. Thereby, it is recommended, that modern companies operating in service industry care for and work on improvement of their emotional capital.

Moreover, attempting to better their external emotional capital, service organizations need to work on internal emotional capital, particularly on creating state of emotional harmony for employees. As Lashley (2001) argued, employees' empowerment can be seen as a useful technique here. According to Johnson and Redmond (1988, in Lashley, 2001), when applying empowerment, employees feel being involved in the organization's 'life', become more committed to it, satisfied and, often naturally produce required 'happy feelings'. And, more chances for employees to have emotional harmony at work appear when employees are empowered with both psychological and rational approaches (Aziz, 2008).

Thus, the main distinctive characteristic of empowerment among other methods, is emotional engagement of employees at work (Lashley, 1995), which allows employees to genuinely produce 'happy emotions' and attain the state of emotional harmony. According to the previous

research by Fulford and Enz (1995, in Patah et al., 2009), when an individual feels that he/she is empowered, this feeling directly impacts on his/her emotional state at work. Therefore, different forms of empowerment are in high relationship with state of empowerment, or feeling of power (Lashley, 1995).

Consequently, an important question, raised in this thesis, is about how exactly and to which extent an employee should be empowered on the emotional level, so that such empowerment would lead to the employee's happy emotions at work and, hence, to the improvement of organization's both internal and, as a result, external emotional capital.

My own interest in the nature and ways to influence employee's emotions at work has originated from my work experience in international and national organizations in Ukraine and USA, and study-visits to service organizations in Sweden. Almost all the organizations I personally worked for or just listened to their presentations, used different managerial approaches and initiatives with concern of emotional state of their employees. Additionally, all those organizations have been more or less empowering their employees. However, it seemed to be not fully realized, by management in service organizations, that empowerment can lead to the positive emotions of employees itself. Also, from my experience, strategies intended to improve emotions of personnel either worked only for some time or did not work at all. Therefore, I have chosen to conduct my research with empirical data collected from interviews with former service employees from different countries, as their differences might show a wider picture from employees' perspective, and in comparison to the theories and previous studies presented in literature.

Thereby, the aim of this research is to investigate the relationship between employee's empowerment and their emotional state at work.

In accordance with the aim, following research questions have been formulated:

- How important is emotional harmony at work for employees?
- Why employees want and need empowerment, if they do?
- How does the empowerment affect employees' emotional state at work?

In order to answer these research questions, empirical data was collected with method of semi-structured qualitative interviews with ten former employees from different organizations operating in service industry and current master students on the program of service management.

## **II. Theoretical framework**

This part of thesis presents its main idea and the important concepts, a clear understanding of which has a direct impact on how a studied phenomenon is perceived. Thus, it is further described how empowerment initiatives can lead to the improvement of internal and, as a result, external emotional capital of service organization. And, importantly, these empowerment initiatives are regarded as creating a state of empowerment in empowered employees, which, in its turn, can generate positive emotions and eventually a state of emotional harmony at work for employees.

However, to give reader a clear understanding on what this thesis and particularly this section is aiming, it has been chosen to present the link between employee empowerment and organization's emotional capital by introducing the concepts 'from the end to the beginning'. Therefore, this section starts with definition and different perspectives on emotional capital, emotions, and possible and desirable employee's emotional states at work. Further, definition on employees empowerment, particularly, on emotional level is given. Importantly, the last part of this section gives some insights on connection between empowerment and employee's emotional harmony at work, which, as it will be introduced, can be considered as the one leading to the improvement of organization's emotional capital.

### **1. Emotional capital of organization**

According to Thomson (1998, in Lashley, 2001), there has been seen more and more awareness about the importance of emotions in the life of an organization. Moreover, it can be predicted that with this growing 'emotional awareness', an increasing number of organizations will consider their emotional capital as valuable as physical assets.

As Lashley (2001) argued, emotional capital can be considered as consisting of two components, internal and external emotional capital. External emotional capital includes feelings of customers, partners, shareholders, communities and all other important external stakeholders, about organization. And, all of these is related to organization's 'brand value' and goodwill. On the other hand, according to Thomson (1998 in Lashley, 2001), internal emotional capital encompasses emotions of employees, and feelings, beliefs and values of everyone 'operating' in the organization.

Moreover, emotional capital is “the ‘heart’ that is the essential working of the ‘mind’”, and that drives intellectual and physical assets of the organization (Thomson, 1998 in Lashley, 2001: 174).

In order to create and maintain excellent emotional capital, service organizations attempt to work on its internal component, state of which will consequently impact on external emotional capital as well, through an employee-customer service encounter (Lashley, 2001). This connection between two core elements of organization's emotional capital, as explained by Aziz (2008), is based on the nature of service encounter, when customer's emotions about product depend on additional value of service provided. Thus, according to Jain and Jain (2005, in Aziz, 2008), emotional bond between employees and customers can be seen as a competitive advantage of service-focused organizations.

Employees' work-related emotions, or internal emotional capital, as suggested by Lashley (2001), can be improved using one of the following approaches.

First approach includes techniques used by leaders to train the employees just to show certain 'friendly' emotions to the customers but not to actually feel them. The negative side of this approach is a difficulty for employees to continuously demonstrate these emotions during the long period of time, particularly when a worker is tired or his/her actual emotions at the moment are the opposite to those which he/she is obliged to express.

Another approach is about making the employee to really generate the feeling or emotion that is necessary for the job, by recalling his/her previous 'positive experience' or "imagining how it would feel to have these experiences" (Lashley, 2001:180). Additionally, service workers often use this method by imagining themselves 'on the customer's place', that is, according to Lashley (2001), the best way to make an employee 'treat the customer as a guest in employee's own home'.

However, both of mentioned above approaches require some emotional work, which, as Mann (1999) argued, can lead to one of three different emotional states for an employee. These states include emotional harmony, emotional dissonance and emotional deviance. According to Mann (1999), emotional harmony happens when an employee really feels and expresses the required emotion; emotional dissonance relates to the situations when the employee doesn't actually feel the emotion which is required to be displayed; emotional deviance appears when displayed emotion is the one which is actually felt but is not the same as a required one. Therefore, it is obvious, that for benefit of both, employee and organization he/she works for, state of emotional harmony is the most desirable, as it does not include emotional labor and in the same time allows the expression of required emotions at work. Further, this emotional state will be regarded in more details, as well as the concepts of emotions, emotional work and emotional labor.

## 1.1 Emotions at work

### Defining emotions

According to Ginsberg and Davies (2007), first attempts to define emotions can be regarded as being made in Darwin's work "The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals" and have been continued up to nowadays' researches. However, there is still no one accepted definition of emotions. For instance, Kleinginna and Kleinginna (1981, in Ginsberg & Davies, 2007: 20) suggested, that there can be distinguished ninety-two definitions of emotions in literature and an uncounted number of theories on emotions and their role at work. Although, as Payne and Cooper (2004) argued, common themes can be noticed in the definitions suggested by many researchers. Thus, often emotion can be regarded as "...a response to specific types of events..." related to individual's goals, needs, surviving, that lead to some "adaptive behavior" (Watson & Clark, 1994a:89 in Payne & Cooper, 2004:22). Similarly, emotions can be defined as some prime signals about individual's perception of people, situations or interactions (Caruso & Salovey, 2004).

Additionally, the common way to define emotions is to look at them from functional perspective. Thus, emotions can be seen as a guiding "...to take an action, to approach or avoid an object or person..." (Levenson, 1994 in Payne & Cooper, 2004: 22), while focusing individual's attention "...on a specific aspect of the environment that may require action or decision"(Clark & Watson, 1994; Clore, 1994 in Payne & Cooper, 2004: 22). This is achieved through emotional motivation of a certain behavior (Caruso & Salovey, 2004), and helps a person to adapt and react "quickly, decisively, and vigorously" in changing situation (Frijda, 1994 in Payne & Cooper, 2004: 23).

Another way often used by researchers to understand the concept of emotions is comparing them with the concept of mood, as these two notions can be confused due to many similarities. Thus, both constructs can be described as positive or negative "subjectively experienced affective states", which reflect the individual's emotional state in the process of his/her interaction with surrounding environment (Parkinson et al., 1996 in Payne & Cooper, 2004: 24-25). However, despite these similarities, emotions and moods can be distinguished by some important differences, such as "comprehensiveness, duration, frequency/intensity, and pattern of action" (Davidson, 1994; Ekman, 1994; Watson & Clark, 1994a in Payne & Cooper, 2004: 25). These differences can help to clear the important aspects of emotions. For instance, as Salovey and Mayer (1990, in Ginsberg & Davies, 2007) argued, emotions usually appear as a



result of individual's perception of the internal or external 'event', which was perceived and interpreted as important with positive or negative consequences. In other words, according to Ginsberg and Davies, (2007:21), "...emotions are the resulting behavioral manifestations – either physical or psychological – from some real or perceived positive or negative interaction". On the other hand, moods can last longer than emotions and appear even without some stimulus or reason (Izzard, 1993, Caruso & Salovey, 2004 in Ginsberg & Davies, 2007).

Moreover, in contrast to moods, the event, provoking emotion, is usually strong, intense and, hence, short in time. Therefore, it can be concluded that emotion is a state of individual, which occurs due to some intensive stimulus or behavior, is brief in duration, and, regardless its infrequent appearance, makes a profound impact on individual (Ginsberg & Davies, 2007; Payne & Cooper, 2004).

### ***Role of emotions at work***

For a long time emotions at work have been seen as "... noise cluttering the rational operation of organizations"(Goleman et al., 2002:xi), and accordingly a work place was promoted as to be free of emotions with all the decisions and actions to be taken on a rational basis only(Payne & Cooper,2004). Moreover, according to Fineman (1993, in Lashley, 2001), traditional organizational theories have long resisted to recognize the role of emotions even in service organizations. However, with growing number of organizations focused on service, the increasing number of studies have been conducting on emotions and their role at work. This happened as the result of increased number of work-related stress, mainly among service delivering employees. Thus, emotions have been no more ignored or considered to be irrelevant at work. Instead, according to Goleman et al. (2002), service organizations have been attempting to use employees' emotions as a sales point, and make them generate emotions required at their job position.

Nowadays, emotions became a very important element of modern service organization's successful work in the form of relationships between employees and customers, and communication between employees and their managers (Thomson, 1998 in Lashley, 2001: 175). Depending on positive or negative nature of emotion, it can "motivate, organize, direct, and activate" people at work, or have a negative, and even disruptive, impact on their work and work-related relationships (Payne & Cooper, 2004; Goleman et al., 2002).

Many researchers mostly studied emotions at work from individual's perspective. Such as, for instance, how to become aware of oneself's emotions, to understand, use and control them

(Caruso & Salovey, 2004). These has been recognized as emotional intelligence of an individual and researched mainly in relation to those performing managerial and/or leadership roles in organizations (Goleman et al., 2002; Caruso & Salovey, 2004). Along with emotional intelligence, emotional competence has appeared in research, which encompassed individual's emotional self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and emotional relationship management (Ginsberg & Davies, 2007). Moreover, emotional competences were related to the abilities of an individual to use his/her own organs of sense for successful communication and interpersonal skills, for example (Dahlgaard-Park & Dahlgaard, 2003).

However, this thesis is focused not on the ways individual can care of emotions, but on the way the emotions of everyone related to the company can be influenced by employee empowerment. And all the emotions of everyone working in organization and interested in it, are introduced here as the components of organization's emotional capital, as it was mentioned above. This concept has been first introduced by Thomson (1998, in Lashley, 2001) and developed further, particularly in relationship with empowerment, by Lashley (2001) and Aziz (2008). Therefore studies of these authors had a major impact on my research.

Here, different roles can be considered as performed by emotions, based on whether the emotion is being expressed or experienced (Briner, 1999b in Payne & Cooper, 2004:283). The expression of emotion is usually referred to the Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labor, which will be introduced further in this paper. On the other hand, experienced emotion is a feeling which an individual experiences as the result of some perceived event(s) at work (Payne & Cooper, 2004:283). Therefore, when employee is required to express 'happy emotions' at the workplace and these are exactly the emotions he/she experiences, then a situation of emotional harmony appears for that employee and there is no need in executing emotional work in such case.

## **1.2 Emotional labor and emotional harmony**

### ***From emotional work to emotional labor***

As Mann (1999) argued, nowadays many service organizations apply 'strong service culture', which requires from employees to always be 'happy', willing to assist customers with pleasure, and like their work and company.

Thereby, in my view, and, according to Ginsberg & Davies (2007), counting for service-oriented organizations' needs and attempts to control the display of their employees' emotions at work by suppressing the real feelings and wearing a 'happy mask', or performing emotional

labor, can be considered as an important topic in research on emotions, particularly if done on behalf of organizations.

In order to follow company's 'display rules', employees execute emotional work. This concept, according to Hochschild (1983), refers to the efforts of the employees on suppressing and controlling their experienced emotions. And while actually wearing organization's 'mask' in accordance with accepted in the company 'display rules', an employee performs emotional labor. Thus, emotional labor, which has become a characteristic feature of growing service industry (Leidner, 1999; Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Reiter, 1996 in Payne & Cooper, 2004), can be otherwise defined as “a clear, and powerful, attempt to control the way employees present themselves emotionally – for commercial ends” (Payne & Cooper, 2004:225).

In addition, as Ginsberg and Davies (2007) argued, there can be three main ways for employees to conduct emotional work, such as by suppressing really experienced emotion, surface acting or deep acting. And, regardless the strategy, chosen by employee to manipulate his/her emotions, it can be the most hard to do, when employee's experienced emotions clash with those which he/she is required to express. In other words, as Caruso & Salovey (2004) stated, when a suppression of experienced emotions takes place, either when performing surface acting or deep acting, negative consequences of emotional labor are likely to appear for an individual.

Therefore, performance of emotional labor can positively influence organization's performance and results, and in the same time have negative impact on performing employees' health (Grandey, 2000 in Ginsberg & Davies, 2007). However, having an unfavorable impact on employees health, negative outcomes of emotional labor will eventually reflect on all the company's emotional capital (Lashley, 2001).

Consequences of emotional labor (see example Table1) for employee and organization, can be related to the “...job-related attitudes and behaviors, physical and psychological well-being, withdrawal behaviors” (Rubin et al., 2005 in Ginsberg & Davies, 2007:23). Particularly, when the required company's 'display rules' are played with deep acting, there can be a problem with stop playing at the end of the working day, which can consequently cause psychological problems and inability to 'serve' for the company's benefit (Payne & Cooper, 2004). Furthermore, such negative outcomes of emotional labor, resulting, for instance, in emotional overload or burnout at work, can potentially lower organization's internal and in a longer period external emotional capital. In its attempts to prevent or solve this issue, organizations'

increasingly trying to create states of emotional harmony for their employees so there would be no need in performing emotional labor.

### **Emotional harmony**

Referring to the three emotional states that can be experienced by service employee performing emotional work (Mann, 1999), situation of emotional harmony is the most desirable. While state of emotional dissonance can be harmful for an employee, and a state of emotional deviance is not beneficial for a company (Appendix 1). This can be supported by previous discussion on the negative consequences of the emotional labor. Indeed, the situation of emotional dissonance requires to express the emotions which are not felt and to hide the real ones, and in such a way to perform 'emotional labor', which can lead to negative outcomes of emotional work mentioned above. In relation to the state of emotional deviance, it can not be regarded as preferable due inability of employee to express the required emotions and, hence, to follow company's 'display rules'. Therefore, I believe, that aiming to improve organization's emotional capital, which implies caring for both external and internal customers and stakeholders, it can be suggested that creating situations of emotional harmony would be the most beneficial for each individual involved and organization itself.

The concept of emotional harmony at work, according to Mann (1999), can be defined as the emotional state of an individual when his/her experienced emotions match with expressed emotions and company's 'display rules'. This can be particularly beneficial for service organizations requiring employees to wear a happy and smiling 'mask', as a service employee "...who feels happy and helpful, and display this emotions, is not providing emotional labor...", because this employee does not need to hide or fake his emotions (Lashley, 2001:182).

In addition, there have been noticed some positive outcomes of emotional harmony at work. Thus, as Goleman et al. (2002) argued, the organization's attempting "to prime good feelings" in their employees, potentially "free the best" in their people on emotional level, making them work at their best. This can be explained by the ability of positive emotions to influence employees mental efficiency, and, hence, "...making people better at understanding information and using decision rules in complex judgments, as well as more flexible in their thinking" (Dalglish & Power, 1999 in Goleman et al., 2002:14).

Moreover, feeling 'happy emotions' and, thus, perceiving events, environment and interactions in a positive light, "...helps people feel more optimistic about their ability to achieve a goal, enhances creativity and decision-making skills, and predisposes people to be helpful"(Fisher &

Noble, 2000 in Goleman et al., 2002: 14), that can be considered as crucial features in service industry. Thereby, in my view, enabling and increasing the situations of emotional harmony for employees should be the main focus of organizations intending to improve their emotional capital.

## **2. Empowerment on emotional level**

### **2.1 Definition and nature of empowerment**

According to Ghoshal and Bartlett (1997), since mid-1980s there has been noticed a new tendency and later movement to regard each individual as a valuable human resource in the organization. As they further argued, that was the beginning of transformation of traditional organizations into “individualized corporations”, where organizational structure, working environment and relationships were built in the way that allowed explicit and implicit knowledge and unique skills of each employee to be revealed for organization's benefit (Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1997). Simultaneously, a raising interest in research to the role of emotions at work, has led to the attempts of organizations, particularly focused on services, to sell employees' emotions as additional value to services (Ginsberg & Davies, 2007). Therefore, it has been recognized that excellent results for service organizations can be achieved with emotional capital of 'high-quality', and, accordingly, coping with negative consequences of emotional labor has become an important field to study (Thomson, 1998 in Lashley, 2001).

#### **Empowerment in its initiatives and forms**

Many managerial initiatives, often employees involvement and participation, were implied to reduce negative outcomes of emotional labor for both, employees and organization (Lashley, 2001; Aziz, 2008). Furthermore, as a response to the organizational changes and new market needs, a new approach has occurred, namely “empowerment”(Cook & Macaulay, 1997). As this new concept appeared, it was mainly interpreted and applied as “...a management technique used to motivate employees, by delegating or sharing power with them...” (Kanter, 1983 in Patah et al., 2009: 168), that met many rejections, particularly, among middle-level managers (Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1997). These rejections have been to the most extent caused by understanding empowerment in the way that if “...the empowered are given more authority to make decisions, there is a corresponding reduction in the direct authority exercised by supervisors and managers” (Lashley, 2001: 9).

However, service-focused organizations have later discovered different forms of empowerment which can be used, exactly for service companies with concern about their

emotional capital (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1992, 1995; Zimmerman, 1995 in Patah et al., 2009). These empowerment forms, related to one or another empowerment initiatives, can include, for instance, quality circles, team briefing, job enlargement and job enrichment. Each of these techniques can be applied alone or together with others, depending on organization's intention, needs and resources. However, initiatives and forms of empowerment will not be researched in this thesis, as it is assumed that this 'topic' can be better covered with data collected from interviews with employers, rather than employees. And, according to the aim of thesis, this paper is focused on connection between emotions and empowerment from employees' perspective. Thus, particularly emotional state of empowerment, which can be created for employees, is an important phenomenon here, and will be regarded further in more details.

Empowerment as managerial initiative has long been used interchangeably with such initiatives as employee involvement and employee participation (Plunkett & Fournier, 1991; Cotton, 1993 in Lashley, 2001), as all of them can be considered as attempts “...to engage employee individually, morally and emotionally” (Schein, 1988 in Lashley, 2001). Moreover, empowerment, having similar aims with employee involvement and participation techniques, can employ them “...to create an emotional bond between the individual and the organization” (Lashley, 2001: 172), and contribute to the improvement of organization's emotional capital.

### **Empowerment and delegation**

In the process of its development and probing, empowerment of employees, as Cook and Macaulay (1997) stated, has been often perceived by managers as another word for delegation of power. However, empowerment and delegation are very different in their approach to management. Thus, when the task is delegated, the employee gets the power and responsibility for its fulfillment, but the employee is being controlled by management while executing the task. In the contrast to delegating authority, empowerment implies that manager hands over his/her responsibility, authority and accountability for certain tasks, and employs a role of a coach rather than controller. In the same time, empowered employee operates within frame of company's guidelines and values, which helps management to ensure that all the services provided within the same standards (Cook & Macaulay, 1997: 56).

### **Empowerment on emotional level**

As Lashley (1995) argued, engaging employees on emotional level, along with realizing their “... feelings of personal effectiveness and worth...”, are the main distinct characteristics of

empowerment. In addition, empowerment is related to the establishment of the boundaries in relation to what an employee can do, or what the degree of power he/she is given (van Outdshoorn and Thomas, 1993 in Lashley, 2001), while being involved in making organization reach its goals and succeed (Johnson and Redmond, 1998: xv in Lashley, 2001).

Furthermore, some researchers defined empowerment as individual's 'authorization' to freely act, be responsible for the results of these actions (Blanchard, Carlos & Randolph, 1996 in Honold, 1997) and to believe in his/her ability to exercise the actions (Velthouse, 1990 in Snipes et al., 2005). And, according to Johnson (1993, in Lashley, 2001), employee in fact has this ability and hidden potential and empowerment helps to realize it and unleash. Therefore, many academics (Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Schlessinger & Heskett, 1991 in Patah et al., 2009) in their attempts to identify the concept of empowerment, have defined the core principles, according to which empowerment is about providing an employee with some freedom to act, or latitude, in relation to certain tasks, along with responsibility for its completion. For such empowerment of mainly frontline employees to be successful, its chosen forms within chosen initiative should give an individual an "intrinsic motivation" (Patah et al., 2009). Moreover, feeling in greater control, having sense of greater power and freedom to make their choices in performing the tasks, can provide empowered employees with feeling of self-efficacy and self-determination in the organization (Alpander, 1991 in Lashley, 2001). These feelings, in their turn, can become a link between empowerment and emotional state which it creates in employees, their feeling of being empowered, that is crucial in this 'initiative' to be successful.

## **2.2 Emotional state of empowerment**

The feeling of being empowered, or the emotional state of empowerment is fundamental in research on the concept of empowerment (Lashley, 1999), as it doesn't have any practical sense without the empowered employee having this feeling (Lashley, 2001). According to Lashley (1996, 1999), empowerment is related to the power given to an employee to perform a task, and the freedom of choice and ability to execute this power, that result is certain emotional feeling experienced by the empowered employee. Thereby, in order to engage employees on emotional level, while aiming to improve organization's emotional capital, it is important to count for an impact of different managerial initiatives and techniques, used in the context of empowerment, on employees. This impact can be defined as emotional state of empowerment, which, as Lashley (1995) argued, can help an employee to produce appropriate to the

company's 'display rules' emotion.

However, the link between 'empowerment initiative' and the state of empowerment, according to Lashley(2001), can be regarded in two directions. As it has been mentioned above, empowerment can lead to the employee's feeling of being empowered and, hence, it can be used as 'management approach' to create those 'happy emotions' required to be expressed by employees at service encounter, that in its turn allows to avoid negative outcomes of emotional labor. On the other hand, there can be no success in applying employee empowerment, without employee actually feeling empowered.

According to Conger and Kanungo (1998, in Lashley, 1999: 170), empowerment can be regarded as “...working arrangements which engage the empowered at an emotional level”, and encompass two elements, or perspectives, each of which cannot be successfully applied if used separately. From organization's perspective, there can be distinguished a rational construct of empowerment, which relates to the style of management and the level of employee participation. While, from individual or employee perspective, according to Lashley (1999: 170), motivational or psychological aspect of empowerment becomes the most important, as “...it is about discretion, autonomy, power and control”. Although either construct of empowerment cannot lead to the desired organizational results alone, psychological 'element' of empowerment should be of the main focus, as it is about employee's emotional state of empowerment. Here, according to many researchers (Conger, 1989; van Oudtshoorn & Thomas, 1993; Johnson, 1993 in Lashley, 1999), it is important for an empowered employee to feel that he is not controlled but is given authority, power, freedom and ability to use it, and that it is an important task that he/she is empowered to do.

Psychological empowerment, according to Robbins et al. (2002), is therefore considered as a foundation to motivate empowered employees emotionally, so they will have the state of empowerment (Robbins et al., 2002). This motivational or psychological empowerment can be successful if all the four components of the empowerment state are satisfied (Lashley, 2001). These components include employee's perception of task as worthwhile, employee's belief in his/her abilities to perform the task, existence of a freedom to choose on how better to do execute the task, and employee's belief in the importance of his job in the organization (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990 in Lashley, 2001; Robbins et al., 2002). In other words, having a feeling of meaningfulness, self-efficacy, self-determination and the belief in being able to make some impact on the way to achievement of organization's goals (Robbins et al., 2002), empowered employee inevitably comes to the emotional state of empowerment (Conger &



Kanungo, 1988; Sparrowe, 1994; Siegall & Gardner, 2000 in Lashley, 2001). These feelings, experienced by empowered employee can be explained by mental or psychological needs of a human beings (Dahlgaard & Kondo, 2000 in Dahlgaard-Park & Dahlgaard, 2003). Moreover, according to the Trinity model of human needs, mental and spiritual needs can be the motivation factors for employees (Dahlgaard-Park & Dahlgaard, 2003).

### **2.3 Emotional harmony and empowerment**

Service organization aiming to create emotional harmony at work for its employees, as Lashley (2001) argued, is following the root of making happy customers by making happy employees. And empowerment can be used here to achieve this goal by creating some psychological state for employee to feel those 'happy emotions' required at work and to be able to express them appropriately. That, in its turn, impacts on organization's external emotional capital, as, according to Lashley (2001: 185), “through empowerment, employees are expected to be able to genuinely feel the warmth to customers...”, so the employees' positive emotions will be 'transmitted' to the customers.

The emotional state, which allows an employee to generate positive emotions 'naturally', as has been identified above, defined as a state of empowerment, experienced by empowered employee. And, a feeling of being empowered is positively connected to the emotional state of employees (Fulford & Enz, 1995 in Patah et al., 2009), that “... reduces emotional dissonance, and reduces the need to supply emotional labor” (Lashley, 2001: 189). Thus, employee having such emotional state of empowerment, is able to express really experienced emotions, as they are positive, in accordance with service organizations' 'display rules' (Mann, 1999).

Furthermore, applying particularly psychological or motivational empowerment, and, hence making employees believe in their meaningfulness, competence, ability to make decisions and be a valuable 'resource' in organization, can influence employees' emotional state in the way that they actually start to feel required happy emotions. So, in this case, according to Lashley (1999, 2001) and Aziz (2008), employees come in the state of emotional harmony and there is no need in emotional work and emotional labor anymore.

However, as it has been mentioned above, up to nowadays, different people, regardless their managerial or subordinate positions in the organization, understand, perceive and apply empowerment in different ways, thereby, various definitions can be found in literature. Thus, as Ayupp and Chung (2010: 563) stated, one of the practical views is to look at the empowerment as a “...method of delegation which enables work decisions to be taken as near

as possible to the operating units and their customers”. Although, as it has been argued, delegation is not enough to succeed in employees' empowerment. On the other hand, empowerment on emotional level, according to Cook and Macaulay (1997), can be used as a tool to create a certain environment in organization, which allows employees to use all their abilities to satisfy and exceed customers' expectations as fast and efficiently as possible. Thereby, Lashley (1999) argued, employees having such power to make decisions, feel significance of their role in the organization, which helps them to really produce the required emotions.

In this context, empowerment, can be seen as a 'method' or managerial approach, which engages empowered employee on emotional level (Conger & Kanungo, 1988 in Lashley, 1999: 170), and helps to overcome emotional dissonance and deviance, and leads to the state of emotional harmony for employees (Lashley, 2001). In such a way, empowerment creates the “inner state of empowerment” enabling an employee not only to perform according to organization's standards, but also to feel 'required' emotions (Lashley, 1996), and to have a state of emotional harmony at work. Moreover, according to previous research, empowered employee feels valuable and trusted, which also leads to positive work-related emotions (Yoon, Beatty & Suh, 2001; Babin & Boles, 1996 in Snipes et al., 2004; Lashley, 2001), and employee motivation and satisfaction at work (Dahlgaard-Park & Dahlgaard, 2003). Furthermore, all these improvements can develop a positive feeling about organization and, thus, improve its emotional capital.

### **3. Summary**

In this section findings from previous studies on emotions, emotional labor, empowerment and emotional capital, and theories derived from them, have been discussed as theoretical framework for research in this thesis. As it has been argued, emotional capital of organization, in particular operating in service industry, is better to be considered as valuable as intellectual capital and physical assets in organization. This emotional capital was regarded as consisting of its internal part (mainly employees' emotions at work) and external part (mostly customers' feelings about organization). Moreover, as it was presented above, improvement of internal emotional capital can lead to the improvement of external one, or, in other words, happy employees can easier make customers be happy. Thereby, improvement of employees' emotions at work can improve organization's emotional capital.

Furthermore, as company's 'display rules' and emotions of employees at work can differ,

emotional state of employees can also be different. Thus, finding ways to reduce performance of emotional labor for employees and to create a state of emotional harmony was presented as the main focus here. For these purposes, employee empowerment with creating emotional state of empowerment was suggested as a mean to make employees be genuinely happy at work. However, before applying empowerment of employees as a tool to improve emotional capital of service organization, it is important to consider employees' attitudes about being empowered, as it can significantly affect the results. Therefore, in this research my intention is to reveal, interpret and understand employees' views about state of emotional harmony at work and a feeling of being empowered, and to see possible relationship between them, from employees' perspective. Importantly, in order to be able to interpret interviewees' views and attitudes as clear as possible, attention was also paid to the possible 'explanation' of their views and beliefs, such as their emotions at work and emotional labor they performed in organizations.

### **III. Methodology of Research**

#### **Qualitative research**

As it is indicated above, this research is focused on phenomenon of emotional capital of service organization and the empowerment of employees in this organization. Particularly, such concepts as emotional labor and emotional harmony of employees at work are regarded in relationship with empowerment, which, as has been argued in literature, may improve employees emotional state at work and in its turn internal and external emotional capital of organization.

For these purposes, qualitative research was chosen to be conducted, as the one letting researcher to study what is actually happening in reality (Silverman, 2006). However, it is acknowledged, that in this research the reality is presented subjectively by some people (interviewees) and analyzed by other people (researcher), which does not allow objective results as a single approach (May, 1997).

Referring to the theoretical framework of this thesis, presented in the above part of the paper, different studies have been conducted in relation to emotions at work and empowerment as a managerial initiative aiming to engage employees emotionally. And, according to those previous studies in reviewed literature above, some theories were built around relationship between employees emotional state at work and the way they are empowered. However, those theories were based mostly on research either related to the employees work-related views, beliefs and attitudes of a certain organization, or were regarded from employers' perspective.

On the other hand, my research is based on data collected from former service employees with work experience in different service organizations and from different countries, which allowed me to see the phenomenon with eyes of those who experienced it and to explore a wider picture, not based on certain organization or country of residence. Such approach to the study, according to Gubrium and Holstein (1997, in Bryman, 2001: 265), allows the researcher to gain "...access to 'inside' experience..." of participants and is defined as emotionalism. In addition, as focus of my research has been driven by previous studies in literature, that 'background' literature, presented as theoretical framework in this thesis, can be considered as equivalent of theory, according to Bryman (2001: 6-7).

#### **Research aim and questions**

Up to these days many researchers have been arguing, that empowerment of employees can help them generate positive feelings about their job and in such a way let employees avoid

emotional labor and have emotional harmony at work (Lashley, 2001). This process, as it was suggested, happens because happy employees can easier make customers be happy. In other words, organizations can improve their external emotional capital by improving internal one through empowerment. Thereby, this research aims to study the relationship between empowerment and emotional state at work from employees' perspective. This relationship can explore such questions as importance of such emotional state at work, as emotional harmony, for employees; the reasons of aspiration for or avoiding of empowerment by employees; and possible impact of employees' empowerment on their emotional state at work.

Therefore, in this research, my intention was to see on practice if employees think that they really need emotional harmony at work, and whether they would like to be empowered to make their own decisions, and, finally, to see whether absence/presence/certain level of empowerment influences employees' emotional state at work and leads to the state of emotional harmony.

### ***Research method***

Qualitative interview as a research method was chosen to study the phenomenon, as allowing the researcher to carefully listen in order to hear and try to understand the meaning of what is communicated, which is particularly more possible in an interview as a guided conversation (Kvale, 1996, Rubin & Rubin, 1995 in Gubrium & Holstein, 2002).

Accordingly, the method of semi-structured interviews was chosen for it's ability to allow the researcher to comprehend respondents 'views' and 'attitudes' related to the studied phenomenon and in the same time to direct the order of asked questioned, and, hence, to make interviewee follow a certain structure (Flick, 2009). Thereby, during the interview, questions sometimes were slightly changed or reformulated to encourage interviewee to actively participate in conversation and, in particular, on emotional level.

Additionally, the sequence of questions was sometimes changed and subsidiary questions were used in some cases to help interviewees formulate and express their views in required direction. Such latitude of interviewer's 'behavior' can be regarded as an advantage given by a chosen type of interview, according to Bryman (2001). Although, to have this 'freedom' at the interview and in the same time to stay attached to a studied phenomenon, an interview guide was designed (Appendix 2).

### **Interviewees**

Ten interviews were conducted with former employees from different service organizations placed in different countries. All the interviewees were females of age 24-29. Thus, it is suggested, that other 'views' and 'attitudes' could appear if male interviewees were included in sample. However, such limitation was not made for purpose when choosing the respondents. In my view, due to the fact that majority of service employees are females, it was easier to choose them for interview. Therefore, this research does not account for gender when investigating the relationship between emotions and empowerment. Although, I acknowledge that gender factor can have a decisive impact on employees emotions at work and the way they perceive empowerment. So, it is suggested for further studies.

Cultures in countries, where interviewees have worked and/or have been residents of, could also influence their views and beliefs, which can be considered as given a wider picture of phenomenon. Countries of interviewees' residence, which, could be important to consider in further research if accounting for cultural aspect, included Thailand, China, Vietnam, Armenia, Czech, Sweden, Russia and Serbia. However, companies' 'display rules' for these employees could also be affected by culture of the country in which the company was located. These countries encompasses, besides named above, Scotland and Bali. Therefore, even though cultural influence on employees emotional state at work and their feeling of being empowered is not studied in this paper, it is suggested that named cultural aspects could be important to consider in further related research.

All the interviewees had experience working on different positions, which required direct service encounter with customers. Therefore, they were chosen based on their experience and easier reachability for interviews, in comparison to current service employees. Thus, all the respondents were unemployed at the moment and improving their competence while taking the same Master Program in Service Management in Lund University, Sweden. Enlarging their knowledge in such a way, allowed the employees to look at their experience in service industry from deeper and may be another perspective, that makes them be very interesting candidates to interview.

Additionally, as all the respondents had quitted their jobs for some reasons, it has been assumed that those reasons might affect their attitude to the former places of work. Thereby, this was also revealed during the interview. According to my findings, interviewees who had work experience in more than one service organization have quitted their jobs either because of many harmful negative consequences of emotional labor they have experienced, or just because

of the end of the contract. And those interviewees who had just one job have quitted it due to their acceptance to the program in Lund University, Sweden. Thus, it is assumed, that the way chosen respondents felt about service organizations they worked in, was not affected by their current status as former employees.

### **Data collection and processing**

Research design and interviewing were conducted according to the stages, introduced by Kvale (1996:88, in Gubrium & Holstein, 2002), and included thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing and reporting. Thus, a phenomenon to study was chosen based on its 'theoretical framework' and relevance in modern service organizations. Further, research was designed with setting its aim, formulating research questions and choosing a method of study. And, as it has been mentioned above, in order to answer the research questions interview guide was designed, which included basic and main questions, that “begin and guide conversation” and “follow-up questions that pursue the implications of answers to main questions” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 145-146 in Gubrium & Holstein, 2002: 86-87).

On the stage of choosing interviewees, 'criterion' sampling was used, which means that all the participants have experienced the phenomena (Creswell, 1998: 118), such as emotional labor and empowerment. Thus, important criteria included previous work in service organization(s), experience of stress and performance of emotional labor at work, and being empowered to some degree in task-related activities.

All the interviewees were contacted in advance, informed about the topic of research, confidentiality and approximate time of the interview, and a contribution they can make. The time of interviews varied from 27 to 75 minutes, based on interviewees experience and a degree to which they felt involved emotionally in conversation. Many of them have stated that it is a very important topic in service industry nowadays, and a very sensitive one for them, who build their career in service organizations. Therefore, in my view, most of the interviewees tried to recall all the emotional experience in service organizations to make a valuable contribution to this research.

After all the interviews have been recorded, they were transcribed (Appendix 3), analyzed and reported. In the process of analysis interviewees' words were taken as their true conscious views, beliefs and attitudes. Next part of this paper will present mentioned above stages of interviewing process.

#### **IV. Empirical data analysis**

This section includes three parts of thematic analysis, which follow the structure of theoretical framework used in thesis, that allowed researcher to better see similarities and possible differences on studied phenomena in theory and practice. These three parts were explored in the process of collected at the interviews data analysis. After all the interviews have been transcribed, answers were grouped and analyzed. First, groups were made in accordance to the main concepts in theoretical framework; then, these groups were restructured as to be able to answer research questions; last grouping was made within already existed groups in relation to the similarities and differences in views.

Finally, analysis of data, processed in such a way, were performed, trying to find some 'reflection' in literature and to suggest why interviewees had exactly such views, beliefs and attitudes, which they have claimed. Thus, when making analysis of interviews, there were attempts to see the phenomenon from three different perspectives - interviewees', mine, and researcher. By "mine" perspective, I mean a person who has been making a research but at the same time, who had a similar experience as the most of interviewees, which could have affected my perception and interpretation of their answers. Therefore, to study the phenomenon without being 'emotionally involved' in it, I tried to separate me as a participant and me as a researcher, to the most possible, as to my abilities, extent.

The analysis and some initial findings on them are reported below.

##### **Emotions at work, emotional labor and emotional harmony**

Nowadays, an important role to the concept of emotional labor is given in literature on emotions at work and, the increasing number of studies are being made, particularly on behalf of service organizations, to investigate the nature and ways to improve the performance of emotional labor by employees. However, not many researches regarded this concept from employees perspective, personal and work-related. Therefore, this part explores employees' awareness of and attitude to the emotional work they do and emotional labor they perform, and their attitude to the state of emotional harmony at work.

Interestingly, many former service employees involved in this research, have shown the ability to cope with negative consequences of emotional labor themselves and regarded doing it as their work-related responsibility. For example, one interviewee mentioned:

*"...I think you have to be very aware of your emotions...when you work in*



*such (service) environment you have to control your emotions according to company's standards...but it's hard to act when your real emotions differ from required ones very much..."*

Thus, this interviewee has shown a good knowledge of the nature of service industry, which according to Thomson (1998, in Lashley, 2001), can be characterized with highly customized service encounters and emotions of employees' as additional value to services. Moreover, as an interviewee mentioned above, emotional work is harder to conduct when experienced and required to be expressed emotions are not in match, that has been also earlier argued by Ginsberg and Davies (2007).

Some interviewees have stated that it is a responsibility of each employee, working in service organization, to prepare themselves to perform emotional labor with minimum negative outcomes, and, when possible, to work on creating emotional harmony for themselves by understanding and managing their emotions. One of respondents explained:

*"...you have to come to work being prepared...to wear a 'happy mask', but it should be still flexible depending on the situation ...it's hard to really feel bad and pretend that you don't...the ability to avoid negative emotions...is quite good to have in this environment...I think that as long as you understand your emotions and others, you can better manage to actually have emotional harmony at work..."*

Other interviewee with similar views explained their emotional work aiming to reach the state of emotional harmony as a part of service employee's work:

*"...everything (stress) should be under control...because you always should have a good self-control of your real emotions... because if you work in hospitality, you need to control yourself, as you deal with a lot of people and it's quite important...because everyone (service employee) believe that customers are kind of Gods...so we need to serve everything they want and make them be satisfied..."*

In literature, however, such cases when employees are taking their responsibility for being genuinely happy at work, are not usually examined. Instead, there is an increasing number of studies on how organization and its managers can become more aware of and be able to

manage their emotions and others, being emotionally intelligent and competent (Goleman et al., 2002; Caruso & Salovey, 2004), and consequently help their employees to produce required emotions as naturally as possible. Although, it would be strange not to assume that employees may exercise attempts not only to perform emotional labor efficiently, but also to find their way to be genuinely happy at work, that, as it has been argued above, is beneficial for both, employee and organization. For instance, some interviewees tried to avoid negative outcomes of emotional labor with help of their colleagues:

*“...I think for me it was OK to get used to the situations when I needed to pretend that I was happy...I also communicated with my colleagues...and we discussed ... bad situations, and I felt that I wasn't not alone with them...that's how it worked...”*

Additionally, interesting views and attitudes were presented by those interviewees, who were not required to always wear a “happy mask” at work, which is uncommon in service-oriented organizations. Some of such interviewees demonstrated a genuine ability and willingness to be hospitable as it supposed to be, in their view, in service industry. Thereby, even though the company they worked for haven't demanded to follow certain 'display rules' all the time, they tried to do it in according with their own beliefs. For example, one interviewee working in a hotel with family values, have noted:

*“..unsatisfied customers made me feel uncomfortable but I still had to wear a 'happy mask' ...I was not told that I had to look happy in any situation, but I felt that I had to, because that is how I understand providing service should look like...but sometimes when the customers were not very polite, I stopped wearing that 'mask' because I felt that it would be more appropriate to be yourself and in such a way it would be easier for me to solve a problem...”*

Therefore, in general, although all the employees suffered from performing emotional labor, only a few of them tried to avoid it by working on their emotional self-awareness and self-management to produce 'happy emotions' naturally and regardless a situation, and none of them considered the problem as organization's responsibility and as something that company's management should try to solve. Mostly, those who did not aim at emotional harmony, were just not aware that it is possible not just to pretend that you feel happy at work, but to really

feel so, while working in accordance with company's "display rules".

Moreover, when analyzing 'techniques' used by the above cited interviewees to perform emotional labor or to avoid it, while still doing their job efficiently, methods of "surface acting" and "deep acting", as described by Ginsberg and Davies (2007), can be seen. Even though, these techniques, according to Lashley (2001), are to be applied by organizations to 'manage' emotions of their employees, they appeared to be useful for interviewees at their work. Thus, "surface acting", or pretending to have certain emotions, was the most commonly used among interviewees, while "deep acting", or trying to really generate required emotions, was only possible, according to some respondents, with awareness of oneself's emotions and additional emotional support, for instance, from colleagues.

### **Emotional state of empowerment : perspective of empowered ones**

To study the relationship between employees' emotional harmony and empowerment, assumed in literature, I also decided to determine what employees think about the concept of empowerment itself and whether they want to be empowered. And here my findings were interestingly divided. For example, there were interviewees who didn't want to be empowered at all as they thought that "*...empowerment and all responsibility that comes with it make a job be more stressful...*" and, as one interviewee put it:

*"... I think if you are empowered to make many decisions, you feel pressure and don't feel good at work, and when you are required to have a "smile" then it's hard to make it look natural and be natural..."*

Importantly, to consider for service organizations, such employees who don't appreciate being empowered, may try to avoid exercising the 'power' and freedom they are given in task-related decisions. For example:

*"...even if I'm empowered to make my own decisions... I prefer to ask someone if I have some doubts on which decision to make...and then, if there is a mistake because of made decision, then I won't be responsible...because then it's their decision...it is the way I do...so I always consult someone..."*

Thereby, it can be assumed that such negative attitudes to the empowerment are due to the lack of efforts made by organizations not just to empower employees but to make sure

that employees feel empowered. This feeling of being empowered, as Lashley (2001) argued, is crucial in any empowerment initiative to be successful.

On the other hand, some interviewees' beliefs and attitudes can be considered as examples of personalities which in their nature enjoy responsibility and regard it as trust in them. Therefore, these respondents could have a state of empowerment by just being given a power and a freedom to act, and by acting efficiently so they feel happy at work. Hence, some of them stated:

*“ ...I really liked the empowerment I was given at that job and it made me feel more confident ...I felt better about my job when I was making right decisions myself ... I think I could easier make the customers be happy when I felt that I am trusted to solve the issues without being told exactly what to do...”*

or

*“...I think that if I'm empowered to make at least some work-related decisions then I would do my work better because it will let me have a positive feeling about my job... but if there is no empowerment at all, I won't feel as I belong to the organization and am important there...I don't feel loyalty to such organization and eventually will quit my job...I think it is good to be empowered but in the same time to be able to consult someone if you are not competent enough to decide or have doubts...”*

Interestingly, in the last citation above, interviewee have mentioned about importance of being not only trusted but also supported and competent enough for a job one is empowered to do. It corresponds to the four components needed to exist for employee to have a state of empowerment. These components, according to Lashley (2001) and Robbins et al. (2002), include feelings of meaningfulness, competence, trust and belonging. Moreover, they correspond with important factors in quality of work life (Thorgaard, 1997 in Dahlgaard-Park & Dahlgaard, 2003), and valuable mental and spiritual human needs in The Trinity Model (Dahlgaard-Park & Dahlgaard, 2003). Thereby, it can be suggested, that particularly motivated and committed employees can really feel empowered when are given some power and freedom to act.

In particular, feeling of being trusted and supported have been often mentioned in the interviews as key factors letting employees really feel empowered and happy at work. For

example, interviewee who had not much power at work, noted:

*“...I would say I had a limited empowerment...I like this way...it is good to be trusted and be able to decide on solving some situations yourself...but if there is something serious it's better to consult with manager and share responsibility for that decision...”*

In another case, such factors as cooperation with managers and colleagues, good communication between departments and 'coverage' by more experienced personnel, in case of the issues related to all the organization, were considered to be very important. Thus, one interviewee explained it as:

*“...when you are empowered to make your own decision on behalf of the hotel it is important to remember that your mistakes, either big or small, can ruin people's attitude to the whole hotel...so you have to cooperate with your colleagues and manager and share the information with them, consult before taking action...in such way...I still had the situations in my hands but tried to confirm my actions with others before doing them...and then of course I didn't need to ask how to deal in every small case...I think I just felt when it was better to ask someone what to do...”*

Therefore, it can be assumed that in those cases, when interviewees did not feel fully empowered, not all the four components of emotional state of empowerment were presented. Hence, one interviewee, for example, was eager to take more responsibility at work but also was afraid of it to some extent, so preferred to have someone more competent to 'double-check':

*“...I think that I would like to be empowered more at my job but only if the level of my empowerment match with my capabilities...then I can be sure that everything will be done right and I prefer to decide myself in such cases...otherwise, I'd better ask someone more experienced for an advice...”*

### **Emotional harmony and empowerment**

When conducting interviews, it was important to determine together with interviewees their views and attitudes about emotional harmony and empowerment, and afterwards to find a link between these two concepts based on interviewees' work experience. According to the

interviews' data, mainly respondents who almost did not have power at their work place, or were not able to make even a single decision without prior asking the manager what to do, also did not see a connection between their emotional state at work and the level of empowerment they were given. For instance, some of them put it as:

*“... I don't think that more empowerment would help me to cope with my bad emotions and to feel happier at work...because with more empowerment I would feel more nervous, because I always would have to think if I've made a right decision...”*

or

*“...less empowerment...kind of ...make me feel better...because the decisions are not made by me, and if they are wrong – it's not my business...”*

In such cases, when no empowerment was desired by employees at all or there were attempts to avoid responsibility given, it could be suggested that empowered employees were given some power and freedom to act, but they did not feel their decisions would make a change and, hence, that they were important in the company. However, in my view and according to Lashley (2001), some people simply want to do their job and they regard additional power as something that makes their job be more complicated, which leads to negative feelings about it.

On the other hand, interviewees who have been empowered to make a lot of task-related decisions on their own, stated that it was not important to them how much power they had at their work place as long as customers were happy, and that made such employees be happy too. Thus, one of interviewees with such views said:

*“...I just want to solve the problems and make the customer be happy and that makes me feel better and I don't care whether I am empowered to make a decision on my own or have to always ask the manager what to do, the result with happy customer is more important...and this result is important for my emotional harmony at work...”*

Further, this respondent explained her views:

*“...working in hospitality industry, you need to have kind of a service spirit and to do your job in a professional way, to make them (customers) be*

*satisfied and that makes you be happy...”*

Beliefs and work-related attitudes of such interviewees above, can be considered as an example of situations when feeling emotional state of empowerment has a positive impact on the success of empowerment initiative, instead of vice versa. As, according to Lashley (2001), on one hand, empowerment initiatives can lead to the state of empowerment, which, in its turn, leads to employee feeling happy at work. On the other hand, there also can be another connection between different forms of empowerment and the state of empowerment, only employee feeling empowered can successfully act within given power and freedom. And, then, empowerment itself makes an employee be happy doing his job. Also, as Ghoshal and Bartlett (1997) argued, making employees like their jobs through different empowerment initiatives, can make them do their best at work place and be happy with the results. Similarly, one interviewee expressed her views:

*“...if you like the job, you can find your own way to reduce the pressure...because I think that I'm trying to understand the customers emotions, why they behave bad and are not satisfied...and I don't take it personally...but sometimes it still affect my own emotions...but I still control myself...and easily return my happy emotions...”*

Moreover, some interviewed employees really appreciated the way and degree to which they were empowered at their working places. Those interviewees have acknowledged that they had some positive feelings when they were making their own work-related decisions and, by the end of the interview, they even defined this feeling as coming from being empowered, which made them be happy at work. This feeling was self-confidence, as defined by many interviewees and, which is an important component in the emotional state of empowerment, according to Thomas and Velthouse (1990, in Lashley, 2001) and Robbins et al. (2002). Thus, interviewees willing to be empowered and feeling so, explained it as:

*“...I think, if you are empowered, you can fix everything easier and faster and avoid stressful situations...”*

and

*“...I think confidence is very important here...if you have really good self-confidence then you can genuinely produce a required 'happy emotion'*

*...and it doesn't matter what stressful situations are happening around you...I think making employees feeling confident in what they do by empowering them, can create emotional harmony for them at work..."*

In such a way the concept of “confidence” or “self-confidence” was suggested to be a link between empowerment and emotional harmony:

*"...I think that feeling of self-confidence is like a reward for being able to do good at what you were empowered for...and, then this feeling leads to emotional harmony...and not to be afraid to solve unexpected situations with customers...I think empowerment impacts on emotional harmony through confidence in what you do..."*

Additionally, based on some interviewees' views, it can be suggested that empowerment can help to create emotional harmony with involvement of other factors, such as supportive working environment and with forms of empowerment 'transformed' to fit different personalities. For example, as an interviewee expressed it:

*"...I think that empowerment definitely helps to feel better, to genuinely be happy at work...but it also depends on the attitude of the managers to their subordinates...if they are kind and open-minded...and if colleagues are good...I feel much better when I know that I am trusted..."*

and

*"I think it depends on personality...for me, empowerment helps to have emotional harmony at work only together with friendly and trusted working environment...then I don't really feel all the stress that can happen..."*

### **Summary**

It can be concluded, that, based on empirical data analysis, that when employees feel that their job is meaningful, that they are trusted and competent enough for the task they are empowered to do, and that their decisions are important for the company, employees really feel empowered, and exercising the power given, they are genuinely happy at work. Importantly, trust and meaningfulness of the job appeared to be valuable factors making empowered employees have a state of emotional harmony at work. Such findings are similar with previous research on motivation by Dahlgard-Park and Dahlgard (2003), where a feeling of belonging,



self-determination, confidence, trust, loyalty were some of the important motivating factors at work. Furthermore, all of these, according to Lashley (2001) and Robbins et al. (2002), are the components of the emotional state of empowerment.

In addition, those interviewees who have mentioned about the importance of certain friendly and supportive environment to make them feel “on their place” when empowered and to feel naturally happy at the work place, regardless sometimes stressful nature of service jobs, regarded that special environment as something without what they would not feel empowered. While, Cook and Macaulay (1997) argued, that exactly empowerment on emotional level creates the environment in the company, in which employees reveal their best at the job and feel empowered.

Therefore, it can be assumed that, depending on personality of empowered employee and/or on the presence of all the components necessary for creation of emotional state of empowerment, service employee can genuinely produce happy emotions at work as a result of being empowered and then feeling empowered, or feeling empowered and then actually given power and freedom to exercise it. Additionally, however, there can be cases, in which employee does not feel empowered and does not desire task-related power, regardless organization's efforts in this direction. This can be caused, for instance, by personal characteristics of the employee, and can be prevented from happening in organization, for instance, by thorough recruitment procedures.

## **V. Conclusion**

This thesis, as presented above, had the *aim to study the relationship between employees empowerment and their emotional state at work*. Therefore, theoretical framework of a study was introduced in the beginning, which was based on findings from and interpretation of previous studies on emotions at work and empowerment in literature. According to the common traits in literature sources used, empowerment can create positive feelings in employees and a state of emotional harmony for them. And, by making employees be happy at work, empowering them, service organizations improve their internal emotional capital. Moreover, at the service encounter such happy employees can easily make customers be happy, which improves organization's external emotional capital.

However, my research has revealed some interesting aspects of studied phenomenon, creating the state of emotional harmony for employees through empowerment.

### **1. Findings**

According to the research questions, interviewees' views, beliefs and attitudes were explored in relation to the emotional harmony at work, empowerment, and connection between their emotions at work and empowerment, in a consequently stepwise manner. Thus, findings and their suggested interpretation are provided in the same sequence below.

#### **How important is emotional harmony at work for employees?**

Some employees believed that having emotional harmony at work is very important, particularly when working on the frontline in service organizations. In their views, it can reduce experienced stress at work, as not only they do not need to work on hiding their real emotions, or to do emotional work, but also being genuinely happy at work allowed such employees not to let stressful situations at work affect their feelings. Additionally, employees with concern about emotional harmony at work, claimed that it made them work better. That happened, as interviewees explained, because state of emotional harmony at work made them really like their job, as employees could express the emotions they experienced, which made them be happy and, hence, feel good at work.

However, there also were some contrary views among interviewees. Some of them stated that, although it would probably be good to have emotional harmony at work, it is not something that they care about a lot. They believed, that being under stress sometimes is what everyone just have to accept when working in service industry. And in cases when some negative outcomes of emotional labor appeared to the employees with such beliefs, they just

discussed it with their colleagues feeling the same, and it made them feel better and keep performing emotional work.

In my view, such differences in the attitude to the emotional harmony at work can be due to different work experience and/or personal characteristics of individuals. Previous work experience of employee hired to work in service organizations, I believe can be very influential for his/her new job. For instance, interviewees belonging to the first group above (with concern of their emotional harmony) seemed to work in service organizations, where internal emotional capital is considered to be very valuable and employees are made to genuinely happy at work instead of forced to perform emotional labor. On the other hand, it can be assumed, that interviewees of the second group above (who seemed not to care about having emotional harmony at work) worked in organizations, which regardless their focus on service, were managed in more traditional or 'rational' manner. Thus, in such 'rational' companies employees had to find their own ways to reduce negative consequences of emotional labor.

#### ***Why employees want and need empowerment, if they do?***

Attitudes towards empowerment were also contrary. Some interviewees perceived empowerment as something that served as the evidence of trust from management, and they really appreciated it. Additionally, among these interviewees were those who desired and appreciated the power and freedom to act given along with support from management. Thus, as it has been argued in literature, all these aspects, mentioned above, are the component of the state of empowerment, which means that employees with such views about empowerment really felt empowered.

On the other hand, some employees did not wish to be empowered to make any or many decisions at work by themselves. They claimed, that empowerment made them feel stressed, as it was perceived as some additional responsibility, which as they felt was their managers' task delegated to them. Some interviewees also stated that they did not feel as they were competent enough to make decisions they were empowered to. In my view, if to refer to the previous researches in literature, such employees have demonstrated an example when there was no state or feeling of empowerment, which should include feelings of employee's meaningfulness, confidence, competence, power and freedom to make work-related decisions and belief that this decisions are important in organization. Thus, as those interviewees who did not feel that their work was meaningful, did not have sense of belonging, being trusted and supported, they also did not feel competent and confident enough at work, so they felt that they should not have been empowered and did not want it.

### **How does empowerment affect employees' emotional state at work?**

Employees views about connection between empowerment and emotions at work were divided into those who did not see a link between concepts at all, those who experienced negative effect of empowerment on emotional state at work, and finally, there were employees who noticed a positive impact of empowerment on emotions at work.

It can be assumed that employees who did not see any connection between empowerment and their emotional state at work, simply did not notice it. As, they have also stated that they tried to do their job the best they could because that made them be happy, and it was not a matter for these employees where they could make any decisions themselves, as long as customers were happy. In this case, interviewees were empowered to make some work-related decisions and to decide themselves when to consult with manager. Thus, regardless the point that interviewees with such beliefs did not acknowledge that the way they were empowered made them be happy, as they were able to do their job in the best way they wished, connection between employees' empowerment and emotional state at work seems to be obvious here.

However, as stated above, there were employees who did not wish to be empowered, as they associated it with additional responsibility, stress and negative emotions. Thereby, as it has been already discussed, such employees did not feel empowered, which could have happened either due to the lack of components of the state of empowerment, or because of personal characteristics of individuals.

In addition, a number of employees, participating in research, have noticed a positive connection between their empowerment and emotions at work. These interviewees claimed that having a power and freedom to act in accordance with work situation on their own, together with support and relevant feedback from management, feeling of being trusted, meaningful, competent and confident in what they were doing, made them have a state of empowerment. A feeling of self-confidence was determined here, by some interviewees, as a link between empowerment and emotional harmony. According to these employees' views, being empowered in such a way made them feel confident at their work place, and by exercising the power given with happy customers as the result, created a state of emotional harmony for employees. Therefore, being empowered and feeling empowered made employees be genuinely happy at work via creating a feeling of self-confidence in themselves.

Therefore, it can be concluded, that, according to previous studies in literature and to findings of my research, empowerment can be considered as important method of making employees feel better at work. However, in order to create a situation of emotional harmony for employees

and, thereby to improve organization's emotional capital, there are other factors that should be considered when employee is empowered. Here, personal characteristics of employee can be important when deciding on who and how much to empower. Additionally, there can be differences in perception of empowerment and need for it, based on cultural background and work experience, for instance.

To sum up the findings, although some employees were not aware of the possibility to have emotional harmony at work and tried just to cope with negative consequences of emotional labor as long as they could, many others have seen a link between empowerment and their work-related emotional state. Moreover, as it was mentioned during the interviews, empowerment can help to successfully create emotional harmony for employees mostly with involvement of other factors, for instance, manager's support, trust, appropriate training, positive and encouraging working environment. And, importantly, organizations should empower only those who are ready to take new responsibilities, have necessary capabilities and have appropriate personal traits.

## **2. Concluding discussion**

### ***Strengths and possible contribution of research***

This research, intended to see on practice if service employees think that they need emotional harmony at work and whether they would like to be empowered to make their own decisions, and, finally, to see whether absence/presence/certain level of empowerment influences employees' emotional state at work.

Findings of this study can be very valuable for both, employees working in service organizations and organizations aiming to improve their emotional capital, in particular with help of empowerment. As such, people having to perform emotional labor at work can find out about different ways of avoiding and coping with negative consequences of emotional work. On the other hand, organizations operating in service industry, can discover the importance of caring for their emotional capital, in particular for emotional state of their employees at work, and the role of employees' empowerment in it, as well as important factors which may have a significant impact on the success of empowerment.

Furthermore, taking into account that a growing number of service-oriented organizations become concerned with their emotional capital almost as much as with physical assets, this research can be important as giving some insights into management of organization's emotional capital, particularly from perspective of managed ones. One of advantages of this study is a

source of data used for it. Thus, people, interviewed for research, were former service employees, majority of which had experience working on the frontline in different service organizations, that considered as making them be more experienced at performing emotional labor and, hence, more valuable interviewees.

### **Weaknesses and possibilities for further research**

As interviewees were from different countries in Europe and Asia, and not working in the same organizations, their views, beliefs and attitudes could provide a wider picture of the phenomenon. However, it can be assumed that if cultural aspect would be taken into account some differences in the results could be explained in another ways. Here, cultural differences in countries where interviewed employees originated from, and the ones, where organizations were located, should be considered. As such, country specific and/or organization specific studies are suggested for further research.

Additionally, the same Master Program all the interviewees were taken, could also influence the results of the study. While the factor that I was familiar with all the respondents before the interview, can be considered as advantage, as it helped interviewees to express their views more free and easy.

Also, the age range and gender of employees participated in research can be important to take into account in further studies. Particularly, this can be done if qualitative interviews were combined with quantitative, that would give the employers better understanding of their internal emotional capital. Moreover, it is suggested, that in order to verify to some extent the findings from interviews, which imply that researcher takes interviewees' views, beliefs and attitudes as a true reality, they can be accomplished with method of qualitative observations.

And, finally, intending to find the most successful ways to improve the emotional capital of service organization by empowering employees, it is recommended to study it from employers and/or managers perspective as well. In such a way, combing and comparing the views and attitudes of those who manage and those who are managed, greater and more valuable findings can be achieved.

### **Personal reflection**

On the stage of collecting theoretical background for this thesis, it has appeared that there were not many previous studies in literature related exactly to the emotional capital of service organizations. However, many researches have been conducted on related topics, such as emotions at work, emotional state of frontline employees, and empowerment initiatives as

managerial approach. Therefore different theories were combined to explore the relationship between empowerment and emotional state of employees' at work, in particular, emotional harmony.

The process of choosing interviewees for research and interviews themselves were very interesting, as allowed an 'open-minded conversation'. Importantly, during the interviews, in some cases, it was the first time when respondents were thinking about empowerment and their emotions at work. Hence, it was interesting to find out not only their views and attitudes, but also to see how they come to certain concepts and conclusions. In general, the subject of the study was supported and considered to be very important by interviewees, particularly if its findings would be taken into account by service organizations.

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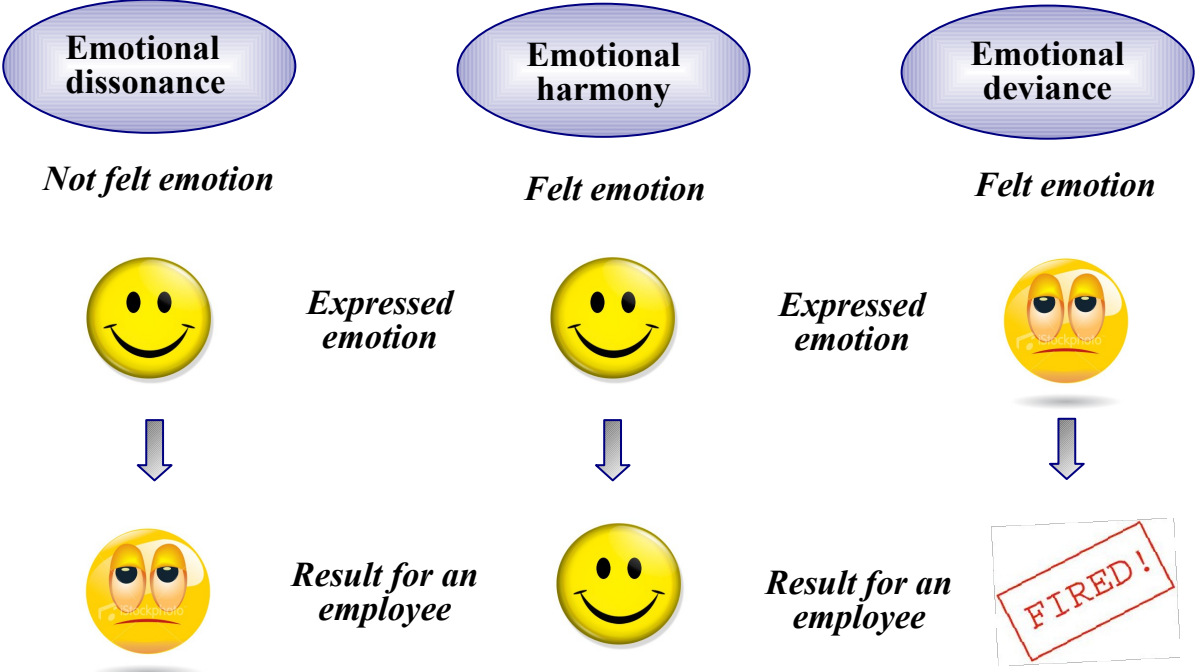
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Appendix 1 – Table 1 “Three emotional states and their consequences for employee”



## **Appendix 2– Interview Guide**

This interview is intended to help to reach the aim of the research for Master thesis on the program of Service Management. The research intends to investigate the relationship between emotions at work and empowerment of employees. Please answer the questions expressing your own view, based on previous work experience in service organizations.

### **Basic Questions:**

- Year of birth
- Nationality
- In which service organization(s) have you worked and for how long?

### **1<sup>st</sup> research question - How important is emotional harmony at work for employees?**

- How important are emotions at the work place, in your opinion?
- What kind of “display rules” were set for employees at your previous job(s), if they were? And, how did you feel about being required to follow those “display rules”?
- How did you cope with emotional work you had to perform there?
- What do you think about having emotional harmony at work?

### **2<sup>nd</sup> research question - Why employees want and need empowerment, if they do?**

- Were you empowered to make your own decisions in task-related situations if necessary?
- How did you feel about the empowerment you were given?

### **3<sup>rd</sup> research question - How does the empowerment affect employees' emotional state at work?**

- How has empowerment influenced your emotional state at work, if it has?

**Appendix 3 – Interviews transcription of records** (As there was a large volume of interviews data, only some samples of it were transcribed here).

**Interviewee 1**

*“...even if I'm empowered to make my own decisions... I prefer to ask someone if I have some doubts on which decision to make...and then, if there is a mistake because of made decision, then I won't be responsible...because then it's their decision...it is the way I do...so I always consult someone...”*

*“...I think that if I'm empowered to make at least some work-related decisions then I would do my work better because it will let me have a positive feeling about my job... but if there is no empowerment at all, I won't feel as I belong to the organization and am important there...I don't feel loyalty to such organization and eventually will quit my job...I think it is good to be empowered but in the same time to be able to consult someone if you are not competent enough to decide or have doubts...”*

**Interviewee 2**

*“...I think for me it was OK to get used to the situation when I needed to pretend that I was happy...I also communicated with my colleagues...and we discussed ... bad situations, and I felt that I wasn't not alone with them...that's how it worked...”*

*“...less empowerment...kind of ...make me feel better...because the decisions are not made by me, and if they are wrong – it's not my business...”*

*“... I don't think that more empowerment would help me to cope with my bad emotions and to feel happier at work...because with more empowerment I would feel more nervous, because I always would have to think if I've made a right decision...”*

**Interviewee 3**

*“... I think if you are empowered to make many decisions, you feel pressure and don't feel good at work, and when you are required to have a “smile” then it's hard to make it look natural and be natural...”*

*“...I was empowered to make all the decisions myself, often even when I had doubts, I couldn't get help because my manger was very busy with her own tasks...I didn't feel good about that much responsibility I had ...with all the decisions I was empowered to*

*make myself...it was very stressful...to count for a lot of things before making a decision...but often I could talk to my colleagues...and then I didn't feel that pressure...*

#### **Interviewee 4**

*“...unsatisfied customers made me feel uncomfortable but I still had to wear a 'happy mask' ...I was not told that I had to look happy in any situation, but I felt that I had to, because that is how I understand providing service should look like...but sometimes when the customers were not very polite, I stopped wearing that 'mask' because I felt that it would be more appropriate to be yourself and in such a way it would be easier for me to solve a problem...”*

*“...I think, if you are empowered, you can fix everything easier and faster and avoid stressful situations...”*

#### **Interviewee 5**

*“...empowerment and all responsibility that comes with it make a job be more stressful...”*

*“...I think that I would like to be empowered more at my job but only if the level of my empowerment match with my capabilities...then I can be sure that everything will be done right and I prefer to decide myself in such cases...otherwise, I'd better ask someone more experienced for an advice...”*

*“I think it depends on personality...for me, empowerment helps to have emotional harmony at work only together with friendly and trusted working environment...then I don't really feel all the stress that can happen...”*

*“...I think that empowerment definitely helps to feel better, to genuinely be happy at work...but it also depends on the attitude of the managers to their subordinates...if they are kind and open-minded...and if colleagues are good...I feel much better when I know that I am trusted...”*

#### **Interviewee 6**

*“...you have to come to work being prepared...to wear a 'happy mask', but it should be still flexible depending on the situation ...it's hard to really feel bad and pretend that you don't...the ability to avoid negative emotions...is quite good to have in this environment...I think that as long as you understand your emotions and others, you can better manage to*

*actually have emotional harmony at work...”*

*“...I think you have to be very aware of your emotions...when you work in such (service) environment you have to control your emotions according to company's standards...but it's hard to act when you real emotions differ from required ones very much...”*

*“...when you are empowered to make your own decision on behalf of the hotel it is important to remember that your mistakes, either big or small, can ruin people's attitude to the whole hotel...so you have to cooperate with you colleagues and manager and share the information with them, consult before taking action...in such way...I still had the situations in my hands but tried to confirm my actions with others before doing them...and then of course I didn't need to ask how to deal in every small case...I think I just felt when it was better to ask someone what to do...”*

*“...if you like the job, you can find your own way to reduce the pressure...because I think that I'm trying to understand the customers emotions, why they behave bad and are not satisfied...and I don't take it personally...but sometimes it still affect my own emotions...but I still control myself...and easily return my happy emotions...”*

*“...I think that feeling of self-confidence is like a reward for being able to do good at what you were empowered for...and, then this feeling leads to emotional harmony...and not to be afraid to solve unexpected situations with customers...I think empowerment impacts on emotional harmony through confidence in what you do...”*

*“...I think confidence is very important here...if you have really good self-confidence then you can genuinely produce a required 'happy emotion' ...and it doesn't matter what stressful situations are happening around you...I think making employees feeling confident in what they do by empowering them, can create emotional harmony for them at work...”*

### **Interviewee 7**

*“...I would say I had a limited empowerment...I like this way...it is good to be trusted and be able to decide on solving some situations yourself...but if there is something serious it's better to consult with manager and share the responsibility for that decision...”*

*“...I just want to solve the problems and make the customer be happy and that makes*

*me feel better and I don't care whether I am empowered to make a decision on my own or have to always ask the manager what to do, the result with happy customer is more important...and this result is important for my emotional harmony at work..."*

**Interviewee 8**

*"...I really liked the empowerment I was given at that job and it made me feel more confident ...I felt better about my job when I was making right decisions myself ... I think I could easier make the customers be happy when I felt that I am trusted to solve the issues without being told exactly what to do..."*

**Interviewee 9**

*"...if we had some unusual complaints from customers, I was empowered to solve a problem myself and then of course I reported to my manager about it...I felt very self-confident, satisfied ... because of that (empowerment)...and that encouraged me to do my best ...I was happy because I had such power and skills to do it...and, I could easier deal with really stressful situations because of that feeling of confidence in myself, ability to deal with complicated situations...that made me feel good about my work..."*

**Interviewee 10**

*"...at my job I had to always be extra friendly...even with rude customers,...that made often feel very stressed..."*

*"...I was not able to make any decisions myself...it was even harder to smile sometimes when customers needed my immediate decisions and...I had to always ask my manager...but I think that in some way it is good that I was not empowered to make my own decisions because I also didn't feel myself competent to do it... If had necessary skills...I would prefer to be empowered...I would feel better then and had less stress..."*