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EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT FOR IMPROVING OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE AND QUALITY IN SAUDI INDUSTRIAL COMPANIES

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A B S T R A C T

This study aimed to explore the determinants of employee empowerment and its role in enhancing functional quality through studying industrial companies listed in the Saudi Stock Exchange. The study relied on the quantitative approach, where a representative sample of the study population was selected, which included (539) employees in industrial companies listed in the Saudi Stock Exchange. The results showed that there is a statistically significant impact of the determinants of employee empowerment on improving functional quality in industrial companies listed in the Saudi Stock Exchange. The study reached several main results, including the importance of having a clear policy to empower employees to enhance their awareness and motivation, as well as the need to focus on meeting customer needs. In addition, the study recommended the need to develop objective plans to educate and train employees and stakeholders, and to establish an integrated system to manage training processes to ensure their effective implementation and maintenance to achieve quality objectives.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Empowering employees is an important management concept. The quality of work life explains a phenomenon that circumstances that emerged with what is known as through the industrial revolution and the development of the labour movement which gave rise to the framing of the concept empowering workers. Previously, it had strong opposition by the managers of organizations. Thus, the concept arose from the demands of workers for empowerment and the pressure exerted by organizations by carrying out strikes and collective negotiations. It is beyond doubt that empowering workers in matters and businesses concerning them will make them more accepting and receptive to them and to the development systems in them, and they will even participate in the implementation of and empowering with their development, so long as they are empowered in decision-making processes (Abualoush et al., 2018; Kulachai et al., 2024; Woźniak et al., 2024).

According to Coun et al (2021), employee empowerment refers to giving employees the power to make decisions and implement their activities through soliciting their opinions and recommendations, which makes their participation more effective. This is considered to help in

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facilitating the implementation of their work. As a result, we can say that employee empowerment can be seen as a wide concept and includes their participation at all levels (Hoang et al., 2021). According to Naqshbandi et al (2019), employee empowerment is the involvement of employees in tasks and their ability to organize as well as act on them.

However, management need to enhance their role in administrative tasks and decision-making in addition to consulting with them and providing them with continuous support. Hassi (2019) states that employee empowerment indicates how effective these employees are within the organization and how intellectually and emotionally able they are with all parties.

Kundu et al (2019) employee empowerment means taking part in an organization's processes especially when the organization has a problem and taking a decision. By involving employees, they are able to actively contribute to solving problems which creates trust and commitment toward the company. Empowerment refers to a managerial strategy created by Rhee et al. (2017). It involves developing a setting where employees are encouraged to perform at their best. This method aligns the aims of the organization with the capacities and inclinations of employees, balancing organizational needs with individual capabilities.

According to Jung et al. (2020), empowering employees cognitively and emotionally integrates them into the organizational system and motivates them with the feelings of responsibility and ownership for achieving the goals and performing the functions of the institution.
According to Kim et al. (2018), empowerment allows individuals at lower-levels of an organization to perform job tasks that are normally linked to higher organization levels and thus, flatter organizational hierarchies to promote high performance. Empowerment permits presence of employee in the decision-making and administrative process of the organization (Schilpzand et al. 2018). Teamwork is like supporting one another through thick and thin. It could help unrelated people engage with one another. There are key enablers for effective empowerment of a public service workforce.

1. Management commitment:
Each individual in any organization, from the manager to the administrator at the lowest levels, is concerned with enabling the provision of good quality goods and services at the cheapest costs. People can be thought of as a form of resource for creativity or innovative ideas. Their experience and know-how should be exploited, and their cooperation ensured in the implementation of these ideas. (Zhang et al., 2018) To implement employee empowerment successfully, the first step is to convince each and every member of the organization of his role in it. It is the job of senior management since the extent of genuine commitment and enthusiasm by senior management largely governs employee motivation in the empowerment process (Jung et al, 2020). In addition to this, an individual collaborating as a member in a single team develop and sharpen the Spirit. Moreover, it makes them capable of creating, innovating and taking calculated risks in an attempt to find good solutions to old problems (Nouri & Mousavi, 2020). Furthermore, the widespread empowerment of employees to solve problems and make decisions will increase their loyalty to them, leading to a higher morale outcome, as well as improving and developing work performance. Most notably,' management in any organization is an important factor to activate the employee empowerment process, given that the employee empowering process are very important process that senior management should support and commit to, as well as convince and motivate all related parties on importance of empowerment process (Lee et al., 2017), and the aim of the empowerment process is continuous improvement on the works done by organization, and it is also extremely important in raising the efficiency of the organization as a whole, which requires management to administer some changes in its organizational structure, and also requires cultural and environmental changes in it. This indicates management must be prepared to follow other methodologies and methods that will help it activate the empowerment of its employees then support them by all means (Hirzel et al., 2017).

2. Team building and teamwork:
The defined teamwork refers to "groups created within the organization to accomplish a special objective or task requiring coordination, interaction and complementarity of the members of the team (Yin et al., 2019). The team members are the ones responsible for accomplishing the objectives and very empowered is the team in takes decisions". The group essentially helps individuals to act harmoniously like a homogeneous unit. In current jargon we often use the term 'community' when referring to the dynamics of the community, however, when we talk about practical applications we use the term 'team' (Kim & Beehr, 2018). A team style of working encourages collaboration amongst group members and this is the main benefit. Members want to work together, support one another. Because they are in a team, they want to see that team succeed and instead of competing with each other, they focus on working together to be the best team (Rhee et al., 2017).

The management and construction of task forces also offer opportunities for the free flow of necessary information in an effortless manner. Information is easily exchanged from bottom-up (members to management) and top-down (management to members) because working with effective teams makes individuals aware of the need for the provision of necessary information to achieve the group and organization's objectives effectively (Lee et al., 2017). The organization's effectiveness within the group spirit is an important secret of its success, and conduct business and activities more efficiently and expeditiously than usual (Yin et al.,

2019). In order to be able to achieve tasks organizations build competent teams and frame the concept of teamwork to be able to root it within the Organization and make it organizational culture (Vu, 2020). Here comes the Organization's role of spreading the spirit of teamwork working culture and emphasizing its importance because the requirements of modern management stress the inclusion of collective action and building competent teams as the basis for managerial excellence and achieve the functional quality of workers through their participation in the management approach skills and abilities and acquire teamwork skills according to systematic scientific methods working together is undoubtedly more useful and useful for achieving the desired goals (Dennerlein & Kirkman, 2022).

3. Education and training:

A company's performance mainly relies on its people's efficiency and productivity. This efficiency and productivity can only be assured through proper training. Effective training is a collaborative effort involving multiple stakeholders who work together to determine the development needs of the organization and of individuals in the organization (Baird et al. (2020) Once the needs have been identified, training programs can be designed to address these needs. To ensure that the learning transfer happens and to measure the effectiveness of the training, mechanisms can be devised. Training a term that usually used to refer to a continuing developing process whereby the employees receive enabling knowledge and skills to perform their important task effectively and to adjust with the future (Al Zeer et al., 2023). In-service training, in particular, plays a vital role in building employee skills. A skills upgrade will provide staff with updated skills and knowledge whether such are essential to the profession or are merely best practice in dealing with workplace problems thus reducing chances of making errors in performance and matching individual capabilities with organization's growth vision (AlKahtani et al., 2021). From the point of view of strategic management, training and education are important devices used to achieve the goals of an organization and give power to the employees. The systematic arrangement of these processes, along with organizing work, and directing and developing employees in ways that stimulate talent and help teams grow (Murray & Holmes, 2021). In this case, Andika and Darmanto (2020) state that training is a systematic arrangement of activities aimed to increase the knowledge, abilities, experience of employees in order to improve their performance. Training bridges the gap between employee capabilities and job requirement improvements, so the employee can do a job better. Organizations place great worth on preparing their employees with general administration as well as specialised skills related to the job. According to Karimi et al. (2021), training will be most effective when employees practice on the job, gain relevant knowledge, and develop the technical skills needed to do the job.

4. Rewards and incentives:

Incentives are best understood as a mix of tangible and intangible motivators that alter people's behaviour, influence their actions, and gets them to carry out their responsibilities by operating lawfully, efficiently and diligently. Often viewed as the benefits—material or symbolic—that set apart one's efforts from others and serve as a reward for his or her contribution (Saira et al., 2020). Employees from both operations and management are targeted with these external motivator to ensure they do their jobs carefully and without mistakes. According to Alagarsamy et al. (2020), the understanding of incentives demonstrates that they contribute to energizing employees, enhancing productivity, and developing a merit culture where the hardworking are rewarded and encouraged while the underperforming are guided to improve. Moreover, they can function in corrective manner by addressing misconduct or passivity in a positive way to help the negligent get back on task and foster greater involvement in the unmotivated staff. Nonetheless, the stopping of incentives, in the case of employees failing to comply willfully, may act as a necessary deterrent (Tripathi & Bharadwaja, 2020). In addition, incentive systems usually provide for bonuses and other compensation mechanisms that not only compensate for current performance but also ensure the retention of the workforce beyond the official employment date. According to Bose et al. (2020), these strategies act as means of sustaining institutional knowledge and other related means of maintaining a stable labour force.

5. Perceived Benefits:

Making it possible for employees to take part has been recognized as a way in which higher performance of the organization can be achieved due to more stability and ride of the employees to participate (Jung et al. 2020) This process instills confidence in the organization through the workforce, which leads to trust-building with the environment. This strengthens the credibility and public image of the organization. Moreover, empowerment gives lower management more power and influence: As a knock-on effect, the accountability processes are more open to receiving the organization (Lee et al, 2017). Employees perceive a decision to be more legitimate and worthwhile if they have been involved in making that decision. As a result, they will feel motivated and committed to implementing the decisions. In addition, empowering managers and teams will build mutual trust, both at the organizational level and between organizations and external stakeholders (Kim and Beehr, 2018). When we trust each other, the workplace flourishes over time. When employees are allowed contributions to organizational decisions, lower management becomes more aware of the organizational goals and better able to deal with problems. Further, lower management is more likely to implement solutions that they help to create (AlKahtani et al., 2021). Also, when employees have decision-making power their morale improves as it meets their psychological needs of

respect, autonomy and self-worth. As a result, this heightens their emotional involvement at work (Hoang et al., 2021).

Second: Functional Quality

Functional quality is a key managerial concept in many contexts, as it is associated with essential aspects of an organization, such as performance, productivity, and output. The importance of organizational culture involves the interaction of internal dynamics and external pressures as well as it is one of the main reasons behind the success or failure of an organization (Fakhri et al, 2020). Functional quality has importance which varies with the purpose, structure, management, and competencies and traits of the organization's staff. Due to this, we see a lot of academic and professional research regarding how stress is excreted and how much it impacts organizations (Peiró et al., 2005).

According to Bossert (2021), "functional quality" is a critical topic that structures organizational behaviour. It is understood to mean the satisfaction of employees with their jobs and their general optimism towards doing so (Keyser & Lariviere, 2014). Kang (2006) defined it as a level of importance that employees ascribe to their duties. It is an Internal State that reflects acceptance and engagement with organizational tasks. Furthermore, Kerse et al. (2008) expanded this definition by referring to functional quality as a multi-dimensional construct, which includes behavioural patterns, cognitive orientations and emotional attitude towards work. Intellectual and emotional factors influence it over a period.

Al-Jeong et al. (2009) stated that it is the responsibility of the organization to create a functional quality in materials, psychology and environment that adds value to employee satisfaction. Likewise, Bernardo et al. (2012) stated the functional quality refers to the employees' evaluation of the work environment which includes emotions, behaviors, and expectations with regard to the job. Ferguson et al. (1999) point out that it is a mixture of employees' goals, feelings and emotional conditions developed while carrying out tasks related to the job. According to Holdford and Schulz (1999), this is when employees exhibit satisfaction, either with their job role or organization.

According to Ariffin, et al. 2010, functional quality is the ability of the job position to meet people's expectations and lead to good results, which is the cause of workers' being comfortable and feeling grateful for the job in relation to the reward he/she receives. In the same way, Andronikidis et al. (2009) define functional quality as the consequences of attitudes and perceptions that employees form from their direct workplace experience. This shows how well the actual work activities of employees fit the benefit they are getting from the organization. How good or bad the employees feel in the organization. The characteristics of functional quality are as follows:

1. Multiple concepts of measurement methods: According to a number of scholars who have analyzed the concept of functional quality, the idea is more complex than it seems. It has been defined in different ways, suggesting that its determiner is not only theoretical but also other kinds of research. Yet, there is a common agreement among scholars that functional quality is defined based on employees' inner perceptions and emotional responses toward the positions they occupy or the tasks they undertake (Kasiri et al., 2017).
2. Viewing Functional quality as an individual subject: The factors that limit the Functional quality process are the generalization of satisfaction among all workers without considering their differences and diversity, but organizations that make Functional quality a basis for their work view it as an individual process that differs according to the difference and diversity of its workers, as the factors that constitute satisfaction for a specific worker may not constitute a factor of satisfaction for others (Ali et al., 2016).

3. Functional quality is related to many interrelated factors of individual behavior: The many interrelated and diverse factors in individual behavior and patterns vary from one situation to another and from one individual's point of view to another, so the results of studies conducted by researchers appear different depending on the circumstances that govern individuals' behavior, and these factors determine their behavior (Arora & Narula, 2018).

4. Functional quality is a state of satisfaction and acceptance: Functional quality is a state of satisfaction and acceptance resulting from employees' satisfaction with their functionals and the activities they perform, with the work environment, and the organization's ability to satisfy their needs and desires, which leads to a sense of responsibility towards the organization and trust in it, and true loyalty and belonging to it, which contributes to achieving the organization's goals(Ferguson et al., 1999).
5. Functional quality is related to the context of work organization and the social system: Functional quality is the final result of experiences and skills related to work, and the extent to which this work is compatible with the personal needs of employees, and the extent to which they appreciate the work and their will to enhance the work, and this depends directly on the success or failure in achieving the organization's overall goals in order to reach these goals (Sirca et al., 2012).

6. An individual's satisfaction with a specific factor is not evidence of his satisfaction with other factors: There is no doubt that an individual's satisfaction with a specific factor does not necessarily mean that he is satisfied with other factors, and that an individual's satisfaction is not a measure of everyone's satisfaction; Because needs and expectations differ from one individual to another (Kang, 2006).

2. METHODOLOGY

This study takes a quantitative approach which aims to study the impact of determinants of employee empowerment on industrial firms functional quality listed on the Saudi Exchange. The goal of the research is converting qualitative to quantitative analysis. Since the study involved gathering data directly from the employees of these industrial organizations, it was a Field Study conducted in companies listed on the Saudi Exchange.

2.1 Population and Sample

The target population for this study was the employees of industrial companies listed on the Saudi Exchange (42 firms). A purposive sampling was used for participant selection, and 600 paper-based questionnaires were distributed among the administration category officers such as department heads, branch managers, and division managers. Of the questionnaires distributed, 560 were returned and the response rate was 93.33%. However, the writer was unable to analyze 40 responses as they were unsuitable. As such, there are 539 questionnaires that qualify for statistical analysis. Table 1 demonstrates the demographic breakdown of the respondents used in this study.

Table 1. Sample's Demographics

Variable	Categories	Frequency	%
Gender	Males	368	68.3
	Female	171	31.7
	Total	**539**	**100%**
Age Groups	Less than 30	119	22.1
	30 to less than 40	124	23
	40 to less than 50	226	41.9
	50 years old and above	70	13
	Total	**539**	**100%**
Education Qualifications	Diploma	88	16.3
	Bachelor's degree	396	73.5
	Postgraduate	55	10.2
	Diploma	88	16.3
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years	19	3.5
	From 5 to 10 years	179	33.2
	From 11 years to 20 years	298	55.3
	21 years and over	43	8
	Total	**539**	**100%**

Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the participants in the study. Male respondents made up 68.3% of the sample, while females accounted for 31.7%. In terms of age distribution, the largest group (41.9%) fell within the 40 to under 50 age range, whereas 22.1% of the participants were under the age of 30. Regarding educational background, the majority of respondents (73.5%) held a bachelor's degree. When it comes to professional experience, 3.5% had fewer than 5 years of experience, 33.2% had between 5 and 10 years, 55.3% had 11 to 20 years, and 8% reported having 21 years or more of experience.

3. DATA COLLECTION

For data collection, researcher used a structured paper-based questionnaire containing 30 items for carrying out study. Researchers used a five-point Likert scale to measure respondents' perception, assigning the values Very Low=1, Low=2, Medium=3, High=4, Very High=5. In order to enhance the validity, clarity, and relevance of the instrument to the research objectives, the questionnaire was subjected to vetting by nine academics. Comments from stakeholders were used to reword for clarity and to confirm appropriate content.

They analyzed the instrument's reliability after the modification. In simpler terms, they examined the device's stability. Calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficient assesses the internal consistency of the scale and its items coherence and correlation with impact evaluation. An alpha of 0.60 or higher is statistically acceptable in research. This can be seen as per Sekaran (2003). The reliability analysis indicated that the instrument items demonstrate internal consistency and may thus be used to test hypotheses and achieve the objectives. The Table 2 shows the reliability coefficients.

Table 2. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the study areas and the tool as a whole

P	N	Cronbach's Alpha
Management Commitment	4	0.832
Team Building and Teamwork	4	0.932
Education and Training	4	0.875
Rewards and Incentives	4	0.687
Perceived Benefits	4	0.754
Employee Empowerment Determinants as a whole	20	0.816
Functional Quality as a whole	10	0.877

Table 2 reveals that the alpha results of "employee empowerment determinants" gauges with values ranging between 0.732 to 0.943. The dimension that achieved the highest reliability score was team building and teamwork. On the other hand, the dimension of rewards and incentives recorded the lowest reliability score. The study found a Cronbach's alpha of 0.816 for all the determinants of empowerment indicating an acceptable internal consistency for the study. As per conventional research criteria, a reliability coefficient above 0.60 is satisfactory. The computed value of Cronbach's alpha for the whole "functional quality" construct was 0.877 which again shows it to be reliable and acceptable to use it for hypothesis testing and further analysis.

4. RESULT

4.1. PLS Path Model Estimation

Before testing the structural model path coefficients, the researcher checked the reflective measurement model for

internal consistency reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity to confirm their adequacy (Wong, 2013).

4.1.1. Indicator Reliability

To assess the reliability of a measurement of latent variables. It can be taken as the first step in establishment of validity. The reliability of indicators is a must. It is to confirm that indicators which all represent the same latent variable explain sufficiently in the same variance. An examination of the outer loadings for every latent variable revealed that all accompanying indicators were greater than 4 as stated by Hair et al. (2013). In particular, all the outer loading values were 0.58 or higher indicating adequate indicator reliability. The structural model we estimated is illustrated in Figure 1, while the outer loading values of the individual constructs are summarized in Table 3.

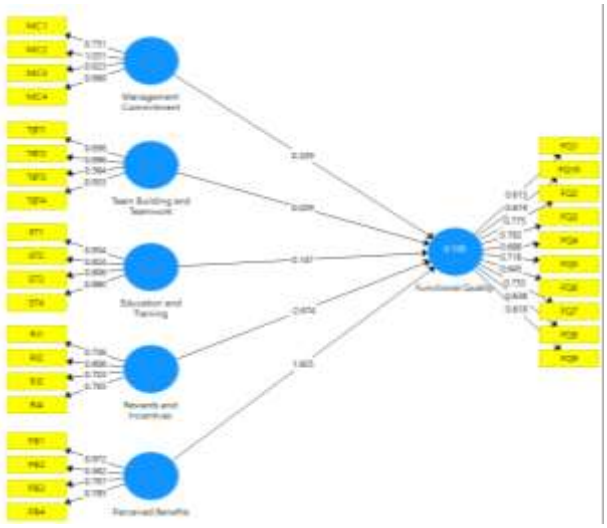


Figure 1. PLS Path Model Estimation

Table 3. Outer Loadings

Constructs (Latent Variables)	Outer Loadings
Employee Empowerment Factors	
Management Commitment (MC)	
MC1	0.751
MC2	1.031
MC3	0.623
MC4	0.668
Team Building and Teamwork	
TBT1	0.656
TBT2	0.696
TBT3	0.584
TBT4	0.933
Education and Training	
ET1	0.934
ET2	0.824
ET3	0.806
ET4	0.86
Rewards and Incentives	
RI1	0.736
RI2	0.908
RI3	0.703
RI4	0.765
Perceived Benefits	
PB1	0.972
PB2	0.582
PB3	0.767
PB4	0.785
Functional Quality	
FQ1	0.613
FQ2	0.619
FQ3	0.775
FQ4	0.782
FQ5	0.688
FQ6	0.718
FQ7	0.645
FQ8	0.753
FQ9	0.638
FQ10	0.818

4.1.2. Internal Consistency Reliability

In the research utilizing PLS-SEM, composite reliability was utilized to evaluate the measurement model's internal consistency instead of cronbach's alpha. This method is adopted because composite reliability considers the different outer loadings of separate indicators (Werts et al., 1974). As it can be observed from Table 4 that the composite reliability values of the construct ET, FQ, MC, PB, RI and TBT is 0.917, 0.909, 0.860, 0.864, 0.862 and 0.815 respectively. This reflects a good level of internal consistency reliability based on the threshold criteria recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994).

Table 4. Internal Consistency Reliability and Convergent Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Extracted Variance (AVE)	Variance
ET	0.917	0.920	0.917	0.735	
FQ	0.910	0.913	0.909	0.502	
MC	0.865	0.901	0.860	0.615	
PB	0.867	0.891	0.864	0.622	
RI	0.861	0.871	0.862	0.612	
TBT	0.812	0.844	0.815	0.531	
Optimal Values	> 0.7	> 0.7	> 0.7	> 0.5	

4.1.3. Convergent Validity

As per Fornell and Larcker (1981), Average Variance Extracted is one of the ways for assessing convergent validity. AVE values of latent constructs (ET, FQ, MC, PB, RI and TBT) in this study were 0.735, 0.502, 0.615, 0.622, 0.612 and 0.531. All these values exceed the minimum level of 0.50 recommended by Bagozzi and Yi (1988), meaning that the constructs have strong convergent validity.

4.1.4. Discriminant Validity

The Fornell-Larcker criterion (1981) remains one of the most widely used methods to evaluate discriminant validity. According to Table 5, the present study satisfied this condition as the square root of the AVE of ET, FQ, MC, PB, RI and TBT, is significantly higher than (LVC) inter-construct correlations, confirming acceptable levels of discriminant validity.

Table 5. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Latent Variable (LVC)							**Discriminant Validity Met? (Square root of AVE > LVC)**
	ET	**FQ**	**MC**	**PB**	**RI**	**TBT**	
ET	**0.857**						Yes
FQ	-0.42	**0.708**					Yes
MC	0.578	-0.297	**0.784**				Yes
PB	0.76	-0.389	0.627	**0.789**			Yes
RI	0.837	-0.384	0.724	0.761	**0.782**		Yes
TBT	0.653	-0.373	0.628	0.624	0.712	**0.729**	Yes

Note: The bolded diagonal values represent the square roots of the constructs AVE and the off-diagonal elements are the latent variable correlations (LVC).

4.1.5. Collinearity Assessment

In addition to measuring model evaluation, it is also necessary to look at possible collinearity problems in the structural model. As per the Hair et al. (2011), Generally, A VIF value of 5 or more would point to a dangerous collinearity. Table 6 reveals the VIF for the entire predictor construct in the structural model. The outcome of the analysis suggests that the VIF values of all predictors (MC, TBT, ET, RI and PB) with regards to the dependent variable of FQ are well below 5. Thus, it can be inferred that multicollinearity is not a serious issue in the structural model.

Table 6. Collinearity Assessment

Predictor	**VIF**
MC	2.091
TBT	1.964
ET	2.733
RI	3.242
PB	4.169

4.2. Research Hypotheses Findings

Main Hypothesis: There is a statistically significant association between the determinants of employee empowerment and the enhancement of functional quality of industrial companies listed in Saudi exchange.

The main hypothesis of this research was broken into five sub-hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Management commitment has a significant association with functional quality improvement in industrial firms listed on the Saudi Exchange.

Hypothesis 2: team building and collaborative efforts positively impact functional quality in industrial corporations listed on the Saudi Exchange.

Hypothesis 3: Educational and training programs facilitate the enhancement of functional quality in industrial firms listed on the Saudi Exchange.

Hypothesis 4: Rewards and incentive systems are significantly linked to the improvement of functional quality in industrial firms listed on the Saudi Exchange.

Hypothesis 5: The enhancement of functional quality in industrial companies listed on the Saudi Exchange is considerably related to perceived organizational benefits.

As shown in Table 7 the R^2 Value is 0.163 suggesting the determinants of employee empowerment explain only 16.3% of functional quality of industrial companies listed on Saudi Exchange.

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing

	F Square (f^2)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
EE → FQ	0.195	-0.411	0.035	11.472	0.000
Determination Coefficient R^2 = 0.163					

The table shows a significant association between employee empowerment factors and functional quality improvement with a p-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.001. This leads to the rejection of the main null hypothesis. In addition, the value of F^2 is 0.195, showing a moderate effect of employee empowerment (EE) on functional quality (FQ).

5. CONCLUSION

The study results regarding employee empowerment and functional quality are generally consistent with previously conducted literature, although there are slight differences. Earlier work has often corroborated that empowerment creates a ripple effect of positive outcomes. As an illustration, empowerment is proposed to play a mediating variable between knowledge management practices and information systems for the purpose of enhancing employee performance (Abualoush et al., 2018). Evidently, the current study shows that learning, training and teamwork enhance the functional quality of the industrial sector of Saudi Arabia. Professional development must be continual (AlKahtani et.al, 2021), one must invest in the employees in order to achieve more job satisfaction from them and essentially, commitment to the organization. These outcomes, in turn, foster improved performance. The results of both studies indicate that greater maturity of the skills and competencies of employees improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation.

In contrast to studies that found management commitment helps improve performance, the author of this study finds management commitment has no role. While Murray & Holmes, 2021, found that strong commitment of the managers' significantly support sustainability of the workforce and better performance results, in this study, management commitment was found to have no statistically significant relationship with the functional quality. It seems that managerial support is likely not enough to improve functional quality of Saudi industrial companies. Cultural or contextual factors may be involved; maybe the decentralized employee-driven initiative has more impact on performance than management-driven initiatives. The findings here are also different from that of Bose (2018), who argued that strong management commitment tends to be a significant driver of performance improvement in many settings. Leadership engagement is necessary to successfully empower employees.

Also, the impact of team building and teamwork shown in the present study is in agreement with existing literature that the quality of the function is improved with teamwork. In the hospitality industry, team cohesiveness or unity and collaborative tendencies promote innovation that enhances service quality (Hassi, 2019). Andika & Darmanto (2020) also observed that teamwork strengthens organizational commitment and hence performance. Thus, it can be concluded that teamwork can help improve a great deal in all sectors. Both of the studies place an emphasis on creating environments where people can work together. In this way, it promotes collaborative working. The study indicates that the more individuals work together as a team (involving the same country), the better the functional quality will be. Similarly, this enhance performance in Saudi Arabia.

In contrast, findings of the current study about the influence of rewards and incentives are different from many others. For instance, Andika & Darmanto (2020) said that rewards and incentives improve employee performance and enhance organizational commitment. The present study found no significant association between rewards and functional quality. This implies that traditional monetary incentives or reward systems in Saudi industrial firms do not motivate employees as well as other forms of recognition or intrinsic motivators do. Unlike the study of Bose (2018), which showed that well-structured reward systems in UAE banking sector have an important role in enhancing employee performance? The current study's lack of significant findings may imply that incentive structures are perceived and responded to differently across sectors and cultures, highlighting the need for a tailored approach to employee motivation based on regions and sectors.

Moreover, a particularly surprising finding from this study is that perceived benefits negatively affect functional quality, which stands in direct contradiction to much of the extant literature. According to Bossert (2021) and Keyser & Lariviere (2014) for instance, perceived benefits (better working conditions, better job security) impact job performance positively; the employee feels motivated to get involved in an organization's operations when the perks are perceived as beneficial. The 21-word statement detailed a negative impact of perceived benefit on functional quality with an F-square value of 9.6%. The benefits offered to employees in Saudi industrial firms may not in line with what they expect and this affects performance negatively. Results obtained sharply contrast with those reported by Ferguson et al. (1999) who asserted that benefits perceived as highly motivating significantly enhance service quality and staff commitment in different sectors. The unexpected negative finding of the current study suggests that employees' unmet expectations about benefits create frustration and disengagement and, ultimately, negatively impact their job performance.

These results indicate the convergence and divergence of the current work and the wider research on employee empowerment. It is common for employees to need to empower people for functional quality. Education training and teamwork have a positive influence in all occasions. According to Bose et al (2020), psychological empowerment created by skill development and positive team dynamics can boost job performance. Similar thinking is echoed here too. The difference in areas such as management commitment, rewards, and perceived benefits suggests that specific cultural and organizational contexts, e.g. Saudi industrial firms, may have an important role on the way empowerment practices affect performance. There are various factors specific to a context which makes management and incentive structures less impactful in certain cases, it also makes alternative approaches like teamwork and continuous

development opportunities more impactful with respect to functional quality.

In summary, although the findings of the current research are in line with the widespread literature on the importance of education and training and teamwork, there are certain differences with respect to management commitment, rewards and perceived benefits. The findings signal the necessity of more studies that consider culture and context to help understand the influence of employee empowerment practices on functional quality in a specific industry and region like Saudi Arabia.

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