

The Role of Empowerment on Employee Performance with Training as Moderation at Pt. Andalan Sukses Makmur, West Kotawaringin District

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Abstract. *This study aims to analyze the role of empowerment on employee performance with training as a moderating variable at PT. Andalan Sukses Makmur in West Kotawaringin Regency. This study uses a quantitative approach with the Partial Least Square (PLS) analysis method. The population in this study was all employees of PT. Andalan Sukses Makmur. The sampling technique used purposive sampling. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to respondents. Data analysis was performed using SmartPLS software, which included testing the outer and inner models, as well as testing for moderating effects. The research results show that empowerment has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Furthermore, training has been shown to moderate the relationship between empowerment and employee performance, thereby strengthening the effect of empowerment on performance improvement. The implications of this research indicate that companies need to improve employee empowerment programs supported by effective training in order to be able to optimally improve employee performance.*

Keywords: *Empowerment; Employee Performance; Moderation; PLS; Training.*

1. Introduction

Human resources are a strategic asset for companies facing increasingly competitive business environments. An organization's success is largely determined by the quality and performance of its employees in achieving company goals. Therefore, companies are required to manage human resources effectively and sustainably through various management strategies, particularly those related to improving employee performance. Performance improvement efforts focus not only on systems and technology, but also on developing the skills and active role of employees within the organization.

Employee performance is the quality and quantity of work achieved by an employee in carrying out tasks according to their assigned responsibilities. According to Mangkunegara

(2017), performance is the work results achieved by an individual based on standards set by the organization. Meanwhile, according to Rivai (2015), employee performance is the actual behavior displayed by each person as work achievements according to their role in the company. Previous research shows that employee performance is influenced by various factors, such as motivation, leadership, compensation, work environment, empowerment, and training. Research by Wibowo (2018) states that human resource development factors have a significant influence on improving employee performance.

Employee empowerment is the process of granting employees the authority and responsibility to make decisions regarding their work. According to Sedarmayanti (2017), empowerment is an effort to provide autonomy, trust, and opportunities to employees so they can develop their potential and contribute optimally to the organization. Empowerment aims to increase a sense of ownership, responsibility, and commitment to their work. Previous research by Prasetyo (2019) showed that empowerment has a positive and significant impact on employee performance because employees feel more valued and have room to develop. This indicates that the higher the level of empowerment, the higher the resulting performance.

Training is a systematic process to improve employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities so they can perform their tasks effectively and efficiently. According to Dessler (2016), training is the process of teaching new and existing employees the basic skills they need to perform their jobs. Training aims to improve competency and align employee abilities with technological developments and job demands. Research by Handayani (2020) shows that training has a positive and significant impact on improving employee performance, especially when it is conducted continuously and aligned with job requirements.

Previous studies have shown mixed results regarding the influence of empowerment and training on employee performance. Some studies indicate that empowerment and training have a positive and significant effect on employee performance, while others find that neither variable has a significant partial effect. These differences in research findings indicate a research gap that requires further study, particularly considering differences in objectives, organizational characteristics, and work environment conditions.

Field observations indicate that even though companies have implemented training programs and empowered employees, their performance is still not optimal. At PT. Andalan Sukses Makmur, several issues remain, such as limited employee initiative, suboptimal utilization of training outcomes in their work, and productivity levels that fall short of company targets. This situation indicates a gap between management expectations and the reality of employee performance (a performance gap phenomenon).

Numerous studies have been conducted on the effect of empowerment and training on employee performance, including one by Hanafi, Robiansyah, and Syaharuddin (2018), who found that training and empowerment significantly influence employee performance. Another study by Purwanto and Nugroho (2021) showed that training and empowerment

can improve performance through increased competency. Based on these findings, along with the differences in results and phenomena in the field, this study is crucial to analyze the effect of empowerment on employee performance, with training as a moderator, at PT. Andalan Sukses Makmur.

2. Research Methods

This research is quantitative research with a causal associative approach, namely research that aims to determine and analyze the effect of empowerment on employee performance with training as a moderator at PT. Andalan Sukses Makmur in Kumai District, West Kotawaringin Regency.

A quantitative approach is used because the research data is in the form of numbers obtained from questionnaire results and analyzed using statistical methods to test the formulated hypotheses.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Direct Effect of Empowerment on Employee Performance (Hypothesis 1 Rejected)

The results of testing Hypothesis 1 show findings that at first glance seem counter-intuitive but are full of theoretical and contextual meaning. The path of empowerment (PB) to employee performance (KK) produces a coefficient of $\beta = 0.076$ with a T-statistic = 0.937 (< 1.96) and a P-value = 0.351 (> 0.05), so that Hypothesis 1 which states that empowerment has a positive and significant direct effect on employee performance at PT. Andalan Sukses Makmur is rejected. The effect size value of $f^2 = 0.006$, which is categorized as 'very small' (even close to zero) by Cohen (1988), further emphasizes that the substantive contribution of empowerment to performance variance is almost undetectable statistically when standing alone without the presence of training variables as a moderator.

The rejection of Hypothesis 1, while surprising on the surface, can be explained in depth through several complementary theoretical and contextual lenses. First, from a job characteristics theory perspective, field operations in the oil palm plantation sector, such as harvesting, spraying, and fertilization, are highly routinized and standardized (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Every work procedure is defined in great detail in the company's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), from frond cutting techniques and fertilizer application dosages to daily production reporting. In such a work environment, the space for employees to express autonomy and independence in making direct decisions is very limited. Formal "empowerment," such as delegating minor decisions or including employees in team meetings, does not automatically translate into measurable performance improvements if the work itself does not provide adequate space for such autonomy.

Second, these findings align closely with the theoretical arguments of Kirkman & Rosen (1999) who explicitly state that the effectiveness of empowerment is highly dependent on task characteristics. In highly structured and procedure-based jobs, psychological

empowerment tends to lack adequate channels of expression to translate into measurable performance improvements. Seibert et al.'s (2011) meta-analytic study in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, which analyzed over 100 studies on empowerment, also found that the effects of empowerment on performance vary widely depending on the organizational context, job type, and the availability of enabling conditions such as adequate employee competency, superior support systems, and a supportive organizational climate.

Third, this phenomenon can be interpreted through the concept of the 'empowerment paradox' identified by Spreitzer (1995) in his classic research. Spreitzer argued that psychological empowerment only produces a positive impact on performance if four conditions are simultaneously met:

1. Meaning employees perceive work as meaningful and important;
2. Competence employees feel they have sufficient competence to carry out their work effectively;
3. Self-determined employees have choice and control over how they work; and
4. Impact employees believe that their work has a real impact on organizational outcomes.

In the context of PT. Andalan Sukses Makmur, if condition (2) competence has not been fully met, that is, if employees do not have sufficient technical competence through adequate training, then empowerment without competence can actually create role ambiguity and counterproductive uncertainty. Employees who are given autonomy but do not have the knowledge and skills necessary to utilize it effectively will tend to feel overwhelmed rather than empowered.

Fourth, the AVE value for empowerment (0.565), which is close to the minimum threshold, indicates a relatively large variation in employee perceptions of the extent to which they feel empowered in their work. This variation likely reflects real differences in the level of autonomy granted to different positions within PT. Andalan Sukses Makmur's organizational hierarchy. Field foremen, for example, may perceive a higher level of empowerment than daily harvesters. This heterogeneity in perceptions, at the aggregate level, weakens the correlation between average empowerment scores and performance.

Fifth, these findings also resonate in the context of empirical studies in similar industries. A study of labor-intensive manufacturing firms in Southeast Asia (Koopmans et al., 2014) showed that in jobs with low cognitive levels and high routinization, intrinsic factors such as empowerment require mediators or moderators—such as training, motivation, or organizational commitment—to actualize their impact on performance. Empowerment without the right mediators or moderators is like 'fuel without an engine'—the potential energy is there, but there is no mechanism to convert it into movement.

Overall, the rejection of Hypothesis 1 in this study is not a research failure, but rather a substantive finding that makes an important contribution to the human resource management literature: that in the context of operational work in the plantation industry, employee empowerment without adequate competency development through training is unable to produce significant performance improvements. This finding enriches our understanding of the limits and conditionality of empowerment's effects.

3.1.1. The Moderating Role of Training in the Relationship between Empowerment and Employee Performance (Hypothesis 2 Accepted)

In contrast to the results of Hypothesis 1, testing of Hypothesis 2 yielded very strong findings and had high statistical and practical significance. The interaction path of training moderation ($PB \times PK$) on employee performance (KK) produced a coefficient of $\beta = 0.830$ with a T-statistic = 4.691 (far exceeding the critical value of 1.96) and a P-value = 0.000 ($p < 0.001$). The effect size value of $f^2 = 0.689$, which is categorized as 'large' by Cohen (1988), firmly confirms that the moderating effect of training is not only statistically significant but also has very substantive practical significance. Hypothesis 2, which states that training moderates the relationship between empowerment and employee performance at PT. Andalan Sukses Makmur, is declared accepted with very strong empirical evidence.

The implications of the coefficient value $\beta = 0.830$ need to be carefully understood. In the context of the PLS-SEM moderation effect, this coefficient indicates that when the interaction variable ($PB \times PK$) is included in the model, the relationship between empowerment and employee performance strengthens dramatically as the level of training received by employees increases. In other words, empowerment and training do not operate independently and separately in influencing performance—they interact synergistically: quality training activates and strengthens empowerment mechanisms so that the granted autonomy and authority can be effectively utilized by employees to produce higher performance.

Theoretically, this finding is strongly grounded in the Human Capital Theory proposed by Becker (1964). Human capital theory argues that investment in human knowledge and skills (human capital), one of the primary mechanisms of which is training, directly increases an individual's productivity and economic value. Within the framework of this research, training functions as a human capital investment that equips employees with the technical competencies and operational knowledge necessary to optimize the use of the autonomy and authority granted through empowerment programs. Competent employees who have been well-trained in optimal harvesting techniques, work equipment management, and safety procedures are able to utilize the autonomy granted to make better, faster, and more targeted work decisions, ultimately leading to higher performance.

In addition to Human Capital Theory, these findings are also highly consistent with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model developed by Bakker & Demerouti (2007). The JD-R model views training and competency development as job resources that serve as buffers

against job demands and also as amplifiers of the positive impacts of psychological resources, such as empowerment, on employee engagement and performance. In the context of work on oil palm plantations that has high physical demands (high job demands), the availability of adequate training resources allows employees to negotiate these demands more efficiently using the competencies acquired from training, while simultaneously expressing the autonomy granted through empowerment to find more effective ways of working.

The large effect size of $f^2 = 0.689$ deserves special attention. Following Cohen's (1988) guidelines, an f^2 value above 0.35 is categorized as a 'large effect,' meaning that the addition of the training moderating interaction variable to the model results in a substantial and non-negligible increase in R^2 . In the context of organizational behavior research, an effect size of 0.689 is considered very high and rare, indicating that training moderation is a very powerful mechanism in explaining how empowerment can be converted into actual performance. This finding has 'double significance,' it is statistically significant ($P = 0.000$) AND practically significant ($f^2 = 0.689$)—the highest standard in quantitative research.

The findings of this study also received confirmation and resonance from several recent empirical studies. Malika et al. (2025) in their study at PT. Astra Agro Lestari, a large-scale plantation company with a comparable operational context to PT. Andalan Sukses Makmur found that HR training and development had a strong positive effect on employee performance and work motivation in the plantation sector. Islamiyah, Santoso & Wahdi (2021) also found that the combination of training and empowerment produced a greater effect on performance than when each stood alone, which is consistent with the moderation logic found in this study. Haqqul Mubin et al. (2025) at the Barru Branch of Bank BRI found a significant effect of empowerment, but that study was conducted in a knowledge-based work context (knowledge worker), which inherently provides more room for the expression of autonomy, unlike the operational work context of the plantations in this study.

The very high path coefficient ($\beta = 0.830$) in this moderating effect has profound managerial implications: in a model that includes the interaction between empowerment and training, this interaction variable becomes the dominant predictor of employee performance. This provides a very strong and clear signal to PT. Andalan Sukses Makmur's management that the most effective HR development strategy is not to invest resources in empowerment or training separately, but rather to integrate both within a holistic and synergistic HR development system. Where granting autonomy and authority to employees is always accompanied by increased competence through structured and relevant training.

3.2. Integration of Findings: Synergistic Model of Empowerment-Training-Performance

Combining the findings from both hypothesis tests, this study produces an important conceptual model: in the context of the labor-intensive palm oil plantation industry, the relationship between empowerment and employee performance is not a straightforward

linear one, but rather a contingent one, that is, it depends on the level of training employees receive. This model can be described as a synergistic equation: $\text{Performance} = f(\text{Empowerment} \times \text{Training})$, not $\text{Performance} = f(\text{Empowerment}) + f(\text{Training})$.

The implications are profound: empowerment without training is like giving the wheel to someone without a license. It's not only unproductive, but potentially dangerous (it can result in poor work decisions or unsafe procedures). Conversely, training provided in an empowering work environment has a multiplier effect, as trained employees have the competence to express their autonomy effectively and responsibly. This synergy between empowerment and training creates an "optimum zone" where employee performance can be maximized sustainably.

3.2.1. Managerial Implications

Based on the comprehensively presented research findings, several concrete managerial implications can be recommended to the leadership and HR management of PT. Andalan Sukses Makmur.

First, integration between empowerment and training programs is mandatory. The most fundamental finding of this study is that empowerment is only effective in improving performance when combined with quality training. Therefore, management should not implement empowerment programs, such as delegating authority to field foremen or granting autonomy to harvesting teams in setting work schedules, without first ensuring that the employees in question have received adequate competency training. Ideally, each increase in empowerment level should always be preceded or accompanied by a training program relevant to the new responsibilities to be assumed.

Second, strengthening investment in the quality and relevance of training programs. Given that training is the dominant predictor of performance in this model ($\beta = 0.830$, $f^2 = 0.689$), management needs to increase HR budget investment in high-quality training programs. Indicator PK8 (the impact of training on performance) recorded the highest outer loading (0.859), indicating that improving the quality and impact of training programs on actual employee performance, including the development of relevant materials, improving instructor competency, and developing illustrated modules that are representative of basic education, providing simulation equipment that is appropriate for real conditions, and developing training materials in visual formats that are easily understood by employees with a basic education background are investment priorities that need to be realized immediately.

Third, implement a comprehensive Training Needs Analysis (TNA). Effective training programs must be designed based on a systematic training needs analysis, not simply following a generic curriculum. Given that work at PT. Andalan Sukses Makmur encompasses various work units with different competency requirements (harvesting, spraying, fertilization, administration), TNA must be conducted specifically for each work

unit to ensure that training materials are truly relevant to the actual challenges and work needs faced by employees in the field.

Fourth, evaluate training effectiveness using the Kirkpatrick Model. Large training investments only provide optimal value if their effectiveness is systematically evaluated. Management is recommended to apply the Kirkpatrick Model (2006), which consists of four levels of evaluation:

Level 1 (Reaction) - Measure participant satisfaction and perceptions of the training program;

Level 2 (Learning) - Measure verified increases in knowledge and skills;

Level 3 (Behavior) - Measure the transfer of learning to real work behavior in the field; and

Level 4 (Results) - Measure the impact of training on measurable business outputs such as harvest productivity, error rates, and work accident rates.

Fifth, addressing factors outside the model. Considering the model's R^2 is only 0.278, management needs to also consider other variables not covered in this study but theoretically significantly influence employee performance, such as: performance-based compensation and incentive systems, the leadership quality of supervisors and field foremen, work environment conditions (ergonomics, OHS safety, and rest facilities), and employee motivation and welfare programs. Managing these variables in an integrated manner with empowerment and training programs will result in a more comprehensive and robust employee performance model.

4. Conclusion

This study aims to analyze the effect of employee empowerment on employee performance with training as a moderating variable at PT. Andalan Sukses Makmur, West Kotawaringin Regency, using the Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach with 85 respondents selected through purposive sampling technique. Based on a series of analyses that have been carried out comprehensively and include evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and structural model (inner model), the following conclusions can be drawn that directly answer the research problem formulation.

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