

The influence of Workplace Empowerment on Work Engagement:

An examination of the mediator role of psychological empowerment in the relationship between structural empowerment and engagement

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Introduction

Nowadays, **work engagement (WE)** has become an equivalent of work quality and organizational success. Research focused on engagement states that employees' **empowerment** is a crucial factor in its development (Batnagar, 2012). Two approaches can be distinguished in the study of empowerment in organizations:

- **Structural empowerment (SE)** is the group of policies and practices enacted by management and aimed to improve employees' decision-making authority (Wall et al., 2002).
- **Psychological empowerment (PE)** is the psychological state that employees experience when these organizational empowerment practices are successful (Laschinger et al., 2001).

Current literature proposes that that **SE** will lead to **PE**, and this will culminate in clearly **positive occupational health outcomes**.

Purpose

The aim of this study was to analyze the influence of **Structural Empowerment (SE)** on both **Psychological Empowerment (PE)** and **Work Engagement (WE)**, and to test the mediator role of **PE** in the relationship between **SE** and **WE**.

Design/Methodology

Participants

A total of 155 workers participated in the study: 50 (32.3%) participants were from Spain, while the remaining 105 (67.7%) were from Italy.

Measurement instruments

- **SE** was measured by the Conditions of Work Effectiveness Questionnaire-II (CWEQ-II) (Laschinger et al., 2001).
- **PE** was measured using the Spreitzer's Psychological Empowerment Instrument (PEI) (Spreitzer, 1995).
- **WE** was measured with the nine-item form of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

Data analysis

Several linear regression analyses were performed under a 95% confidence interval (CI). The mediation hypothesis was tested using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013) with a 95% bootstrap CI.

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Results

- Results confirm the influence of **SE** on **PE** and **WE** (table 1). For **PE** dimensions, *Access to opportunity* explains the 50% of the variance of *Meaning*, and the 13% of the variance of *Self-determination*; *Access to Information* explains the 22% of the variance of *Impact*. For **WE** dimensions, *Access to opportunity* and *Access to Information* explain the 34% of the variance of *Vigor*, and the 46% of the variance of *Dedication*; *Access to opportunity* also explains the 27% of the variance of *Absorption*.

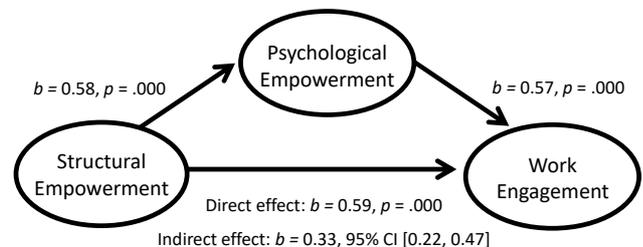
Table 1

		B	Standard Error	t	β	Standard Error	t	β	Standard Error	t
PE Variables		Meaning			Self-determination			Impact		
SE Variables	ACCOPP	.72	0.09	10.48 [†]	.27	0.12	2.99 ^{**}	.15	0.12	1.78
	ACCINF	.02	0.09	0.29	.20	0.12	1.87	.29	0.13	2.89 ^{**}
	ΔR ²	.50			.13			.22		
WE Variables		Vigor			Dedication			Absorption		
SE Variables	ACCOPP	.39	0.11	4.94 [†]	.61	0.11	8.46 [†]	.45	0.10	5.48 [†]
	ACCRES	.22	0.10	2.81 ^{**}	.17	0.11	2.40 [*]	.03	0.10	0.39
	ΔR ²	.34			.46			.27		

PE: Psychological Empowerment; SE: Structural Empowerment; WE: Work Engagement. ACCOPP = Access to opportunity; ACCINF: Access to information; ACCRES = Access to resources. [†]p < .001; ^{**}p < .01; ^{*}p < .05

- Results also confirm the mediator role of **PE** in the relationship between **SE** and **WE** (figure 1). The indirect effect ($b = 0.33$) of **SE** (predictor) on **WE** (outcome) through **PE** (mediator) is statistically significant, since the bootstrap CI doesn't contain the zero value (BCa CI [0.22, 0.47]).

Figure 1



Research/Practical Implications

- The present study contributes to mitigate the lack in the scientific literature on **work empowerment** (Knol & van Linge, 2009) by presenting useful results having used participants of **two different nationalities**.
- The obtained data are sufficiently strong to suggest that the model should be reanalyzed using **structural equations**, in order to provide deeper explanations of these relationships.
- A cross-level research could be another continuation of the present study, measuring the variables of job position in the organization. This would provide an appropriate context to understand further the relationship between **SE**, **PE** and **WE**, and its interactions between different **organizational variables**.
- Results also provide direction for the professional practice, allowing to develop interventions aimed at the generation of a **strong and effective work environment**.
- Management should **believe** in employees, by giving **meaning** to their work and **encouraging** them to act with more **self-determination**: *empowering them instead of controlling them*.