



## Conceptualising The Various Consequences of Psychological Empowerment

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### ABSTRACT

*Purpose - The purpose of this paper is to focus on the consequences of psychological empowerment in the organisational contexts. This is a conceptual paper that explains the various consequences of psychological empowerment. The study suggests organisational citizenship behaviour, employee work engagement, innovative work behaviour, employee's work performance, turnover intention, job satisfaction and organisational commitment are the consequences of psychological empowerment. This work is the first that investigates the outcomes of psychological empowerment.*

**KEYWORDS : Psychological empowerment, employee engagement.**

### Introduction

An integrative psychological approach to employee empowerment was developed based on the principle that the psychological experience of power underlies feelings of empowerment. Existing organisations are operating in an external environment characterised by intense global competition, change and technological innovation (De-Janasz et al., 2002). As a result, managers are showing an enormous interest in employee empowerment with the belief that relinquishing centralised control will promote flexibility and decisiveness as well as employee commitment and a subsequent improvement in individual and organisational performance (Ozaralli, 2003). This contrasts with traditional management techniques that have emphasised control, hierarchy and rigidity. The meaning of empowerment is associated with the concept of power, thereby implying that power is redistributed by those in a senior position to those in more subordinate positions (Tulloch, 1993). This is perhaps somewhat surprising given that empowerment is essentially a perceptual matter and therefore it is necessary to measure empowerment by asking employees if they feel empowered, rather than relying on management opinions, a problem recognised by Psoinos and Smithson (2002). Although previous research has periodically reported on the success or failure of empowerment initiatives, there has been little rigorous research on psychological empowerment and its consequences. The aim of this research is to examine the perspectives of psychological empowerment by accessing its consequences.

### Literature review

#### Consequences of psychological empowerment

##### Psychological empowerment and Organisational commitment

Employees who feel more empowered are more likely to reciprocate by being more committed to their organisation (Liden et al., 2000). More specifically, the meaning dimension of empowerment has been found to result in employees higher levels of concentration and energy (Spreitzer, 1995), as they report more value and worth in the tasks they are required to complete. Further, Liden et al. (2000) found that empowerment contributes to a sense of commitment to the organisation through a process of reciprocation. Furthermore, employees tend to feel appreciative when they are allowed to encounter the benefits of empowerment and are therefore likely to reciprocate by being more committed to the organisation. Therefore, it can be posited that:

##### P1. Psychological empowerment will lead to organisational commitment.

##### Psychological empowerment and Job satisfaction

Self-determination dimension of empowerment is also related with job satisfaction, suggesting that self-determination is a psychological need and a key component of intrinsic motivation. Job satisfaction has also been shown to be an important outcome of psychological empowerment (Seibert et al., 2004). Further, Liden et al. (2000) assert that when employees feel that their work can influence organisational outcomes, they tend to feel more involved and therefore gain a sense of satisfaction with their job.

##### P2. Psychological empowerment leads to job satisfaction

##### Psychological empowerment and turnover intention

According to Blau's (1964) social exchange theory, employees like to feel psychologically empowered and when they are empowered by the organisation, they try to reciprocate it in terms of continuity with the same organisation. Because, it's hard to feel the same level of empowerment with the new employer and this reduces the benefits of leaving the organisation. That is why; an empowered worker shows less intention to leave the organization (Griffeth et al., 2000). In other words, a psychologically empowered employee would also prefer to continue with the same organization rather than a new one. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

##### P3. Psychological empowerment will relate negatively to workers' turnover intention

##### Psychological empowerment and employee's work performance

Some studies have indicated a relationship between psychological empowerment and contextual performance (Chiang and Hsieh, 2012). Moreover, Chan (2003) argued that empowerment strategies can be characterised as interventions to enhance employees' self-efficacy and to intrinsically motivate them, thus creating a support-based relationship between management and employees. Further, employees who feel their jobs are meaningful have more confidence in their competence, experience high self-determination, have impact on the work and other people and are more likely to participate in out of the role work. Previous research has provided empirical evidence of a relationship between psychological empowerment and task performance (Aryee and Chen, 2006). Further, a meta-analysis conducted by Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) showed that there is a strong association between self-efficacy and work performance. Furthermore, when employees believe they can have impact on organisational outcomes, they are more likely to try harder, make their ideas heard and influence the direction of their work unit. All of these aspects of psychological empowerment encourage employees to complete their tasks efficiently.

##### P4. Psychological empowerment is positively related to task performance and contextual performance.

##### Psychological empowerment and innovative work behaviour

Employees, who are empowered by an innovation-supportive, vision-oriented team, direct their efforts toward developing, promoting and implementing innovative ideas at work. Both empowerment and innovation literature have ascribed to psychological empowerment a pivotal motivational role in fuelling innovative work activities (Seibert et al., 2011). Further, Spreitzer (1995) suggested that employees with high levels of psychological empowerment perceive that they have self determination and influence, which promotes their innovative performance. Zhang and Bartol (2010) found that psychological empowerment positively affect the employees' creativity. Thus, employees' perception of meaningfulness of job, individual self-efficacy, self-determination and impact lead to service innovation and new

knowledge creation. Since empowered employees express a sense of freedom and autonomy in carrying out their tasks, they are expected to show a higher degree of personal initiative in proactively generating and applying novel change-oriented ideas in the workplace (Alge et al., 2006). Furthermore, when individuals perceive that their work is meaningful and valuable, they seek to understand a problem from various perspectives and to connect multiple sources of information, which will then result in higher levels of innovativeness (Sun et al., 2012). Therefore, we propose:

**P5. Psychological empowerment is positively related to individual engagement in innovative work behaviours. Psychological empowerment and employee work engagement**

Arguing from a motivational perspective, psychological empowerment could therefore become a resource that enables individuals to be work engaged. Meaningfulness, a component of psychological empowerment has also been found to be related with engagement (May et al., 2004) and positive job behaviour. According to the job demands-resources model of work engagement (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004), psychological empowerment can be seen as a resource that could enable an individual to become engaged. According to Spreitzer (1995) these cognitions combine to produce an overall feeling of empowerment and reflect an active orientation to work role, an orientation in which an individual wishes and feels able to shape his or her work role and context. Employees with self-determination have some control over what they do and how much effort they put. Therefore we hypothesise that:

**P6. Psychological empowerment will have a positive impact on employee work engagement. Psychological empowerment and organisational citizenship behaviour**

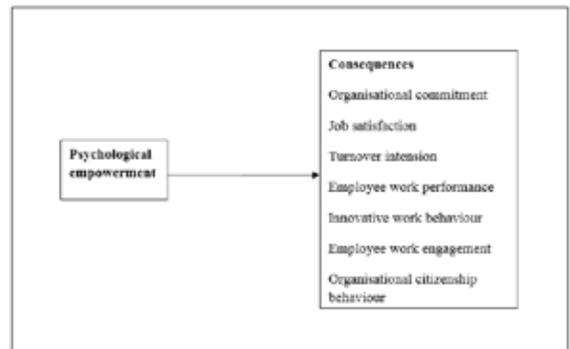
Research suggests that empowerment appears when companies implement practices that distribute power, information, knowledge and rewards throughout the organization (Nezakati et al., 2010) and that psychological empowerment is related to job attitude. With respect to the service sector, there is a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and measures of organisational citizenship behaviour (Maharaj, 2005). Employees who are psychologically empowered feel good about the tasks they are doing and perceive them to be meaningful and challenging. Thus, the chances of a psychologically empowered employee performing well and conforming to organisational citizenship behaviour are higher. Therefore:

**P7. There is a significant positive relationship between psychological empowerment and OCB. Managerial Implications**

Managers should empower the employees' sense of self-determination by allowing them to determine task allocation, which also implies that they have the power to influence their colleagues. Managers should therefore be giving a degree of autonomy to their employees and while facing unexpected emergencies, employees would be able to swiftly provide solutions. Subsequently, psychologically empowered employees would continue to find new and useful ways to enhance service quality. Access to information, employee participation, supervisory social support, job security, organisational commitment and job satisfaction were all correlated positively to psychological empowerment. Supervisors have to be more communication minded, sensitive to the needs of subordinates, are willing and empathetic listeners and be approachable and understanding. The employees who possess feelings of autonomy and meaning have higher levels of both affective commitment and job satisfaction. Further, Spreitzer (1995) has argued that organisations can benefit from employee empowerment by sharing information and linking rewards to empowering behaviours. Further, managerial support encourages employees to become more customer-oriented, cherishing contact points with customers and thereby becoming the customer's first-choice service provider. Besides this, managers should design empowerment-based education to strengthen employees' psychological empowerment, utilising innovative behaviour sharing and cross departmental training to improve the communication of new ideas and enhance employees' capacity for creative thinking. Well-trained employees can thereby more effectively exert autonomy and take on other additional responsibilities. Furthermore, the organisation can understand the strength of an employee by studying how much they feel themselves psychologically empowered and are committed to the organisation. It helps an organisation to study the health of an organisation. The study of psychological empowerment also depicts the level of satisfaction the employee has from the given job.

The perception that the job is meaningful and that the employee can exert the required autonomy leads to a high level of organizational commitment.

**Fig 1.1 Proposed Model**



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