

---

**Title registration for a systematic review:  
Psychological empowerment and performance  
in the workplace**  
**Rossella Barilli, Niklas Frewel, Fabio Massei, Jonny Gifford**

---

*Submitted to the Coordinating Group of:*

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Crime and Justice                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Education                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Disability                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | International Development                |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Nutrition                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Food Security                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Social Welfare                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Methods                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Knowledge Translation and Implementation |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Business and Management                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Other:                                   |

*Plans to co-register:*

- |                                     |       |                          |          |                          |       |
|-------------------------------------|-------|--------------------------|----------|--------------------------|-------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No    |                          |          |                          |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Yes   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Cochrane | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Maybe |                          |          |                          |       |

Date submitted:

Date revision submitted:

Approval date:

---

## **Title of the review**

---

Psychological empowerment and performance in the workplace.

---

## **Background**

---

The concept of employee empowerment was first introduced to management literature by Kanter in 1977 and has ever since received increasingly interest from researchers as well as practitioners. Empowerment is generally described as a process of orienting and enabling individuals to think and behave in an autonomous way (Sahoo, Behera, & Tripathy, 2010). By 2001, more than 70% of organizations introduced some form of empowerment for at least some of their workforce (Lawler, Mohrman, & Benson, 2001). The importance of the concept of empowerment for organizations is closely aligned with general changes in nature of business; an ever faster changing environment calls for greater adaptability. An approach to management and leadership that requires individuals within the organizational landscape to actively contribute, take ownership and drive initiatives, enables organizations to quickly adapt, and rapidly innovate by having various workstreams in parallel. Empowerment has been described as a "key ingredient" for organizational success (e.g. Laschinger et al., 2009). Early work on empowerment developed out of two motivational frameworks: the job characteristics model (Hackman & Oldham, 1980) and Bandura's (1977) work on self-efficacy. These two foundational works built the basis for two distinct conceptualizations of empowerment: structural and psychological (e.g. Leach, Wall, & Jackson, 2003; Spreitzer, 1995). Structural empowerment focuses on the transition of authority and responsibility from upper management to employees and is primarily concerned with organizational conditions, whereby power, decision making, and formal control over resources are shared (Kanter, 1977). In contrast, psychological empowerment focuses on employees' perceptions or cognitive states regarding empowerment (e.g. individuals or teams perceiving that they are in control of their work) (e.g. Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Conger and Kanungo (1988) were the first to introduce a psychological perspective on empowerment. They argued that empowering organizational practices result in greater employee initiative and motivation only to the extent that these practices provide informational cues that enhance the employees' effort–performance expectancies (Lawler, 1973) or feelings of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986).

Recent studies have positioned structural empowerment as a necessary, but not sufficient, antecedent to psychological empowerment (e.g. Mathieu, Gilson, & Ruddy, 2006).

While psychological empowerment was found to be positively related to various outcomes, the magnitude of such benefits is variable, suggesting the likely presence of moderators and contextual influences (e.g. Chen & Tesluk, 2012). This also suggests that variations in the independent and dependent variables may matter. Existing reviews on the topic have noted that critical issues remain in our understanding of when and why employees' psychological empowerment translates into positive outcomes. Therefore, it is crucial to develop a better understanding of the factors that may enhance or diminish the relationship between psychological empowerment and relevant outcome variables.

---

## Relevance for practice

---

The ultimate goal of decision makers in organizations is to increase the organization's effectiveness and employees' performance. Many HR practices aim to work towards this objective, while research can inform decision makers in organizations to do "the right thing" and make informed decisions. Pursuing the goal of gaining a competitive advantage, empowerment has become a particularly popular approach within strategic human resource management. Recent literature suggests that empowerment is one of the answers to the question `How can we succeed in a fast-changing environment?` As of today, however, there is a limited understanding of factors that might play a role in the association between psychological empowerment and practice-relevant outcome variables. A systematic review with meta-analysis according to Campbell-standards will help to strengthen our understanding in that regard and will give valuable and practical insights to practitioners.

---

## Objectives

---

The systematic review aims to answer the following questions:

Question 1: Is psychological empowerment associated with task performance?

Question 2: Is psychological empowerment associated with organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB)?

Question 3: Is psychological empowerment associated with (a) learning (b) creativity?

Question 4: Do certain characteristics and conditions moderate the relationship between psychological empowerment and outcomes?

### **Moderator analysis: A key component**

Psychological empowerment may be important, but it is unclear when—or in which contexts—those benefits manifest (Chen & Tesluk, 2012; Maynard et al., 2013).

This systematic review will investigate the role of the following moderators in enhancing/diminishing the relationship between empowerment and performance:

- Position within the organization (Manager vs. non-manager)
- Experience in the role (years)
- Support and Work Design (divided in the following sub-components: supervisor support, organizational support, work design)
- Study design (cross-sectional studies, longitudinal studies, within subject design, in-between subject design, randomized/non-randomized controlled studies)

## Research Model



*\*The outcome variables we utilize are defined within the criterion framework from the literatures proposed by Seibert et al. (2011), combined with the framework on Job Performance by Sonnentag et al. (2008).*

---

## Existing reviews

---

### **Antecedents and consequences of psychological and team empowerment in organizations: a meta-analytic review**

#### **Seibert, Wang, & Courtright (2011)**

This paper provides meta-analytic support for an integrated model specifying the antecedents and consequences of psychological and team empowerment. Comprised are 142 articles representing 151 independent samples, including 79 published studies and 63 unpublished dissertations and working papers. In terms of individual psychological empowerment, the results show that psychological empowerment is positively associated with a broad range of employee outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and task and contextual performance and negatively associated with employee strain and turnover intentions. Main limitations of this study include the following aspects: (1) The majority of the primary studies were cross-sectional rather than longitudinal. A causal relationship between the variables can therefore not be assumed; (2) Possible moderators in the tested model were limited, due to missing information and data in the primary studies.

### **A meta-analytic investigation of the relation between HRM bundles and firm performance**

#### **Subramony (2009)**

This study investigates the relationship between three Human Resource Management bundles (empowerment, motivation, and skill-enhancing) and business outcomes (retention, operating performance, financial performance, and overall performance ratings), taking into account 239 effect sizes derived from 65 studies. The results predicted a positive relationship

between empowerment-enhancing bundles and business outcomes. There are two main limitations of this study: (1) Absence of investigation into the moderating effects of environmental factors other than industry; (2) Testing the issue of reverse or reciprocal causation - that is, the question of whether firm performance influences the adoption of HRM practices, due to the lack of a sufficient number of relevant studies.

### **A meta-analysis of different HR-enhancing practices and performance of small and medium sized firms**

#### **Rauch, & Hatak (2016)**

Utilizing a framework proposed by Subramony (2009), this study proposes that small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) need to implement HR practices that focus on enhancing skills, motivation, and empowerment. The results of 56 studies that focused on SMEs indicate that HR-enhancing practices are correlated with firm performance. Empowerment-enhancing HR practices were significantly and more strongly correlated with performance than motivation-enhancing HR practices. Moreover, HR-enhancing practices were more relevant for young firms and SMEs operating in high-tech industries and in country contexts characterized by rigid labour regulations. The results suggest that HR-enhancing practices are important in the SME context. One of the main limitation of the study is that this analysis included predominantly cross-sectional studies, and this does not allow to draw causal conclusions. Moreover, moderators that were considered are limited to firm size, firm age, technology industry, and labour market regulations.

As mentioned above, past meta-analyses and systematic reviews identified have serious limitations: often no attempt was made to identify unpublished studies, the process to select studies was often unclear and not reproducible, and, finally, the methodological quality of the primary studies was often not assessed. Therefore, they do not meet the Campbell standards for systematic reviews.

Our work will make use of the rising research interest in the field of empowerment and contribute to the understanding of the association between psychological empowerment and performance as well as the moderators that may enhance or diminish this relationship, by applying a high-quality, standardized procedure for systematic reviews with meta-analysis, in accordance with Campbell standards.

---

### **Intervention / Independent Variable**

---

The systematic review will search and examine studies that refer to the concept of psychological empowerment associated with performance.

We will regard psychological empowerment on the basis of the work of Thomas and Velthouse (1990) being the most widely accepted definition framework for psychological empowerment. The authors defined psychological empowerment as intrinsic task motivation reflecting a sense of control in relation to one's work and an active orientation to one's work role that is manifest in four cognitions: meaning, self-determination, competence, and impact.

- **Meaning** refers to the alignment between the demands of one's work role and one's own beliefs, values, and standards (Hackman & Oldham, 1980).
- **Self-determination** is one's sense of choice concerning the initiation or regulation of one's actions (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989).
- **Competence** refers to one's belief in one's capability to successfully perform work activities (Bandura, 1989; Lawler, 1973).
- **Impact** is one's belief that one can influence strategic, administrative, or operational activities and outcomes in one's work (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978; Ashforth, 1989).

---

## **Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

---

Along with our research objective, we define clear inclusion and exclusion criteria, which will give a framework to the information retrieval process. As we are specifically referring to psychological empowerment in the workplace, we limit our research to studies done in organizational settings. One of the main inclusion criteria will be an existing employee-employer relationship. Our focus will be on Small-and Medium-sized (SMEs) companies (>10 and <250) and large corporations (>250), including studies conducted in healthcare and educational settings as well.

We do include employees from every gender or age and will consider individuals across all levels of the organization. We deliberately decide to exclude organizations from politics. The decision to do so is because the typologies of organizations in politics differ too greatly from our context of interest and may therefore influence the results obtained.

---

## **Outcomes**

---

The outcomes of interest for the purpose of our systematic review are derived from the framework proposed by Seibert et al. (2011), which integrates over thirty years of theory and empirical research on empowerment, combined with the framework on Job Performance by Sonnentag et al. (2008).

### **Primary Outcomes:**

- Performance:
  - Task performance
  - Contextual performance (organizational citizenship behaviour)
  - Adaptive performance (e.g. learning, creativity)

### **Secondary Outcomes:**

- Attitudinal consequences: e.g. job satisfaction, organizational commitment, strain

---

## **Study designs**

---

Eligible study designs include cross-sectional studies, longitudinal studies, within subject design, in-between subject design, randomized/non-randomized controlled studies. Eligible studies can be published or unpublished, in any form, in any language as long as they meet all other eligibility criteria. The search will be carried out in Italian, Spanish, English and German.

---

## References

---

1. Abramson, L. Y., Seligman, M. E. P., & Teasdale, J. D. (1978). Learned helplessness in humans: Critique and reformulation. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 87*, 49–74.
2. Ashforth, B. E. (1989). The experience of powerlessness in organizations. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 43*, 207–242.
3. Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ, US: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
4. Bandura, A. (1989). Human agency in social cognitive theory. *American Psychologist, 44*, 1175–1184.
5. Bandura, A. 1977. Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review, 84*:191-215.
6. Chen, G., & Tesluk, P. (2012). *Team participation and empowerment*. In S. W. J. Kozlowski (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of organizational psychology*: 761–788. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
7. Conger, J. A., & Kanungo, R. N. 1988. The empowerment process: Integrating theory and practice. *Academy of Management Review, 13*: 471-482.
8. Deci, E. L., Connell, J. P., & Ryan, R. M. (1989). Self-determination in a work organization. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 74*, 580–590.
9. Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1980). *Work redesign*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
10. Kanter, R. M. (1977). *Men and women of the corporation*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
11. Laschinger, H. K. S., Finegan, J., & Wilk, P. (2009). Context matters: The impact of unit leadership and empowerment on nurses' organizational commitment. *The Journal of Nursing Administration, 39*: 228–235.
12. Lawler, E. E. (1973). *Motivation in work organizations*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
13. Lawler, E. E., Mohrman, S. A., & Benson, G. (2001). *Organizing for high performance: Employee involvement, TQM, reengineering, and knowledge management in the Fortune 1000 companies*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
14. Leach, D. J., Wall, T. D., & Jackson, P. R. 2003. The effect of empowerment on job knowledge: An empirical test involving operators of complex technology. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 76*: 27-52.
15. Mathieu, J. E., Gilson, L. L., & Ruddy, T. M. 2006. Empowerment and team effectiveness: An empirical test of an integrated model. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 91*: 97-108.



16. Maynard, M. T., Mathieu, J. E., Gilson, L. L., O'Boyle, E. H., & Cigularov, K. P. (2013). Drivers and outcomes of team psychological empowerment: A meta-analytic review and model test. *Organizational Psychology Review*, 3: 101–137.
17. Rauch, A., & Hatak, I. (2016). A meta-analysis of different HR-enhancing practices and performance of small and medium sized firms. *Journal of business venturing*, 31(5), 485-504.
18. Sahoo, C.K., Behera, N. and Tripathy, S.K., Employee Empowerment and Individual Commitment: An Analysis from Integrative Review of Research. *Employment Relations Record*, 2010, 10(1), 40-56.
19. Seibert, S. E., Wang, G., & Courtright, S. H. (2011). Antecedents and consequences of psychological and team empowerment in organizations: a meta-analytic review. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(5), 981.
20. Sonnentag, S., Volmer, J., & Spychala, A. (2008). Job performance. *The Sage handbook of organizational behavior*, 1, 427-447.
21. Spreitzer, G. M. 1995. Psychological empowerment in the workplace: Dimensions, measurement, and validation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38: 1442-1465.
22. Subramony, M. (2009). A meta-analytic investigation of the relationship between HRM bundles and firm performance. *Human resource management*, 48(5), 745-768.
23. Thomas, K. W., & Velthouse, B. A. (1990). Cognitive elements of empowerment. *Academy of Management Review*, 15, 666–681.

---

## Review authors

---

**Lead review author:** The lead author is the person who develops and co-ordinates the review team, discusses and assigns roles for individual members of the review team, liaises with the editorial base and takes responsibility for the on-going updates of the review.

---

Name: Rossella Barilli

---

Title: Master of Science,  
Work and Organizational Psychology, University of Bologna

---

Affiliation:

---

Address: Hauptwachstrasse 8

---

City, State, Province or County: Bamberg

---

Post code: 96047

---

Country: Germany

---

Phone: +4915161043237

---

Email: rossella.barilli92@gmail.com

---

### Co-author:

---

Name: Niklas Frewel

---

Title: Master of Science,  
Work – Organizational and Personnel Psychology, University of Valencia

---

Affiliation:

---

Address: Hauptwachstrasse 8

---

City, State, Province or County: Bamberg

---

Post code: 96047

---

Country: Germany

---

Phone: +491734513875

---

Email: frewel.niklas@gmail.com

---

### Co-author:

---

Name: Fabio Massei

---

Title: Doctor

---

Ph.D. program: “Social, Developmental and Organizational Psychology”, focused on Work and Organizational Psychology.

---

---

**Affiliation:**

---

**Address: Dr-Hans-Ehard-Strasse 18**

---

**City, State, Province or County: Bamberg**

---

**Post code: 96049**

---

**Country: Germany**

---

**Phone: 004915110652970**

---

**Email: massei.fabio@gmail.com**

---

**Co-author:**

---

**Name: Jonny Gifford**

---

**Title: MA Social Research with specialism in Comparative Labour Studies,  
University of Warwick**

---

**Affiliation: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development; and Westminster  
Business School, University of Westminster**

---

**Address: Brookside, Spook Hill**

---

**City, State, Province or County: Dorking**

---

**Post code: RH5 4HN**

---

**Country: UK**

---

**Phone: (+44) 7780837192**

---

**Email: j.gifford@cipd.co.uk**

---

---

## **Roles and responsibilities**

---

Rossella Barilli will lead the different analytical stages of the review, bringing in her applied expertise in HR consulting. Throughout all stages of the review, Rossella Barilli and Niklas Frewel will closely collaborate and will be in charge of content-related discussions and coordinate the review's data analysis and interpretation stages.

Jonny Gifford will contribute to most or all stages of the review: in particular the design, searching, critical appraisal and interpretation of findings; and potentially the statistical analysis.

Fabio Massei, given his passion and strong background in advanced statistical methods, will contribute heavily in the statistical analysis of the systematic review. He will moreover, where possible, provide feedback and needed support throughout all stages of the systematic review.

An advisory team consisting of content experts will be installed to provide the team with feedback and support. In addition experts in the area of information retrieval, systematic review methods or statistical analysis can be consulted.

---

## **Support**

---

The systematic review team may need support from a librarian/information retrieval specialist to design and carry out the systematic search process.

---

## **Funding**

---

We do not receive any funding, nor we intend to apply for any.

---

## **Potential conflicts of interest**

---

None to disclose

---

## **Preliminary timeframe**

---

Note, if the protocol or review is not submitted within six months and 18 months of title registration, respectively, the review area is opened up for other authors.

- Date you plan to submit a draft protocol: October 2018
- Date you plan to submit a draft review: October 2019