# Does psychological empowerment contribute to employee's engagement in companies?

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**ABSTRACT:** Psychological empowerment of an employee benefits organization in this competitive business environment nowadays. This value encourages employees to excel and responsible in all given tasks. These employees have a stronger sense of self-efficacy and perform outstandingly, able to understand customer's demand proactively and responsible to provide solutions for problems in the services effectively within the expected time. These attributes show that psychological empowerment have a positive relationship with the employee's engagement. However, previous studies have yet to discover how significant are the relationship of these variables in electrical and electronics manufacturing in Johor, Malaysia. Thus, this study attempts to predict the relationship of psychological empowerment and employee engagement and improve the current understanding simultaneously. Findings indicated that there is a significant relationship between psychological empowerment and employee engagement of 69.8% among the electrical and electronics manufacturing in Johor, Malaysia. In conclusion, the engagement of a higher psychological empowerment employee towards his job scope affirms the success of an organization.

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

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# I. INTRODUCTION

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The rapid growth and advancements in the competitive era require employees to respond quickly and flexibly to make changes within the organization (Jose & Mampily, 2014). The competitive environment of business demands workforce changes of task performance. This require individuals to take improvement initiatives, stimulate innovation and creativity, and encourage optimum participation to act efficiently and proactively in the organization (Baird and Wang, 2010; Meyerson and Dewwettinck, 2012). This ensures organization continue to thrive and to compete with other organizations (Baird and Wang, 2010). Employees who are innovative, creative, able to adapt changes, efficient and proactive are hungered by a competitive organization (Islam *et al.*, 2014; Bordin *et al.*, 2007). Attitudes that engraved in an employee who are acknowledge psychological (Aghaei&Savari, 2014). This has also been agreed with by previous researchers such as Spreitzer (1995), Spreitzer and Quinn (1999), Wagner *et al.*, (2010) and Zhang and Bartol (2010) who believe that psychological empowerment is the solution for workers in the production of coping employees a change in the organization, being innovative, creative and always active in the organization.

Psychological empowerment is the perception that motivates an employee to develop an active approach to control and influence work (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995; Stander and Rothmann 2009). It associates with employees' perception that influence working attitudes and actions (Forrester, 2000; Askel, 2013). It relates with employee motivation and commitment to perform their jobs successfully. These attitudes driven by the comfort environment nurtured by the organization (Spreitzer, 1995; Wang & Lee 2016). The main concept of psychological empowerment is to focus on how individuals' experiences and to understand their job scopes (Spreitzer, 2008). Employees with high levels of psychological empowerment improves employees 'confidence in to work (Jin & Da 2012). They believe behavior is the key for a success to the organization. These employees are optimistic in communicating creative and innovative ideas in the face of difficulties in the organization (Afshari, 2011). The psychological empowerment characteristic in employees also enables employees to have professional judgment in solving unexpected problems (Lee & Nie, 2013; Sweetland and Hoy, 2000).

Even though psychological empowerment has been linked to a wide range of positive job outcomes, studies have been showed the relationship with employee engagement in the organization (Ugwu *et al.*, 2014; Jose &Mampilly, 2015; Sharma, & Garg, 2017;Zheng, & Tian, 2019). Employee engagement refer to the extent to which employees feel passionate about their jobs, are committed to the organization, and put discretionary

effort into their work (Robertson,2019; Albrecht *et al.*, 2018; Albrecht *et al.*, 2015;Al-Maamari, 2017; Bakker & Leiter, 2010). By having employee engagement, it increases employee retention and loyalty (Khodakarami, & Dirani, 2020; Book *et al.*, 2019). It improves performance and productivity to give competitive edge over others (Buil *et al.*, 2019; Meyer *et al.*, 2019). It minimizes employee turnover and maximizes their morale (Sheehan *et al.*, 2019). It provides customer satisfaction and improves the organizational bottom lines.

However, several studies about employee engagement show that a lot of business potential is not unfold through low or disengaged employees: 85 percent of employees worldwide are not engaged or are actively disengaged in their job (Gallup 2017). According to Gallup, employee engagement can be categorized into three classifications which are engaged employees, followed by non-engaged or disengaged and disengaged. The engaged employee is the employee that happy in doing their task, excitement, dynamic and goes the extra mile for the organizational growth while the non-engaged or disengaged employee is the employee who is still working without any excitement towards the job and always passive. Meanwhile, actively disengaged employees are employees that unhappy at their work and influence the same to other employees and disengaged the others (Azoury *et al.*, 2013).

Thus, contemporary challenges in the workplace cause decision-maker to think about investing in the concept of employee engagement as it has become common as a method to increase the employees productivity, compete highly in the international economy, and achieve organizational objectives (Al Mehrzi & Singh, 2016). It is a challenge for the organization to have engaged employees as they need to engage not only the body of the employee but also the soul and mind each of them (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Further, supports from the managers allow subordinate to commit the job and subsequently to the organization (Alias *et al*, 2017). It clearly shows the importance to focus on engaging employees, both intellectually and emotionally.

Nevertheless, rapid change of modernization has led the needs of the workforce with the adaptability skills in the labor market demands (Othman *et al.*, 2018; Othman *et al.*, 2019).It can be concluded that the overall performance of an employee in an organization is affected by both psychological empowerment and employee engagement (Rich *et al.*, 2010). Employee engagement and psychological empowerment are important concepts to consider when dealing with changes at work and improving performance.(May *et al.*, 2004; Sandhya& Sulphey, 2020). Next, the researcher will discuss the model and concept of employee engagement and psychological empowerment practices in organization.

## II. METHODOLOGY

In order to obtain the data needed for this study, the researcher used the method of questionnaire distribution. In this study, a set of questionnaires were distributed to 100 employees of the manufacturing electronic and electrical organization around Johor Bahru. The questionnaire was conducted to assess the psychological empowerment of workers in the organization based on the items developed by Spreitzer (1995) from the Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire (PEQ). There are 11 items to assessed through this instrument. The dimensions to be assessed in this instrument are meaning, competence, impact, and self-determination. Ouyang *et al.*, (2015) reported the reliability of this tool to be 0.78 using Cronbach's alpha. In addition, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) by Saks (2006) was adopted in this study in order to determine the level of employee engagement. There are two dimensions that will be measured through this instrument: the job engagement and the organization engagement. Respondents answered the questionnaire using a five likert scale ranging from "extremely disagree" to "extremely agree". The data was analysed using a descriptive and linear regression analysis

# III. DISCUSSION

Psychological empowerment is defined as a condition that allows individuals to control and uninfluenced their work (Marynard *et al.*, 2014; Spritzer, 2008). Psychological empowerment is also a spirit in which employees' working environment is shaped and reflects the individuals who are committed to work (Spreitzer, 1995; Gong *et al.*, 2017). According to Spritzer (1995), there are four dimensions for assessing employee's psychological empowerment meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact as shown in Figure 1 (Masuod *et al.*, 2012; Li, 2016; Kariuki & Kiambati, 2017; Dust *et al.*, 2018; Singh & Sarkar, 2019).



Figure 1: Spreitzer Psychological Dimensions (1995), (Masuod et al., 2012: 171)

The first dimension in a matter of meaning. According to Spreitzer (1995), the meaning is to ensure that something is done to achieve the best possible level. However, it is necessary to comply with the scope of the assignment. Arogundade and Arogundade, (2015), points out that if the task is interesting and fulfills the skills it has, one would do a better job. While Wiens *et al.*, (2014), focuses that meaning of a person's assessment of such work in the best interests of the work. Competence is the second dimension of psychological empowerment in Spritzer (1995). According to Shapira and Tsemach (2014), claimed that competence is the capability of an employee to perform the given task. Competence is a type of knowledge and needed by an employee to perform specific tasks within the organization (Fulford& Enz, 1995; Rönnmar, 2004; Baumgarth and Schmidt, 2010; Werner and Weckenmann, 2012; Sandhya& Sulphey,2020). Meanwhile, Competence will shape employee's confidence to carry out the assignment given (Reichard *et al.*, 2015). In view of all the evidence, it appears that competence is a factor that causes the employee to perform his or her duties successfully.

Next, is self-determination which is the third dimension of psychological empowerment by Spreitzer (1995). Self-determination is a feeling that leads to an action on something (Spritzer *et al.*, 1999; Gagné, and Deci, 2005). While Fong *et al.*, (2015) and Spreitzer (1995) believe that self-determination is when an employee is self-sufficient and self-employed. This can be seen in the way workers deal with problems that arise. Similarly, Wang and Liu (2015) believe that self-determination is the efficiency of workers and is used to carry out tasks in the organization.Impact is the last dimension. This dimension shows the highest level that an employee in the organization can achieve (Knol and Linge, 2008). This can be seen when a worker is able to give thoughtful insights to ensure that the organization is successful (Erdogan *et al.*, 2018). Arogundade and Arogundade (2015) state that the impact is the stage in which the worker demonstrates the sincerity and conduct of employees by setting out strategies to ensure that the organization can compete. All these studies have examined that impact as an important factor in the workforce to ensure that employees are always motivated to do their job.

The other focus of this paper is employee engagement. Employee engagement can be defined in different ways. According to Shuck & Wollard (2011), employee engagement is an individual employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward achieving desired organizational outcomes (Abdullah & Lin, 2019). Engagement at work also was defined by Kahn (1990) as the harnessing of organizational members to their work roles (Saks,2019). Additionally, according to Macey *et al.*, (2009) employee engagement is a feeling within a worker that encourages employees to understand the purpose of being in the organization and always focus on performing the tasks. It can be clearly judged based on demonstrated personality, adaptability, demonstrated effort and persistence to ensure that organizational objectives can be achieved. According to Robinson *et al.*, (2004), employee engagement is one of the positive attitudes of workers to show the support provided by employees to ensure that the organization continues to expand. A broader perspective has been adopted by Kompaso and Sridevi (2010), who argue that employee engagement is the physical and emotional relationship of workers within the organization to the ability of the worker to perform tasks beyond the contractual agreement (Malati & Singh, 2019). As conclusions, employee engagement can be defined as the extent to which employees feel passionate about their jobs, are committed to the organization, and put discretionary effort into their work.

According to Saks (2006), there are two dimensions to measure the level of employee engagement in the organization. The dimensions are job engagement and organization engagement as shown in Figure 2.Figure 2 of Saks (2006) shows that the dimensions of employee engagement include emotional factors and employee actions that contribute to the level of employee involvement in the organization. The dimensions of employee engagement by Saks (2006) include aspects of the worker themselves and organizational management to ensure that the employees feel involved in the organization (Saks, 2019; Maslach *et al.*, 2001; Zhu *et al.*, 2004; Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Additionally, according to Ologbo and Saudah (2012) dimensions by Saks (2006) emphasisses the importance of employees in carryin out their tasks at their best. The dimensions also include physical factors, cognitive and emotional aspects of job responsibilities (Mani & Mishra, 2019; Othman *et al.*, 2019).





The first dimension of the engagement based on Saks (2006) is job engagement. According to Roberts and Davenport (2002), job engagement is seen through the enthusiasm and diligence of employees to complete the assignment and to perform other tasks not included in the scope of the assignment. Bakker and Bal (2010) stated that employee engagement is an attitude of employees who are always self-reliant and motivated to discharge their responsibilities. While the second dimension is the organization engagement. In this dimension it is emphasis how the management values its employees and does not cause employees to feel depressed within the organization (Maslach *et al.*, 2001). According to Gorgievski *et al.*, (2010), workers feel involved in the organization when their expertise and knowledge are valued and leveraged to develop an organization. For this reason, Xanthopoulou *et al.*, (2009) notes the importance of workers knowing the characteristics of the job they want to do in order to ensure that employees feel involved in the organization. If the employee feels that the organization can satisfy all the requirements of the employee, the employee shall feel responsibility for carrying out the task (Rhoades *et al.*, 2002). It can be concluded that the involvement of employees in the organization is through the organization's environmental and organizational factors.

In the ever-expanding age of globalization, organizations need workers who can respond quickly and make changes in line with current needs (Meyerson and Dewettinck, 2012). In the face of this atmosphere, organizations need workers who are innovative, creative, capable of facing changes, efficient and proactive in the organization (Islam *et al.*, 2014; Bordin *et al.*, 200)6. It was also agreed upon by previous researchers such as Spreitzer (1995), Quinn and Spreitzer (1999), Wagner *et al.*, (2010) and Zhang and Bartol (2010) who believe that psychological empowerment is a solution for workers in labour that can face a change in an organization, being innovative, creative and always active in the organization. In fact, Ugwu *et al.*, (2014) stated that the psychological empowerment of employees occurs when the management believes in its employees by allowing them to make decisions and implement the best things for the organization. This will cause workers to feel a sense of belonging and the organization needs to ensure that the organization continues to grow. It is clear here that there is interconnection between psychological empowerment and employee engagement.

# IV. FINDINGS

Table 1 shows that most respondents in this study are female (f = 66, percent = 66). Respondents are between 20 and 29 years of age with the highest number (f = 58, percent = 58) indicating that most respondents are single (f = 65, percent = 65). Most of the respondents have a Malaysian Education Certificate (SPM) (f = 6 0, percent= 60). In addition, most respondents served in the organization between one year and 9 years of age (f=4,4 percent=4,4). Most of the respondents earn between RM 1801 and RM 2800.

Demographic Profile		Frequency (	F) Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	34	34
	Female	66	66
Age	20-29 years	58	58
	30-39 years	26	26

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Respondent Demographics

	40-49 years	16	16
Marital Status	Married	35	35
Marital Status	Single	65	65
	Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR)	10	10
Education	Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM)	60	60
	Malaysian Higher School Certificate (STPM)	24	24
	Degree	6	6
	Less than 1 year	24	24
Length of service	1 year -9 years	44	44
	10 years - 19 years	32	32
	RM800-RM1800	28	28
Income	RM1801-RM2800	58	58
income	RM 2801-RM3800	6	6
	RM 3801 and above	8	8

# The Level of Psychological Empowerment among Employees

Table 2 below shows the level of psychological empowerment of employees in the electrical and electronic organization in Johor Bahru. Based on Table 2, the level of psychological empowerment in this organization is at a high level (Min = 4.16, Standard deviation = 0.58). This high level shows that the respondents believe in their ability to ensure that the organization continues to survive and succeed. Psychological empowerment includes four dimensions namely meaning, impact, competence, and self-determination.

Dimension	Min	Standard deviation
Meaning	4.40	0.68
Impact	3.76	0.84
Competence	4.48	0.62
Self-determination	4.03	0.68
Overall	4.16	0.58

# The Level of Employees Engagement among Employees

Table 3 shows the level of engagement of employees in Johor Bahru's electrical and electronic manufacturing organization. Based on Table 3, the level of employees' engagement in this organization is at a high level. (Min = 4.16, Standard deviation = 0.58). This level shows that the employees s has a sense of belonging and are willing to work with the organization. Employee's engagement in the organization includes two dimensions, namely job engagement and organization engagement.

Dimension	Min	Standard deviation
Job Engagement	4.17	0.58
Organization Engagement	4.14	0.66
OVERALL	4.16	0.58

Impact of Psychological Empowerment on Respondents Employee Engagement

Table 4 below shows the value of  $R^2$  in simple regression analysis. The findings show that psychological empowerment has effects on employee engagement ( $R^2 = 0.698$  This explains that psychological empowerment affects 69.8% of employee engagement. In addition, statistics show a significant impact between psychological empowerment and employees' engagement (F = 226.888, p <0.000). This analysis therefore demonstrates a significant impact of psychological empowerment on employee's engagement in electrical and electronic organizations in Johor Bahru.

Table 4: Summ	ary of Simple Reg	gression Analy	sis Models	
D1	4.1° - 1.D2	0		T

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	β	F
0.836	0.698	0.695	0.912	226.888*

### V. CONCLUSION

Result shows that employees in electrical and electronic manufacturing organization at Johor Bharu has a high level of employee engagement and psychological empowerment. The high level of psychological empowerment capability suggests that the organization's employees have a high spirit, are always motivated and willing to accept the changes made by management because they want to ensure that the organization continually develops and succeeds. In addition, the high level of employees' engagement at this organization shows that the employees feel valued and necessary for the organization. This high level of employee engagement shows also the physical and emotional relationship of employees with the organization. This finding of this study supports the previous studies conducted by Marcey and Schneider, 2008; Zhang and Bartol, 2010; Stander and Rothmann, 2010; Ugwu and Rodriguez, 2014 and Ahmad &Gao, 2018 and Sandhya and Sulphey,2020. Previous studies have shown that there is interdependence between psychological empowerment and employee engagement. As the level of employee engagement increases, the level of employee psychological abilities will also increase and vice versa.



This situation explains the fact that psychological empowerment improves the resilience, and responsibility of the workforce to be more focused and committed (Jose and Mampilly,2014). In addition, the relationship between psychological empowerment and employee engagement has an impact on the organization's achievement (Stander and Rothmann, 2008). According to Quinn and Spreitzer (1997), Hill *et al.*, (2014) and Jose and Mampilly (2015), psychological empowerment will increase the employee's personal feelings towards the organization. In this way, employees are encouraged to work with the organization to ensure its growth continues. In the same vein, they will give full support in terms of energy and ideas to the organization for its success.

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