

Psychological Empowerment and Employee Engagement in School Teachers

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Abstract

The current study aimed to see the relationship between psychological empowerment and employees' engagement in school teachers to enhance teaching quality and overall educational effectiveness. The study hypothesized that (a) there would be a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and employee engagement in public and private school teachers; (b) psychological empowerment would be a positive predictor of employee engagement in public and private school teachers; (c) there would be significant gender differences between psychological empowerment and employee engagement in public and private school teachers; and (d) there would be significant institutional differences in psychological empowerment and employee engagement in public and private school teachers. To test these hypotheses, a total of 100 school teachers, 50 men (n=25 from public school and n=25 from private school) and 50 women (n=25 from public school, n=25 from private school), were approached through a purposive sampling strategy. Psychological empowerment was measured using the Psychological Empowerment Scale (Spreitzer, 1995), and employee engagement was measured using the Work and Well-being Survey (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2002). The findings showed a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and employee engagement. Moreover, Simple linear regression showed that psychological empowerment significantly predicted employee engagement. This study will help educational experts devise strategies to enhance teachers' psychological empowerment and engagement.

Keywords: Psychological Empowerment, Employee Engagement, Vigor, Dedication, Absorption, Intrinsic Motivation, Self-determination.

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Introduction and Literature Review

Psychological empowerment denotes the motivation that appears through four mental perceptions indicating how an individual perceives their work role: meaning, competence, impact and self-determination (Llorente-Alonso et al., 2023). Meaning pertains to the significance of work goals based on personal values, while competence reflects one's belief in their ability to perform tasks well. Self-determination involves autonomy in managing actions, and impact measures a person's influence on work outcomes (Spreitzer, 1995). Psychological empowerment holds significance in organizational research and practice because of its potential to provide organizations with a competitive edge in dynamic work settings. Kim et al. (2018) stated that empowering employees can offer advantages that aid organizations in attaining and maintaining competitive positions within their respective markets. It motivates individuals to perform well in their jobs (Boudrias et al., 2014), which is supported by theory of self-determination and positive psychology (Deci et al., 2017). Moreover, psychological empowerment has the potential to mitigate the adverse effects of work-related stress on burnout. (Tsang, et al., 2022). Employees who are empowered do well in their employment because they have access to the resources they need to improve their performance (Javed et al., 2017). Thus, psychological empowerment has a substantial effect on employee engagement. It is a motivating element for job engagement. Research shows that highly empowered employees are more dedicated to work (Ahmed & Malik, 2019).

Studies comparing psychological empowerment across different contexts reveal variations in empowerment levels and their connection to job satisfaction. For instance, Jordan et al. (2017), noticed differences between job satisfaction and psychological empowerment in university lecturers in Serbia and Germany. The results indicated that Serbian lecturers exhibited substantial psychological empowerment, whereas their German counterparts displayed a comparatively lower level of empowerment. Job satisfaction exhibited a substantial prevalence among lecturers in Austria, whereas, in Slovenia, it was observed to be less pronounced. Likewise, Khany and Tazi's (2016) research emphasized that individuals with a sense of empowerment express satisfaction with their jobs.

In the same line of research, Ugwu et al. (2014) investigated how increased empowerment correlates with heightened employee engagement. This line of inquiry was further explored by Ahmed and Malik (2019), who established that empowered and engaged employees exhibit accomplishment and well-being in their professional settings. Consequently, such workers often report elevated levels of engagement, influenced by interconnected factors like a sense of control and autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and a positive work environment. These findings align with research in organizational psychology and management, as articulated by Spreitzer (2008).

Employee engagement is a work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. During work, vigor means mental strength. Dedication means intense attention, passion, and collaboration when working on a difficult task. Absorption means completely absorbing one's task and forgetting everything else (Schaufeli et al., 2002). It is a person's attachment to or identification with a company (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). Engaged workers, enthusiastic about their jobs and relationships with colleagues, tend to go above and beyond their job responsibilities (Kilonzo et al., 2018). In other words, people who enjoy their work are eager to provide 'something extra' to the organization, not because it is expected of them but because it brings them joy (Burić & Moe, 2020). Furthermore, if employee empowerment and engagement perceptions inside a given firm increase, employees are more eager to execute tasks that contribute to the organization's overall success (Cavus & Gokcen, 2015).

According to the Kahn employee engagement model (1990), workers are engaged on a tangible, irrational, and psychological level, impacted by meaningfulness, safety, and accessibility. These three factors have an impact on employee performance. Employees will be engaged in a work environment that provides meaning, safety, and accessibility, according to Kahn. According to him, meaningfulness is a positive sense of return on task, safety is the ability to remain fearless and have a negative impact on one's self-image and life, and accessibility is the ability to process environmental and cognitive sources.

Additionally, Sudibjo and Sutarji (2020) found that employee engagement is influenced by job performance and institutional achievement. Shantz et al. (2013) explored the relationship between engagement, task performance, citizenship, and deviant behaviors, demonstrating that engaged individuals exhibit good performance at work. Shuck and Reio (2013) examined the association between employee engagement and well-being, concluding that high engagement is linked to psychological well-being and personal achievement.

Similarly, Shuck and Reio (2013) worked on employee engagement and well-being. They aimed to explore the degree to which cognitive workplace climate was associated with personal achievement, strangeness, irrational burnout, and cognitive well-being and whether employee engagement balanced these relations. They concluded that employees with high levels of engagement reported high psychological well-being and personal achievement, and those with low engagement reported high irrational burnout and strangeness. While reviewing the previous literature, the relationship between study variables has been explained in international and indigenous research.

Several studies, including Aslam (2017), Yao et al. (2020) and Kosar and Naqvi (2016), reinforced the positive associations between psychological empowerment, satisfaction, productivity, knowledge-sharing behavior, and employee engagement. These findings collectively illustrate the interconnectedness of intrinsic motivation and its impact on several aspects of workplace engagement and outcomes, as examined across diverse cultural and organizational settings.

The Rationale of the Study

The existing literature (Ahmed & Malik, 2019; Kõiv et al., 2019; Hamid et al., 2013) has primarily focused on investigating psychological empowerment exclusively among public school teachers. However, a noticeable research gap exists in exploring this topic in public and private school teachers. Consequently, the aim of this research paper is to investigate the concept of psychological empowerment and its correlation with employee engagement, encircling teachers from public and private educational institutions. Existing research has established a strong association between psychological empowerment and higher levels of employee engagement (Kosar & Naqvi, 2016). Psychological empowerment has also been significantly linked to teachers' job performance and commitment to their work (Ahmed & Malik., 2019). It is worth noting that the teaching profession is often considered highly demanding and stressful (Agai–Demjaha et al., 2015). Given the context and the literature mentioned above, this study investigates the role of psychological empowerment in improving employee engagement among school teachers.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to determine the relationship between psychological empowerment and employee engagement in public and private school teachers, to find psychological empowerment as a predictor of employees engagement in public and private school teachers and to find out the gender and institutional differences in psychological empowerment and employees engagement of public and private school teachers. The additional objective was to determine the relationship between job experience, psychological empowerment, and employee engagement in public and private school teachers.

Hypotheses

- There would be a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and employee engagement in public and private school teachers.
- Psychological empowerment would be a positive predictor of employee engagement in public and private school teachers.

- There would be significant institutional differences between psychological empowerment and employee engagement in public and private school teachers.
- There would be significant gender differences in psychological empowerment and employee engagement in public and private school teachers.
- There would be a positive relationship between job experience, psychological empowerment, and employee engagement in public and private school teachers.

Method

Research Design

The present study used a correlational research design to find the relationship between psychological empowerment and employee engagement in public and private school teachers. The study employed a demographic form, psychological empowerment form and, work and well-being survey.

Sample

The present study used a purposive sampling strategy involving visits to various public and private schools in Lahore, Pakistan. The participants were directly approached in person. The sample consisted of $N = 100$ school teachers, 50 men ($n = 25$ from public school and $n = 25$ from private school), and 50 women ($n = 25$ from public school, $n = 25$ from private school). Only secondary school teachers aged 20-45 with at least three years of job experience were included, whereas teachers from universities/colleges with any mental or physical disability were excluded.

Operational Definition

Psychological Empowerment. It is related to intrinsic motivation which include four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact, that expose the cognitive orientation of a person about his/her job role (Spreitzer, 1995).

Employee Engagement. Engagement is an absolute perspective that brings vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). (i). Vigor is defined as mental strength during work; (ii). Dedication is defined as strong concentration, enthusiasm and collaboration in a job while experiencing challenges. (iii). Absorption refers to being fully engaged in work, and forgetting about everything else.

Assessment Measures

Demographic Form. A self-developed demographic questionnaire was used in which gender, age, institute, and job experience were asked.

Psychological Empowerment Scale (Spreitzer, 1995). This was employed for assessing psychological empowerment. It consists of 12 items categorized into four subscales: meaningfulness, self-determination, competence, and impact. Responses are recorded on a seven-point scale, ranging from 1=(Very Strongly Disagree) to 7=(Very Strongly Agree). According to the author, we can take the sub dimensions individually (the mean of the three questions measuring one dimension), or the mean of the four sub dimension means to construct an overall empowerment score. The overall internal consistency reliability for this scale was $\alpha=.80$.

Work and Well-being Survey (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2002). UWES was used to assess the teacher's employee engagement. The scale consisted of 3 subscales: (i)Vigor, (ii) dedication, and (iii) absorption. Items were graded on a seven-point scale, with 0 indicating "never" and six indicating "always" (every day). The UWES-17 has internal consistencies (Cronbach's alpha) ranging from 0.75 to 0.83 for vigor, 0.86 to 0.90 for devotion, and 0.82 to 0.88 for absorption.

Ethical Considerations

First, permission was obtained from the authors of the questionnaires. After completing the research protocol, permission was obtained from the school administration for data collection. Before conducting research, the nature of the study was explained to the school authorities and participants. The participants provided informed consent after being guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality of the submitted information.

Procedure

An authority letter was obtained from the department; permission was taken from authorities of public and private schools. Data were collected from private schools first. The sample consisted of teachers with minimum three years of job experience. The researcher informed the participants that all information acquired from them would be kept entirely confidential. The research's goal was explained to them. After receiving their assent, participants were given a set of questionnaires, including demographic information, the psychological empowerment scale, the UWES. All instructions were given individually. The researcher was on hand to answer the participants' questions concerning the questionnaires. Each participant took an average of 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The same procedure was repeated with participants in public schools. After this procedure, the data were analyzed by performing descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation, independent sample t-test, and simple linear regression.

Results

A series of statistical analyses were performed to examine the hypotheses. The psychometric properties of the research variables, including mean, standard deviation, range, and alpha ($N=100$), were examined using descriptive statistics analysis. The relationship between psychological empowerment and employee engagement among public and private school teachers was studied using Pearson product-moment correlation. The independent sample t-test assessed mean differences between male and female and public and private school teachers. Simple linear regression analysis was used to assess the predictors of employee engagement.

Table 1
Psychometric Properties of PES and UWES

Variable	<i>M</i>	SD	Range	<i>A</i>
PE	5.89	0.53	4.50-6.83	.74
Meaningfulness	18.48	1.97	3.67-7	.49
Competence	17.01	2.40	2.33-7	.52
Self-determination	17.39	2.22	3.67-7	.48
Impact	17.86	2.22	4-7	.54
EE	4.89	0.57	2.65-6	.77
Vigor	4.72	0.69	2.67-6	.52
Dedication	5.14	0.66	2.60-6	.55
Absorption	4.84	0.75	1.67-6	.63

Note. $N=100$. α = Cronbach alpha; PES = psychological empowerment scale; UWES = work and well-being survey; PE = psychological empowerment; EE = employees' engagement.

Pearson product-moment correlation was used to see the relationship between psychological empowerment and employee engagement. Correlation appears in Table 2. It has been showed that psychological empowerment has a positive relationship with employee engagement except for meaningfulness (subscale of psychological empowerment). Thus, a hypothesis I was accepted that there would be a relationship between psychological empowerment and employee engagement. Additionally, the relationship of job experience was also checked. The results showed that job experience has no positive relationship with psychological empowerment and employee engagement.

Table 2*Correlation between Psychological Empowerment and Employees Engagement*

Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Job experience	100	7.31	4.69	-	-.10	-.19	-.01	-.01	-.08	-.04	-.05	-.05	-.00
2. PE	100	70.74	6.37		-	.74**	.76**	.63**	.74**	.47**	.42**	.41**	.32**
3. Meaningfulness	100	18.48	1.97			-	.40**	.41**	.38**	.32**	.31**	.38**	.11
4. Competence	100	17.01	2.40				-	.22*	.53**	.32**	.29**	.22*	.26**
5. Self-determination	100	17.39	2.22					-	.21*	.33**	.30**	.28**	.21*
6. Impact	100	17.86	2.22						-	.40**	.30**	.33**	.33**
7. EE	100	83.18	9.70							-	.83**	.73**	.82**
8. Vigor	100	4.728	0.69								-	.48**	.52**
9. Dedication	100	5.148	0.66									-	.40**
10. Absorption	100	4.845	0.75										-

Note. *N* = 100. PE = psychological empowerment; EE = employees engagement; ***p* < .01, **p* < .05.

Moreover, simple linear regression analysis was used to measure the predictor variable. The results of the regression analysis (Table 3) indicated that the overall model was significant $F(1,98) = 29.14$, $p < .05$, and the predictor explained 22% of the variance in the outcome variable ($R = .47$, $R^2 = .22$). Psychological empowerment significantly predicted employee engagement ($\beta = .72$, $p < .01$).

Table 3*Regression Analysis of Psychological Empowerment and Employees Engagement*

Variable	β	SE	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Constant	31.6	9.5			
PE	.72	.13	5.39	.000	.46, .99

Note. *N* = 100. CI = confidence interval; PE = psychological empowerment; **p* < .01.

In addition, an independent sample t-test was used to measure the mean difference between public and private school teachers. Results (Table 4) showed that there was no significant difference in psychological empowerment and employee engagement except impact (subscale of psychological empowerment) between public and private school teachers. Teachers from private schools scored higher on impact subscales ($M = 18.38$, $SD = 2.06$) than those from public schools ($M = 17.34$, $SD = 2.27$).

Table 4
Independent Sample T-test for Institutional Mean Differences (Public & Private) in Psychological Empowerment and Employees Engagement

Variables	Public School		Private School		t(98)	P	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
PE	5.82	0.54	5.96	0.50	-1.35	.17	.26
Meaningfulness	18.22	2.25	18.74	1.62	-1.32	.18	.26
Competence	16.92	2.16	17.10	2.64	-.37	.71	.07
Self-determination	17.40	2.23	17.38	2.23	.04	.96	.01
Impact	17.34	2.27	18.38	2.06	-2.39	.01	.47
EE	4.81	0.59	4.97	0.53	-1.45	.15	.28
Vigor	4.61	0.68	4.84	0.68	-1.72	.08	.33
Dedication	5.06	0.69	5.23	0.63	-1.31	.19	.24
Absorption	4.80	0.75	4.88	0.76	-.55	.58	.10

Note. PE= psychological empowerment; EE = employees engagement; M= Mean; SD= standard deviation; CI= confidence interval; P= significant level; P<.05.

Moreover, an Independent sample t-test was used to measure gender differences. Results (Table 5) showed that there was no significant difference in psychological empowerment and employee engagement except meaningfulness (subscale of psychological empowerment) between men and women.

Table 5
Independent Sample T-test for Mean Differences in Gender on Psychological Empowerment and Employees Engagement

Variables	Men		Women		t(98)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
PE	5.86	0.58	5.92	.47	-.53	.59	.11
Meaningfulness	18.10	2.13	18.86	1.73	-1.95	.05	.39
Competence	17.04	2.63	16.98	2.18	.12	.90	.02
Self-determination	17.38	2.39	17.40	2.06	-.04	.96	.008
Impact	17.88	2.46	17.84	1.98	.08	.92	.01
EE	4.92	0.58	4.86	.56	.47	.63	.10
Vigor	4.75	0.74	4.70	.64	.31	.75	.07
Dedication	5.14	0.62	5.15	.71	-.05	.95	.01
Absorption	4.90	0.70	4.78	.80	.77	.44	.15

Note. N = 100. PE= psychological empowerment; EE = employee engagement; M= Mean; SD= standard deviation; CI= confidence interval; P= significant level; P < .05.

Discussion

This research investigated the correlation between psychological empowerment and employee engagement among teachers in both public and private schools. The findings indicate a positive association between psychological empowerment and employee engagement. The results of the first hypothesis were consistent with the findings of Kosar and Naqvi (2016) and Aslam (2017). They found a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and employee engagement. Psychologically empowered, determined and competent workers will be satisfied and engaged in their work. In this way, an individual's cooperation with his colleagues will increase, and he will devote more time to his job and institute. Empowered employees have mental resilience, strong involvement and enthusiasm for their work (Kosar & Naqvi, 2016). Creative and productive employees are granted the primary role of achieving institutional objectives. Therefore, employees should be psychologically empowered to increase institutional performance and betterment (Aslam, 2017).

Moreover, psychological empowerment is a significant predictor of employee engagement in public and private school teachers. The results of the second hypothesis were in line with the findings of Ahmed and Malik (2019) and Nawrin (2016). Their research reported that psychological empowerment is a positive predictor of employee engagement. Psychologically empowered and engaged employees experience trustworthy and confident feelings toward their jobs. This is why satisfied workers are more creative and complete their work smartly and effectively (Ahmed & Malik, 2019).

No significant institutional differences exist between psychological empowerment and employee engagement, except for the impact subscale between public and private school teachers. The results of the third hypothesis are inconsistent with the findings of Wang and Zhang (2012). There was no institutional difference in the level of psychological empowerment and employee engagement except for impact (subscale of psychological empowerment). This phenomenon may be attributed to the fact that both public and private schools in Pakistan exert rigorous efforts to recruit the most highly qualified teachers for teaching roles (Abbasi et al., 2021). The results showed that teachers from private schools had greater scores on impact subscales as compared to teachers from public schools. These findings align with the research conducted by Sultana and Kazimi (2021), which indicated that private school teachers often experience a stronger sense of progression in their teaching when compared with public school teachers. This difference in perception may stem from the observation that public school teachers are sometimes perceived as overly rigid and lacking in rich vocabulary, which limits their ability to encourage students to expand their linguistic abilities. While public school teachers occasionally incorporate positive language, they do not consistently use it

to foster student creativity. In contrast, teachers in private schools have been shown to employ vivid imagery effectively in their teaching, allowing them greater control and impact (Sultana & Kazimi, 2021).

Further, the results revealed no significant gender differences in psychological empowerment and employee engagement except for meaningfulness (subscale of psychological empowerment). The results of the fourth hypothesis are inconsistent with the findings of Wang and Zhang (2012). They found significant gender differences between psychological empowerment and employee engagement. Different reasons may be behind these inconsistent results. Cultural variation might be a significant reason, as the supported literature is taken from Western culture. Moreover, in Pakistan, men and women work equally and have the same passion for their careers, which might be the reason for consistent findings.

Additionally, the results show that job experience has no positive relationship with psychological empowerment and employee engagement. The results of the present study were inconsistent with Kosar and Naqvi's (2016) and Durrah et al.'s (2014) findings, who identified a significant relationship between job experience, psychological empowerment, and employee engagement. Their studies revealed a noteworthy difference, suggesting that psychological empowerment increases with an escalation in years of job experience.

Conclusion

It is concluded that employees' authority and engagement in work are increased by psychological empowerment. Psychologically empowered individuals have the ability and power to accomplish their tasks correctly and are more likely to engage in their work. When workers show interest, power, achievement, concentration, engrossment, and confidence in their work, they are called engaged employee. Employee engagement is an enthusiastic attachment to the place of work, job role, position within the company, colleagues, and members. The engaged employees are satisfied with their job and perform their work effectively.

Recommendation

1. Future research should be undertaken with a large sample size to increase the generalizability of the studies.
2. To explore this field more, future studies should adopt probability sampling, which ensures that all population members have an equal chance of being chosen.
3. Experimental research designs should be used in future studies to measure the cause and effect relationships between variables.

4. The data were collected only from public and private school teachers. In the future, researchers should include university/college teachers to increase generalizability.

Future Implication

1. This study will help educate the school management department to create a climate of belief and engage their teaching staff psychologically because engaged teaching staff help the school grow and flourish.

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