

DOI: 10.2478/orga-2018-0009

The Influence of Teachers' Perceptions of School Leaders' Empowering Behaviours on the Dimensions of Psychological Empowerment

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Background and Purpose: School leader has an effect on teachers in divergent ways. If school leader wants their teachers to be successful and satisfied, he or she must have the potential to prompt work conditions that build up teachers' psychological empowerment. Main aim of our research was to empirically test the relations between teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours and all dimensions of psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination and impact).

Design/Methodology/Approach: We tested four hypotheses in one structural model by using structural equation modelling (SEM). The quantitative data was collected through an online survey on a sample of 525 primary school teachers in Slovenia by using two already validated questionnaires, The School Leader Empowering Behaviours (SLEB) and Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire (PEQ).

Results: Findings show that teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours are positively and statistically significantly related to all dimensions of psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination and impact).

Conclusion: Knowledge of psychological empowerment can be beneficial for school leaders, because with this comprehension they can strengthen apprehension and potential in exercising empowering behaviours towards their teachers to maximize their psychological empowerment.

Keywords: HRM; leadership; psychological empowerment; SEM

1 Introduction

Empowering school leaders are regularly capable of fostering encouraging conditions, that increase teachers' psychological empowerment, intrinsic work motivation, work commitment and effect on greater work results (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades & Drasgow, 2000; Konczak, Stelly

& Trusty, 2000). Teachers, who are feeling empowered also believe, that they are important and influential in the organization and they feel greater sense of commitment (Kark, Shamir & Chen, 2003). Owing to the fact, that psychological empowerment has a big influence on teachers' professional development and psychological well-being, school leaders should pay more attention on strengthening

apprehension and potential in exercising empowering behaviours towards their teachers to maximize their psychological empowerment (Lee & Nie, 2014). In our research, we have focused on how school leaders' empowering behaviours relate to all four dimension of psychological empowerment, being impact, self-determination, competence, and meaning (Spreitzer, 1995b).

2 Literature Review

This paragraph will provide the review of the scientific literature and previous research related to the teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours and psychological empowerment.

2.1 Teachers' perception of school leaders' empowering behaviours

School leaders' behaviour is a crucial component in creating an effective work environment that influences teachers' behaviour (Bass, 1985). Past research has shown the most effective school leadership styles to be such as: transformational leadership, instructional leadership, authentic leadership, servant leadership and distributed leadership (Dimmock, 2011; Ng & Ho, 2012; Owusu-Bempah, Addison & Fairweather, 2014; Shatzer, Caldarella, Hallam & Brown, 2014); but none of those make clear, which are the crucial segments of leaders' behaviour, that empower workers.

In the past decade, the interest in researching the relation between school leaders' empowering behaviours and teachers' psychological empowerment is becoming greater. Researchers are interested in how can school leaders empower teachers with their own behaviour (Lee & Nie, 2013; Vecchio, Justin & Pearce, 2010; Wan, 2005). But it is not only school leaders' empowering behaviour, that influences teachers' psychological empowerment, teachers' perceptions and interpretations of school leaders' empowering behaviour is crucial as well (Lee & Nie, 2014).

Studies and measures of school leaders' empowering behaviours are relatively new. Arnold, Arad, Rhoades & Drasgow (2000) developed a scale for evaluating the communal perception of school leaders' organizational empowering behaviours and on the other hand, Konczak, Stelly & Trusty (2000) developed a scale for evaluating individual perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviour. These authors found, that empowering school leaders are regularly capable of fostering encouraging conditions, that increase teachers' psychological empowerment, intrinsic work motivation, work commitment and have an effect on greater work results. Teachers, who are feeling empowered also believe, that they are important and influential in the organization, and they feel a greater sense of commitment (Kark, Shamir & Chen, 2003).

Lee and Nie (2013) developed The School Leader Empowering Behaviours (SLEB) to measure teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours. SLEB is composed of seven dimensions: delegation of authority, providing intellectual stimulation, giving acknowledgement and recognition, articulating a vision, fostering collaborative relationships, providing individualized concern and support and providing role-modelling. Therefore, it is essential for school leaders to enhance awareness and capacity in exercising empowering behaviours towards their teachers to maximize their work potential (Lee & Nie, 2013). School leaders should give bigger emphasis on high-ranking work tasks, have every confidence in teachers' capabilities and give anticipation of affirmation in their work environment. Only by giving tasks, that are important for teachers, together with giving authority and trust, will the teachers feel more psychologically empowered (Spreitzer, Kizilos & Nason, 1997).

2.2 Psychological empowerment

School effectiveness and also indirectly students' outcomes are influenced by the teacher's motivation and commitment to the organization (Hamid, Nordina, Adnanb & Sirunc, 2013). Therefore, the knowledge of psychological empowerment, as one of the important motivational factors (Edalatian Shahriari, Maleki, Koolivand & Meyvand, 2013), is important for school leaders.

Psychological empowerment is an emotional state, which makes individuals confident, that they will achieve goals successfully (Zhang, Ye & Li, 2018). First definitions have defined empowerment unidimensional as self-efficacy or with other words as a process that strengthens individuals' feelings of their own effectiveness among other members of an organization (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Psychological empowerment is in recent literature defined as a multidimensional concept, which has four dimension: self-determination, meaning, competence and impact (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995b). These four dimensions reflect a proactive orientation to one's work role (Spreitzer, Kizilos & Nason, 1997).

Meaning or the meaning of work is the mechanism through which individuals get energized about work (Spreitzer, Kizilos & Nason, 1997). For meaning it is important, that work responsibilities are in accordance with the beliefs, attitudes and values of an individual (Spreitzer, 1995b). Individuals, who perceive their work as important, have a greater sense of commitment to the organization (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) and will make more effort to solve problems (Gilson & Shalley, 2004).

Competence is an individual's perception of the ability to successfully perform and accomplish work tasks (Spreitzer, 1995a; Quiñones, Van den Broeck & De Witte, 2013). Without a sense of confidence in the workplace, individuals will feel inadequate, and will therefore not feel

empowered (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). An individual feels competent when he is self-confident about his ability to perform well or successfully complete all of his work tasks (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997) and is able to cope with different work situations (Spreitzer, 2008).

Self-determination represents the individual's autonomy in performing work and work tasks, and the ability to choose their own behaviour in different situations, without feeling that he is under constant control (Spreitzer, 1995b). Those individuals who have a high sense of self-determination, will show a more constructive response to stressful situations (Goodale, Koerner & Roney, 1997), will be more flexible, creative, initiative, persistent and will have more self-control (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Impact represents the level of individuals' feeling of making a difference in their organization (Spreitzer, Kizilos & Nason, 1997) and the influence they have over the outcomes in the organization (Spreitzer, 1995b). Impact also refers to the ability of an individual to attract others to listen to his ideas (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). With other words, impact is the control over an individuals' work environment (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Similar as the previous explanation of psychological empowerment, Edalatian Shahriari, Maleki, Koolivand and Meyvand (2013) expose the main dimensions of psychological empowerment to be: self-efficiency, self-determination, acceptance of personal consequence, meaningfulness and trusting others. Self-efficiency means that the person believes that he/she has the necessary skills, competence and abilities to successfully perform a task. Self-determination refers to the individual's experience of having a choice in personal performing and independently organizing their activities. Acceptance of personal consequences means, that individuals try to maintain their dominance and control on what they see instead of having a reactive behaviour against their environment. Meaningfulness refers to the value of job goals and objections, which are judged in relation to personal standards, and the last dimension, trusting others, refers to the interest, competence, openness and confidence in others.

2.3 Relations between teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviors and dimensions of psychological empowerment

Research in the area of the relations between teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours and the dimensions of psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination, impact) is relatively new. Studies have shown, that there is a positive relation between teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours and psychological empowerment (Lee &

Nie, 2013). Based on written above, we formulated four hypotheses to determine relations between teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours and dimensions of psychological empowerment. Proposed hypotheses were tested in the proposed model (Figure 1). The hypotheses are:

- H1: Teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours are positively related to meaning.
- H2: Teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours are positively related to competence.
- H3: Teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours are positively related to self-determination.
- H4: Teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours are positively related to impact.

3 Research methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants in the research were primary teachers from Slovenia. The full set of questionnaires was completed by a total of 525 teachers, of whom 40 (7.6%) were men and 485 (92.4%) were women. The average age of respondents was 44.7 years. In average teachers have 19.9 years of work experience. According to the marital status, 336 (64.0%) were married, 109 (20.8%) were in relationship, 44 (8.4%) were single, 26 (5.0%) were divorced and 10 (1.9%) were widowed.

3.2 Instruments

The School Leader Empowering Behaviours (SLEB) was used for measuring teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours developed by Lee and Nie (2013). The 21-item scale is composed of 7 dimensions: delegation of authority, providing intellectual stimulation, giving acknowledgement and recognition, articulating a vision, fostering collaborative relationships, providing individualized concern and support and providing role-modelling. The response scale was a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). The coefficient of reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.93, respectively.

Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire (PEQ) was used for measuring dimensions of psychological empowerment developed by Spreitzer (1995b). The 12-item scale is composed of 4 dimensions: competence, self-determination, meaning and impact. The response scale was a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). Evidence of the internal consistency of the psychological empowerment has been

reported in numerous studies (Faulkner & Laschinger, 2008; Seibert, Silver & Randolph, 2004; Spreitzer, 1995b). The coefficient of reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.93, respectively.

3.3 Data collection

For the purpose of this research, we conducted an online survey in May 2017, which was sent to all primary schools in Slovenia. Email addresses were selected from official internet site of *Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Slovenia*. The survey was translated and presented to the participants in Slovenian language. Before completing the surveys, teachers were assured that all answers provided would be kept anonymous. The survey consisted from measure of teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours, psychological empowerment, career satisfaction and demographics. After conducting online research, primary data was controlled and edited. For processing and analysing data, we used IBM SPSS Statistics 24.

4 Results

The descriptive statistics for the items of the teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours are presented in Table 1.

The descriptive statistics for the items of psychological empowerment are presented in Table 2.

In continuation, we present a method to test the model by applying structural equation modelling (SEM), which is used for testing structural relations between constructs. That operation was made by building a model in Lisrel 8.80 software package, which is an analytical statistics program, which allows the testing of multiple structural relations at once (Prajogo & McDermott, 2005). It combines factor and regression analysis by which it tests the proposed model by which we can assess the significance of hypothesized cause-and-effect relations among the variables (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000). The standardized solutions and t-values for the hypotheses tested in the

Table 1: Means and standard deviations for the items of school leaders' empowering behaviours

Item	N	M	SD
Gives me the authority to make changes necessary to improve things.	525	3,79	0,95
Gives me the authority I need to make decisions that improve work processes and procedures.	525	3,7	1,03
Delegates authority to me that is equal to the level of responsibility that I am assigned.	525	4,1	0,83
Asks questions that prompt me to think.	525	3,82	0,96
Stimulates me to rethink the way I do things.	525	3,62	1,02
Challenges me to re-examine some of the basic assumptions about my work.	525	3,43	1,05
Always gives me positive feedback when I perform well.	525	3,8	1,14
Gives me special recognition when my work is very good.	525	3,92	1,12
Personally compliments me when I do outstanding work.	525	3,98	1,11
Paints an interesting picture of the future for our school.	525	3,68	1,04
Is always seeking new opportunities for the school.	525	3,98	1,00
Inspires staff with their plans for the future.	525	3,49	1,06
Fosters collaboration among staff members.	525	3,88	1,05
Encourages staff members to be team players.	525	3,97	0,97
Gets staff members to work together for the same goal.	525	3,82	1,01
Treats me as an equal.	525	3,81	1,12
Takes the time to discuss my concerns patiently.	525	3,87	1,08
Stays in touch with me.	525	3,94	0,96
Works as hard as anyone in my school.	525	4,01	1,00
Sets a good example by the way they behave.	525	3,82	1,07
Leads by example.	525	3,81	1,07

Table 2: Means and standard deviations for the items of psychological empowerment

Item	n	M	SD
I am confident about my ability to do my job.	525	4,41	0,66
The work that I do is important to me.	525	4,61	0,61
I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job.	525	4,33	0,75
My impact on what happens in my department is large.	525	4,31	0,74
My job activities are personally meaningful to me.	525	4,3	0,73
I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department.	525	4,15	0,76
I can decide on my own how to go about doing my own work.	525	4,25	0,75
I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job.	525	4,28	0,78
I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.	525	4,36	0,66
The work I do is meaningful to me.	525	4,33	0,75
I have significant influence over what happens in my department.	525	4,12	0,78
I am self - assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities.	525	4,35	0,67

model are presented in Figure 1.

Standardised solution weights between the teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours and dimensions of psychological empowerment are presented in the model in Figure 1. We can therefore with the use of structural equation modelling confirm positive relations between the researched constructs in our hypotheses:

- H1: Teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours are positively related to meaning. (Standardized solution = 0.41, t-test = 8.44)
- H2: Teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours are positively related to competence. (Standardized solution = 0.29, t-test = 5.88)
- H3: Teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours are positively related to self-determination. (Standardized solution = 0.58, t-test = 11.91)
- H4: Teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours are positively related to impact. (Standardized solution = 0.43, t-test = 9.29)

Based on the standardized solutions we found that the relations are positive.

Table 3 presents model fit indices, reference values and model fit according to individual indices (Hooper, Coughlan & Mullen, 2008; Kenny, 2014) for our researched model.

Whereas most of the model fit indices show a very good model fit, there are five indices which show a bad fit, which is a result of a smaller than recommended sample (Moss, 2009; Kenny, 2014). χ^2 is troublesome in cases where the sample is too large or too small (Hooper, Coughlan & Mullen, 2008; Iacobucci, 2010) and almost always when used in such cases shows a bad model fit (Jöreskog

& Sörbom, 1993); since there is no unilateral agreement on the marginal value that provides a good or bad model fit (Hooper, Coughlan & Mullen, 2008). The same problem arises when it comes to all indices which are derived from it (χ^2/df , RMSEA and SRMR), since they are sensitive to sample size in can consequently lead to an unjustified rejection of the model (Bearden, Sharma & Teel, 1982; Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Sharma, Mukherjee, Kumar & Dillon, 2005). Model fit indices therefore confirm a good model fit and strong, positive and statistically significant relations.

5 Discussion

Research in the area of school leaders' behaviour is relatively new, studies have shown how teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours are linked with higher levels of psychological empowerment (Lee & Nie, 2013) and based on our research, we can add to these studies the effect on psychological empowerment.

With the proposed hypotheses, which were based upon a previous research and an in-depth study of relevant literature, we have tested the relations between teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours and the four dimensions of psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination and impact). Teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours play an important role in adding to all four dimensions of psychological empowerment, as we have found by testing our hypotheses.

Limitations of this study need to be considered before interpretations of the results can be explored. The whole research was focused mostly on how teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours relate to the

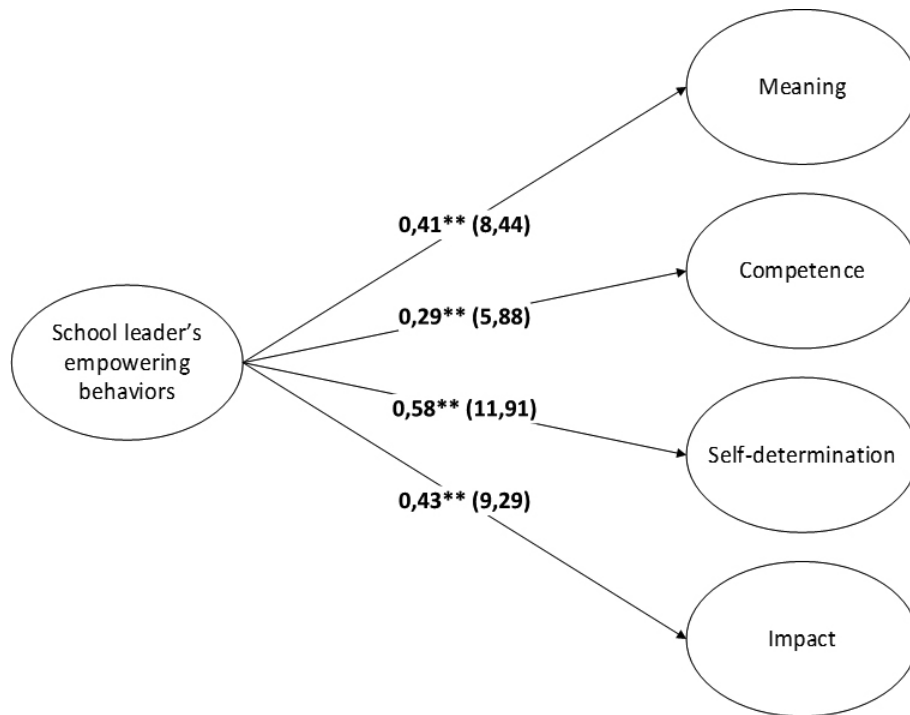


Figure 1: Conceptual model with the standardized solutions (and t-test) for the hypotheses. Source: Own research.

Table 3: Model fit indices

Notes: χ^2/df = chi square divided by degrees of freedom, RMSEA= Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, NFI= Normed Fit Index, NNFI= Non-Normed Fit Index, CFI= Comparative Fit Index, IFI= Incremental Fit Index, SRMR= Standardized Root Mean Square Residual.

Bookmarks:

*Hu & Bentler, 1999; Hooper, Coughlan & Mullen, 2008; Kenny, 2014.

**Problems with sample size (Sharma, Mukherjee, Kumar & Dillon, 2005; Moss, 2009; Iacobucci, 2010).

*** Williams & O'Boyle, 2011.

Fit indices	Value for the model	Reference value*	Model fit according to individual indices *
χ^2/df	10.33	≤ 2 or ≤ 5	Bad fit**
RMSEA	0.13	< 0.08	Bad fit***
NFI	0.92	≥ 0.90	Very good fit
NNFI	0.92	≥ 0.95	Bad fit
CFI	0.93	≥ 0.93	Very good fit***
IFI	0.93	≥ 0.95	Bad fit
SRMR	0.13	< 0.08	Bad fit**

four dimensions of psychological empowerment, whereas other determinants were not considered. As mentioned, teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours are not the only determinant of psychological empowerment, therefore we can only propose that teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours in part affects the dimensions of teachers' psychological empowerment, whereas there are also other factors involved in the process.

The theoretical contribution of this study is to the existing research of teachers' perceptions of school leaders' empowering behaviours and psychological empowerment in the aspect of advancing previous research by empirically examining the relations between both of them. The practical contribution is in the presented results that school leaders influence teachers with their behaviour.

For further research, we suggest investigating the effects of the determinants omitted or to put in other words not included in our study. These determinants could be divided into those influencing teachers besides their school leaders' behaviour, such as situational and other attributive determinants.

6 Conclusion

Understanding the importance of school leaders' empowering behaviour and psychological empowerment is of great importance for school leaders, because with this comprehension they can strengthen apprehension and potential in exercising empowering behaviours towards their teachers to maximize their psychological empowerment (Lee & Nie, 2013). Furthermore, school leaders should give bigger emphasis on high-ranking work tasks, have every confidence in teachers' capabilities and give anticipation of affirmation in work environment. Only with giving tasks that are important for teacher together with giving authority and trust, teacher will feel more psychologically empowered (Spreitzer, Kizilos & Nason, 1997).

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Vpliv učiteljeve zaznave ravnateljevih vedenj, ki opolnomočijo na dimenzije psihološkega opolnomočenja: primer slovenskega vzorca

Ozadje in namen: Ravnatelj na različne načine vpliva na učitelje. Ravnatelj, ki si želi uspešnih in zadovoljnih učiteljev, je sposoben ustvariti delovne pogoje, ki vplivajo na povečanje psihološkega opolnomočenja učiteljev. Glavni cilj naše raziskave je bil empirično preveriti razmerje med učiteljevimi zaznavami ravnateljevih vedenj, ki opolnomočijo in dimenzijami psihološkega opolnomočenja učiteljev (pomen, kompetentnost, samodoločenost in vpliv).

Oblikovanje/ Metodologija/ Pristop: S pomočjo strukturnega modeliranja (SEM) smo testirali štiri hipoteze v enem strukturnem modelu. Podatke za raziskavo smo zbrali s pomočjo spletne ankete, ki je bila izvedena med 525 slovenskimi učitelji, zaposlenimi v osnovnih šolah. Za merjenje učiteljevih zaznav ravnateljevih vedenj, ki opolnomočijo smo uporabili vprašalnik SLEB avtorjev Lee in Nie, za merjenje dimenzij psihološkega opolnomočenja pa Spreitzerin PEQ.

Rezultati: Rezultati raziskave kažejo, da učiteljeva zaznava ravnateljevih vedenj, ki opolnomočijo, pozitivno in statistično značilno vpliva na vse dimenzije psihološkega opolnomočenja učiteljev (pomen, kompetentnost, samodoločenost in vpliv).

Sklep: Poznavanje psihološkega opolnomočenja je za ravnatelje izjemnega pomena, predvsem pa je ključno, da ravnatelji ozaveštujejo svoje veščine vodenje in s povečanjem vedenj, ki opolnomočijo učitelje, ustvarijo delovno okolje, ki bo učitelje še bolj opolnomočilo. Raziskave na področju ravnateljevega vodenja so dokaj nove, zato je opravljena raziskava prispevala nova spoznanja na področju vodenja v vzgoji in izobraževanju ter področju psihologije dela.

Ključne besede: HRM; vodenje; psihološko opolnomočenje; SEM