Workplace Empowerment, Psychological Empowerment, and Work-related Wellbeing in Southeast Asian Employees: A Cross-sectional Survey

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Abstract

There is a growing body of research examining the nature and correlates of s*alutogenic* factors in the workplace and employee wellbeing, and the role of empowerment therewithin. A paucity of research has distinguished between structural and psychological forms of empowerment in the workplace and examined how they independently and collectively relate to employee wellbeing. Much of the existing research has examined such considerations in western samples, with limited exploration of eastern working populations. The aim of this study is to investigate the association between structural empowerment (SE) and employee self-reported work-related wellbeing (operationalised as psychological wellbeing and job satisfaction), and the postulated mediating role of psychological empowerment (PE). With a sample of 324 southeast Asian employees from a single organisation, this study used a cross-sectional case study design using self-report measures to examine the relationships between SE, PE, and employee job satisfaction and psychological wellbeing. PE was postulated to mediate the relationship between SE and work-related wellbeing outcomes of job satisfaction and psychological wellbeing. Mediation analyses revealed that SE was positively associated with PE which, in turn, completely mediated the positive relationships between SE, and job satisfaction and psychological wellbeing. The results of this study contribute empirically and practically in the following ways: 1) it expands upon previous research on employee empowerment, 2) contributes to the developing field of positive occupational health psychology, 3) highlights the crucial role of organisations in creating sources of structural and psychological empowerment.

Lay summary

In this study we explore two forms of empowerment at work and investigate their relationship with employee wellbeing. *Workplace empowerment* (WE) comes from organisational structures, policies, and practices that ensure power and resources are shared across employees, and, in turn, facilitate their accomplishment and development at work. *Psychological empowerment* (PE) derives from the meaning, competence, perceived control, and influence employees feel they have at work and on work outcomes. Limited research has investigated whether WE and PE interact with each other, and whether this, in turn, relates to employees' motivation, health and wellbeing. This is the aim of this study. We collected data from 334 employees in a large organisation in southeast Asia using an online survey. Both WE and PE were observed to be important factors in relationship to employees' satisfaction at work and psychological wellbeing. We found the relationship between WE and employees' self-reported job satisfaction and psychological wellbeing was facilitated through their PE. This study contributes to the small, but growing, body of literature examining empowerment in the workplace. Our findings highlight the importance of workplace health promotion initiatives to ensure employee empowerment is cultivated both within individuals and their work environments.

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The field of occupational health psychology has largely revolved around a pathological perspective (Kahneman, Diener & Schwartz, 2009), focusing on psychosocial hazards that are detrimental to employees' and organisations' health and functioning (e.g., workplace aggression) alongside negative outcomes (e.g., burnout and job insecurity; De Witte, Pienaar & De Cuyper, 2016). In contrast, *salutogenic* approaches have received less attention. This perspective focuses on positive factors that generate and facilitate human health and wellbeing in the workplace and, in turn, high-performing employees and organisations (Jenny et al., 2016).

Employee empowerment is one construct that has generated considerable interest in both academia and practice, due to a wider awareness of its role in facilitating positive outcomes and optimal functioning of organisations and the workforce. Various general definitions of empowerment are abundant in the literature, but a shared key component is the idea of individuals being bestowed power, or possessing the motivation, to decide how to attain their goals and accomplish work tasks (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015).This concept was introduced by Kanter (1977) into the management literature forty years ago, and employee empowerment practices have spread across both public and private sectors in the subsequent decades (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013). An estimated 70% or more of organisations implementing empowerment initiatives in their workforce (Lawler, Mohrman & Benson, 2001) including participative management techniques (e.g. quality circles and self-organising teams, Powell, 2002) that aim to increase employees' perceived power, involvement, and autonomy. This study aims to examine the relationship between workplace (structural) empowerment and employee work-related wellbeing (operationalised as psychological wellbeing and job satisfaction), and the mediating role played by psychological empowerment in this postulated association.

Two perspectives of empowerment have been described in the literature (Echebiri, Amundsen & Engen, 2019): *structural and psychological.* The structural perspective originated from the early human relations movement in management theory (e.g. Follett, 1926; Argyris, 1957), which first described employee empowerment as an interpersonal construct illustrating how individuals with authority share their power, information, resources, and rewards in an organisation (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013). Kanter (1977) expanded the concept of employee empowerment into his *structural empowerment* theory. This theory emphasises the role of organisational structures, policies, and practices that enable such sharing of power and accomplishment of work. In contrast, the *psychological perspective* describes empowerment as a motivational construct arising from intrapersonal cognitive processes, emphasising the individual's psychological state and intrinsic motivation towards their job (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1997). Arguably, each perspective is restricted by its constrained focus when considered in isolation (Spreitzer, 2008; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). In the empirical literature, studies on empowerment have tended to adopt either perspective exclusively, rather than considering them from an integrated perspective (Laschinger & Read, 2017). Consequently, this study seeks to integrate both perspectives to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of employee empowerment and, in turn, its association with wellbeing.

Structural empowerment (SE) is defined based on Kanter's (1977) perspective that postulated employees' attitudes and behaviours are more strongly influenced by organisational structures than personal predispositions. Kanter (1977, 1993) identified six sources of SE that grant employees access to empowering organisational structures to accomplish their work (Laschinger, 2012).

- Formal power – Stemming from job characteristics associated with visibility, decision-making, and centrality to organisational priorities.
- Informal power - Arising from social connections and organisational relationships.

- Opportunities – Access to education, growth, and movement.
- Information – Access to formal and informal knowledge such as technical expertise and organisational decisions.
- Support – Access to guidance and feedback.
- Resources – Ability to acquire time or resources to accomplish tasks.

Psychological empowerment (PE) is defined based on Spreitzer's (1997) operationalisation of Thomas and Velthouse's (1990) multi-dimensional framework of empowerment, which emphasises intrapersonal and motivational attributes. PE includes four components:

- *Meaning* – Congruence between one's work, beliefs, values, and behaviours (Hackman & Oldham, 1980).
- *Competence* – Work-related self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989).
- *Self-determination* – Perceived control over initiating and doing one's work (Deci & Ryan, 2008).
- *Impact* – The perception of influence one has on important work outcomes (Ashforth, 1989).

SE is an antecedent of PE through cognitive and affective mechanisms, but not vice versa (Biron & Bamberger, 2010). While SE is the perception of the availability of empowering conditions at work, PE is the interpretation and response to these empowering working conditions (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015). Therefore, conceptually when employees perceive that the organisation provides them with adequate structures, resources, and power they should feel personally empowered and motivated.

***Hypothesis* 1:** SE is positively associated with PE.

Scholars have studied various outcomes of structural and psychological empowerment extensively, such as burnout (Gilbert, Laschinger & Leiter, 2010; Mardani & Mardani, 2014), work innovation (Ertürk, 2012; Dan et al., 2018), and organisational commitment (DeCicco, Laschinger & Kerr, 2006). However, most studies have investigated the direct effects of empowerment on health and work outcomes, without considering the indirect effects of empowerment.

Laschinger and colleagues are the primary contributors to the body of research investigating an integrative model surrounding empowerment at work (e.g., Laschinger & Read, 2017). Their research demonstrates that SE is associated with positive work behaviours and attitudes in the presence of PE, thus alluding to a potential mediated relationship. Their work culminated in an Expanded Workplace Empowerment Model. Derived from Kanter's (1977) and Spreitzer's (1997) models, where PE plays an intervening role between SE and employee outcomes (e.g. organisational commitment, Laschinger, Finegan & Wilk, 2009; burnout, Laschinger et al., 2003; and job satisfaction, Laschinger et al., 2001). However, these studies were conducted in healthcare settings, and studies investigating this mediating relationship in other sectors are rare. This study aims to examine the direct and indirect effects of structural and PE in relation to self-reported work-related wellbeing (operationalised as psychological wellbeing and job satisfaction).

Job satisfaction is defined as a "pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (Locke, 1976). It is an important correlate of many positive individual and organisational outcomes (such as, physical and mental health, Faragher, Cass & Cooper, 2013) and job performance (Siengthai & Pila-Ngarm, 2016). A meta-analysis of job satisfaction found strong correlations between employee empowerment and work-related behaviours and attitudes, such as: organisational commitment (.56), organisational performance (.50), and reduced turnover intention (-.30, Cantarelli, Belardinelli & Belle, 2015). Highlighting the importance and value of exploring structural and PE as exploratory variables with significant theoretical and practical implications.

A meta-analysis observed significant associations between job satisfaction with both empowering work characteristics (i.e., SE) and PE (Seibert, Wang & Courtright, 2011). Studies have also consistently found strong relationships between job satisfaction and SE (Orgambidez-Ramos & Borrego-Ales, 2014), and job satisfaction and PE (Cicolini, Comparcini & Simonetti 2014). Specifically, Deci and Ryan's Self-determination Theory (2008) and Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics model (1980) suggest that psychologically empowering work fulfils intrinsic needs for employees (such as a sense of self-determination and meaning, growth, and autonomy). Hence, empowered employees experience more intrinsic fulfilment at work and are, therefore, more likely to report higher job satisfaction and psychological wellbeing (Spreitzer, 2008). Furthermore, some researchers have specifically demonstrated that structural empowerment is associated with PE, which consequently contributes to job satisfaction (Laschinger, Purdy & Almost, 2007).

***Hypothesis* 2:** SE has a positive association with job satisfaction.

***Hypothesis* 3:** PE has a positive association with job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4: PE mediates the relationship between SE and job satisfaction.

Psychological wellbeing is defined as individuals' "cognitive and affective evaluations of their lives" (Diener, 2000), in terms of positive moods, vitality and general interest in life over the previous two weeks (WHO, 1998). A time-specific definition was used as it provides better diagnostic information about contextual antecedents as compared to a global definition of psychological wellbeing (e.g. overall life satisfaction), which is influenced more by individual dispositions and endures over time and circumstance (Diener, 2006). Structural and psychological empowerment have been broadly linked to psychological wellbeing (Laschinger & Read, 2017). An experimental study using customer-service simulations found that SE led to psychological wellbeing (Biron & Bamberger, 2010). Additionally, Diener and Biswas-Diener's (2005) seminal work on psychological wellbeing describes global PE (e.g. global self-efficacy, life meaningfulness) as a facet of it, and notes the necessity of SE.

Furthermore, they theorise a cyclic empowerment-wellbeing relationship, where PE results in better psychological wellbeing, which then translates back into psychological capital reinforcing PE. Work is a significant aspect of life, and SE is likely to contribute to one's psychological wellbeing. However, there is little evidence on the mediating effect of PE at work on the relationship between SE and psychological wellbeing.

Hypothesis 5: SE has a positive association with psychological wellbeing.

Hypothesis 6: PE has a positive association with psychological wellbeing.

Hypothesis 7: PE mediates the relationship between SE and psychological wellbeing.

The limited available research examining structural and psychological empowerment from an integrative perspective has been primarily conducted in western cultures and working populations (Bordin, Bartram & Casmir, 2006). This has resulted in a limited understanding of such associations within a wider spectrum of cultures and workforces. Culture seemingly influences the perception and consequences of empowerment. Robert et al. (2000) demonstrated that SE in India was related to lowered job satisfaction, while Seibert, Silver and Randolph (2004) suggested that some cultures react to SE with decreased psychological wellbeing. Furthermore, understandings of empowerment maybe be culturally derived. For example, in Asia it is typically associated with individual-level factors (ideas linked with the facets of PE), but with organisational factors (i.e., SE) in the West (Cheung, Baum & Wong, 2012). Therefore, practiced and valued differently (Seibert et al., 2004), possibly due to preferences for hierarchical structures and authoritarian leadership (Robert et al., 2000). Evidently, the interactions between structural and psychological empowerment and employee outcomes are complex, and this study integrates these empowerment frameworks in a new cultural setting for a more nuanced perspective.

Method

Design

A cross-sectional case study design with self-report measures was used to explore the relationships between structural and psychological empowerment, and the outcomes of job satisfaction and psychological wellbeing in Asian employees. Due to the constraints of this publication and for brevity, analyses of the sub-facets of structural and psychological empowerment will not be reported in this study. Demographic information was collected as there is evidence for age (Neves & Ribeiro, 2016), gender (Sankar, 2018), and tenure differences (Spreitzer, 2007) in empowerment and outcomes variables. Mediation analyses were conducted, while controlling for demographic covariates.

Recruitment and Procedure

Ethics approval was granted by the Division of Psychiatry and Applied Psychology Ethics Board, School of Medicine, University of Nottingham. Participants were employees in a single multi-site organisation based in southeast Asia. A randomised sample of 6,000 email addresses was obtained from a directory of employees in the sector, and invitations sent by an organisational representative in June 2020. Potential participants were given two weeks to complete the survey. A reminder was emailed five days before the deadline. Responses were collected via an online survey platform (JISC) anonymously without identifiers, and participants were not compensation for their participation. Selection criteria included all employees in the organisation with more than six months tenure in their current work role.

Measures

Structural Empowerment was measured by the Conditions of Work Effectiveness Questionnaire-II (Laschinger et al., 2004). It comprises 19 items over six subscales: opportunity, information, support, resources, job activities (3 items each), and organisational relationships (4 items). On a 5-point Likert scale (1= “None” to 5 = “A lot”), participants rated the extent to which they had access to empowering factors at work. An example item is: ‘The amount of flexibility in my job is…’ (Job activities). Higher scores reflected higher perceived

SE. Adequate validity and reliability have been demonstrated (Laschinger et al., 2004; Patrick et al., 2011). We have used a higher order factor based on the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results. The reliability of the global factor in this current sample was .90.

Psychological Empowerment was measured by the Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire (Spreitzer, 1997). It comprises 12 items over four subscales: meaningfulness, competence, autonomy, and impact (3 items each). On a 7-point Likert scale (1 = "Very strongly disagree" to 7 = "Very strongly agree"), participants rated the extent to which they had experienced PE at work. An example item is: 'The work I do is meaningful to me' (Meaning). Higher scores reflected higher perceived PE. Adequate psychometric properties have been established in an Asian sample (Avolio et al., 2004). We used a higher order factor as CFA results showed a substantial advantage of a second order structure of this variable. The reliability of the global factor was .89.

Job Satisfaction was measured by the Job Satisfaction scale, a selection of 5 items by Judge et al., (1998) from Brayfield and Rothe's (1951) 19-item scale. On a 5-point Likert scale (1="Strongly disagree" to 5="Strongly agree"), participants rated the extent to which they were satisfied with their job. An example item is: 'I find real enjoyment in my work'. Two items were reverse-scored, and higher scores reflected higher satisfaction. Adequate reliability and validity have been demonstrated (Judge et al., 1998). CFA results support a unidimensional structure. However, the item "*Each day at work seems like it will never end*" was removed due to extreme low factor loading (- .18). Reliability of the remaining four items showed good reliability at .87.

Psychological Wellbeing was measured by The World Health Organisation – Five Well-Being Index (WHO-5; WHO, 1998). Participants responded to five items on a 6-point Likert scale (0= "At no time" to 5= "All the time") about the extent to which they had experienced positive wellbeing over the past two weeks. An example item is: 'I have felt calm and relaxed'. Higher scores reflected better psychological wellbeing. Adequate validity across

different settings has been reported (Topp et al., 2015). CFA supported a single dimensional structure. The scale achieved a reliability level of .92 in the current sample.

***Demographics*.** Categorical information about participants' gender, and five-year age and tenure bands, and role categories was collected.

Statistical Analyses Strategy

To test our hypotheses we conducted SEM using the maximum likelihood estimator of STATA (v16). SEM offers analytical advantage over the conventional regression method as it enables the simultaneous estimation of systems of complex relationships between latent constructs (Kline, 2016). To reduce the potentials of interpretational confounding (Burt, 1976), Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step SEM modelling procedure were followed. In the first step, to validate the factorial structure and conceptual distinctiveness of our latent variables, we performed a CFA comparing four alternative models. In step two, we proceeded to estimate our proposed structural model using the full SEM function. To assess the overall model fit, a range of goodness of fit indicators were used: χ^2, degrees of freedom, comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR; Kline, 2016).

Results

Out of 6,000 employees, 331 responded to the survey with a 5.52% response rate. Five cases with more than a 10% incompletion rate and two cases with invalid responses were removed, yielding a final sample of 324 participants (see Table 1).

TABLE 1 | Demographics of the Study Sample

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender			
	Male	139	42.90
	Female	185	57.10
Age Group			
	Below 25	4	1.20
	25-30	41	12.70
	31-35	52	16.00
	36-40	48	14.80
	41-45	66	20.40
	46 and above	113	34.90
Tenure			
	Over 25 years	31	9.60
	21-25 years	30	9.30
	16-20 years	29	9.00
	11-15 years	46	14.20
	6-10 years	88	27.20
	3-5 years	51	15.70
	1-2 years	44	13.60
	6 months - 1 year	5	1.50
Role			
	Individual contributor	122	37.70
	First-line manager	77	23.80
	Middle manager	81	25.00
	Senior management	44	13.60

Four alternative measurement models were tested to validate the factorial structures and the distinctiveness of the study variables in the current sample. As shown in Table 2, the single factor model (Model one) demonstrated a poor fit across all goodness of fit indexes reported and its χ^2 value is significantly different from and considerably larger than all the other three alternative models. This supports good distinctiveness between the key constructs. Based on the evidence from the literature discussed in the measurement section (Laschinger et al., 2004; Patrick et al., 2011; and Spreitzer, 1997), SE, PE, job satisfaction and psychological wellbeing were tested as four global factors in Model two. Model three tested a twelve-factor structure with job satisfaction, psychological wellbeing, the six components of SE, and the four components of PE. Although Model two and three showed significant improvement from Model one, their goodness of fit levels was not adequate. In addition, Model two demonstrated unsatisfactory factor loading (ranging between .44 and .74), with seven items out of 19 (36.84%) failing to achieve a loading larger than the conventionally accepted .50 threshold (Kline, 2016). The sub-dimensions in SE shared high level of correlations (ranging between .69 and .75), with similar problems observed between the subdimensions of PE. To avoid the potential problem of multicollinearity and type II error, we decided to test Model four, a fourteen-factor Model treating both structural and psychological empowerment as second-order models. As Model four has achieved the best fit compared to all alternative models (see Table 2), we adopted it as the measurement model base for the following structural analysis. As outlined previously, one item from job satisfaction was removed due to extreme low factor loading (- .18). One Item from resources subdimension of the SE ("*Acquiring temporary help when needed*") achieved a factor loading of .47, just falling short of the recommended .50 cutoff. We decided to keep this item to preserve information. All factor loadings for the remaining items fell between 0.57 and 0.97.

TABLE 2 | Measurement Model comparison (*k*=40)

Model	χ^2	*df*	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	$\Delta x^2(\Delta df)$
Model one	4785.04	440	6.47	.50	.47	.13	.11	--
Model two	4168.62	740	5.63	.59	.57	.12	.25	616.42***(0)
Model three	3218.08	740	4.35	.70	.69	.10	.29	950.54***(0)
Model four	2369.38	730	3.25	.80	.79	.08	.24	848.70***(10)
Model CMV								

*Note: ***p < .001; χ^2 = chi-square, df = degrees of freedom, CFI = comparative f*

Considering the self-report nature of data collection, we examined the common method variance in the current sample as part of the pre-analysis. Harman's single-factor test using Principal Axis Factoring extraction showed that only 31% variance can be explained by a common factor, which is lower than 50% (Malhotra et al., 2006). Therefore, the common method variance did not appear to pose a serious concern for the current study.

Shown in Table 3, the four focal study variables shared positive correlations at a moderate to large size (ranging between .47 and .68) reaching statistical significance. Mean scores were positive and all scales demonstrated good reliability (.87 to .92). As for the covariates, females are found to have lower means on all study variables compared to males. Age was positively and significantly related to all study variables, as were professional role in the organisation and tenure.

TABLE 3 | Descriptive statistics and correlations (*n*=324)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 [a]Gender	-							
2 Age	-.16**	-						
3 [b]Role	-.22***	.49***	-					
4 [c]Tenure	-.07	.62***	.36***	-				
5 Job Satisfaction	- .03	.27***	.21***	.21***	.87			
6 Subjective wellbeing	-.13*	.24***	.21***	.16**	.42***	.92		
7 Structural Empowerment	-0.06	.17**	.32***	.20***	.58***	.47***	.90	
8 Psychological Empowerment	-.18***	.37***	.44***	.27***	.57***	.48***	.59***	.89
Mean					3.37	3.56	3.42	5.05
SD					0.52	1.01	0.55	0.55

*Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (two tailed). Cronbach's alpha values are on the diagonal female = 1. [b]Role: role in the organization. [c]Tenure: years worked in the current organisation.*

In the second step, we proceeded to investigate the full latent factor structural model. Shown in Figure 1, our model showed an adequate fit to the data ($\chi 2$ = 2040.91, *df* = 871, $\chi 2/df$ = 2.34, RMSEA = .06, CFI = .86, TLI = .85, SRMR = .09), explaining 96.58% of the variance in total. The analysis found a positive and large relationship between structural and psychological empowerment (β = .69, p < .001), supporting H1. SE and job satisfaction shared a large and positive relationship (β = .73, p < .001), supporting H2. PE was positively and significantly related to job satisfaction (β = .84, p < .001), with a very large effect. H3 is, thus, retained. The association between SE and job satisfaction was found to be fully explained by PE as we observed a perfect indirect effect through PE (β = .58, p < .001). The magnitude of this indirect effect was on the large side. H4 is retained. The direct path between SE and job satisfaction was not, however, statistically significant (β = .15, p =.26).

Both SE (β = .51, p < .001) and PE (β = .50, p <.001) shared a positive and significant relationship with psychological wellbeing. Both demonstrating a large effect size. H5 and H6 are, thus, retained. PE fully mediates the relationship between SE and psychological wellbeing (β = .34, p < .001), which supports H7. The direct relationship between SE and psychological welling was not statistically significant (β = .17, p =.19).

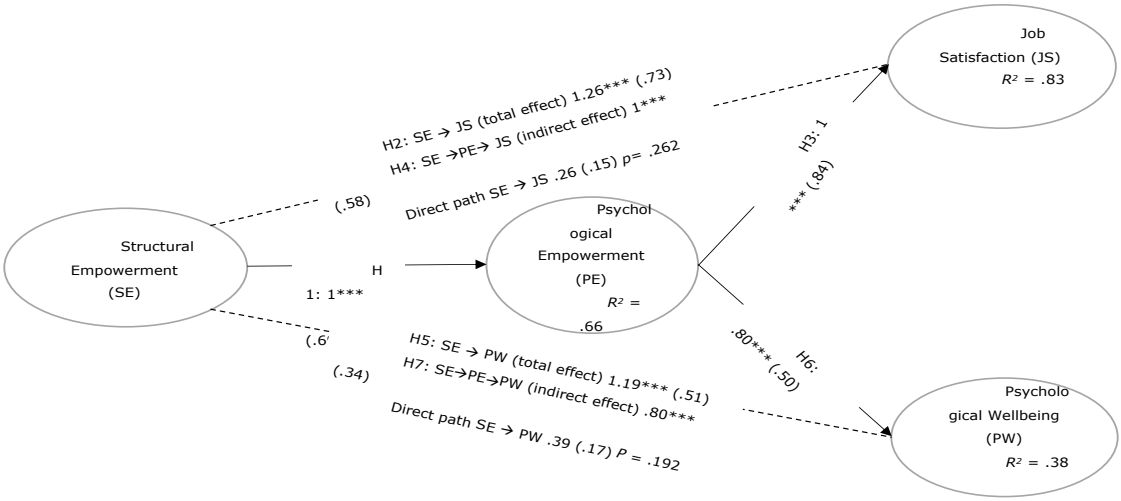

Figure 1. Results of the research module (standardised beta in parentheses; dashed line represents path without a significant effect). ***p<.001

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the mediating role of PE in the relationship between SE and work-related wellbeing (operationalised as job satisfaction and psychological wellbeing) in a single, multi-site organisation in southeast Asia. The observed results support all postulated study hypotheses: namely, structural empowerment was positively associated with PE (H1); and SE and PE were positively associated with job satisfaction (H2; H3) and psychological wellbeing (H5; H6).

SE indirectly influenced job satisfaction (H4) and psychological wellbeing (H7) through its relationship with PE. The direct association between higher-order SE and higher PE (H1) lend support to previous studies that have also observed direct effects (Seibert et al., 2011). The direct associations between structural and psychological empowerment and the outcomes of job satisfaction (H2; H3), and psychological wellbeing (H5; H6) are aligned with previous findings that both empowerment factors are predictors of job satisfaction (Laschinger et al., 2007) and psychological wellbeing (Biron & Bamberger, 2010). Essentially, working conditions that are largely out of employees' control significantly influence their personal feelings of empowerment and motivation, job satisfaction, and mental wellbeing. Furthermore, employees' intrapersonal PE has a smaller but nonetheless significant influence on their job satisfaction and psychological wellbeing.

Secondly, PE partially mediated the relationship between SE and job satisfaction (H4). Employees who experienced higher SE also experienced higher PE, and this partially explained the corresponding increase in job satisfaction. This parallels findings from the healthcare context, outlined in the meta-analysis by Seibert et al. (2011) and the series of studies by Laschinger and colleagues (2017). Thirdly, as with job satisfaction, PE also partially mediated the relationship between SE and psychological wellbeing (H7). Higher SE was linked to higher psychological wellbeing, through the associated increase in PE. This brings together previous studies that have found causal effects of structural and

psychological empowerment on individual wellbeing (Biron & Bamberger, 2010). It also lends support to Diener and Biswas-Diener's (2005) theories that SE is an important pre-requisite of optimal psychological wellbeing, and that work-related PE significantly contributes to overall psychological wellbeing. Despite previous evidence for cultural differences in the relationship between structural and psychological empowerment and outcomes (Robert et al., 2000; Cheung et al., 2012) in non-Western cultures, our observed findings in a southeast Asian sample are comparable with those found in Western contexts.

Collectively, these findings provide empirical support for Laschinger's Expanded Work Empowerment Model (2012), suggesting that when employees experience higher SE at work (i.e. better working conditions that provide *formal* and *informal power* and access to *opportunities*, *information*, *support*, and *resources*), they are more likely to experience more work-related PE. This manifests in motivational feelings of self-efficacy and *competence*, perceptions of job *autonomy*, and that work is *meaningful* and *impactful*. Correspondingly, they are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs, and experience better psychological wellbeing in the form of positive moods, greater vigour, and interest in life.

Furthermore, while this study provides support for Laschinger's (2012) Expanded Workplace Empowerment Model and its behavioural and attitudinal outcomes, the model and Laschinger's subsequent work lacks acknowledgement of the effect of structural and psychological empowerment on employee health and wellbeing (e.g., job satisfaction and psychological wellbeing) beyond occupational burnout. Foundational stress theories (e.g. Job-Demands-Resources model, Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; and Effort-Reward Imbalance model,Siegrist, 1996) describe how working conditions have powerful effects on employees' health and wellbeing through job stress, strain, and burnout (Laschinger & Read, 2017). This has important implications for workplace health promotion. A potential avenue for future research would be to integrate these models to broaden the Empowerment Model and account for health- and wellbeing-related outcomes.

Regardless, this study has contributed to the literature on several fronts. It builds upon previous work by integrating structural and psychological empowerment in a single integrative conceptual framework, providing further empirical support for Laschinger's (2012) Expanded Workplace Empowerment Model beyond the healthcare context in a different culture. Moreover, while job satisfaction has been studied extensively, this study additionally demonstrates the impact of empowerment on psychological wellbeing, establishing it as an additional factor in the Expanded Empowerment Model. This is significant because of its meaningful implications beyond the workplace as a general indicator of mental health, thus bridging the often neglected (but ever-present) intersect between work and personal life. Lastly, utilising a *salutogenic* approach, this study contributes to the developing field of positive occupational health psychology by recognising the role of positive factors (such as structural and psychological empowerment), and how they can be leveraged to promote psychological flourishing and wellbeing in the workplace. This complements predominant prior literature that focused on preventing and managing negative factors (such as work risks and hazards) and pathological outcomes (such as burnout and stress).

Study Limitations

Despite the positive findings, the results should be interpreted with caution. Data was collected from a single source at a single time-point, raising issues of common method errors of response consistency or social desirability, and causing inflations or deflations of the correlations between variables (Podsakoff et al., 2003). While self-reported methods are appropriate for the study's perception and attitudinal measures, future studies could consider different methods (e.g. using multiple and regular point-in-time surveys) to reduce the impact of transient conditions.

More importantly, the impact of transient mood states across the population may have compounded such errors. Data collection occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic (June 2020), and the study's ecological validity beyond these circumstances are uncertain.

Negative psychological effects were reported worldwide, including depression, anxiety, and stress (Rossi et al., 2020) due to isolation, financial burden, and mortality salience (Probst et al., 2020). Responses to measures such as psychological wellbeing may have been affected. A key concern is whether such effects were inconsistent across the population and moderated by confounds, such as job function and socioeconomic status. Furthermore, the initiation of teleworking triggered unprecedented and sudden changes to working conditions (e.g. structural empowerment) in yet-unstudied ways, and insufficient time has elapsed to see the full impact on PE and other outcomes. Further studies could be conducted when/if work returns to normal, contributing insights on pre-post-pandemic differences in work empowerment mechanisms on various employee outcomes.

The use of cross-sectional data limits the potential to make causal and directional inferences. While previous experimental and longitudinal studies have established some causality between the study's variables (e.g. Biron & Bamberger, 2010; Laschinger et al., 2004), others have theorised reverse effects (Pradhan, Hati & Kumar, 2017). For instance, higher psychological wellbeing may translate to higher psychological capital (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2005), resulting in higher work-related PE , and more lenient perceptions of SE and the work environment. Longitudinal studies have investigated the mediating role of PE on SE and job satisfaction, but not for psychological wellbeing. Evidently, the interplay between psychological wellbeing and the workplace is complex. Follow-up studies could collect longitudinal data to establish temporal lag, or use experimental methods simulating empowerment conditions to examine causal relations. The low response rate (5.52%) and reliance on a convenience sample highlights self-selection bias issues and population representativeness. The impact depends on the degree to which participation is random or systematic regarding the study's variables, and how far responses deviate from reality (Hellevik, 2015).

Lastly, while these findings were comparable to those in healthcare settings (Seibert et al., 2011), one should be cautious in generalising the findings beyond the study's setting. Other

Asian studies with dissimilar findings are testament to the complexity and interdependency of empowerment mechanisms with cultural elements (such as power-distance, Robert et al., 2000). These discrepancies highlight, we believe, an important area for investigation into sectoral and cultural differences.

Practical Implications

These findings highlight the crucial role of organisations in enhancing employees' job satisfaction and psychological wellbeing. They also reinforce the idea that working conditions, as sources of SE , are vital in engendering positive employee outcomes; and should be, therefore, prioritised by employing organisations. Fundamentally, organisations and managers should be encouraged to create and promote empowering working structures to encourage employees' PE , positive work attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction) and broader mental health outcomes. These empowering work structures should include work design and management practices that provide *opportunities* (e.g. training), access to *information* (e.g. clear communication plans), feedback and *support* (e.g., social support from colleagues or line managers) mechanisms, and flexibility to reallocate time and *resources* (e.g. job crafting and coaching). The findings also imply that empowerment initiatives should emphasise the promotion of PE among employees. To augment them, interventions to increase job satisfaction and wellbeing could be directly targeted at individuals' PE. For instance, organisations could facilitate mindset shifts towards encouraging *autonomous* self-regulation, participation, and ownership. Communicative measures could be introduced to help employees understand the *impact* and significance of their work and increase perceptions of *meaningfulness* of such work.

Conclusion

The current study demonstrated that SE was positively associated with job satisfaction and psychological wellbeing through the mediating effects of PE . Although the findings are not new, they expand upon earlier studies and provide evidence for Laschinger's (2012)

Expanded Work Empowerment Model extending it to include work-related wellbeing. This study also advances understanding of empowerment and outcomes and in the sparse literature on workplace empowerment in Southeast Asia. Despite limitations, this study contributes to the growing movement of positive occupational health psychology and raises important implications for administration and organisation development in the Asian workplace, including recognition of the crucial role of organisations in creating sources of structural and psychological empowerment.

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