

**PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT, JOB  
INSECURITY AND WELLNESS OF EMPLOYEES IN  
SELECTED ORGANISATIONS**

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## REMARKS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The references as well as the editorial style as prescribed by the Publication Manual (4<sup>th</sup> edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA) were followed in this thesis. This practice is in line with the policy of the programme in Industrial Psychology at the North-West University.
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## SUMMARY

**Title:** Psychological empowerment, job insecurity and wellness of employees in selected organisations.

**Key words:** Psychological empowerment, leader empowering behaviour, job insecurity, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement.

South Africa, like the rest of the world, is undergoing major changes in the social, political, economic, technological and organisational environments. The ability of any organisation to compete internationally will depend to a large extent on the quality of its people. The biggest challenge that organisations are facing is to find, develop and retain talent. More than ever the ability of organisations to grow and develop will be determined by the level of competence and energy of their people. Challenging and meaningful work, development opportunities, leadership and empowerment are some of the most important reasons why talented people will stay on in a company. To increase speed, efficiency and to reduce costs, organisations have flattened their structures. From this it can be concluded that if companies want to be successful and retain talented people they have to create an environment where people feel empowered. The leader or manager plays an import role in the empowerment of people. The consequences of empowerment can include higher levels of job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement.

The objectives of the study were to determine the reliability and validity of the instruments, as well as the relationship between psychological empowerment, leader empowering behaviour, job insecurity, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement.

Employees from selected organisation were targeted. The study population included employees from managerial and non-managerial categories. A cross-sectional survey design was used to obtain the research objectives. Six standardised questionnaires were used in the empirical study, namely Leader Empowering Behaviour Questionnaire, Job Insecurity Inventory, Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire, Job satisfaction, Organisational commitment and Work engagement. Descriptive statistics, factor analyses, Cronbach alpha coefficients, correlations, MANOVAS and regression analyses were used to analyse the data.

The results indicated a four-factor model for PEQ, as well as construct equivalence of the scales for two randomly selected samples. Statistically significant differences were found between the levels of psychological empowerment of employees in terms of age, race, tenure, position within the company and type of industry. Practical significant differences were found between organisational levels and different types of industries. Managers experience higher levels of empowerment than specialists and employees in non-management positions. Significant differences were found between government organisations and service organisations on the one hand and the manufacturing, mining, and the chemical industries on the other hand.

A significant relationship exists between leader empowering behaviour, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Regression analysis indicated that leader empowerment behaviour has significant predictive value towards job satisfaction and organisational commitment. The results indicated that organisations can lift employee's levels of engagement through empowerment and creating job security.

Results demonstrated a significant relationship between psychological empowerment and engagement. No practical significant relationship was found between job insecurity and psychological empowerment, or between job insecurity and engagement. Regression analysis indicated that meaning and impact have significant predictive value towards engagement. Affective job insecurity predicted engagement significantly.

Based on the results, recommendations were made for future research, as well as actions to be implemented by the organisations. The results indicate that it will be worth it for organisations to develop manager's competence to empower people. The empowerment will lead to higher levels of job satisfaction that will impact on the commitment and work engagement of people.

## OPSOMMING

**Titel:** Psigologiese bemagtiging, werksekuriteit en werknemerwelstand in geselekteerde organisasies.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Leierbemagtigingsgedrag, werksonsekerheid, psigologiese bemagtiging, werksbevrediging, organisasieverbondenheid en werkbegeestering.

Suid-Afrika, soos die res van die wêreld ondergaan baie veranderinge op sosiale, politieke, ekonomiese, tegnologiese en organisatoriese vlak. Die vermoë om internasionaal kompetend te bly is afhanklik van die kwaliteit van werknemers. Die grootste uitdaging vir organisasies is die verkryging, ontwikkeling en behoud van talentvolle mense. Organisasies se vermoë om te groei en te ontwikkel sal bepaal word deur die bevoegdheid en energie van hul werknemers. Uitdagende en betekenisvolle werk, geleentheid vir ontwikkeling, leierskap en bemagtiging is van die belangrikste redes waarom werknemers sal bly by die organisasie. In 'n poging om tyd beter te benut, effektiwiteit te verbeter en koste te bespaar het organisasies platter strukture geskep. Om talentvolle mense te behou en 'n suksesvolle organisasie te wees, sal mense bemagtig moet word. Die leier of bestuurder speel 'n belangrike rol in die bemagtiging van mense. Die gevolge van bemagtiging kan hoër vlakke van werkstevredenheid, organisasieverbondenheid en werkbegeestering insluit.

Die doel van die studie was om die geldigheid en betroubaarheid van die meetinstrumente, asook die verhouding tussen leierbemagtigingsgedrag, psigologiese bemagtiging, werksekuriteit, werksbevrediging, organisasieverbondenheid en werkbegeestering te bepaal.

Werknemers van geselekteerde ondernemings is geteiken. Die proefgroep sluit werknemers van bestuurs- en nie-bestuurskategorieë in. 'n Kruisdeursnit opname-ontwerp is gebruik om die navorsingsdoelwitte te bereik. Ses gestandaardiseerde vraelyste is gebruik in die empiriese studie, naamlik Leierbemagtigingsgedrag, Psigologiese Bemagtiging, Werksonsekerheid-inventaris, Werksbevrediging, Organisasieverbondenheid en Werkbegeestering. Beskrywende statistiek, faktor-analises, Cronbach alpha-koëffisiënte, korrelasies, MANOVAS en regressie-analises is gebruik om data te analiseer.

Die resultate het 'n vierfaktormodel van die Psigologiese Bemagtigingvraelys, asook konstrukekwivalensie vir twee ewekansige proefgroepe bevestig. Prakties betekenisvolle

verskille is gevind ten opsigte van die vlak van psigologiese bemagtiging van werknemers in terme van ouderdom, ras, jare diens, posisie binne die onderneming en tipe industrie. Prakties betekenisvolle verskille is ook gevind tussen organisasievlakke en tipe industrie. Bestuurders ervaar beduidende hoër vlakke van bemagtiging as spesialiste en werknemers in nie-bestuursposte. Werknemers in die staatsdiens en dienste-industrie ervaar laer vlakke van bemagtiging gemeet teenoor ander industrieë.

'n Sterk verwantskap bestaan tussen leierbemagtingsgedrag, werkstevredenheid en organisasieverbondenheid. Regressie-analise toon aan dat leierbemagtingsgedrag werkstevredenheid en organisasieverbondenheid voorspel. Resultate dui op 'n prakties betekenisvolle verband tussen psigologiese bemagtiging en werksbegeestering. Daar is nie 'n prakties betekenisvolle verband tussen werksonsekerheid en psigologiese bemagtiging, of tussen werksonsekerheid en werksbegeestering gevind nie. Regressie-analise dui aan dat sinvolheid en impak beduidende voorspellingswaarde ten opsigte van werksbegeestering het, en dat affektiewe werksonsekerheid werksbegeestering voorspel. Die resultate dui daarop dat organisasies werknemers se vlakke van begeestering kan verhoog deur mense te bemagtig en 'n groter mate van werksekuriteit te skep.

Gebaseer op die resultate, is aanbevelings gemaak vir verdere navorsing, asook aksieplanne wat deur hierdie organisasies geïmplementeer kan word. Die resultate dui daarop dat dit organisasies sal baat om leiers se bevoegdheid om mense te bemagtig te ontwikkel. Hierdie bemagtiging sal lei tot meer werkstevredenheid wat hoër vlakke van organisasieverbondenheid en werkbegeestering tot gevolg het.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about leadership, psychological empowerment and employee wellness in selected organisations in South Africa.

In this chapter the problem statement is discussed. The research objectives are set out, which include the general objective and specific objectives. The research method is explained and the chapter divisions given.

### 1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

South Africa, like the rest of the world, is undergoing major changes in the social, political, economic, technological and organisational environments. In response to ever-increasing competition, companies are continuously under pressure to re-position themselves. They need to fundamentally re-think and re-design their existing organisational processes. According to Van Tonder (2005), organisations by necessity have to adapt to changing circumstances. These adaptive responses have taken the form of strategic repositioning, reorganisations, mergers, acquisitions and buy-outs. To increase speed, efficiency and to reduce costs, organisations have flattened their structures to replace their traditional hierarchical management structures with empowered work teams (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000).

According to Sparks, Faragher, and Cooper (2001), the 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen dramatic changes in the world of work. These authors see the 1960s and 1970s as the period where new technology was introduced into the work area, especially the computer. The 1980s saw a trend towards globalisation with many organisations undergoing mergers, acquisitions, strategic alliances and privatisation that resulted in ever-increasing competitiveness. The 1990s were characterised by the restructuring of the workplace through processes such as downsizing, delayering, subcontracting and outsourcing (Canaff & Wright, 2004; Sparks et al., 2001). The changing world of work of the past two decades is characterised by life-long learning, risk taking, speed and change, networking and measuring outputs (Wentzel & Geldenhuis, 2005).

Re-designing organisational processes has stimulated a need for employees to adapt their roles to these demands by embracing risk, stimulating innovation, and coping with high levels of uncertainty (Spreitzer, 1995). Krawitz (2000) and Boninelli and Meyer (2004) state that companies need to attract, develop, care for, retain and inspire the best people in order to be winners in the new economy. The ability of any organisation to compete internationally will depend to a large extent on the quality of its people. The biggest challenge that organisations are facing is to find, develop and retain talent (Boninelli & Meyer, 2004, Roethgiesser, 2005). More than ever the ability of organisations to grow and develop will be determined by the level of competence and energy of their people. The demand for talented people outstrips the supply and one can assume that the search for talented and competent people will intensify. Ridout (2007) state that the war for talent is about to become even more serious.

Organisations need to start asking the question why talented people want to join the company, and what they must do to retain and optimise the talent. Attracting and retaining new managers will depend on the quality of the work environments that organisations can create (Laschinger, Purdy, Cho, & Almost, 2006). Research done by Kaye and Jordan-Evans (2000) indicates that of more than 2000 respondents from diverse industries and functions gave career growth, learning and development, exciting work and challenge, meaningful work, making a difference and a contribution, autonomy and sense of control over your work as some of the most common reasons to stay with a company. Birt, Wallis, and Winternitz (2004) identify challenging and meaningful work, advancement opportunities, manager integrity and quality, empowerment and responsibility and new opportunities as the most important reasons why talented people will stay on in a company.

Kanter (1994) proposes that companies need to switch incentives from careers, status and promotion, to personal reputation, teamwork and challenging assignments, finding ways of making work challenging and involving so it becomes a source of loyalty, which translates into a new kind of security. Kanter (1997) uses the term "employability security" for this new type of security. From this it can be concluded that if companies want to retain talented people they have to create an environment where people feel empowered.

Wentzel and Geldenhuis (2005) state that to keep the best employees, organisations need to offer them freedom of choice and greater participation. Buckle (2003) identifies increased

productivity, performance and motivation, quality products and services, lowered absenteeism and turnover, and more creative employees as advantages of empowerment for the organisation, while job satisfaction, commitment, energy, high performance and willingness to learn were identified as some of the advantages for the individual. Seibert, Silver, and Randolph (2004) find that psychological empowerment was significantly and positively related to performance and job satisfaction. Laschinger and Finegan (2005) are of the opinion that empowerment has become an increasingly important factor in determining employee health and well-being in these changing conditions.

Wilson, Deljoy, Vandenberg, Richardson, and McGrath (2004, p. 567) define a healthy work organisation “as the one characterised by intentional, systematic, and collaborative efforts to maximise employee well-being and productivity by providing well-designed and meaningful jobs, a supportive social-organisational environment, and accessible and equitable opportunities for career and work – life enhancement”. According to Mok and Au-Yeung (2002), management support and encouragement, information, autonomy, rewards and opportunities for development are important elements of organisational climate to enhance a sense of empowerment. They found that teamwork and leadership had the highest correlation with empowerment.

In their research Wilson et al. (2004) develop and validated a model for a healthy organisation consisting of six interrelated components namely organisational attributes, organisational climate, job design, job future, psychological work adjustment and employee health and well-being. Employees’ perceptions of their organisation (organisational attributes) affect their perception of the climate (organisational climate), which impacts the way people relate to their job (job design) and see their future in the organisation (job future), ultimately impacting their work adjustment (psychological work adjustment), health and well-being (employee health and well-being). Probst’s integrated model for job insecurity supports the model of Wilson. According to Probst (2002), certain antecedents stimulate the perception that one’s job is endangered. This perception will lead to an emotional or affective response (job attitudes) that will impact on individual and organisational outcomes (Probst, 2002).

According to Wilson et al. (2004), the healthy work organisation concept is based on the premise that it should be possible to identify the job and organisational characteristics of

healthy organisations and that such organisations should have healthier and more productive workers. For this research the focus will be on employees' perceptions of organisational attributes and climate (leader empowerment behaviour), their perception of their future in the organisation (job insecurity) and the impact on psychological empowerment, job satisfaction and organisational commitment (psychological work adjustment) leading to work engagement (employee well-being) in pursuit of a healthy organisation. Wallach and Mueller, (2006) are of the opinion that empowerment is a mediator between organisational factors and positive outcomes for workers.

Most definitions of empowerment refer to some aspects of power and control – control over decision making, control over work processes, control over performance goals and measurement or control over people (Appelbaum, Hebert, & Leroux, 1999). The common thread through most definitions of empowerment is the concept of showing trust, offer encouragement, providing more information, provide vision and develop skills and ability to make decisions on how to perform their work (Robbins, 1998; Robinson 1997). According to Kaminski, Kaufman, Graubarth, and Robins (2000) empowerment is a process that promotes an active approach to problem solving, increased political understanding, and an increased ability to exercise control over the environment.

Conger and Kanungo (1988) state that empowerment as simply equated to employee participation is inadequate reasoning, since the nature of empowerment as experienced by the employees is not addressed. The research of Spreitzer and Quinn (1997) supports this view on empowered people and suggests a more complex view. According to Spreitzer (1995), organisational researchers have, in the past, focused their work on measurement practices without any perspective on the individual experience of psychological empowerment.

Menon (2001) conceptualises empowerment as an act, a process or a state. She classifies empowerment into three broad categories, based on the underlying thrust and emphasis, namely structural (situational) empowerment, motivational empowerment and leadership empowerment. Empowerment as a situational construct emphasises moving decision-making authority down the organisational hierarchy so that the employee has the ability to impact on the organisational outcomes. The leadership approach focuses on the leader who energises his followers to act with the leader providing future vision (Menon, 2001). The leader plays a vital role in providing subordinates with empowering experiences (Liden, Sparrowe, &

Wayne, 2000). Delegation of authority, accountability for outcomes, participative decision making, information sharing, coaching and developing of people have been identified as leadership behaviours that will empower people (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Dragow, 2000; Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Avolio, Zhu, Koh, and Bhatia (2004) state that transformational leaders involve followers in envisioning an attractive future and inspire them to be committed to achieving the future. In the process they enhance followers' level of psychological empowerment.

Wallach and Mueller (2006) state that transformational leaders can empower followers by providing positive emotional support and opportunities to experience task mastery (competence). The work climate created by managers contributes directly to subordinates feelings of self-worth and sense of self-determination (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989). Higher levels of decision making and responsibility provide meaning, feelings of self-efficacy, a sense of impact, and perceptions of self-determination that are described as being key ingredients of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Patrick and Laschinger (2006) state that the level of feedback from supervisors correlates strongly with employee's perception of organisational support. Chen, Lam, and Zhong's (2007) study demonstrated that supervisors can create a climate in which subordinates can seek more negative feedback to ensure that they are working effectively. Bordin, Bartram and Casimir (2007) are of the opinion that when employees perceive that their supervisors support them they will be less likely to be concerned about making mistakes and having additional responsibilities (being empowered). Bartram and Casimir, (2006) are of the opinion that people are to be empowered by their leaders in order to perform optimally.

Since the late eighties researchers have taken an interest in psychological empowerment within the workplace (Avolio et al., 2004; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Dee, Henkin, & Duemer, 2002; Dimitriades, 2005; Griggspall & Albrecht, 2003; Hancer, 2005; Hancer & George, 2003, Hancer, George, & Kim, 2005; Hochwalder & Brucefors, 2005; Holsworth & Cartwright, 2003; Hu & Leung, 2003; Jansen, 2004; Konczak, Stelly, & Trusty, 2000; Kraimer, Seibert, & Liden, 1999; Liden & Arad, 1996; Laschinger, 2001; Menon, 2001; Moye, & Henkin, 2006; Seibert et al., 2004; Siegall & Gardener, 2000; Spreitzer, 1995; Spreitzer & Quinn, 1997; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Vardi, 2000).

Psychological empowerment differs from the situational concept of empowerment in that it focuses on intrinsic motivation rather than the managerial practices used to increase an individual's level of power. Empowerment as a motivational construct (psychological empowerment) reflects an individual's active orientation to his work role, with his cognitions being shaped by a work environment (Spreitzer, 1995). Psychological empowerment exists when employees feel that they exercise some control over their work life (Spreitzer, 1995). Menon (2001) conceptualises motivational empowerment as psychological enabling. Enabling implies motivating through enhancing personal efficacy or increasing the sense of self-worth by creating conditions for heightening motivation for task accomplishment (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Spreitzer and Quinn (1997) state that empowerment is a mindset or an active orientation that an employee has about his role in the organisation.

Menon (2001) defines psychological empowerment as a cognitive state characterised by a sense of perceived control, competence and goal internalisation. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) conceived empowerment within the workplace and proposed a cognitive model in which they argued that empowerment is multifaceted. They emphasised that an individual's work context and personality characteristics shape empowerment cognitions. They furthermore defined empowerment more broadly as increased intrinsic task motivation manifested in a set of four cognitions reflecting an individual's orientation to his work role. The set of four task-related cognitions pertaining to an individual's work role consists of: *meaning, competence, choice (self-determination) and impact*.

Dee et al. (2002) state that empowerment may create the conditions necessary to build organisational commitment, and as such acts as an antecedent of commitment. A committed employee identifies with the organisation, makes personal sacrifices, performs beyond normal expectations, works selflessly and contributes to the organisation's overall effectiveness. An affectively committed employee has no desire to leave the organisation (Hartmann, 2003). Menon's (2001) survey found that the greater the empowerment, the greater the organisational commitment. Bordin et al. (2007) and Dee et al. (2002) found that empowerment had a significant positive effect on organisational commitment. They reported that empowerment scores had positive effects on teachers' levels of commitment. Baird (2006) reports a correlation between meaning and impact and higher levels of commitment.

Lee (2005) reports that transformational leadership has a positive association with organisational commitment. Teams that were led by a supervisor who exhibits the characteristics of a super leader have higher levels of organisational commitment (Elloy, 2005). Joiner and Bakalis (2006) report that strong co-worker and supervisor support both contribute to affective commitment. They found that a supervisor who offers support, shares concerns and provides job-related information is likely to have a positive influence on casual academics' commitment. Greguras and Ford (2006) concluded that supervisory support uniquely influences affective organisational commitment. Scott-Ladd, Travaglione, and Marshall (2005) found that participation in decision making promotes commitment.

Appelbaum and Honeggar (1998) stated that a review of the literature suggests that empowerment leads to increased job satisfaction. Menon's (2001) survey determined that the greater the empowerment, the higher the job satisfaction. These statements are supported by the research of Bordin et al. (2007) as well as Pearson and Moomaw (2005) when they state that greater job satisfaction was associated with a high degree of empowerment. Empowerment perceptions are associated with increased job satisfaction and work effectiveness, as well as a decreased intention to leave the organisation (Koberg, Boss, Wayne, Jason, & Goodman, 1999).

The studies of Konczak et al. (2000), as well as Malan (2002) report a significant relationship between psychological empowerment, leader-empowering behaviour and job satisfaction. Psychological empowerment mediate the relationship between six dimensions of empowering leader behaviour and two outcome variables, job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Konczak et al., 2000). Bartram and Casimir's (2006) research found that leadership had significant positive correlations with empowerment, trust, performance and satisfaction. Shore, Sy, and Strauss (2006) support this by reporting a significant relationship between leader's responsiveness to employee requests and job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

In an attempt to improve efficiency and to meet future challenges, organisations will have to make structural changes (Randolph & Sashkin, 2002). On the one hand re-structuring can lead to empowerment, but at the same time attempts to adapt to the changing environment implies that organisations put pressure on employees who remain at work to modify their jobs, convert full-time jobs to part-time positions, increase the number of temporary workers

(Probst, 2002), accept alternative employment conditions, or relocate, all of which strengthen job insecurity, and lead to employees working harder in order to keep their jobs (Büssing, 1999). According to Chirumbolo and Areni (2005), as well as Sverke and Hellgren (2002), organisations in most industrialised countries have been involved in restructuring, layoffs, and in their attempts to reduce costs and improve competitiveness.

According to De Witte (2005) the last few decades have been marked by important organisational changes and for many employees these changes have caused feelings of insecurity concerning the nature and future existence of their jobs (Hartley, Jacobson, Klandermans, & Van Vuuren, 1991). Job insecurity can impact negatively on the retention of talented people. Job insecurity undermines the goodwill of the workforce in the sense that competent employees who can easily find employment elsewhere leave the company as soon as possible because they have a better chance of finding a job elsewhere (Ashford, Lee, & Bobko, 1989; De Witte, 2005).

Researchers argue that job insecurity refers not only to the degree of uncertainty, but also to the continuity of certain aspects of the job, such as opportunities for promotion and freedom to schedule work (Ashford, Lee, & Bobko, 1989). De Witte (2005) states that job insecurity appears to exert a significant and autonomous influence on employee's well-being. Stress arises when the demands of a particular situation are appraised by the individual as exceeding the resources available, thereby impacting on the well-being of employees (Lazarus, 1991).

Any perceived changes could cause job insecurity because the individual is experiencing uncontrollability and uncertainty (De Witte, 2005). The underlying theme of various definitions is that job insecurity is a subjective perception, in other words it is based on the individual's interpretations of the immediate work environment (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Hartley et al., 1991). Job insecurity will result in increased organisational withdrawal, less positive attitudes towards the organisation, greater incidence of reported health conditions and more psychological distress (De Witte, 2005; Probst, 2002). Rothmann (2003) notes that tracking employees' effectiveness in coping with demands of the new world of work and stimulating their growth in areas that could possibly impact on individual well-being and organisational effectiveness are crucial, hence the importance of this research, which investigates the relationship between psychological empowerment, job insecurity and psychological well-being.

There has been an increased emphasis on positive psychology and optimal human functioning in recent years (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Van Tonder (2005) defines wellness as a form of optimal health, a positive “total person” state involving physical, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions, characterised by among others a balanced lifestyle and enhanced quality of life. In monitoring and improving employee effectiveness in coping with multiple new demands, stimulating their growth and enhancing their well-being as well as organisational performance, burnout and engagement are specific research areas (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

Hotta, Kawaguchi, and Yoshizawa (2005) define engagement as the dynamic relationship between an organisation and its members, and how they contribute to each others’ growth. Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001) state that work engagement differ from other constructs such as organisational commitment and job involvement. May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) argue that in order for the human spirit to thrive at work, individuals must be able to engage themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally. Kahn (1990) identifies three psychological foundations of engagement, namely meaningfulness, availability and safety. According to May et al. (2004) meaningfulness and availability play significant roles in leading to engagement. Meaningfulness is the psychological energy resulting from the feeling that job tasks are valuable and make a difference. Availability refers to maintaining the psychological, emotional and physical resources to immerse the self in work (Ford & Poms, 2005). Nelson and Simmons (2003) state that meaningful work leads to less stress, which would promote engagement, even if the situation is demanding.

Psychological safety relates to "feeling able to show and employ one’s self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career" (Kahn, 1990, p. 708). Unsafe conditions exist when situations are ambiguous, unpredictable and threatening. According to May et al. (2004) individuals who feel psychologically safe are likely to feel safer to engage themselves more fully. One would thus expect that a person in a psychologically unsafe situation, for example a less empowered or job insecure employee, would be less engaged. May et al. (2004) indicate that disengagement from work is viewed as the decoupling of oneself from the work role, and involves people withdrawing and defending themselves.

Schutte, Toppinen, Kalimo, and Schaufeli (2000) define engagement as an energetic state of employee dedication to work performance and confidence of their effectiveness. Schaufeli,

Salanova, González-Romà, and Bakker (2002) define engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption. Vigour generally refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, dedication to a feeling of inspiration, pride and strong involvement in one's work, and absorption to being totally concentrated and happily immersed in one's work (Ford & Poms, 2005; Rothmann, 2003).

South African companies are being exposed more than ever to the effects of the world economy, technological advancement and tough international competition. Tremendous pressure is placed on organisations to improve their performance and to become increasingly competitive. South Africa is faced with an ever-shrinking labour market, making the prospect of unemployment a potential reality for many South Africans. The above-noted issues are not exclusive to certain groups of people or organisations and also relate to employees working in a government organisation, where part of this research will take place.

In summary, it is clear that empowerment and the experience of job insecurity is a reality in the South African context and even worldwide. Employee empowerment is a concept that has been the subject of research for many years. Despite the increasing popularity of the concept empowerment, very few companies today are truly empowered and programmes intended to empower meet with very little success. Furthermore, empowerment, together with the strategies for implementing them, is far from being a simple "quick fix". Employee empowerment is multidimensional – no single set of contingencies can describe it. It actually encompasses a very complex and multifaceted continuous process, with its roots in the changing social, economic, and political structures of society. More research needs to be done on the psychological impact of structural empowerment on employees, and the outcome of psychological empowerment in organisations, specifically the impact on the wellness of people.

There is a lack of research on the relationship between leader behaviour, job insecurity, psychological empowerment and employee wellness in South African industries. The information obtained in this study can be of value when facilitating organisational development interventions, individual development, talent management strategies and training programmes in companies.

On the basis of the above-mentioned problem statement, the following research questions are identified:

- How are leader empowering behaviour, psychological empowerment, job insecurity, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement and the relationship between these constructs conceptualised in the literature?
- What are the reliability and validity of the Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire (PEQ) for employees in selected organisations in South Africa?
- What are the relationships between leader empowerment behaviour, job satisfaction and organisational commitment of employees in selected organisations?
- What are the relationships between psychological empowerment, job insecurity and work engagement of employees in selected organisations?

The research will make the following contribution to industrial psychology as a science:

- A standardised measuring instrument for psychological empowerment which has been proven valid and reliable, will exist;
- Recommendations for interventions to enhance empowerment, leading to individual and organisational wellness.
- Scientific information on the relationship between psychological empowerment on the one hand and energy (engagement) and job security on the other hand will be valuable in the development of strategies to manage talent and performance.

## **1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

### **1.2.1 General objective**

The general objective of this study is to establish the relationship between leader empowering behaviour, psychological empowerment, job insecurity, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement of employees in selected organisations.

### **1.2.2 Specific objectives**

The specific research objectives are the following:

- To conceptualise leader empowering behaviour, psychological empowerment, job insecurity, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement and the relationship between these constructs from the literature.
- To determine the reliability and validity of the Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire (PEQ).
- To determine the relationships between leader empowerment behaviour, job satisfaction and organisational commitment of employees in selected organisations
- To assess the relationships between psychological empowerment, job insecurity, and work engagement of employees in selected organisations.

### **1.3 RESEARCH METHOD**

The research for each of the three articles submitted for the purposes of this thesis consists of a brief literature review and an empirical study.

#### **1.3.1 Research design**

A survey design will be utilised to reach the research objectives. This design can be used to assess interrelationships among variables at one point in time, without any planned intervention. According to Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1997), this design is ideally suited when the aim of the study is predictive and descriptive by nature.

#### **1.3.2 Participants**

The study population could be defined as random samples of employees in selected organisations in South Africa. The sample consists of employees from the steel, manufacturing, mining, petro-chemical, chemical, service and packaging industries, a tertiary institution and a government organisation. The population includes workers from all levels, i.e. ranging from semi-skilled to professional level. The lowest level employees have a level of literacy adequate to allow for valid completion of questionnaires.

### 1.3.3 Measuring instruments

Six standardised measuring instruments will be used in the empirical study, namely the Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire (PEQ) (Spreitzer, 1995), the Leader Empowering Behaviour Questionnaire (LEBQ) (Konczak et al., 2000), the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993), the Revised Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, (1967), the Job Insecurity Survey Inventory (De Witte, 2000) and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

The *Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire (PEQ)* (Spreitzer, 1995) will be used. This scale contains three items for each of the four sub-dimensions (for example, meaning: “the work I do is meaningful to me”; competence: “I have mastered the skills necessary for my job”; self-determination: “I have significant autonomy in determining how to do my job”; and impact: “I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department”) of psychological empowerment. Respondents indicate the extent to which they agree with each statement on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Malan (2002) found an alpha coefficient of 0,79, Graca (2002) 0,87, Konczak et al. (2000) 0,86, Stander and Rugg (2001) 0,84, Avolio et al. (2004) 0,84, Siebert et al. (2004) 0, 88, Jansen (2004) 0, 82 and Laschinger (2001) between 0,87 – 0,92. Sauer (2003) found an overall Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0,92 and reported alpha coefficients for the subscales of 0,92 (meaning), 0,89 (competence), 0,91 (self-determination) and 0,84 (impact).

Liden, et al. (2000) report that the construct validity of each of the four sub-dimensions of the scale contributes to the overall degree of felt empowerment: meaning (0,92); competence (0,77); self-determination (0,85); and impact (0,86). Convergent and discriminate validity of the empowerment measures in the industrial sample indicate an excellent fit [(AGFI) (adjusted goodness-of-fit index)] = 0,93, RMSR (root-mean-square residual) = 0,04, NCFI (non-centralised normal fit index) = 0,98. Spreitzer (1995) suggested the need for continued work on discriminant validity.

*The Leader Empowering Behaviour Questionnaire (LEBQ)* (Konczak et al., 2000). This instrument provides leaders with feedback on behaviour relevant to employee empowerment. As an applied tool, the six-factor model provides behavioural specific feedback for coaching

and development purposes. The six dimensions are: delegation of authority, accountability, self-directed and participative decision making, information sharing, skills development and coaching and developing for innovative performance. The questionnaire consists of 19 items. The interfactor correlations ranged from 0,40 to 0,88 (Konczak et al., 2000). Dwyer (2001) and Stander and Rugg (2001) found an alpha coefficient of 0,95 and 0,97 for reliability respectively (total scale).

*The Organisational Commitment Questionnaire* (Meyer et al., 1993). This questionnaire was used to measure the organisational commitment of employees. Continuance, affective and normative commitments are dimensions measured by this questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 18 items. Dwyer (2001) and Stander and Rugg (2001) found an alpha coefficient of 0,79 and 0,86 for reliability respectively.

*The Revised Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire* (Weiss et al., 1967). Buitendach's (2005) research results indicate that the MSQ is a reliable instrument to assess the extrinsic and intrinsic job satisfaction of employees in selected organisations in South Africa. The short version of this questionnaire was used to measure job satisfaction of employees. The short version of the Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire consists of 20 items that measure satisfaction with specific aspects of the job and the work environment. Research done by Konczak et al. (2000) indicates a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0,85. Dwyer (2001), and Stander and Rugg (2001) found an alpha coefficient of 0,92 and 0,91 for reliability respectively (total scale).

This questionnaire measures two distinct components of job satisfaction. Buitendach's (2005) research supports the two factor structure for South African organisations. Intrinsic job satisfaction is how people feel about the nature of the job tasks. It is the degree to which a person is cognitively preoccupied with, engaged in, and concerned with his present job and is linked to intrinsic job satisfaction (Hirschfeld, 2000). Extrinsic job satisfaction is how people feel about aspects of the work situation that are external to the job tasks or work itself (Hirschfeld, 2000).

The *Job Insecurity Inventory* (JII) (De Witte, 2000) will be used as a measure of job insecurity. This eleven-item questionnaire relating to job insecurity will be used to measure the perceived job insecurity of participants. The 11 items of the JII summarise both the

cognitive and affective dimensions of job insecurity and are arranged along a 5-point scale, varying from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 representing (*disagree strongly*). An example of a statement relating to cognitive job insecurity would be, "I am sure I can keep my job", whereas an example of a statement relating to affective job insecurity would be, "I am worried about keeping my job". The items of the JII, measuring global job insecurity are reported to be highly reliable, with the six items measuring cognitive job insecurity, displaying a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0,90, and the five items of the affective job insecurity having a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0,85 (De Witte, 2000). According to De Witte (2000), the content of these two scales do not overlap, but nevertheless have a high underlying correlation ( $r = 0,76$ ). Heymans (2002) obtained an alpha coefficient of 0,81 for the JII, while Sauer (2003) obtained 0,80 for the cognitive scale and 0,85 for the affective scale .

The *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)* (Schaufeli et al., 2002) will be utilised as a measure of work engagement. This seventeen-item questionnaire is arranged along a seven-point frequency scale, ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*daily*). This measure of work engagement has three scales, namely vigour (6 items), dedication (5 items), and absorption (6 items). High levels of vigour, dedication and absorption point to an individual who experiences a high level of work engagement. Regarding internal consistency, Cronbach coefficients have been determined between 0,68 and 0,91 (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Storm and Rothmann (2003) obtained alpha coefficients of 0,78 for vigour, 0,89 for dedication and 0,78 for absorption for the UWES in a sample of 2396 members of the South African Police Service. Ford and Poms (2005) reported coefficient alphas for vigour (0,67), dedication (0,87) and absorption (0,68) respectively.

#### **1.3.4 Statistical analyses**

The statistical analysis will be carried out with the SPSS program, 15.0 (SPSS, 2006) and the Amos-program (Arbuckle, 2006). Descriptive statistics, (e.g. means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis) will be determined to analyse the data). Cronbach alpha coefficients will be used to determine internal consistency, homogeneity and unidimensionality of the measuring instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995). Coefficient alphas contain important information regarding the proportion of variance of the item of a scale in terms of the total variance explained by that particular scale. Structural equation modelling and exploratory

factor analyses will be used to test the factor structures of the instruments. According to Byrne (2001), structural equation modelling is a statistical methodology that takes a hypothesis-testing approach to the analysis of theory.

Structural equation (SEM) methods, as implemented by AMOS (Arbuckle, 2006), will be used to construct and test the structure of psychological empowerment. Hypothesised relationships will be tested empirically for goodness of fit with the sample data. The  $\chi^2$  statistic and several other goodness-of-fit indices, which sum up the degree of correspondence between the inferred (hypothesised) and observed covariance matrices, will be used. If used in isolation, the  $\chi^2$  statistic can lead to certain limitations. Researchers have addressed the  $\chi^2$  limitations by developing goodness-of-fit indices that take a more pragmatic approach to the evaluation process. One of the first fit statistics to address this problem was the  $\chi^2$ /degrees of freedom ratio (CMIN/DF) (Wheaton, Muthén, Alwin, & Summers, 1977), which is the minimum discrepancy per degree of freedom. These criteria also referred to as “subjective” or “practical” indices of fit are frequently used as additions to the  $\chi^2$  statistic.

A value  $<2$  for  $\chi^2$ /degrees of freedom ratio (CMIN/DF) (Wheaton et al., 1977), indicates acceptable fit (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The hypothesised relationships with the data will also be tested using the following goodness-of-fit statistics: Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI), Parsimony Goodness-of-Fit Index (PGFI), Normed-Fit Index (NFI), Comparative-Fit Index (CFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square of Approximation (RMSEA).

Exploratory factor analyses will be used to determine the validity of the LEBQ, JII, OCQ and the UWES. Firstly a simple principal components analysis will be conducted. The Eigenvalues and scree plot will determine the number of factors. Secondly principal components analysis with a direct Oblimin (related factors) rotation or a Varimax (unrelated factors) rotation will be conducted (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients will be calculated to specify the relationship between the variables. In terms of statistical significance, it was decided to set the value at a 99% confidence interval level ( $p \leq 0,01$ ). Effect size will be used in addition to statistical significance to determine the practical significance of correlation coefficients. A cut-off point

of 0,30, which represents a medium effect (Cohen, 1988; Steyn, 2002), was set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients.

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) will be used to determine the significance of difference between psychological empowerment of demographic groups. MANOVA tests whether mean differences among groups on a combination of dependent variables are likely to have occurred by chance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). In MANOVA a new dependent that maximises group differences is created from the set of dependent variables. One-way analysis will then be performed on the newly created dependent variable. Wilks' lambda will be used to test the significance of the effects. Wilks' lambda is a likelihood ratio statistic of the data under the assumption of equal population mean vectors for all groups against the likelihood under the assumption that the population mean vectors are identical to those of the sample mean vectors for the different groups. When the effect is significant in MANOVA, ANOVA will be used to discover which dependent variables will be affected. Because multiple ANOVAS will be used, a Bonferroni type adjustment will be made for inflated Type I error, Tukey test will be done to indicate which groups differed significantly when ANOVAS are done.

Regression analyses will be carried out to determine the percentage variance in the dependent variable that is predicted by the independent variables. A correlation can be better understood by determining  $R^2$  (Cohen, 1988). The square of the correlation coefficient indicates the proportion of variance in any two variables, which is predicted by the variance in the other.

#### **1.4 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS**

- Chapter 1: Introduction, problem statement and objectives
- Chapter 2: Article 1: Psychological empowerment of employees in selected organisations in South Africa.
- Chapter 3: Article 2: Leadership, job satisfaction and organisational commitment in selected organisations.
- Chapter 4: Article 3: Job insecurity, psychological empowerment and work engagement in selected organisations.
- Chapter 5: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

## **1.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the problem statement and motivation for the research were discussed and the general and specific objectives formulated. The research method (including the literature review, empirical study, research design, study population, measuring battery, data analysis and research procedure) was discussed and lastly a chapter division was given. In chapter 2 (research article), leader empowerment behaviour, psychological empowerment, job satisfaction and organisational commitment will be conceptualised, and the empirical results will be discussed in detail.

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## **CHAPTER 2**

### **RESEARCH ARTICLE 1**

# **PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT OF EMPLOYEES IN SELECTED ORGANISATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

## **ABSTRACT**

The objectives of this study were to assess the psychometric properties of the Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire (PEQ) for employees in selected organisations in South Africa, and to investigate differences between the psychological empowerment levels of various demographic groups. A cross-sectional survey design with a random sample ( $N = 1405$ ) was used. The Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire and a biographical questionnaire were administered. The scales showed acceptable internal consistencies. Structural equation modelling confirmed a four-factor model for PEQ, as well as construct equivalence of the scales for two randomly selected samples. Statistically significant differences were found between the levels of psychological empowerment of employees in terms of age, race, tenure, position within the company and type of industry. Practically significant differences were also found between organisational levels and different types of industries.

## **OPSOMMING**

Die doelstellings van hierdie studie was om die psigometriese eienskappe van die Psigologiese Bemagtigingsvraelys vir werknemers in geselekteerde organisasies in Suid-Afrika te bepaal, en om verskille tussen die vlakke van psigologiese bemagtiging van demografiese groepe te bepaal. 'n Dwarsdeursnee-opnameontwerp met 'n ewekansige steekproef ( $N = 1405$ ) is gebruik. Die Psigologiese Bemagtigingsvraelys (PEQ) en 'n biografiese vraelys is afgeneem. Die skale het aanvaarbare interne konsekwentheid getoon. Strukturele vergelykingsmodellering het 'n vierfaktormodel van die PEQ, asook konstrukekwivalensie vir twee ewekansige proefgroepe bevestig. Prakties betekenisvolle verskille is gevind ten opsigte van die vlak van psigologiese bemagtiging van werknemers in terme van ouderdom, ras, jare diens, posisie binne die onderneming en tipe industrie. Prakties betekenisvolle verskille is ook gevind tussen organisasievlakke en tipe industrie.

The ability of any organisation to compete internationally will depend to a large extent on the quality of its people (Boninelli & Meyer, 2004). The biggest challenge that organisations face is to find, develop and retain talent (Boninelli & Meyer, 2004; Roethlisger, 2005). Organisations need to start asking why talented people want to join the company, and what they must do to retain and optimise the talent. Research done by Kaye and Jordan-Evans (2000) indicates that out of more than 2000 respondents from diverse industries and functions, respondents gave career growth, learning, and development, exciting work and challenge, meaningful work, making a difference and a contribution, autonomy and sense of control over one's work as some of the most common reasons to stay with a company. Birt, Wallis, and Winternitz (2004), identify challenging and meaningful work, advancement opportunities, manager integrity and quality, empowerment, responsibility and new opportunities as the most important variables why talented people will stay on in a company.

Avolio, Zhu, Koh, and Bhatia (2004) state that transformational leaders get followers involved in envisioning an attractive future and inspire them to be committed to achieving the future. In the process they enhance follower's level of psychological empowerment. Buckle (2003) identified increased productivity, performance and motivation, quality products and services, lowered absenteeism and turnover, and more creative employees as advantages of empowerment for the organisation while job satisfaction, commitment, energy, high performance and willingness to learn as some of the advantages for the individual. Seibert, Silver, and Randolph (2004) found that psychological empowerment is significantly and positively related to performance and job satisfaction.

According to Robinson (1997), the common thread through most definitions of empowerment is the concept of providing everyone in the organisation with more information and skills to make decisions on how to perform their work. Most definitions of empowerment refer to control over decision making, control over work processes, control over goals and measurement or control over people (Appelbaum & Honegger, 1998; Lashley, 1999). Kaminski, Kaufman, Graubarth, and Robins (2000) define empowerment as a process that promotes an active approach to problem solving, increased understanding, and an increased ability to exercise control over the environment. According to Wilkinson (1998) empowerment is as a form of employee involvement and focuses on task-based involvement and attitudinal change. Keeton (2002) states that empowerment arises when subordinates are inspired to participate in the process of transforming the organisation. Simply providing

opportunities for employees to take power is not enough. Employees must choose to take ownership (Honold, 1997).

According to Spreitzer (1995), organisational researchers have in the past focused their work on empowering measurement practices without any emphasis on the individual's perspective on empowerment and the psychological experience of empowerment. How people feel about themselves, their self-image, their self-limiting beliefs, could hold them back from achievement and this must be addressed in any meaningful empowerment programme.

Menon (2001) classifies empowerment research into three broad categories, based on the underlying thrust and emphasis, namely structural (situational), motivational and leadership empowerment. Empowerment as a situational construct emphasises redistribution of authority and granting decision-making authority and power down the organisational hierarchy so that the employee has the ability to impact on the organisational outcomes, be creative, and have greater flexibility to take risks (Cloete, Crous, & Scheepers, 2002; Greasley, Bryman, Dainty, Price, Soetanto, & King, 2005; Menon, 2001). The leadership approach focuses on the leader who energises his followers to act with the leader in providing future vision (Menon, 2001). Delegation of authority, accountability for outcomes, participative decision making, information sharing, coaching and developing of people have been identified as leadership behaviours that will empower people (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Dragow, 2000; Conger & Kanungo, 1988). The next paragraph deals with the conceptualisation of psychological empowerment.

### **Psychological empowerment**

Menon (2001) conceptualises empowerment as the granting of power, a process that leads to the experience of power, or a psychological state that can be measured. Psychological empowerment differs from the situational concept of empowerment in that it focuses on intrinsic motivation rather than the managerial practices used to increase an individual's level of power. Empowerment must be viewed as a continuum, not as an absolute, that is, people can be viewed as either more or less empowered, rather than empowered or not empowered (Spreitzer, 1995). Honold (1997) supports the above-mentioned view, and sees empowerment as a continuum of power from powerlessness to being empowered.

Psychological empowerment exists when employees feel that they exercise some control over their work life (Spreitzer, 1995). Menon (2001) defines psychological empowerment as a cognitive state characterised by a sense of perceived control, competence and goal internalisation. The benefits of empowerment will only be realised if the employee actually experiences empowerment as a psychological state. The psychological state refers to the internal processes of the individual being empowered. Spreitzer and Quinn (1997) state that empowerment is a mindset or an active orientation that an employee has about his role in the organisation. Spreitzer (1995) highlights the following important assumption regarding her definition of psychological empowerment, namely that psychological empowerment reflects an individual's active orientation to his work role and that his cognitions are shaped by the work environment, and not an unchangeable personality attribute.

Psychological empowerment affects both individual and organisational effectiveness. Organisations want employees who can take initiative, embrace risk, stimulate innovation and cope with high uncertainty, and this requires effectiveness and innovative behaviour (Spreitzer, 1995). Menon (2001) conceptualises motivational empowerment as psychological enabling. Enabling implies motivating through enhancing personal efficacy or increasing the sense of self-worth by creating conditions for heightening motivation for task accomplishment (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Managerial strategies that strengthen the belief in personal self-efficacy will make people feel more powerful. Efficacy expectations determine how much effort people will invest and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles and aversive situations (Bandura, 1997).

Chen, Kanfer, Kirkman and Allen (2007) mention that empowered individuals are motivated to perform well because they believe they have the autonomy and capability to perform meaningful work that can impact their organisation. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) proposed a cognitive model in which they argued that empowerment is multifaceted. They emphasise that an individual's work context and personality characteristics shape empowerment cognitions. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) furthermore define empowerment more broadly as increased intrinsic task motivation manifested in a set of four cognitions reflecting an individual's orientation to his work role. The set of four task-related cognitions pertaining to an individual's work role consists of: *meaning, competence, choice (self-determination) and impact*.

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) describe meaning as the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own ideals or standards. A typical statement dealing with meaningfulness (Spreitzer, 1995, p. 491) is: "The work I do is meaningful to me". This encompasses the value of work goals evaluated in relation to an individual's ideals. Spreitzer and Quinn (1997) state that empowered people have a sense of meaning, they feel that their work is important to them and they care about what they are doing. Luthans and Peterson (2002) argue that employees who experience meaning in their work are more engaged. Menon (2001) states that employees need to internalise the goals of the organisation because goals are important for energising people. The feeling of meaningfulness is the feeling that one is on a path that is worth one's time and energy, that one is on a valuable mission and that the purpose matters in the larger scheme of things (Buckle, 2003).

Competence is the degree to which a person believes he can perform activities. A typical statement dealing with competence (Spreitzer, 1995, p. 491) is: "I am confident about my ability to do my job". Spreitzer and Quinn (1997) state that empowered people have a sense of competence. The feeling of competence involves the individual's confidence in his ability and the sense that one is doing high-quality work (Baruch, 1998). Employees are confident about their ability to do their work well, and they know they can perform (Spreitzer & Quinn, 1997). Feelings of self-worth are positively related to feelings of psychological empowerment. Through self-esteem employees see themselves as valued resources having talents worth contributing, and are thus more likely to assume an active orientation with regard to their work (Spreitzer, 1995). This dimension is labelled competence rather than self-esteem because of a focus on efficacy specific to a work role. Competence refers to self-efficacy (Conger & Kanungo, 1988) or an individual's belief that he is capable of successfully performing a particular job (Bandura, 1997).

Bandura (1997) links competence to personal mastery or effort-performance expectancy and further explains that empowerment is gained through development of personal efficacy. According to Bandura (1997) people low on self-efficacy avoid situations requiring relevant skills. Empowerment enables employees to exert influence over practices that affect their wellbeing. In the efficacy-building process, employees need early experiences in producing tangible results to convince themselves that they have the capability to change the environment in which they live. Having success will reinforce their belief that they can overcome tougher problems, leading to feelings of self-worth and satisfaction (Bandura,

1997). Perceived competence is the cornerstone of Conger and Kanungo's (1988) empowerment strategy as well as a major component of Thomas and Velthouse's (1990) model of empowerment.

Where competence is a mastery of behaviour, self-determination is an individual's sense of having a choice in initiating and controlling actions. Self-determination reflects autonomy in the initiation and continuation of work behaviours and processes; examples are making decisions about work methods, pace and effort (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989). A typical statement dealing with self-determination (Spreitzer, 1995, p. 491) is: "I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job". According to Baruch (1998) self-determination comes to the foreground when employee's jobs are enriched and they have the power to influence work processes. Spreitzer and Quinn (1997) state that empowered people have a sense of self-determination. Self-determination relates to the opportunity one feels one has to select task activities that make sense and to perform them in ways that seem appropriate, while choice is the feeling of being able to use one's own judgment (Spreitzer & Quinn, 1997).

Impact is the degree to which behaviour is seen as making a difference in terms of accomplishing the task, in other words, producing intended effects in one's environment. A typical statement dealing with impact (Spreitzer, 1995, p. 491) is: "I have significant influence over what happens in my department". This describes an individual's ability to influence outcomes at work. Spreitzer and Quinn (1997) state that impact is the accomplishment one feels in achieving goals. The feeling of perceived impact involves the sense that the task is moving forward, that one's activities are really accomplishing something.

Spreitzer (1995) proposes that individuals who are internal will feel more empowered than those who are external in their locus of control. People with an internal locus of control believe they have strong personal control over their life experiences, whereas those with an external locus of control feel luck, fate or others determine their decisions, behaviour and outcomes (Koberg, Boss, Senjem, & Goodman, 1999).

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) mention that employees detect feelings of helplessness when impact is seen as unlikely, irrespective of performance. Ashforth (1989) states that impact is

the degree to which an individual can influence outcomes at work. Impact is the converse of learned helplessness (Spreitzer, 1997). Impact represents the degree to which individuals perceive that their behaviour makes a difference (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

### **Measurement of psychological empowerment**

In their study on instruments that measure psychological empowerment, Arneson and Ekberg (2006) found nine questionnaires measuring empowerment in working life. They found that most authors shared the same theoretical basis, that control and competence are dimensions that are frequently used, and that Spreitzer's (1995) questionnaire has undergone the most comprehensive investigation.

Siegall and Gardner (2000) surveyed 203 employees of a manufacturing firm and found Cronbach alpha coefficients of 0,87 (meaning), 0,77 (competence), 0,72 (self-determination) and 0,86 (impact). Sauer (2003) reports an overall Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0,92 and 0,92 (meaning), 0,89 (competence), 0,91 (self-determination) and 0,84 (impact) for the subscales. Henken and Marchiori (2003) report Cronbach alpha's ranging from 0,79 – 0,88 for the four sub-scales. The above results indicate high reliability for the sub-scales of the instrument.

Konczak, Stelly, and Trusty (2000) report an alpha coefficient of 0,86, Laschinger (2001) of between 0,87 and 0,92, Stander and Rugg (2001) of 0,84, Dee, Henkin, and Duemer (2003) of 0,89, Hancer and George (2003) of 0,87, Hu and Leung (2003) of 0,90, Avolio et al. (2004) of 0,84, Seibert et al. (2004) of 0,88, Jansen (2004) of 0,82, Dimitriades (2005) of 0,79, Hancer, George, and Kim, (2005) of 0,89 and Moye and Henkin (2006) of 0,87 for the overall empowerment scale. This is an indication that the questionnaire's level of reliability is more than acceptable.

A number of studies show support for Spreitzer's four empowerment dimensions (Dee et al. 2002; Griggspall & Albrecht, 2003; Henken & Marchiori, 2003; Hochwalder & Brucefors, 2005; Hu & Leung, 2003; Moye & Henkin, 2006; Kraimer, Siebert, & Liden, 1999; Vardi, 2000). Siegall and Gardner (2000) applied oblique and orthogonal factor analyses in their research and found that the meaning, competence and impact scales clearly emerged but not the self-determination dimension. Hancer and George (2003) identify three factors in their

study of 917 service employees. Self-determination and impact loaded onto one factor. This supports the results of an earlier study with service employees by Fulford and Enz (1995) who called the “new” factor “influence”. Consistent with Fulford and Enz (1995), Kraimer et al. (1999) and Hancer and George (2003), Boudrias, Gaudreau, and Laschinger (2004) suggest that self-determination and impact have something in common that is not shared with the other dimensions of the questionnaire. In his study of 154 Greek employed students Dimitriades (2005), retains a three-factor model. He reports a potential overlap between self-determination and impact. Hancer’s (2005) research with 214 undergraduate Turkey students suggests that three factors might represent the structure of the Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire accurately. Factor one closely resembles what Fulford and Enz (1995) and Hancer and George (2003) called influence, while the other two was named meaning and competence (Hancer, 2005).

Hancer et al. (2005) in their study with 173 restaurant service employees report two factors which they called attitude (meaning and competence) and influence (self-determination and impact). The cumulative variance explained by the two factors is 63,1%.

From the above it is clear that the results of other studies can be grouped into mainly those that found three factors and those that identified four factors as in the original studies by Spreitzer (1995). Further analyses of the above results indicate that it is possible that organisational level, type of job and work experience or a lack of experience may play a role. In most of the studies with two and three factors the sample consists of students, lower level employees and young participants. Fulford and Enz (1995) suggested that the three-factor structure in their study was due to the nature of the labour-intensive service organisation. This calls for further investigation on the discriminant validity of the four scales. The above results support the importance of this study for South African companies and employees.

### **Variables impacting on the measurement of psychological empowerment**

A subjective perception such as psychological empowerment is likely to be interpreted in different ways by different people. Koberg et al. (1999) report that personal characteristics will influence an individual’s sense of empowerment. Age, educational level, gender, hierarchical level, tenure, industry and type of employment contract will be discussed as

variables that can impact on the measurement of psychological empowerment. No studies comparing different races or cultures could be found.

Vardi (2000), as well as Miller, Goddard, and Laschinger (2001) report no significant differences between people's perceptions of empowerment in terms of different *age* groups. Ellefsen and Hamilton (2000), Hancer and George (2003), as well as Sauer (2003) found that older employees indicated higher empowerment scores than younger employees. Hu and Leung's (2003) findings suggest that empowered women are usually older and that age is a significant predictor for the competence dimension. Kim and George (2005) report that age was not statistically associated with differences in the scores of psychological empowerment. Vardi (2000) reports no significant differences between people's perceptions of empowerment in terms of different *educational levels*. The results of Miller et al. (2001) indicated no relationship between empowerment and level of education. Hancer and George (2003) found that employees with high school or lower levels of education indicated significantly higher scores on the meaning dimension. Piazza (2006) found that certification increases nurse's perception of empowerment.

In terms of *gender* Vardi (2000) found that men rated themselves higher on overall empowerment than women. Finegan and Laschinger (2001) found no significant differences between men and women nurses' experience of empowerment, while Miller et al.'s (2001) results indicated no differences between empowerment levels of male and female physical therapist's. Hancer and George (2003) report that females indicated significantly higher scores on the meaning and general empowerment dimension than males. Boudrias et al. (2004) found that there are few, if any, differences in the way empowerment is construed across genders. Kim and George (2005) report that gender was not statistically associated with differences in the scores of psychological empowerment.

In researching the impact of *hierarchical level*, Vardi (2000) reports that managers felt significantly more empowered than non-managers. Ellefsen and Hamilton (2000) found that nurses in leadership positions had higher scores on overall empowerment than staff nurses. Dwyer (2001) found significant differences in the level of psychological empowerment between managers and specialists. The question can be asked if employees involved with the core business will experience psychological empowerment differently than those in support functions like Human Resources, Administration and Financial Management. Stander and

Rugg (2001) report no significant differences between the results of the academic and non-academic staff members at a university. Boudrias et al. (2004) suggest that the impact dimension is sensitive to organisational position. Having influence is more important for managers than for non-managers.

Hancer and George (2003) report that employees with more than two *years of service* indicated significantly higher scores on the competence dimension than employees with less than two years tenure. Miller et al. (2001) report no differences between empowerment levels of physical therapists with different years of practice. Sauer (2003) as well as Kim and George (2005) found that employees with longer years of service perceive themselves as more empowered than employees with shorter years of service.

Assessing the role of type of *employment contract* on the perception of empowerment, Fulford and Enz (1995) report differences in perceptions between full-time and part-time workers. Kim and George (2005) report that full-time employees showed higher scores on psychological empowerment, while Hancer and George (2003) indicate that full-time employees have significantly higher scores on the competence, meaning and general empowerment dimension than part-time employees. Boudrias et al. (2004) report that full-time nurses have higher feelings of competence and meaning than part-time nurses.

Research indicates differences in empowerment perceptions between employees in different industries and jobs. Holdsworth and Cartwright (2003) in their study with call-centre agents found lower levels of empowerment on meaning, self-determination and impact when compared with traditional office workers. Compared to office workers they felt that their work is more likely to conflict with their values, they experienced less freedom and they believe they are not making a difference in the organisation. The research of Hancer and George (2003) indicates that wait-staff exhibit lower scores on all dimensions when compared with other employees. According to Deery and Shaw (1999), the hospitality industry has traditionally been described as notorious for low morale and high turnover of hourly-paid employees. Miller et al. (2001) found no differences between professional and academic physical therapists.

Pitts (2005) mentions that empowerment has become an important component of management trends in both private and public sectors. In the USA empowerment has featured

prominently in the “New Public Management Movement” (Pitts, 2005). Peters and Pierre (2000) note the attraction of a concept like empowerment in the context of a democratic society such as the United States. It is possible that government can become too remote, bureaucratic and hierarchical to be acceptable in democratic regimes (Peters & Pierre, 2000). They further state that workers on the lower levels in public organisations should be granted increased power through empowerment. In South Africa government organisations are perceived as bureaucratic with too much red tape. South Africa is in its second decade of democracy and it would be interesting to assess and compare the level of perceived empowerment in a government organisation.

### **Aims and hypotheses**

The first objective of this study was to determine the factorial validity, construct equivalence and internal consistency of the Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire (PEQ) for workers in selected organisations in South Africa. The second objective was to determine whether the levels of psychological empowerment differ in terms of demographic variables such as age, qualification, gender, years of service, industry and race.

The hypotheses of this study are as follows:

- H<sub>1</sub>: Psychological Empowerment, as measured by the PEQ, has acceptable levels of internal consistency for each of its subscales.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Psychological Empowerment, as measured by the PEQ is a four-dimensional construct (meaning, competence, self determination and impact).
- H<sub>3</sub>: Older employees experience higher levels of psychological empowerment than younger employees.
- H<sub>4</sub>: Employees with higher levels of qualification experience more psychological empowerment than employees with lower levels of qualification.
- H<sub>5</sub>: Males experience higher levels of psychological empowerment than females.
- H<sub>6</sub>: Black employees experience higher levels of psychological empowerment than employees from other cultural groups.
- H<sub>7</sub>: Employees in management positions experience higher levels of psychological empowerment than employees in non-management positions.
- H<sub>8</sub>: Employees with longer years of service experience higher levels of psychological empowerment than employees with shorter years of service.

H<sub>9</sub>: Employees in a government organisation experience lower levels of psychological empowerment than employees in other industries.

## METHOD

### Research design

A cross-sectional survey design was used.

### Participants

The study population could be defined as random samples of employees in selected organisations in South Africa ( $N = 1406$ ). The participants included employees from the following industries: Manufacturing ( $n = 583$ ), Mining ( $n = 75$ ), Chemical ( $n = 285$ ), Service ( $n = 167$ ), and a Government Organisation ( $n = 296$ ).

The population includes workers from all levels, i.e. ranging from semi-skilled to professional level. The lowest level employees have a level of literacy adequate for valid completion of questionnaires.

Descriptive information of the sample is given in Table 1. As indicated in Table 1, the majority of employees (42%) were younger than 35. More males (66%) than females (27%) participated in the research. The majority of employees (47%) had a level of education of grade 12 or lower, while 43% had tertiary qualifications. Seventeen per cent are on a management level, while 44% have longer than 10 years of service, and 36% have less than 5 years of service.

Table 1  
*Characteristics of the Participants*

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	35 years and younger	592	42
	36-45 years	295	21
	46 years and older	324	23
	Missing	194	14
Gender	Male	928	66
	Female	373	27
	Missing	104	7
Race	Black	346	25
	White	508	36
	Others	47	3
	Missing	504	36
Qualification	Up to grade 12	667	47
	Diploma and degree	405	29
	Postgraduate qualification	200	14
	Missing	133	9
Organisational level	Management	246	17
	Non-management	473	34
	Specialists	200	14
	Missing	487	35
Years of service	Less than 5 years	501	36
	6 – 10 years	270	19
	More than 10 years	620	44
	Missing	15	1
Industry	Manufacturing	583	42
	Government	296	21
	Mining	75	5
	Service	167	12
	Chemical	285	20
	Missing	0	0

## Measuring instrument

*The Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire (PEQ)* (Spreitzer, 1995) was used in this study. Spreitzer (1995) developed the scales by adapting items from previous research. Meaning items were taken directly from Tymon (1988), competence items from Jones' (1986) self-efficacy scale, impact from Ashforth's (1989) helplessness scale and self-determination items from Hackman and Oldham's (1980) autonomy scale. The scale contains three items for each of the four sub-dimensions (for example, meaning: "the work I do is meaningful to me"; competence: "I have mastered the skills necessary for my job"; self-determination: "I have significant autonomy in determining how to do my job"; and impact: "I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department") of psychological empowerment. Respondents indicated the extent to which they agree with each statement on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Konczak et al. (2000): 0,86; Stander and Rugg (2001): 0,84; Avolio (2004): 0,84; Seibert et al. (2004): 0,88; Jansen (2004): 0,82; and Laschinger (2001) found Cronbach alphas between 0,87 and 0,92.

Liden, Sparrowe, and Wayne (2000) report that the construct validity of each of the four sub-dimensions of the scale were found to contribute to the overall degree of felt empowerment: meaning: 0,92; competence: 0,77; self-determination: 0,85; and impact: 0,86. Convergent and discriminate validity of the empowerment measures in the industrial sample indicate an excellent fit. AGFI (Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index) = 0,93; RMSR (Root-Means-Square Residual) = 0,04; NCFI (Non-Centralised Normal-Fit Index) = 0,98. Spreitzer (1995) suggested the need for continued work on discriminant validity.

## Statistical analysis

The analysis was carried out with the SPSS 15.0 Program (SPSS, 2006) and Amos program (Arbuckle, 2006). The reliability and validity of the PEQ were assessed by means of Cronbach alpha coefficients, as well as confirmatory factor analysis. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis) were determined to describe the data. Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to determine the significance of differences between different groups (Field, 2005).

A factor analysis is a technique to identify groups or clusters of variables (Field, 2005). The word construct usually relates to a concept with several underlying dimensions. This concept can be measured quantitatively through the identification of its various dimensions. The data was firstly analysed by means of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) methods, as implemented by AMOS (Arbuckle, 2006), to test the factor structure of the PEQ. Secondly, a factor analysis was performed on two randomly selected samples to test equivalence.

Confirmatory factor analyses evaluate the fit between the postulated model and the observed data (De Bruin & Bernhard-Pherna, 2002; Henson & Roberts, 2006). Henson and Roberts (2006) advise that when prior theory exists regarding the structure of the data, as in this study, confirmatory factor analyses should be considered. Structural equation modelling, as implemented in AMOS (Arbuckle, 2006), was used to test the factorial model of the PEQ, by using the maximum likelihood analyses. Given that this is the first comprehensive study assessing the dimensions of psychological empowerment in South Africa, one-, two-, three-, and four-factor models were considered. The following indexes produced by AMOS were used in this study: the Chi-square statistic, which is the test of absolute fit of the model, the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), the Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI), the Normed Fit Index (NFI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and the Root-Means-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA).

In this research the differences in psychological empowerment of groups based on age, qualification, race, organisational level, years of service and type of industry were determined by means of MANOVA. MANOVA tests whether mean differences among groups on a combination of dependent variables are likely to have occurred by chance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). In MANOVA a new dependent variable that maximises group differences was created from the set of dependent variables. One-way analysis of variance was then performed on the newly created dependent variable. Wilks' Lambda was used to test the significance of the effects. Wilks' Lambda represents the ratio of error variance to total variance for each variant (Field, 2005). When an effect was significant in MANOVA, ANOVA was used to discover which dependent variables were affected. Because multiple ANOVAs were used, a Bonferroni-type adjustment was made for inflated Type 1 error. Tukey tests were conducted to indicate which groups differed significantly from other groups.

## RESULTS

Structural equation modelling, as implemented in AMOS (Arbuckle, 2006), was used to test the factorial model of the PEQ, by using the maximum likelihood analyses.

The following hypothesised models of the PEQ were tested:

- Model 1: A four-factor model (competence, meaning, impact and self-determination)
- Model 2: A one-factor model (psychological empowerment)
- Model 3: A three-factor model (competence, meaning and influence)
- Model 4: A two-factor model (attitude and influence)
- Model 5: A three-factor model (attitude, impact and self-determination)

Table 2 presents fit statistics for the test of the various models. The first model hypothesised that the PEQ consists of four factors. Comparison on the fit indices indicates that model 1 displays the best fit. The statistically significant  $\chi^2 = 761,06$  ( $df = 100$ ;  $p = 0,00$ ) and fit indices of model 1 revealed the best fit for the originally hypothesised PEQ model. From a practical perspective, values for GFI, NFI, TLI and CFI above the 0,90 level indicate a satisfactory fit. The RMSEA value lower than 0,08 (reasonable fit) furthermore confirms the hypothesised model. A value close to 1,00 was obtained on the AGFI, which is indicative of relatively good fit. Furthermore, Table 2 indicates relatively poor fit statistics for the other models. These results support the findings of Kraimer et al. (1999), who found that a one-factor model had a much worse fit than the four-factor model.

Table 2

*Goodness-of-Fit Statistics for the Hypothesised PEQ Models*

Model	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	AGFI	NFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Model 1	761,06	7,61	0,91	0,86	0,93	0,92	0,94	0,07
Model 2	3317,07	30,71	0,65	0,50	0,68	0,62	0,69	0,15
Model 3	1007,40	9,88	0,88	0,82	0,90	0,89	0,92	0,08
Model 4	1583,25	14,94	0,82	0,74	0,85	0,82	0,86	0,10
Model 5	1092,30	10,71	0,87	0,81	0,90	0,88	0,90	0,83

The standardised regression weights of the PEQ for two randomly selected samples are reported in Table 3.

Table 3

*Standardised Regression Weights of the PEQ for Two Randomly Selected Samples*

<i>Item</i>	<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Estimate sample 1</i>	<i>Estimate sample 2</i>
PEQ1	Competence	0,73	0,69
PEQ10	Competence	0,76	0,78
PEQ12	Competence	0,83	0,83
PEQ5	Meaning	0,83	0,85
PEQ6	Meaning	0,89	0,87
PEQ11	Meaning	0,87	0,83
PEQ2	Impact	0,82	0,80
PEQ7	Impact	0,88	0,84
PEQ8	Impact	0,80	0,80
PEQ3	Self-determination	0,83	0,86
PEQ4	Self-determination	0,86	0,85
PEQ9	Self-determination	0,75	0,75

Table 3 indicates that the standardised regression weights of the two samples are more or less the same for PEQ. The model fit statistics of the PEQ for two randomly selected samples are reported in Table 4.

Table 4

*Model Fit Statistics for the Two Samples of the PEQ*

<i>Model</i>	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	AGFI	NFI	IFI	CFI	RMSEA
Unconstrained	761,06	100	7,61	0,91	0,86	0,93	0,94	0,94	0,07
Measurement weights	764,58	108	7,08	0,91	0,87	0,93	0,94	0,94	0,07
Structural weights	767,23	111	6,91	0,91	0,88	0,93	0,94	0,94	0,07

Table 4 indicates that, at each step up the hierarchy from the unconstrained model to the measurement residuals model to the structural weights model, the increase in chi-square is smaller than the increase in degrees of freedom. Therefore there appears to be no significant evidence that sample one's parameter values differ from sample two's parameter values. The

result of the structural equivalence analysis indicates no significant difference between the factor structures for the two randomly selected samples. These findings, as well as the fit of model 1 on the originally hypothesised model, provide support for accepting Hypothesis 2.

### **Descriptive statistics**

The descriptive statistics and alpha coefficients of the four factors of the PEQ are given in Table 5. From Table 5 it is evident that the scores on the scales are reasonably normally distributed. The skewness and kurtosis do not exceed the critical values of 2,00 and 7,00 respectively (West, Finch, & Curran, 1995).

Table 5

#### *Descriptive Statistics and Cronbach Alpha Coefficients of the PEQ*

Construct	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	$\alpha$
Meaning	5,51	1,41	-1,05	0,67	0,89
Competence	5,81	1,19	-1,62	3,35	0,81
Self-determination	4,93	1,47	-0,63	-0,26	0,85
Impact	4,48	1,59	-0,33	-0,74	0,86

The internal consistencies of the four scales of the PEQ are very high, according to the guidelines of 0,70 as set by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). These results indicate high reliability, that is consistent with the findings of other research (Avolio, 2004; Dee et al. 2002; Dimitriadis, 2005; Jansen, 2004; Hancer & George, 2003; Hu & Leung, 2003; Konczak et al. 2000; Laschinger, 2001; Moye & Henkin, 2006; Siegall & Gardner, 2000; Seibert, et al., 2004; Stander & Rugg, (2001). Based on the abovementioned findings, Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

Subsequently, MANOVA was used to determine the relationship between psychological empowerment on the one hand, and demographic variables such as age, qualification, gender, race, position in organisation, years of service and type of industry on the other hand. This was done with the score for the total psychological empowerment. These demographic variables were analysed for statistical significance, using Wilks' Lambda. The relationship between psychological empowerment and those demographic variables that showed statistically significant differences was further analysed using ANOVA. Lastly, Tukey's HSD

tests were done. Partial eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ) is used in addition to statistical significance to determine the practical significance of results. A partial eta squared  $> 0,09$  (explaining 9% of the variance) is a medium effect. The results of these comparisons are reported in Table 6.

Table 6

*MANOVAS – Differences in Psychological Empowerment Levels of Demographic Groups*

Variable	Wilks' Lambda	F	df	Error df	p	$\eta^2$
Age	0,95	9,19	8	2410	0,000*	0,02
Qualification	0,99	2,11	8	2532	-	0,01
Gender	0,99	0,45	4	1296	-	0,00
Race	0,97	3,21	8	1790	0,001*	0,01
Organisational level	0,91	11,62	8	1824	0,000*	0,05
Years of service	0,96	7,32	8	2678	0,000*	0,02
Type of industry	0,82	18,13	16	4268,54	0,000*	0,05

$\eta^2 > 0,25$  = large effect

• Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0,05$

No practically significant differences of medium or large effect were found. In analyses of Wilks' Lambda, statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) were found between all the variables except gender and qualification. No practically significant differences were found. These results support the findings of Boudrias et al. (2004) that there are few, if any, differences in the way empowerment is construed across genders. At the same time it differs from the results of Vardi (2000) who found that men rated themselves higher on overall empowerment than women and Hancer and George (2003) who found that females indicated significantly higher scores on the meaning and general empowerment dimension than males. Hypothesis 5, stating that males experience higher levels of psychological empowerment than females, is not supported.

Although statistically significant differences were found on the sub-test, no significant differences were found between employees with different qualifications on the total psychological empowerment. Participants with postgraduate qualifications obtained significantly higher scores on impact and self-determination than participants with grade 12 and lower. No practically significant differences were found. These results support the work of Vardi (2000) and Miller et al. (2001) who report no differences in terms of educational

levels. Hypothesis 4, stating that employees with higher levels of qualifications experience higher levels of psychological empowerment, is not supported.

The differences in the levels of the sub-dimensions of psychological empowerment were further analysed using ANOVA, followed by Tukey HSD tests. The differences in means of the sub-dimensions of psychological empowerment between demographic groups are reported in Table's 7 - 11.

Table 7

*ANOVAS – Differences in Psychological Empowerment Levels of Different Age Groups*

Item	Younger than 35	36 – 45 years	Older than 46	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
Psychological empowerment	4,97	5,34	5,50	0,00*	0,04
Competence	5,68	5,88	5,99	0,00*	0,01
Meaning	5,43	5,74	5,88	0,00*	0,02
Impact	4,13	4,73	4,85	0,00*	0,04
Self-determination	4,64	5,03	5,29	0,00*	0,04

$\eta^2 > 0,25$  = large effect

\* Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0,05$

Statistically significant differences were found between participants younger than 35 and those between the age of 36 to 45, as well as those employees older than 46 on all the dimensions, as well as on total psychological empowerment. No statistically significant differences were found between participants between 36 and 45 years and those older than 46. The oldest age group (older than 46 years) showed higher levels of psychological empowerment than the other age groups. Hypothesis 3, stating that older employees experience higher levels of psychological empowerment, is supported.

Table 8

*ANOVAS – Differences in Psychological Empowerment Levels of Different Race Groups*

Item	Black	White	Other	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
Psychological empowerment	5,15	5,41	5,10	0,00*	0,02
Competence	5,62	5,96	5,76	0,00*	0,02
Meaning	5,47	5,77	5,60	0,00*	0,01
Impact	4,61	4,70	4,22	0,01	0,00
Self-determination	4,90	5,22	4,80	0,00*	0,02

$\eta^2 > 0,25$  = large effect

\* Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0,05$

Table 8 shows that there was a significant effect of race on the dependent variable psychological empowerment. Statistically significant differences occurred between black and white participants on the competence, meaning, self-determination and total psychological empowerment dimensions. Whites showed higher levels of psychological empowerment than blacks. Hypothesis 6, stating that black employees experience higher levels of empowerment as other groups, is therefore not supported.

Table 9

*ANOVAS – Differences in Psychological Empowerment Levels of Different Organisational Levels*

Item	Management	Non-management	Specialists	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
Psychological empowerment	5,60	5,18	5,14	0,00*	0,03
Competence	6,02	6,03	5,72	0,00*	0,01
Meaning	6,01	5,72	5,51	0,00*	0,02
Impact	5,08	4,14	4,39	0,00*	0,06
Self-determination	5,28	4,83	4,93	0,00*	0,02

$\eta^2 > 0,25$  = large effect

\* Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0,05$

Table 9 indicates that managers experience statistically significant higher levels than specialist on all the dimensions, as well as higher scores than employees in non-management positions on total psychological empowerment, meaning, impact and self-determination

dimensions. Non-management employees obtained significantly higher scores than the specialists for the competence dimension. These results partly support hypothesis 7.

Table 10

*ANOVAS – Differences in Psychological Empowerment Levels of Different Years of Service*

Item	Less than 5 years	6-10 years	More than 10 years	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
Psychological empowerment	4,99	5,16	5,44	0,00*	0,03
Competence	5,66	5,81	5,96	0,00*	0,01
Meaning	5,46	5,51	5,83	0,00*	0,02
Impact	4,18	4,40	4,79	0,00*	0,03
Self-determination	4,66	4,93	5,16	0,00*	0,02

$\eta^2 > 0,25$  = large effect

\* Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0,05$

Employees with more than 10 years of service experience statistically significant higher levels of psychological empowerment on all the dimensions compared to those participants with less than 5 years of service. Participants with more than 10 years experience scored significantly higher on total psychological empowerment, meaning and impact than those with 6 to 10 years experience, while employees with 6 to 10 years experience scored significantly higher on the self-determination dimension than participants with less than 5 years experience. No practically significant differences were found. Based on the above results, Hypotheses 8, stating that employees with longer years of service experience higher levels of psychological empowerment than employees with shorter years of service, is supported.

Statistically significant differences were found between government organisations on the one hand and the manufacturing, mining, service and chemical industries on the other hand. Table 11 indicates that the levels of psychological empowerment in the government organisation are lower on all the dimension compared to the levels in the manufacturing, mining and the chemical industries, as well as the service industry in terms of perceived competence and meaning.

Table 11

*ANOVAS – Differences in Psychological Empowerment Levels of Different Industry Groups*

Item	Government	Manufacturing	Mining	Chemical	Service	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
Psychological empowerment	4,84	5,40	6,00	5,28	4,78	0,00*	0,08
Competence	5,27	5,95	6,23	5,96	5,90	0,00*	0,06
Meaning	5,07	5,88	6,29	5,68	5,40	0,00*	0,08
Impact	4,36	4,67	5,83	4,36	3,67	0,00*	0,08
Self-determination	4,67	5,11	5,65	5,12	4,15	0,00*	0,06

$\eta^2 > 0,25$  = large effect

\* Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0,05$

The government organisation obtained significantly higher scores than the service industry on the impact and self-determination dimensions. No significant difference between the government and service industry was obtained for total psychological empowerment, while the other industries obtained significantly higher levels than the service industry on total psychological empowerment. Employees in the mining industry perceived themselves to have higher levels of psychological empowerment than the other industries. With the exemption of the sub-dimension competence, the mining industry obtained significantly higher levels on all the dimensions than the other industries. The service and government organisations experience lower levels of psychological empowerment compared to the other industries. Hypothesis 9 is therefore partly supported.

## DISCUSSION

The aims of this study were firstly to assess the psychometric properties of the PEQ for workers in selected organisations in South Africa, and to investigate whether employees of different demographic groups experienced different levels of psychological empowerment. The scales showed acceptable internal consistencies. A four-factor model for PEQ, as well as construct equivalence of the scales for two randomly selected samples was confirmed. Statistically significant differences were found between the levels of psychological empowerment of employees in terms of age, race, tenure, position within the company and type of industry. Practically significant differences were found between organisational levels and different types of industries.

The significance of the findings of the study is firstly that the construct validity of the PEQ received support. Structural equation modelling determined a four-factor structure. A four-factor structure is consistent with literature findings across various samples, groups and countries (Dee et al., 2002; Griggspall & Albrecht, 2003; Henken & Marchiori, 2003; Hochwalder & Brucefors, 2005; Hu & Leung, 2003; Moye & Henkin, 2006; Kramer et al., 1999; Vardi, 2000). Construct equivalence indicates that the construct of the PEQ has similar meaning across different data sets.

In the second place, reliability analysis confirmed sufficient internal consistency of the subscales. The observed correlations were found to be comparable with the values reported by previous research (Avolio, 2004; Dee et al., 2002; Dimitriadis, 2005; Jansen, 2004; Hancer & George, 2003; Hu & Leung, 2003; Konczak et al., 2000; Laschinger, 2001; Moye & Henkin, 2006; Siegall & Gardner, 2000; Seibert, et al., 2004; Stander & Rugg, 2001). This is an indication that the questionnaire's level of reliability is acceptable. From the preceding paragraphs it appears that the PEQ is a useful instrument to use in further research as well as in practice.

Thirdly, differences in levels of psychological empowerment between demographic groups were assessed. As far as age is concerned, the results indicated that statistically significant differences existed between the psychological empowerment of different age groups. The oldest age group (older than 46 years) showed higher levels of psychological empowerment than the other age groups. This result supports the findings of Hancer and George (2003), Hu and Leung's (2003) as well as Sauer (2003). These findings must be linked to the results of tenure as variable where it was found that employees with longer years of service perceived themselves as more empowered as well. Employees with more than 10 years of service have statistically significantly higher levels of psychological empowerment than those with less than 10 years. These employees probably perceive that they are experienced, and that they have mastered the skills of their professions over the years. It is possible that older and more experienced people's expectations are more realistic and more clarified than those of younger employees who still want to challenge the status quo. Younger employees may feel that they are not making a strong impact on the ways things are being done.

Whites showed higher levels of psychological empowerment than blacks. One possible explanation for the higher level of psychological empowerment of whites is that the white

sample has a higher percentage of managers and highly skilled employees than the sample of black participants. Another possible reason is that many blacks, especially on the lower levels, still experience discrimination against them, and they feel that they don't have the same impact and decision-making authority as whites.

Managers experience higher levels of empowerment than specialists and employees in non-management positions. Vardi (2000) reported that managers felt significantly more empowered than non-managers, while Dwyer (2001) found significant differences in the level of psychological empowerment between managers and specialists. In many organisations there are still a difference in "status" and "power" between managers and specialists. Specialists often perceive themselves as rendering a service and not adding directly to the bottom line, or being part of the core business. Even the remuneration system can "discriminate" against specialists, by higher levels of pay for managers.

Findings from literature and this research indicate that there are significant differences between types of industries with regard to psychological empowerment. Statistically significant differences were found between government organisations on the one hand and the manufacturing, mining, and the chemical industries on the other hand. Employees in the mining industry perceived themselves to have higher levels of psychological empowerment than the other industries. A possible reason for this is that all the participants were from the same mining group and that the group implemented interventions to empower people. This can be seen as a positive result of the intervention.

The service and government organisations experienced the lowest levels of psychological empowerment. People in the service industry don't always see the impact of their efforts on the end result, leading to feelings of having less influence. This could also be the case for a government organisation delivering a service. In general, government organisations have more hierarchical levels leading to employees not always seeing the difference or impact that they have. Peters and Pierre (2000) mention that one of the purposes of empowerment is to make workers feel better about their jobs, and clients about the service being provided. The empowerment process must be managed very sensitively in a government organisation. Bureaucratic systems have many well-known problems, but it also appears undeniable that their replacements would have similar problems (Peters & Pierre, 2000).

In conclusion, this study could serve as a standard regarding perceived levels of psychological empowerment of workers in selected organisations in South Africa. The four-factor structure of the psychological empowerment construct was confirmed, as well as the internal consistency of the scales. Based on the results of this study, it would seem that the PEQ could be regarded as a suitable instrument for measuring psychological empowerment in South Africa.

This study had several limitations. Firstly, self-report measures were exclusively relied upon. It must be kept in mind that a self-report questionnaire has limitations. Self report bias, as well as respondents' motivation could impact on the results (Kim & George, 2005). Hoyt, Warbassa and Chu (2006) mention that there are pervasive threats to construct validity when researchers exclusively use self-report measures. The use of a cross-sectional study design also represents a limitation. Longitudinal data would allow for a better understanding of the true nature of psychological empowerment. The high percentage of missing values in some of the demographic groups is another limitation. More work with a larger and more representative sample of different races and languages can improve the quality of the research.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Several research issues flow from this study. These require attention in order to increase both our understanding of psychological empowerment and the usefulness of this concept. Clearly, further discriminant validity research is needed to establish more fully the factorial validity of the Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire (PEQ).

Research is needed to determine the reliability and validity of the PEQ in different occupations and industries in South Africa. Larger sample sizes might provide increased confidence that study findings would be consistent across other (similar) groups. Further studies need to explore the impact of race, language, qualification and age on answering the questionnaire. In the South African context research on race and language can provide valuable information for researchers and the practitioner developing interventions. Additional studies on the factor structure in different work environments should be conducted. Finally, longitudinal research is recommended to establish the levels of psychological empowerment over a period of time.

According to Wilson, Deljoy, Vandenberg, Richardson, and McGrath (2004), the healthy work organisation concept centres on the premise that it should be possible to identify the job and organisational characteristics of healthy organisations and that such organisations should have healthier and more productive workers. For an organisation to have such a healthy and more productive workforce, it must have leaders who will be able to empower their followers in all aspects of the business in pursuit of a healthy organisation. Leaders in service and government organisations need to be trained in the principles of leader empowerment behaviour and organisational support. This can support the organisation's retention strategy and improve on the wellness of employees.

Specific programmes to enhance perceptions of empowerment need to be developed for service and government organisations. The perception exists that service and government organisations spend less time, money and energy on the development of people. Training and development could enhance the competence levels of people. Designing positions to ensure meaningfulness and clear performance criteria could assist people to perceive their action as making a difference and could contribute to them feeling more empowered.

More effort must be put into clarifying expectations of new entrants into the job market and newcomers into positions. If they have a clear picture of expectations and role clarity, it could lead to a higher level of perceptions of empowerment. Developing managers' competence in the development of people will increase employees' feelings of empowerment. When managers spend time on getting to know people, setting targets, identifying development needs, facilitating personal development plans, giving positive and corrective feedback, employees' levels of self-efficacy will increase and they will experience that they make a difference in the work place.

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**CHAPTER 3**

**RESEARCH ARTICLE 2**

## **LEADERSHIP, JOB SATISFACTION AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT IN SELECTED ORGANISATIONS**

### **ABSTRACT**

The objectives of this study were to assess the relationship between leader empowerment behaviour (LEB), job satisfaction and organisational commitment for employees in selected organisations in South Africa. A cross-sectional survey design with a random sample ( $N = 209$ ) was used. The results confirmed a one factor model of leader empowerment behaviour. The scales showed acceptable internal consistencies. The results demonstrated a significant relationship between leader empowering behaviour, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Regression analysis indicated that leader empowerment behaviour has significant predictive value towards job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

### **OPSOMMING**

Die doelstellings van hierdie studie was om die verwantskap tussen leierbemagtingsgedrag, werkstevredenheid en organisasietoewyding vir werknemers in geselekteerde organisasies in Suid-Afrika te bepaal. 'n Dwarsdeursnee-opnameontwerp met 'n ewekansige steekproef ( $N = 209$ ) is gebruik. Die faktoranalise het 'n eenfaktor model vir die Leierbemagtingsvraelys (LEB) getoon. Al die meetinstrumente het aanvaarbare interne konsekwenheid getoon. Die resultate dui aan dat daar 'n sterk verwantskap bestaan tussen leierbemagtingsgedrag, werkstevredenheid en organisasieverbondenheid. Regressie-analise toon aan dat leierbemagtingsgedrag werkstevredenheid en organisasieverbondenheid voorspel.

Organisations by necessity have to adapt to changing circumstances (Van Tonder, 2005). These adaptive responses have taken the form of strategic repositioning, reorganisations, mergers, acquisitions and buy-outs. Re-designing organisational processes has stimulated a need for employees to adapt their roles to these demands by embracing risk, stimulating innovation, and coping with high levels of uncertainty (Spreitzer, 1995). Rothmann (2003) notes that studying employees' effectiveness in coping with demands of the new world of work and stimulating their growth in areas that could possibly impact on individual well-being and organisational efficiency and effectiveness, are crucial.

Krawitz (2000) and Boninelli and Meyer (2004) state that companies need to attract, develop, care for, retain and inspire the best people in order to be winners in the new economy. The ability of any organisation to compete internationally will depend to a large extent on the quality of its people. The biggest challenge that organisations are facing is to find, develop and retain talent (Boninelli & Meyer, 2004; Roethlisger, 2005). More than ever the ability of organisations to grow and develop will be determined by the level of competence and energy of their people.

Organisations need to start asking the question why talented people want to join the company, and what they must do to retain and optimise the talent. Research done by Kaye and Jordan-Evans (2000) indicates that of more than 2,000 respondents from diverse industries and functions, respondents gave career growth, learning and development, exciting work and challenge, meaningful work, making a difference and a contribution, autonomy and a sense of control over one's work as some of the most common reasons for staying with a company. Birt, Wallis, and Winternitz (2004) identify challenging and meaningful work, advancement opportunities, manager integrity and quality, empowerment and responsibility and new opportunities as the most important variables why talented people will stay on in a company. Wentzel and Geldenhuis (2005) state that to keep the best employees organisations need to offer them freedom of choice and greater participation.

Patrick and Laschinger (2006) are of the opinion that increasing access to empowerment structures and organisational support must become a priority for organisations to ensure that quality work environments are created. To increase speed and efficiency and to reduce costs, organisations have flattened their structures to replace their traditional hierarchical

management structures with empowered work teams (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000).

Matthews, Diaz, and Cole (2002) postulate that one of the more recent ways by means of which organisations have attempted to increase the motivation of employees is empowerment. Empowerment has become a buzzword and an important component of management (Pitts, 2005). Bartram and Casimir (2006) state that the empowerment of employees is vital for organisational effectiveness. Their study indicates that empowerment leads to improved performance. Buckle (2003) identified increased productivity, performance and motivation, quality products and services, lowered absenteeism and turnover, and more creative employees as advantages of empowerment for the organisation, while job satisfaction, commitment, energy, high performance and willingness to learn were identified as some of the advantages for the individual. Seibert, Silver, and Randolph (2004) found that psychological empowerment was significantly and positively related to performance and job satisfaction.

Despite an increasing popularity of the concept empowerment, very few companies today are truly empowered and programs intended to empower meet with very little success. Most definitions of empowerment refer to some aspects of power and control over decision making, work processes, performance goals, measurement and people (Appelbaum, Hebert, & Leroux, 1999). Kaminski, Kaufman, Graubarth, and Robins (2000) define empowerment as a process that promotes an active approach to problem solving, increased understanding, and an increased ability to exercise control in the environment. Petter, Byrnes, Choi, Fegan, and Miller (2002) formulated a definition of empowerment that includes seven dimensions: grant power to subordinates, allow subordinates to make decisions, share information, autonomy, initiative and creativity, knowledge and skills, and sense of responsibility. Carson and King (2005) state that the root of empowerment is power, and employees must be given the opportunity to exercise that power.

Conger and Kanungo (1988) view empowerment from two perspectives, namely as a situational construct and a motivational construct. Menon (2001) conceptualises empowerment as an act, a process or a state. She classified empowerment into three broad categories, based on the underlying thrust and emphasis, namely structural empowerment, motivational empowerment (psychological empowerment) and leadership empowerment.

Empowerment as a situational or structural construct emphasises moving decision-making authority and power down the organisational hierarchy so that the employee has the ability to impact on the organisational outcomes (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Dee, Henkin, & Duemer, 2002). Thomas and Velthouse (1990) in their definition concentrate on psychological empowerment when they define it as increased task motivation manifested in four cognitions reflecting in an individual's orientation towards his or her work role. The four cognitions are meaning, competence, self-determination and impact.

The leadership approach focuses on the leader who energises his or her followers to act with the leader providing future vision (Menon, 2001). It is thus imperative for researchers to explore what it is that makes employees experience a sense of empowerment. Pitts (2005) reports that research has been done on the empowerment of nurses, accountants, teachers and social workers, while other studies have examined empowerment through cultural and gender lenses. However, according to Pitts (2005), research has neglected to ask which managers empower. Empowerment can play a crucial role in creating successful, healthy organisations. It is this researcher's opinion that a lack of research exists regarding the relationship between leadership and psychological empowerment and the impact on the wellness of people.

Wilson, Deljoy, Vandenberg, Richardson, and McGrath (2004, p. 567) define a healthy work organisation "as the one characterised by intentional, systematic, and collaborative efforts to maximise employee well-being and productivity by providing well-designed and meaningful jobs, a supportive social-organisational environment, and accessible and equitable opportunities for career and work – life enhancement".

In their research Wilson et al. (2004) developed and validated a model of a healthy organisation consisting of six interrelated components, namely organisational attributes, organisational climate, job design, job future, psychological work adjustment and employee health and well-being. Employees' perceptions of their organisation (organisational attributes) affect their perception of the climate (organisational climate), which impacts the way people relate to their job (job design) and see their future in the organisation (job future), ultimately impacting their work adjustment (psychological work adjustment), health and well-being (employee health and well-being). The model of Wilson supports the work done by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) who defined perceived organisational support (POS) as

the beliefs of employees that their organisations care about their well-being. They identified supervisor support as one of the organisational attributes that positively influence employees' perceptions.

According to Wilson et al. (2004), the healthy work organisation concept centres on the premise that it should be possible to identify the job and organisational characteristics of healthy organisations and that such organisations should have healthier and more productive workers. According to Mok and Au-Yeung (2002), management support and encouragement, information, autonomy, rewards and opportunities for development are important elements of organisational climate to enhance a sense of empowerment. They found that teamwork and leadership had the highest correlation with empowerment.

In this study, the focus will be on the leader's role to empower their followers (organisational attributes and climate) and the impact on job satisfaction and organisational commitment (psychological work adjustment) in pursuit of a healthy organisation. Wallach and Mueller (2006) state that empowerment is a mediator between organisational factors (organisational attributes and climate) and positive outcomes for workers. Carson and King (2005) are of the opinion that empowered work environments provide the starting point from which self-leadership can result in positive organisational outcomes. They further mention that empowerment and self-leadership are avenues to influence and improve direction and motivation within organisations.

Talented people are increasingly in demand and the cost of attracting and retaining them is rising. Losing quality people is very costly for any organisation. Both the companies where this research was conducted embarked on an intensive talent management process. Talent management is the process of ensuring that an organisation attract, develop and retain talented people. The retention of scarce competencies and skills development is a major force of staying competitive.

Employees of both companies are in demand because of the companies drive to develop and optimise people's talent. The companies identified very senior line-managers to drive the attracting and retention of qualified, competent people. In the process of attracting and retaining talent the manager plays a crucial role. Employee's intention to stay can be positively influenced by the manager's leadership style. Managers need to become aware of

their crucial role in retaining talented people (Kaye, & Jordan-Evans, 2000). Research indicate a link between leadership behaviour and employee attitudes (job satisfaction, psychological empowerment and organisational commitment) leading to organisational outcomes (intention to leave and turnover). The pressure is on managers to give their talented people space to be self-directed (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2000). One of the major characteristics of the best run American companies is management's ability to create a culture of self-determination (Peters & Waterman, 2006). More research needs to be done on the impact of leadership on employees, and the outcome of psychological empowered employees in organisations, specifically the wellness of people.

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between leader empowerment behaviour, job satisfaction and organisational commitment in selected organisations in South Africa.

### **Leadership**

Spreitzer (1996) suggests that leadership contributes to empowerment to the degree to which it affects the individual's perception of meaning, self-efficacy, self-determination and impact. Arnold et al. (2000) state that leadership in traditional environments may be at most only partially applicable in empowered environments. Konczak, Stelly, and Trusty (2000) are of the opinion that there is a lack of research on the leader's role in the empowerment process. Avolio, Zhu, Koh, and Bhatia (2004) support these opinions when they mention that although evidence suggests that transformational leadership is positively associated with work attitudes, attention should be paid to understanding the process through which transformational leadership influences attitudes. Robbins (2003) describes the transformational leader as someone who inspires followers to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the organisation, and who is capable of having an extraordinary effect on his or her followers. Avolio et al. (2004) identified involving followers in decision making, developing personal potential of followers, encouraging people, consideration, allowing followers to think critically and appreciating different needs of followers as behaviours of transformational leaders.

Wallach and Mueller (2006) state that transformational leaders can empower followers by providing positive emotional support and opportunities to experience task mastery

(competence). The work climate created by managers contributes directly to subordinates' feelings of self-worth and sense of self-determination (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989). Higher levels of decision making and responsibility provide meaning, feelings of self-efficacy, a sense of impact, and perceptions of self-determination that are described as being key ingredients of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Avolio et al. (2004) state that transformational leaders involve followers in envisioning an attractive future and inspire them to be committed to achieving the future. In the process they enhance followers' level of psychological empowerment. Bartram and Casimir (2006) are of the opinion that people are to be empowered by their leaders in order to perform optimally.

The leadership approach to empowerment focuses on the leader who energises his followers to act with the leader providing future vision (Menon, 2001). Delegation of authority, accountability for outcomes, leading by example, encouraging, showing concern, participative decision making, information sharing, coaching and developing of people have been identified as leadership behaviours that will empower people (Arnold et al., 2000; Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Arnold et al. (2000) and Konczak et al. (2000) developed empowering leadership questionnaires. Arnold focused on the shift in the source of control from the leader to the team member. Konczak focused on the leader's role in the empowerment process.

The leader plays a vital role in providing subordinates with empowering experiences (Liden, Sparrowe & Wayne, 2000). According to Blanchard, Carlos, and Randolph, (1999) people need direction much more than support in order to be empowered. The leader should identify outcomes, provide an action plan, share information, provide credible role models and provide information that allows employees to reach their own conclusions. Patrick and Laschinger (2006) state that the level of feedback from supervisors correlates strongly with employee's perception of organisational support. Chen, Lam, and Zhong's (2007) study demonstrated that supervisors can create a climate in which subordinates can seek more negative feedback to ensure that they are working effectively.

The work climate created by managers contributes directly to subordinates' feelings of self-worth and sense of self-determination (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989). The most important aspects that differentiate leader-subordinate relationships are the degree of emotional support,

decision-making responsibility, and task challenge granted to the subordinate (Liden et al., 2000). Wallach and Mueller (2006) state that transformational leaders can empower followers by providing positive emotional support and opportunities to experience task mastery. Bordin, Bartram and Casimir (2007) are of the opinion that when employees perceive that their supervisors support them, they will be less likely to be concerned about making mistakes and having additional responsibilities.

Appelbaum et al. (1999) suggest that leaders must get the message that all people, to some degree, want power and prestige. In a study done by Quinn and Spreitzer (1999), they suggested that creating an empowered environment requires continuous attention. This leads to the question of what an empowered leader looks like in order to empower others. The empowered leader must have a sense of meaning, a sense of impact, a sense of competence and confidence to execute his work and a sense of self-determination and choice. This implies that the leader must empower himself or herself before he or she can empower others (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1999). Spreitzer, de Janasz, and Quinn, (1999) found that supervisors who felt empowered were seen by their subordinates as more innovative, influential and inspiring.

Wallach and Mueller (2006) are of the opinion that the ability to influence decision-making at an organisational and unit level is antecedents of empowerment. This is supported by Bordin, et al.'s (2007) research results which reveal that supervisory support is an important determinant of the effect of empowerment on job satisfaction.

### **The relationship between leadership and job satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is the attitude employees have towards their job, or about aspects of the job (Robbins, 2003; Spector, 2000). According to Oshagbemi (1999), job satisfaction is an affective reaction to a job that results from a person's comparison of outcomes with those that are desired, anticipated or deserved. Robbins (2003) and Spector (2000) state that an employee with a high level of job satisfaction holds positive attitudes towards the job, while a person who is dissatisfied with his or her job holds negative attitudes about the job. According to these authors dissatisfaction can lead to higher turnover and absence, as well as lower well-being and life satisfaction.

Robbins (2003) identified the following dimensions that influence job satisfaction: the work itself, promotional opportunities, the abilities of the supervisors to provide emotional and technical support, the extent to which fellow workers are supportive, working conditions and the equitability of remuneration. In line with the framework for understanding empowerment, job satisfaction can also be viewed from three similar perspectives: situational (environment), dispositional (personality) and interactional (Spector, 2000). Features of the environment are causes of satisfaction (Spector, 2000), leading employees to select themselves into environments that are congruent with their dispositions (Manz & Sims, 1993). House, Shane and Herold (1996) describe the dispositional approach to job satisfaction as an individual's personal characteristics which influence his or her affective and behavioural reactions to organisational settings, which in turn affects his or her level of job satisfaction. When the environment is not compatible with the employee's disposition, the employee will become dissatisfied and leave that environment. The interactional perspective is a combination of the situational and dispositional perspectives (Roberts & Foti, 1998; Spector, 2000).

People are likely to search for correspondence between what they have and what they want. They want jobs that fit their qualifications, needs and job expectations (Dormann & Zaph, 2001; Spector, 2000). Mok and Au-Yeung (2002) report that organisational climate and in particular supportive leadership are related to empowerment. Wallach and Mueller (2006) found positive significant relations between participation and empowerment, and between empowerment and supervisory support.

Appelbaum and Honegger (1998) stated that a review of the literature suggests that empowerment leads to increased job satisfaction. Menon's (2001) survey determined that the greater the empowerment, the higher the job satisfaction. These statements are supported by the research of Bordin et al. (2007) and Pearson and Moomaw (2005) when they state that greater job satisfaction was associated with a high degree of empowerment. Empowerment perceptions are associated with increased job satisfaction and work productivity/effectiveness, as well as a decreased propensity to leave the organisation (Koberg, Boss, Wayne, Jason, & Goodman, 1999). Judge and Bono (2001) report that self-efficacy (competence) correlates positively with job satisfaction. Savery and Luks (2001) suggest that the level of employee involvement is directly linked to job satisfaction. Scott-Ladd, Travaglione and Marshall (2005) found that participation in decision making promote

job satisfaction. Baird (2006) reports that meaning is a statistically significant predictor of job satisfaction.

The study of Konczak et al. (2000), as well as Malan (2002) reports a significant relationship between psychological empowerment, leader empowering behaviour and job satisfaction. Malan, (2002) found that leader empowering behaviour predict job satisfaction. Erdogan and Enders (2007) report that the positive relationship between leader-member exchange and job satisfaction was stronger when supervisors experience high perceived organisational support. Psychological empowerment mediate the relationship between six dimensions of empowering leader behaviour and two outcome variables, job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Konczak et al., 2000).

Bartram and Casimir's (2006) research found that transformational leadership had significant positive correlations with empowerment, trust, performance and satisfaction. Shore, Sy and Strauss (2006) support this by reporting a significant relationship between leader's responsiveness to employee requests and job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

Patrick and Laschinger (2006) report that it is reasonable to expect that managers who report high levels of empowerment will also give high levels of perceived organisational support (POS). They further report a link between empowering work structures and employee POS and satisfaction with their roles. Their research found that empowerment explained 36% of the variance in role satisfaction. Bordin et al. (2007) state that the correlation between job satisfaction and empowerment will increase with increasing levels of supervisory support.

### **The relationship between leadership and organisational commitment**

Competition, fuelled by globalisation, increases the demands on employees, requiring a higher level of loyalty and commitment from employees, who are being asked to give their emotional, intellectual, and physical energy to ensure organisational success (Joiner & Bakalis, 2006; Ulrich, 1997). Commitment involves the attachment of the individual to the organisation (Spector, 2000). In a highly competitive environment where profit margins become smaller and smaller, the only real competitive edge is the commitment of people Smith (1998).

Allen and Meyer (1996) define organisational commitment as the psychological link between the employee and the organisation that makes it less likely for the employee to want to leave voluntarily. Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) conceptualised organisational commitment as consisting of three components: employees trust in, and acceptance of the values and goals of the organisation; the willingness to work hard for the organisation; and employee's desire to stay on in the organisation and maintain a relationship with their organisation (Geysken, Steenkamp, Scheer, & Kumar, 1996).

Dee et al. (2002) state that empowerment may create the conditions necessary to build organisational commitment, and as such acts as an antecedent of commitment. A committed employee identifies with the organisation, makes personal sacrifices, performs beyond normal expectations, works selflessly and contributes to the organisation's effectiveness.

Meyer, Allen, and Smith, (1993) distinguish between three dimensions of organisational commitment. Firstly continuance commitment refers to an employee's behavioural orientation. Continuance commitment exists when an employee must stay with the company, especially when the employee perceives a lack of suitable alternatives or when the personal costs of leaving are too high. Employees feel committed to stay, but more out of desperation than anything else. Secondly affective commitment occurs when an employee wishes to remain and identify with the company because of an emotional attachment. Lastly, normative commitment comes from the values of the employee (Spector, 2002), and together with affective commitment refers to an employee's attitudinal disposition (Meyer, et al. 1993).

Bartram and Casimir (2006) mention that few studies have examined the mediating role of empowerment on the relationship between transformational leadership and outcomes such as performance and job commitment.

Single and Pearson (2000) found only partial support for the relationship between perceptions of empowerment and organisational commitment. Menon's (2001) survey found that the greater the empowerment, the greater the organisational commitment. The research of McDermott, Spence Lashinger and Shamain (1996) indicates that empowerment for health professionals was associated with higher levels of commitment. Bordin et al. (2007) and Dee et al. (2002) found that empowerment had a significant positive effect on organisational commitment. They reported that meaning, self-determination, impact and total empowerment

scores had positive effects on teachers' levels of commitment. Nyhan (2000) suggested that empowerment leads to increased trust that resulted in higher commitment. Baird (2006) reports a correlation between meaning and impact and higher levels of commitment.

Lee (2005) reports that transformational leadership has a positive association with organisational commitment. A transformation leader's consideration for follower's individuality and willingness to coach them creates meaningful exchanges (Lee, 2005). Teams that were led by a supervisor who exhibits the characteristics of a super leader have higher levels of organisational commitment (Elloy, 2005). Joiner and Bakalis (2006) report that strong co-worker and supervisor support both contribute to affective commitment. They found that a supervisor who offers support, shares concerns and provides job-related information is likely to have a positive influence on casual academics' commitment. Greguras and Ford's (2006) results indicate a relationship between a subordinates respect for a supervisor and commitment. They further found that the more individuals like a supervisor, the more they want to stay with the organisation. They concluded that supervisory support uniquely influences affective organisational commitment. Scott-Ladd et al. (2005) found that participation in decision making promotes commitment.

Konczak, et al. (2000) found correlations between leader empowering behaviour, psychological empowerment and organisational commitment. In addition they found that psychological empowerment completely mediated the relationship between leader empowering behaviour and organizational commitment. Malan (2002) reported a significant relationship between leader behaviour, psychological empowerment and organisational commitment. She found that leader empowering behaviour predict organisational commitment. Konczak et al.'s (2000) study found that psychological empowerment mediated the relationship between leader behaviour and commitment.

In summary, it is clear that leadership behaviour, empowerment, job satisfaction and commitment is a reality in attracting and retaining talented people in the South African context. Employee empowerment is a concept that has been the subject of research for many years. Despite an increasing popularity of the concept empowerment, very few companies today are truly empowered and programs intended to empower meet with very little success. More research needs to be done on the psychological impact of structural empowerment on employees, and the outcome of psychological empowered in organisations.

A lack of research exists regarding the relationship between leader empowering behaviour, job satisfaction and organisational commitment in South African industries. The information obtained in this study can be of value when facilitating organisational development interventions, individual development, talent management strategies and training programmes.

### **Hypotheses**

The hypotheses of this study are as follows:

- H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant positive relationship between leader empowering behaviour, job satisfaction and organisational commitment.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Leader empowering behaviour predicts job satisfaction, which in turn predicts organisational commitment.

## **METHOD**

### **Research design**

A survey design will be utilised to reach the research objectives. A correlation design will also be used. This design can be used to assess interrelationships among variables at one point in time, without any planned intervention. According to Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1997) this design is ideal when the aim of the study is predictive and descriptive by nature.

### **Participants**

The study population could be defined as random samples of employees in selected organisations in South Africa ( $n = 207$ ). The sample consists of employees from the chemical and mining industry. The population includes workers from all levels, in other words ranging from unskilled to semi-skilled to professional level. The lowest level employees have a level of literacy adequate to allow for valid completion of questionnaires.

Descriptive information of the sample is given in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Characteristics of the Participants*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Age	30 years and younger	62	30
	31-39 years	61	29
	40 years and older	86	41
Gender	Male	190	92
	Female	17	8
	Missing	2	-
Qualification	Up to grade 12	101	48
	Diploma and degree	95	46
	Postgraduate qualification	13	6
Organisational level	Management	30	14
	Non-management	176	84
	Missing	3	2
Years of service	Less than 5 years	76	37
	6 – 10 years	40	19
	More than 10 years	93	44
Industry	Chemical	134	64
	Mining	75	36

As indicated in Table 1, the majority of employees (70%) were older than 30. More males (92%) than females (8%) participated in the research. The majority of employees (52%) had tertiary qualifications. Fourteen percent is on a management level, while 44% has longer than 10 years of service, and 37% less than 5 years of service.

### **Measuring instruments**

Four standardised measuring instruments will be used in the empirical study:

*The Leader Empowering Behaviour Questionnaire (LEBQ)* (Konczak et al. 2000) instrument provides leaders with feedback on behaviour relevant to employee empowerment. As an applied tool, the six-factor model provides behavioural specific feedback on coaching and development purposes. The LEBQ consists of 17 items and is scaled on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). This scale contains six dimensions (delegation of authority, e.g. “My manager gives me the authority to make changes necessary to improve things”; accountability, e.g. “My manager holds me accountable for performance and results”; self-directed decision-making, e.g. “My manager encourages me to develop my own solutions to problems I encounter in my work”; information sharing, e.g. “My manager shares information that I need to ensure high quality results”; skills development, e.g. “My manager provides me with frequent opportunities to develop new skills”; and coaching for innovative performance, e.g. “I am encouraged to try out new ideas even if there is a chance they may not succeed”) (Konczak et al. 2000). Three items measure each construct, except for the construct ‘information sharing’, which is measured by two items. Konczak et al. (2000) recommended that future investigators should explore additional items to assess the dimensions of empowering leader behaviour. Two items from Arnold, et al. (2000) were added to this dimension for this research. Konczak, et al. (2000), found Cronbach alpha coefficients of 0,92 for delegation, 0,82 for accountability, 0,85 for self-directed decision-making, 0,93 for information sharing, 0,86 for skill development and 0,89 for coaching and total leader empowering behaviour obtained an alpha coefficient of 0,86. Various researchers found high reliability coefficients for the total scale. Dwyer (2001) obtained an alpha coefficient of 0,95 (Malan, 2002), and Graca (2002) found a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0,91. Sauer (2003) reported an alpha coefficient of 0,97 on the leader empowering behaviour questionnaire in his study.

Dwyer (2001), Stander and Rugg (2001), and Buckle (2003) indicated that the construct validity of the questionnaire was acceptable. Tjeku’s (2006) research indicate that three factors could be extracted, explaining a high percentage (62%) of the total variance. Konczak et al. (2000) are aware of this and stated in their research that a parsimonious model (e.g. three to four factors) was not considered, because they felt that the six-factor model provided managers with very prescriptive feedback. Maré (2007) found little differences between the fit indices for the one and six-factor models.

*The Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)* (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993) was used to measure the organisational commitment of employees. Continuance, affective and normative commitments are dimensions measured by this questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 18 items. Inter-correlations between populations were found to be consistently above 0,90 (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Dwyer (2001) and Stander and Rugg (2001) found an alpha coefficient of 0,79 and 0,86 for reliability respectively.

*The Revised Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)* (Schriesheim, Powers, Scandura, Gardiner, & Lankau, 1993). According to Cook, Hepworth, Wall, & Warr (1981) the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire offers a reliable and valid measure of general job satisfaction. Spector (2000) identified the 20-item short form of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire as a measure that is frequently used in job satisfaction research. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (shortened version) was used to indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied respondents are with their jobs by asking respondents to rate themselves on 20 questions, using a five-point scale (1 = *very dissatisfied* to 5 = *very satisfied*). The MSQ short form measures intrinsic job satisfaction, using items such as: "The chance to do things that doesn't go against my conscience" and extrinsic job satisfaction using items such as: "The chance to be 'somebody' in the community". Hirschfeld (2000) found that a two-factor model is superior to a one-factor model (total job satisfaction). Alpha coefficients were found to range from 0,87 to 0,95, which supports the internal consistency of the scale (Hirschfeld, 2000). Research done by Konczak et al. (2000) indicates a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0,85. Dwyer (2001), and Stander and Rugg (2001) found an alpha coefficient of 0,92 and 0,91 for reliability respectively. Selepe (2004) obtained a reliability coefficient of 0,86 for extrinsic job satisfaction and 0,92 for intrinsic job satisfaction.

### **Statistical analyses**

The statistical analysis was carried out with the SPSS program, 15.0 (SPSS, 2006). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis) was used to analyse the data. Exploratory factor analyses and Cronbach alpha coefficients were used to determine the validity and reliability of the measuring instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995). Coefficient alphas contain important information regarding the proportion of variance of the item of a scale in terms of the total variance explained by that particular scale. The theoretical models were tested in a path analysis. Firstly a simple principal-components analysis was

conducted on the LEBQ and OCQ. The Eigenvalues and scree plot were studied to determine the number of factors. Secondly principal components analysis with a direct Oblimin (related factors) rotation and/or a Varimax (unrelated factors) rotation was conducted (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

Structural equation modelling, as implemented in AMOS (Arbuckle, 2006), was used to test the factorial model of the MSQ, by using the maximum likelihood analysis. The following indices produced by AMOS were used in this study: the Chi-square statistic, which is the test of absolute fit of the model, the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), the Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI), the Normed-Fit Index (NFI), the Comparative-Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and the Root-Means-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA).

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationship between the variables. In terms of statistical significance, it was decided to set the value at a 99% confidence interval level ( $p \leq 0,01$ ). Effect sizes (Steyn, 1999) were used in addition to statistical significance to determine the practical significance of correlation coefficients. A cut-off point of 0.30 (medium effect, Cohen1988) was set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients.

Multiple regression analyses were carried out to determine the percentage variance in the dependent variable that is predicted by the independent variables. A correlation can be better understood by determining  $R^2$  (Cohen, 1988). The square of the correlation coefficient indicates the proportion of variance in any two variables, which is predicted by the variance in the other. Structural equation modelling as implemented in AMOS (Arbuckle, 2006) was conducted to test the second hypothesis.

## **RESULTS**

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted for leader empowering behaviour to verify the construct validity of the components of the questionnaire. A simple principal components analysis was conducted on the 19 items of the LEBQ on the total sample of workers in selected organisations in South Africa. An analysis of Eigenvalues (larger than 1) indicated that 2 factors (as opposed to the original six factors) could be extracted, explaining a high percentage (69%) of the total variance. The scree plot indicated that one factor could be

extracted. Further analysis supports the one factor structure. Konczak et al. (2000) are aware of the fact that the items can load on less factors. They stated in their research that a parsimonious model (e.g. three to four factors) was not considered, because they felt that the six-factor model provided managers with very prescriptive feedback. For the purpose of this study the total scale of leader empowering behaviour will be used for statistical analysis.

An exploratory factor analysis was done on Organisational Commitment. Analysis of Eigenvalues (larger than 1) and scree plot indicated that three factors could be extracted explaining 53% of the total variance. After the factors that had double loadings were eliminated two factors were identified, namely attitudinal commitment (affective and normative loaded together) and continuance commitment formed a separate factor. Meyer et al. (1993) refers to continuance commitment as an employee's behavioural orientation while normative commitment together with affective commitment refers to an employee's attitudinal disposition.

Structural equation modelling, as implemented in AMOS (Arbuckle, 2006), was used to test the factorial model of the MSQ. Table 2 presents fit statistics for the test of the model.

Table 2  
*Goodness-of-Fit Statistics for the Hypothesised Model*

Model	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	AGFI	NFI	TLI	IFI	CFI	RMSEA
Default model	761,06	7,61	0,89	0,85	0,85	0,89	0,91	0,91	0,08

The model hypothesised that the MSQ consists of two factors. Comparison on the fit indices indicates that model 1 (although not a good fit) displays the best fit. The statistically significant  $\chi^2 = 761,06$  ( $df = 100$ ;  $p = 0,00$ ) and fit indices of the model revealed the best fit for the originally hypothesised two-factor model. From a practical perspective, values for GFI, NFI, TLI and CFI above the 0,90 level indicate a satisfactory fit. The RMSEA value ( $< 0,08 =$  reasonable fit) furthermore confirms the hypothesised model. This result supports other studies that found a two-structure (extrinsic and intrinsic job satisfaction) model (Buitendach, 2005; Hirschfeld, 2000). Further research needs to be done on the instrument.

Descriptive statistics and Cronbach alpha coefficients of the instruments are reported in Table 3. From Table 3 it is evident that the scores on the scales are normally distributed. The skewness and kurtosis do not exceed the critical values of 2,00 and 7,00 respectively (West, Finch, & Curren, 1995).

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics and Cronbach Alpha Coefficients of the Measuring Instruments*

Construct	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	$\alpha$
Leader empowering behaviour	5,21	1,25	0,97	0,58	0,97
Attitudinal commitment	3,71	0,87	0,55	0,36	0,88
Continuance commitment	3,33	0,82	0,04	0,51	0,54
Intrinsic job satisfaction	3,98	0,59	-0,42	-0,01	0,86
Extrinsic job satisfaction	3,99	1,01	-0,83	0,10	0,77

The internal consistencies of the constructs, with the exception of continuance commitment, were acceptable according to the guidelines of 0,70 as set by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). These results indicate high reliability of the instruments that is consistent with the findings of other research. Due to the low Cronbach alpha, continuance commitment won't be used for further analysis.

The correlations between the LEBQ, MSQ and OCQ are reported in Table 4.

Table 4

*Correlation Coefficients between the LEBQ, MSQ and OCQ*

	1	2	3
1. Leader empowerment	-	-	-
2. Attitudinal commitment	0,40*†	-	-
3. Intrinsic job satisfaction	0,64*††	0,39*†	-
4. Extrinsic job satisfaction	0,81*††	0,41*†	0,61*††

\* Statistically significant  $p \leq 0,01$

† Correlation is practically significant  $r \geq 0,30$  (medium effect)

†† Correlation is practically significant  $r \geq 0,50$  (large effect)

Table 4 shows that practically significant correlation coefficients of large effect were found between leader empowering behaviour and intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction. Appelbaum and Honeggar (1998) stated that a review of the literature suggests that empowerment leads to increased job satisfaction. Menon's (2001) survey determined that the greater the empowerment, the higher the job satisfaction. These statements are supported by the research of Bordin et al. (2007) and Pearson and Moomaw (2005) when they state that greater job satisfaction was associated with a high degree of empowerment.

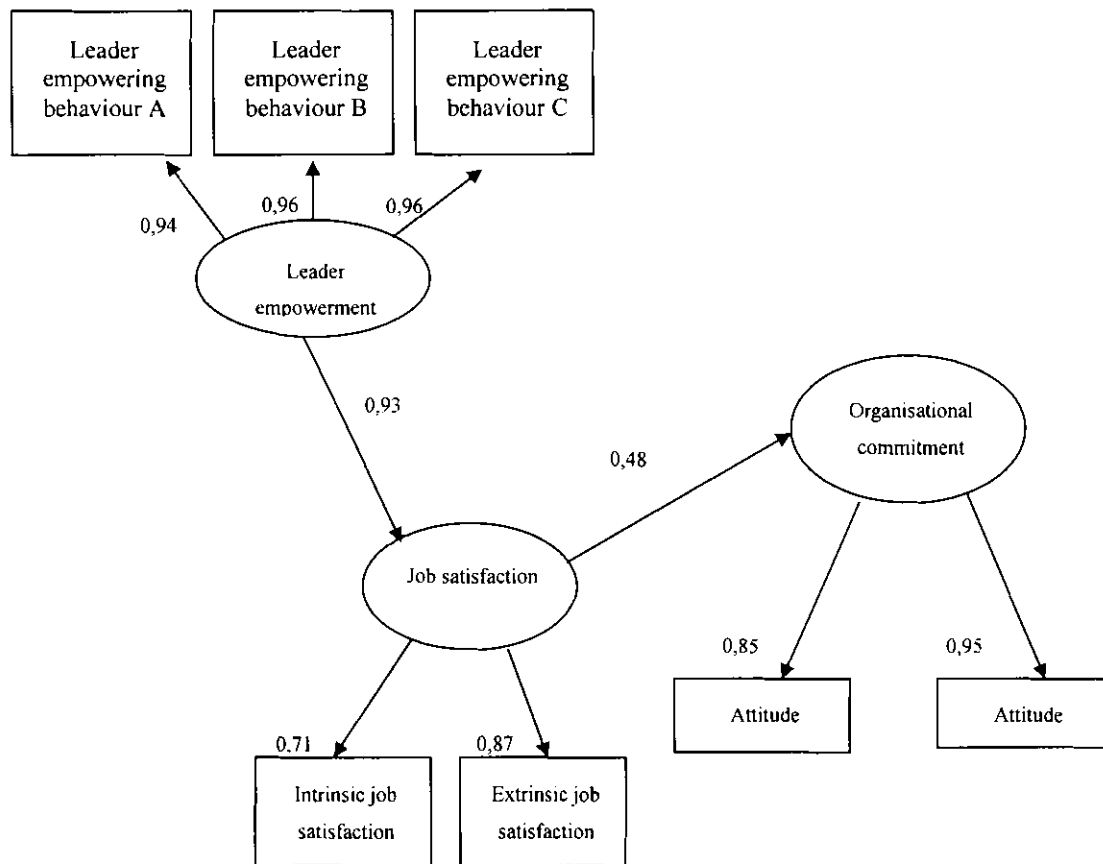
Practically significant correlation coefficients of medium effect were found between leader empowering behaviour and attitudinal commitment (affective and normative). Konczak, et al. (2000) found significant correlations between leader empowering behaviour, psychological empowerment and organisational commitment. Malan (2002) reported a significant relationship between leader behaviour and organisational commitment. She found that leader empowering behaviour predict organisational commitment.

A practically significant correlation of medium effect was obtained between the extrinsic and intrinsic job satisfaction subscales and attitudinal commitment. This indicates that higher levels of job satisfaction will be associated with higher levels of attitudinal commitment. Hypothesis 1, stating that there is a significant positive relationship between leader empowering behaviour, job satisfaction and organisational commitment is supported by the results.

Subsequently, structural equation modelling, as implemented in AMOS (Arbuckle, 2006), was used to test a structural model of leader empowering behaviour, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. In Figure 1 a path model testing the hypothesised relationships, where the latent variables included leader empowering behaviour and job satisfaction, with organisational commitment as the latent dependant variable. The hypothesis state that leader empowering behaviour predicts job satisfaction, which in turn predicts organisational commitment.

The result indicated an adequate model fit:  $\chi^2 (28, N = 209 ; p = 0,00) = 38,20$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 3,18$ ; GFI = 0,95; AGFI = 0,87; NFI = 0,97; CFI = 0,98; IFI = 0,98; RFI = 0,95; TLI = 0,97; RMSEA = 0,10. The statistically significant  $\chi^2$  revealed a good fit for the hypothesised

model. From a practical perspective, values for GFI, NFI, TLI and CFI above the 0,90 level indicate a satisfactory fit. The RMSEA value of 0,10 is indicative of a borderline fit to confirm the hypothesised model. It is however the model with the best fit.



*Figure 1:* The hypothesised model of leader empowering behaviour, job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

The results in Figure 1 demonstrate that 87% of the variance of job satisfaction is explained by leader empowering behaviour. Steyn (1999) explains that for something to be significant means that it must be different from zero and practically important means that  $R^2$  is not only different from zero, but high enough to establish a good linear relationship between x and y to be important. In this study  $R^2$  is statistically significant. The path in Figure 1 indicates that leader empowerment will impact on attitudinal commitment through job satisfaction.

According to Robbins (2003), the ability of the supervisor to provide emotional and technical support plays an important role in the level of job satisfaction of employees. According to

Oshagbemi (1999) job satisfaction is an affective reaction to a job that results from a person's comparison of outcomes with those that are desired, anticipated or deserved. A person with a high level of job satisfaction holds positive attitudes towards the job, while a person who is dissatisfied with his job holds negative attitudes about the job (Robbins, 2003). Allen and Meyer (1996) define organisational commitment as the psychological link between the employee and the organisation that makes it less likely for the employee to willingly want to leave. Geysken, Steenkamp, Scheer, and Kumar (1996) define it as the perceived need of employees to maintain a relationship with their organisation, while organisational commitment has been defined by Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) as employees' desire to stay on in the organisation. In the context of this research it could be stated that the leader's empowering behaviour will impact positively on employees' attitude toward the job. This positive attitude will lead to the employee's desire to maintain the relationship with the company. Based on the above results the second hypothesis stating that leader empowering behaviour predicts job satisfaction, which in turn predicts organisational commitment, can be supported.

## **DISCUSSION**

The objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between leader empowering behaviour, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. This exploratory study serves as an initial step towards assessing the role of leader empowering behaviour on employee attitudes like job satisfaction and organisational commitment. The results demonstrated a significant relationship between leader empowering behaviour, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. The results indicated that leader empowerment behaviour has significant predictive value towards job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

Practically significant correlation coefficients of large effect were found between leader empowering behaviour and job satisfaction. Savery and Luks (2001) suggest that the level of employee involvement is directly linked to job satisfaction. Scott-Ladd et al. (2005) found that participation in decision making promotes job satisfaction, while Baird (2006) reports that meaning is a statistically significant predictor of job satisfaction. Laschinger, Wong, McMahon and Kaufmann's, (1999) findings support the results of this study as well as the above literature when they state that access to information, support, resources and opportunity create the psychological state that employees must experience for managerial

interventions to be successful. It is the researcher's opinion that one of the major challenges for South African organisations is leadership development. The results of this study support the need to develop leader behaviour that will impact on employee's attitudes towards their job as well as improving their wellness.

Practically significant correlation coefficients of medium effect were found between leader empowering behaviour and attitudinal commitment (affective and normative). Empowerment perceptions are associated with increased job satisfaction and work effectiveness, as well as a decreased propensity to leave the organisation (Koberg et al. 1999). Joiner and Bakalis (2006) report that strong supervisor support contributes to affective commitment. They found that a supervisor who offers support, shares concerns and provides job-related information is likely to have a positive influence on people's commitment. Greguras and Ford's (2006) results indicate a relationship between a subordinates respect for a supervisor and commitment. They concluded that supervisory support uniquely influences affective organisational commitment. Scott-Ladd et al. (2005) found that participation in decision making promotes commitment, while Bordin et al. (2007) state that creating feelings of psychological empowerment may intensify organisational commitment. A higher level of commitment may lead to a willingness to stay with the company. In the process it will support the company's retention strategy. A second major challenge for South African organisations is the retention of talented, performing people. Organisations are competing for a limited pool of talented and competent people.

Organisations need to create environments where people can optimise their potential and add value to the organisation. The leader will play a very important role in creating and maintaining this environment. Carson and King (2005) are of the opinion that empowered work environments provide the starting point from which self-leadership can result in positive organisational outcomes. Empowerment and self-leadership are avenues to influence and improve direction and motivation within organisations (Carson & King, 2005). The manager must be developed as people developer. To be able to be a good developer of people managers must be coached and developed to delegate authority, make employees accountability for outcomes, lead by example, encourage subordinates, show concern for others feelings, allow participative decision making, share information, coach, mentor and develop people.

The results indicated that leader empowering behaviour predicts job satisfaction, which in turn predicts organisational commitment. The leader's empowering behaviour will impact positively on employees' attitude toward the job. This positive attitude will lead to the employee's desire to maintain the relationship with the company. These results support Robbins opinion that a person with a high level of job satisfaction holds positive attitudes towards the job, while a person who is dissatisfied with his job holds negative attitudes about the job (Robbins, 2003). Allen and Meyer (1996) define organisational commitment as the psychological link between the employee and the organisation that makes it less likely for the employee to willingly want to leave. These results once again underline the important role of leaders in creating positive attitudes towards the job and the organisation.

As in any research, the limitations of this study need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size limits the generalisability of the results. Bigger samples sizes, a diversity of industries and equal representation of races, organisational levels and genders should improve the value of the research.

Further research need to be done on the validity of the LEBQ in South Africa. The reliance on self-reports, lack of social desirability and the cross-sectional design may limit the conclusions. The concept of leader empowering behaviour in the unique South Africa business environment needs to be explored further. Cross-sectional design makes it difficult to prove causal relationships between constructs. Longitudinal research is needed to assess issues of the strength and duration of the relationship between leader empowering behaviour and employee attitudes. Self-report measures were exclusively relied upon. It must be kept in mind that a self-report questionnaire has limitations. One of the limitations is that the respondents' motivation could impact on the results.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Leadership, empowerment, job satisfaction and commitment are a reality in attracting and retaining talented people in the South African context. Employee empowerment is a concept that has been the subject of research for many years. Despite an increasing popularity of the concept empowerment, very few companies today are truly empowered and interventions intended to empower need to be developed. Matthews et al. (2002) postulate that the most cost-effective and efficient ways to increase people's perception of empowerment is to

change the environment in which they are operating. The result of this study indicates the role of leadership in changing and creating an empowering organisational culture.

Bordin et al. (2007) mention that supervisors have to be more communicative, more sensitive to the needs of subordinates, be willing and empathetic listeners, be understanding and approachable. Managers must budget time for the development of their people. One way of ensuring that managers develop their people is to set people development as one of the performance criteria for every manager. If managers are rewarded for people development they will create an empowering culture.

To empower others, managers need to be empowered themselves. Spreitzer and Quinn, (1997) recommend that leaders need to ask themselves the following four questions:

- How do I continuously work towards clarifying a sense of strategic direction for my people?
- How do I strive for participation and involvement?
- How do I work to clarify expectations regarding goals, tasks and authority?
- How do I resolve conflict among the people?

Another set of questions, which are grounded in Spreitzer's (1995) definition of empowerment, that leaders need to ask themselves are to what extent do I have a sense of meaning, impact, competence and self-determination and what can I do to increase it? If leaders are unable to find evidence to answer these questions they themselves are not empowered and thus cannot empower others.

Managers need to be accountable for developing and retaining people. As indicated in this research, competencies like coaching, delegation, sharing information and skills development must be developed in a process to impact positively on employees' feelings of satisfaction and commitment. Other competencies like trust building, communication, self-efficacy development, performance facilitation and talent identification will be crucial for the manager to become a talent expert in future.

The company must create a motivational climate. This could empower people to achieve the organisational and personal goals. Coetsee (1996) indicates goal-setting, creating an internal locus of control, skills development, job satisfaction and commitment as the key factors on which the leader must focus his attention to create a motivational climate. It can be expected that a company's branding as "employer of choice" will be more important in future. Companies will only be successful in creating this branding if they have leaders who empower their followers. People prefer to stay with a company because of their managers. Organisations must create induction programmes that help employees to acclimatise within the first 10 to 20 days.

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**CHAPTER 4**

**RESEARCH ARTICLE 3**

## **JOB INSECURITY, PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AND WORK ENGAGEMENT IN SELECTED ORGANISATIONS**

### **ABSTRACT**

The primary objective of this research was to examine the relationship between job insecurity, psychological empowerment and work engagement of workers at selected organisations. The measuring instruments that were used included the Job Insecurity Inventory, the Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. A cross-sectional survey design was conducted among 442 employees at a government and manufacturing organisation. Results demonstrated a significant relationship between psychological empowerment and engagement. No practical significant relationship was found between job insecurity and psychological empowerment, or between job insecurity and engagement. Regression analysis indicated that meaning and impact have significant predictive value towards engagement. Affective job insecurity predicted engagement significantly.

### **OPSOMMING**

Die hoofdoelstelling van hierdie navorsing was om die verhouding tussen werksonsekerheid, psigologiese bemagtiging en werksbegeestering van werknemers in geselekteerde organisasie te bestudeer. Die meetinstrumente wat gebruik is, sluit die Werksonsekerheidsinventaris, die Psigologiese Bemagtigingsvraelys en die Utrecht Werkbegeesteringskaal in. 'n Dwarsneeopname-ontwerp is gebruik. Deelnemers aan die navorsing was 442 werknemers van 'n staats-, en vervaardigingsorganisasie. Resultate dui op 'n prakties beduidende verband tussen psigologiese bemagtiging en werksbegeestering. Daar is nie 'n prakties beduidende verband tussen werksonsekerheid en psigologiese bemagtiging, of tussen werksonsekerheid en werksbegeestering gevind nie. Regressie-analise dui aan dat sinvolheid en impak beduidende voorspellingswaarde teenoor werksbegeestering het, en dat affektiewe werksonsekerheid werksbegeestering voorspel.

Tremendous pressure is placed on organisations to improve their performance and increase their competitiveness in the continuously changing world of work (Ndlovu & Parumasur, 2005; Van Schalkwyk, 2004). The changing world of work is characterised by life-long learning, risk taking, speed and change, networking and measuring outputs (Wentzel & Geldenhuis, 2005). Within this constantly changing context, organisations face continuous challenges that require ongoing flexibility, including mergers and acquisitions, downsizing, re-engineering, buy-outs, strategic refocusing and continuous improvement strategies (Van Tonder, 2005). The environments in which employees all over the world function, demand more of them than ever before. Employees have to cope with many such demands, often including limited resources and a lack of control (Rothmann, 2003). Attracting and retaining new managers will depend on the quality of the work environments that organisations can create (Laschinger, Purdy, Cho, & Almost, 2006). Laschinger and Finegan (2005) are of the opinion that empowerment has become an increasingly important factor in determining employee health and well-being in these changing situations.

In a highly competitive environment, the first fundamental consideration for most organisations is their profitability (Van Schalkwyk, 2004). As organisations focus on competition and profit margins, workers are confronted with threats of real or anticipated job loss, causing many to feel insecure about their work life (Holm & Hovland, 1999). Managers should take into account that job insecurity is detrimental for the organisation (Chirumbolo & Areni, 2005), and that they have to implement strategies to reduce the levels of job insecurity in order to increase organisational outputs (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984).

The research of Sparks, Faragher, and Cooper (2001) suggests that perceptions of job insecurity correlate negatively with employee health and well-being. Since job insecurity is experienced as a threat and implies uncertainty, it has been described as a stressor (De Witte, 1999, De Cuyper & De Witte, 2005; Näswall, Sverke, & Hellgren, 2005; Van Tonder, 2005). The research results of Tytherleigh, Webb, Cooper, and Ricketts (2005) show that the most significant source of stress for higher education staff is job insecurity. Employees perceptions of job insecurity may cause organisations to suffer due to the associated costs of absenteeism, lower employee well-being, increased turnover of employees, a decrease in worker productivity, lower levels of commitment, job satisfaction, loyalty and trust in employers (Chirumbolo & Areni, 2005; Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Sparks et al., 2001).

According to Kanter, work behaviour is shaped in response to an individual's position and the circumstances arising within the organisation to a greater extent than in response to personality traits (Kanter, 1997). Power is derived from the ability to attain and organise support, resources and information (Kanter, 1997). Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) defined perceived organisational support (POS) as the beliefs of employees that their organisations care about their well-being. They identified supervisor support as one of the organisational attributes that positively influence employees' perceptions. According to Conger and Kanungo (1988), the experience of powerlessness can be positively influenced through empowerment. Menon and Hartmann (2002) state that to be empowered is to remove or reduce powerlessness and increase feelings of control over one's work environment. Conger and Kanungo (1988) describe empowerment as a process whereby conditions that foster powerlessness are identified and removed by enhancing an employee's belief in his or her self-efficacy, resulting in higher levels of job performance (Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000).

Employees who consider themselves empowered have reduced role conflict and ambiguity, as they have the ability to control their own environment. This reduces emotional strain on the employee (Greasley, Bryman, Price, Soetanto, & King, 2004). The restoration of meaning in work is seen as a method to foster an employee's motivation and attachment to work, thus resulting in work engagement (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004). Empowered employees derive a greater sense of meaning from their work (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004). Meaningfulness is experienced when work stimuli are perceived as motivationally relevant and worth engaging oneself in (Strümpher, 2003).

Greco, Laschinger, and Wong (2006) state that it is reasonable to expect that if employees experience an empowering workplace that fosters a fit between their expectations and their working conditions, they are less likely to experience burnout and more likely to be more engaged in their work. Strategies to increase engagement and reduce burnout are important for improving work environments (Greco et al., 2006). Work engagement provides a perspective on an individual's relationship with work through its focus on the work itself (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Engaged employees have a sense of energetic and effective connection with their work activities and they see themselves as able to deal completely with the demands of their jobs (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzáles-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). Laschinger, Wong, McMahon, and Kaufmann (1999) found that the combination of

leader empowering behaviour and empowerment resulted in lower levels of stress and increased work effectiveness. According to Saks (2006), job and organisational engagement were negatively related to intention to quit and positively to job satisfaction, organisational commitment and organisational citizenship.

Wilson, Deljoy, Vandenberg, Richardson, and McGrath (2004, p. 567) define a healthy work organisation “as the one characterised by intentional, systematic, and collaborative efforts to maximise employee well-being and productivity by providing well-designed and meaningful jobs, a supportive social-organisational environment, and accessible and equitable opportunities for career and work – life enhancement”. According to Mok and Au-Yeung (2002), management support and encouragement, information, autonomy, rewards and opportunities for development are important elements of organisational climate to enhance a sense of empowerment. They found that teamwork and leadership had the highest correlation with empowerment.

In their research Wilson et al. (2004) developed and validated a model of a healthy organisation consisting of six interrelated components, namely organisational attributes, organisational climate, job design, job future, psychological work adjustment and employee health and well-being. Employees’ perceptions of their organisation (organisational attributes) affect their perception of the climate (organisational climate) , which impacts the way people relate to their job (job design) and see their future in the organisation (job future), ultimately impacting their work adjustment (psychological work adjustment), health and well-being (employee health and well-being). Probst’s integrated model of job insecurity supports the model of Wilson. According to Probst (2002) certain antecedents stimulate the perception that one’s job is endangered. This perception will lead to an emotional or affective response (job attitudes) that will impact on individual and organisational outcomes (Probst, 2002).

According to Wilson et al. (2004), the healthy work organisation concept centres on the premise that it should be possible to identify the job and organisational characteristics of healthy organisations and that such organisation should have healthier and more productive workers. For this research the focus will be on employees’ perception of their future in the organisation (job insecurity) and the impact on psychological empowerment (psychological work adjustment) and work engagement (employee well-being) in pursuit of a healthy

organisation. Wallach and Mueller (2006) are of the opinion that empowerment is a mediator between organisational factors and positive outcomes for workers.

### **Job insecurity**

In order to gain insight into the antecedents and consequences of job insecurity, one could consider the person-environment fit theory of stress. The person-environment fit theory of stress emphasises the relationship between the person and the environment (Probst, 2002). An individual's perceived ability to cope with the demands of the environment will determine his or her stress levels. Failure to cope with potential future unemployment or loss of job features may have significant consequences (Probst, 2002).

De Witte (1997, 1999) explains that the subject of job insecurity relates to people in their work context who fear they may lose their jobs. Probst (2002, 2003) defines job security as the perceived stability and continuance of one's job. According to the definition proposed by Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984), job insecurity refers to powerlessness to stay in one's job in a threatened job situation. Mauno and Kinnunen (2002) elaborate on the powerlessness by stating that job insecurity consists of the severity of the changes, the importance and probability of losing a dimension of the total job or a job feature and powerlessness, referring to the employee's relative inability to control threats related to his job. De Witte (2000) conceptualises job insecurity as a two-dimensional perspective. Cognitive job insecurity relates to perceptions of possible job loss, whereas affective job insecurity relates to the fear of job loss.

Sverke and Hellgren (2002) make a distinction between qualitative and quantitative job insecurity. According to the quantitative or global view, job insecurity is defined as the threat of job loss or job uncertainty (De Witte, 1999; Mauno & Kinnunen, 2002). The qualitative view of job insecurity holds that job insecurity refers not only to the measure of uncertainty an employee feels about his or her job continuity, but also on the potential loss of quality in the employment relationship, such as deterioration in working conditions (Mauno & Kinnunen, 2002; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002).

De Witte (1999) as well as De Cuyper and De Witte (2005) report that job insecurity is a work stressor with harmful effects for employees. Research indicate that job insecurity is

negatively related to job satisfaction, engagement, positive work-home interference, commitment, employee health, performance and a positive relation with irritation and turnover intention (De Witte & De Cyuper, 2005; Tytherleigh et al., 2005). Näswall, Sverke, and Hellgren (2005) note that several studies have related job insecurity to mental health complaints, lower levels of job satisfaction, lower levels of job involvement, decreased trust and commitment, increased intention to leave and positive relationships with physical health complaints. Bernhard-Oettel, Sverke, and De Witte's (2005) research shows that perceptions of job insecurity, but not the type of employment contract, predicted health complaints.

Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) emphasise that the sense of powerlessness experienced by employees intensifies the experienced threat. According to Probst (2003), perceived powerlessness is more likely to be a moderator of job security than an aspect of job insecurity, as explained before by Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984). Despite their differences, these authors agree that perceived powerlessness is undoubtedly an important variable in the study of job insecurity (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Probst, 2003). Greco et al. (2006) reports that research suggest that empowering work environments can be an effective way to decrease organisational stress.

### **Psychological empowerment**

Empowerment has the potential to contribute towards organisations reaching their objectives (Spreitzer, 1995). Seibert, Silver, and Randolph (2004) found that the relationship between psychological empowerment, performance and job satisfaction is significant. Buckle (2003) identifies increased productivity, performance and motivation, quality products and services, lowered absenteeism and turnover as well as more creative employees as advantages of empowerment for the organisation. Job satisfaction, commitment, energy, high performance and willingness to learn were identified as some of the advantages for the individual (Buckle, 2003).

Conger and Kanungo (1988) are of the opinion that empowerment is an emerging construct used by theorists to explain organisational effectiveness. Conger and Kanungo (1988) and Smith and Mouly (1998) distinguish between relational and motivational empowerment. As a relational concept, empowerment is concerned with management style and employee

participation. As a motivational construct, empowerment is focused on the personal aspects of the individual, including discretion, autonomy, power and control.

Conger and Kanungo (1988) focus on the motivational approach and conceptualised empowerment as psychological enabling. Menon (2001) defines motivational empowerment as a cognitive state characterised by a sense of perceived control, competence and goal internalisation. Spreitzer's (1995) model defines empowerment as intrinsic motivation manifested in four cognitions reflecting an individual's orientation to his or her work role. The four cognitions are meaning (subjective assessment of importance of the job), competence (self-efficacy), self-determination (autonomy and freedom of choice) and impact (one's influence on work outcomes). Together these four cognitions reflect one's active (an orientation in which the individual wishes and feels able to shape his or her work role and context) rather than passive orientation to a work role (Spreitzer, 1995).

Laschinger (2001) mentions that efforts to improve psychological empowerment may result in improved productivity and retention as well as satisfaction. A greater match between the person and six domains of his or her job environment, namely sustainable workload, feelings of control, appropriate recognition and rewards, a supportive work community, fairness and meaningful and valued work can increase the probability of engagement with work (Maslach et al., 2001).

### **Work engagement**

Luthans and Peterson (2001) state that employees can be emotionally, cognitively or physically engaged. Maslach et al. (2001) describe work engagement as being characterised by energy, involvement and efficacy, which are considered the direct opposites of their burnout dimensions namely exhaustion, cynicism and lack of efficacy. They assess engagement as the opposite scores on the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Schaufeli et al. (2002) define and operationalise engagement in its own right. They consider burnout and work engagement to be opposite concepts that should be measured independently.

Work engagement can be defined as a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfilment in employees that is likely to remain stable over time (Schaufeli et al., 2002). According to Schaufeli et al. (2002), engagement consists of the following dimensions:

Vigour is characterised by high energy levels and mental resilience, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, not easily becoming fatigued, and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Dedication refers to strong involvement in one's work, characterised by enthusiasm and pride, and feeling inspired and challenged by work. Absorption is characterised by total concentration on one's work. It refers to a pleasant state where one is totally immersed in one's work, finding it difficult to detached oneself from the work. Hotta, Kawaguchi and Yoshizawa (2005) define engagement as the dynamic relationship between an organisation and its members and how they contribute to each other's growth.

### **The relationship between job insecurity, psychological empowerment and work engagement**

According to Probst (2002), job insecurity has major negative consequences at organisational and individual level resulting in more psychological distress and lower organisational commitment. Laschinger et al. (2006) tested a model derived from the Theory of Perceived Organisational Support (POS) (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, and Sowa, 1986) in a sample of nurse managers. They found that job conditions such as job security and autonomy (empowerment) were strongly related to POS. At the same time POS strongly relates to outcomes such as emotional exhaustion (burnout) and energy (engagement). De Witte and De Cyper (2005) found that job insecurity is negatively related to engagement. Job insecurity predicted engagement among temporaries and permanent employees (De Witte & De Cyper, 2005).

Researchers agree that perceived powerlessness (lack of psychological empowerment) is undoubtedly an important variable in the study of job insecurity (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Probst, 2003). According to De Witte (2005), job insecurity induces strain for the worker involved. In response to this, Greasley et al. (2005) found that workers who consider themselves empowered have reduced levels of emotional strain. This is supported by Cho, Laschinger, and Wong's (2006) study where they report that empowerment had a direct positive effect on the areas of work life, which in turn negatively affected emotional exhaustion.

Disempowered employees have to put specific efforts, energy and time in to adapt to the pressures of job insecurity. It is clear that this energy cannot then be used for achieving

organisational goals (De Witte, 2005). The lack of high levels of energy may be indicative of a lack of vigour, which implies low levels of work engagement (Maslach et al., 2001). Lower levels of engagement leads to less productive and satisfied workers (Luthans & Peterson, 2001).

Greco et al. (2006) reports that the impact of leader's behaviour on engagement was fully mediated by structural empowerment, that is, leadership affected engagement through its effect on empowerment. Schaufeli et al. (2002) identified dedication as one of the subscales of work engagement. Dedication is characterised by feeling inspired and challenged by work stimuli. By welcoming challenges that are worth engaging with, one will experience meaning (subscale of psychological empowerment) in his work (Strümpher, 2003).

Greco et al. (2006) hypothesised that leader empowerment behaviour will be predictive of higher levels of empowerment which in turn is predictive of a greater fit between the six areas of work life and, ultimately engagement. The level of work engagement can be increased by matching the person and domains of his or her job environment, for instance, feelings of control and meaningful and valued work (Maslach et al., 2001). Spreitzer (1995) has identified both of these domains as subscales of psychological empowerment, implying that psychological empowerment can increase the probability of work engagement. Laschinger (2001) found that psychological empowerment had a direct negative effect on job strain and a positive effect on job satisfaction.

One of Spreitzer's (1995) cognitions identified in his model, namely competence (self-efficacy), relates well to work engagement. Engaged employees see themselves as able to deal completely with the demands of their jobs (self-efficacy) (Llorens, Salanova, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2007; Schaufeli et al., 2000). Maslach et al. (2001) mention the existence of a strong correlation between self-efficacy and engagement. Sarmiento, Laschinger, and Iwasiw (2003) support them by reporting that empowerment was negatively related to all burnout dimensions, most strongly to emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation. Laschinger, Wong, and Greco (2006) found that empowerment had an indirect effect on burnout through nurses' perceived fit in the six areas of work life.

May et al. (2004) note that, in order for the human spirit to thrive at work, individuals must be able to engage themselves cognitively, emotionally and physically. Kahn (1990) proposes

that three psychological foundations of engagement can be identified, namely meaningfulness, availability and safety. According to Luthans and Peterson (2001) and May et al. (2004), meaningfulness and availability play significant roles in leading to engagement. Meaningfulness is the psychological energy resulting from the feeling that job tasks are valuable and make a difference, while availability refers to maintaining the psychological, emotional and physical resources to immerse the self in work (Ford & Poms, 2005). Nelson and Simmons (2003) state that meaningful work promotes engagement, even if the work environment is demanding.

According to May et al. (2004), individuals who feel psychologically safe are likely to feel safer to engage themselves more fully. One would thus expect that a person in a psychologically unsafe situation, for example a less empowered or job insecure employee, would be less engaged. Kanter (1977) argues that employees' behaviour is a reaction to the situation in which they find themselves. When people feel empowered the organisation is likely to benefit both in terms of the attitudes of employees and the organisation's effectiveness. Most of the research provides support for Kanter's organisational empowerment theory. Higher levels of empowerment are associated with lower levels of burnout (higher levels of engagement) and work satisfaction.

## **Hypotheses**

Based on the cited research, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H<sub>1</sub>: A significant positive relationship exists between cognitive and affective job insecurity and psychological empowerment.
- H<sub>2</sub>: A significant negative relationship exists between cognitive and affective job insecurity and work engagement.
- H<sub>3</sub>: A significant positive relationship exists between psychological empowerment and work engagement.
- H<sub>4</sub>: Job insecurity predicts psychological empowerment.
- H<sub>5</sub>: Job insecurity and psychological empowerment predicts work engagement.

## **METHOD**

### **Research design**

A cross-sectional survey design was used to reach the research objectives. This design can be used to assess interrelationships among variables at one point in time, without any planned intervention (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997). Since no intervention was planned, a correlation design was utilised (Huysamen, 1993). According to Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1997), this design is ideally suited when the aim of the study is predictive and descriptive in nature.

### **Participants**

The sample for this study consists of employees from a government and a manufacturing organisation. The population includes workers from all levels, ranging from semi-skilled to professionals. The lowest level employees have a literacy level adequate to allow for the valid completion of the questionnaires. The biographical characteristics of the study population are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1 indicates that 52% of the study population represented the black cultural group. Sixty-two percent males participated in this study. The largest group of participants in terms of age (44%) fell in the 35 years and younger group and 70% had up to Grade 12 level of education. The majority of the study population has been employed by the organisations for periods of between two and five years (31%) and six and ten years (22%).

Table 1  
*Characteristics of the Participants*

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	35 years and younger	196	44
	36-45 years	121	27
	46 years and older	95	22
	Missing	30	7
Gender	Male	272	62
	Female	162	37
	Missing	8	1
Race	Black	227	52
	White	160	36
	Others	35	8
	Missing	20	4
Qualification	Up to grade 12	311	70
	Diploma and degree	100	23
	Postgraduate qualification	30	7
	Missing	1	-
Years of service	Less than 5 years	138	31
	6 – 10 years	96	22
	More than 10 years	199	45
	Missing	9	2
Industry	Manufacturing	164	37
	Government	278	63

### **Measuring instruments**

Three standardised questionnaires were used in the empirical study, namely the Job Insecurity Inventory (De Witte, 2000), the Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire (Spreitzer, 1995) and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Biographical information was also gathered regarding participants' cultural group, gender, age, qualification and tenure.

The *Job Insecurity Inventory* (JII) (De Witte, 2000) was primarily developed to measure employees' feelings towards job insecurity. It consists of eleven items that summarise both the cognitive and affective dimensions of job insecurity and are arranged along a 5-point

scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to five (*strongly agree*). An example of a statement relating to cognitive job insecurity would be, "I think that I will be able to continue working here", whereas an example of a statement relating to affective job insecurity would be, "I am worried about keeping my job". De Witte (2000) reported that the items of the questionnaire measuring total insecurity, displayed a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0,92 with both scales having high reliability. The six items measuring cognitive job insecurity displayed a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0,90 and the five items of affective job insecurity had a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0,85 (De Witte, 2000). According to De Witte (2000) the content of the cognitive and affective scales do not overlap, but have a high underlying correlation. Elbert (2002) obtained an alpha coefficient of 0,84, Sauer (2003) an alpha coefficient of 0,75, Moeletsi (2003) an alpha coefficient of 0,93 and Van Greunen (2004) an alpha coefficient of 0,84 for total insecurity in their South African studies. Sauer (2003) obtained an alpha coefficient of 0,83 for the cognitive scale and 0,86 for the affective scale. De Witte (2000), Elbert (2002), Sauer (2003), Moeletsi (2003) and Van Greunen (2004) reported acceptable levels of validity for the questionnaire.

*The Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire (PEQ)* (Spreitzer, 1995) was used in this study. Spreitzer (1995) develop the scales by adapting items from previous research. Meaning items were taken directly from Tymon (1988), competence items from Jone's (1986) self-efficacy scale, impact from Ashforth's (1989) helplessness scale and self-determination items from Hackman and Oldham's (1980) autonomy scale. The scale contains three items for each of the four sub-dimensions (meaning example "the work I do is meaningful to me", competence "I have mastered the skills necessary for my job", self-determination "I have significant autonomy in determining how to do my job" and impact "I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department") of psychological empowerment. Respondents indicate the extent to which they agree with each statement on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Konczak, Stelly, and Trusty (2000) report an alpha coefficient of 0,86 for the total scale; Stander and Rugg (2001) 0,84; Avolio (2004) 0,84; Seibert et al. (2004) 0,88; Jansen (2004) 0,82; and Laschinger (2001) found Cronbach alphas between 0,87 and 0,92. Liden et al. (2000) report that the construct validity of each of the four sub-dimensions of the scale found to contribute to the overall degree of felt empowerment: meaning (0,92); competence (0,77); self-determination (0,85); and impact (0,86). Convergent and discriminate validity of the

empowerment measures in the industrial sample indicate an excellent fit: (AGFI) (adjusted goodness-of-fit index) = 0,93; RMSR (root-mean-square residual) = 0,04; NCNFI (non-centralised normal fit index) = 0,98. Spreitzer, (1995) suggested the need for continued work on discriminant validity.

The *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2002), a 17-item self-report questionnaire, was used to measure work engagement. The questionnaire is arranged along a 7-point frequency scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*always*). The UWES has three scales, namely vigour (6 items), dedication (5 items), and absorption (6 items). Examples of items relating to the three dimensions are the following: "I am bursting with energy in my job" (vigour); "I find my work full of meaning and purpose" (dedication); and "When I am working, I forget everything around me" (absorption). High levels on the 3 scales point to high levels of work engagement. Cronbach alpha coefficients were determined between 0,68 and 0,91 (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Storm (2002) reported alpha coefficients of 0,78 (vigour), 0,89 (dedication) and 0,78 (absorption) in her study with the South African Police Service. Durán, Extremera, and Rey (2004) reported alpha coefficients of 0,82 (vigour), 0,85 (dedication) and 0,81 (absorption). Ford and Poms (2005) reported Cronbach alpha coefficients between 0,67 and 0,87.

Factor analysis done by Schaufeli et al. (2002) indicates that the three-factor model fits reasonably well to the data with the RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) and the CFI (Comparative Fit Index) satisfying their criteria of 0,08 and 0,09 respectively, and NFI (Norm Fit Index) and NNFI (Non-Normed Fit Index) approaching 0,09. Storm and Rothmann's (2003) research suggests that a one-factor model fits the data better than the three-factor model. They found that further exploratory work revealed substantial improvement in model fit with the deletion of four items. According to Van Zyl (2005), the goodness-of-fit statistics in her study indicates acceptable levels of model fit for the TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index) and CFI (Comparative-Fit Index). The three-factor model obtained an overall good fit with the data. The RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) value was lower than 0,08 and is indicative of acceptable fit. The GFI (Goodness-of-Fit Index) indicated a value of 0,83, AGFI (Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index) a value of 0,78; PGFI (Parsimony Goodness-of-Fit Index) a value of 0,63 and NFI (Normed-Fit Index) a value of 0,83, which were below the acceptable levels of fit.

## Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis was carried out with the SPSS 15.0 program (SPSS Inc., 2006), using descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients.

Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis) were used to analyse the data. Structural equation modelling, as implemented in AMOS (Arbuckle, 2006), was used to test the factorial model of the PEQ, by using the maximum likelihood analysis (See chapter 2).

Cronbach alpha coefficients were used to assess the internal consistency of the measuring instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995). Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationships between variables. The level of statistical significance is set at  $p < 0,01$ . Steyn (2002) criticises the sole use of statistical significance testing and recommends that effect sizes be established to determine the importance of a statistically significant relationship. While the reporting of effect sizes is encouraged by the American Psychological Association (APA) in their Publication Manual (APA, 1994), few of these measures are ever found in published reports (Kirk, 1996; Steyn, 2002). Therefore, effect sizes will be computed to assess the practical significance of relationships in this study. A cut-off point of 0,30, which represents a medium effect (Cohen, 1988; Steyn, 2002), was set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients.

Regression analyses were carried out to determine the percentage variance in the dependent variable that is predicted by the independent variables. A correlation can be better understood by determining  $R^2$  (Cohen, 1988). The square of the correlation coefficient indicates the proportion of variance in any two variables, which is predicted by the variance in the other.

## RESULTS

Structural equation modelling, as implemented in AMOS (Arbuckle, 2006), was used to test the factorial model of the PEQ (See chapter 2). One, two, three, four and five-factor models were considered. The following indices produced by AMOS were used in this study: the Chi-square statistic, which is the test of absolute fit of the model, the Goodness-of-Fit Index

(GFI), the Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI), the Normed-Fit Index (NFI), the Comparative-Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and the Root-Means-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). The four-factor structure of psychological empowerment as measured by the PEQ, namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact, was confirmed by literature (Buckle, 2003; Malan, 2002; Moeletsi, 2003; Sauer, 2003; Spreitzer, 1995).

A simple principle components analysis was conducted on the 11 items of the JII on the total sample of employees. Analysis of eigenvalues (larger than one) and scree plot indicated that two factors could be extracted, explaining 51% of the variance. Two items were problematic. Items 10 and 11 both loaded on the affective subscales instead of the cognitive scale. Buitendach's (2005) research in selected organisations reports the same problem with the specific items. These two items were removed from the analyses. Literature (De Witte, 2000; Elbert, 2002; Sauer, 2003; Moeletsi, 2003; Van Greunen, 2004) confirms that job insecurity, as measured by the JII, has a two-factor structure, namely cognitive job insecurity and affective job insecurity.

A simple principal component analysis was conducted on the 17 items of the UWES on the total sample of employees. Analysis of eigenvalues (larger than one) and scree plot indicated that only one factor could be extracted, explaining 52% of the total variance. This result supports the research of Storm and Rothmann (2003) who found a one-factor model fitted the data best in a sample of police members in South Africa. For the purpose of this study, a one-factor structure will be used. Further research is necessary regarding the construct validity and factor structure of the UWES questionnaire within the South African context.

Descriptive statistics and Cronbach alpha coefficients of the JII, PEQ and UWES for employees working in selected organisations are reported in Table 2. The information reflected in Table 2 indicates that the scores on all the scales have a normal distribution (skewness and kurtosis smaller than one), except total job insecurity and competence. Acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficients were obtained on all the scales, with the exception of the cognitive job insecurity subscale (0,65) which fell marginally below the 0,70 cut-off point (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995). It can be concluded that the results obtained from the measuring instruments are reliable.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics and Cronbach Alpha Coefficients of the Measuring Instruments*

Measuring instrument	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	$\alpha$
Cognitive job insecurity	3,13	0,89	-0,25	-0,14	0,65
Affective job insecurity	2,80	0,90	0,02	-0,14	0,76
Job insecurity (total)	2,90	0,63	-0,43	1,09	0,70
Meaning	5,25	1,47	0,83	0,24	0,83
Competence	5,59	1,31	-1,24	1,50	0,73
Self-determination	4,90	1,40	0,62	0,09	0,77
Impact	4,45	1,48	0,45	0,32	0,77
Psychological empowerment	5,05	1,12	0,69	0,86	0,88
Work engagement	4,09	1,34	0,59	0,21	0,94

The alpha coefficients for job insecurity are lower than in other South African research. Elbert (2002) obtained an alpha coefficient of 0,84 and Van Greunen (2004) an alpha coefficient of 0,84. Sauer (2003) obtained an alpha coefficient of 0,83 for the cognitive scale and 0,86 for the affective scale, while Moeletsi (2003) obtained an alpha coefficient of 0,91 for the cognitive scale and 0,86 for the affective scale.

Next, the correlation coefficients between the JII, PEQ and UWES were analysed. The results are reported in Table 3.

Table 3 shows that no practically significant correlation coefficients were found between the job insecurity scale and the psychological empowerment scale or its sub-dimensions. Statistically significant negative correlation coefficients were found between total job insecurity and all the sub-scales of psychological empowerment. Higher levels of job insecurity correlate with lower levels of perceived empowerment. Cognitive job insecurity, that is the continuity of certain dimensions of the job, correlate statistically negatively with total, meaning, self-determination and impact sub-scales of psychological empowerment. Affective job insecurity, which is uncertainty about job continuity, correlate statistically negatively with impact. Based on the above-mentioned, hypothesis 1, stating that a

significant relationship exists between job insecurity and psychological empowerment, will therefore be partly accepted.

Table 3

*Correlation Coefficients between the JII, PEQ and UWES*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Job insecurity	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Cognitive job insecurity	0,50*††	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3. Affective job insecurity	0,81*††	0,04	-	-	-	-	-	-
4. Psychological empowerment	-0,21*	-0,18*	-0,12	-	-	-	-	-
5. Meaning	-0,17*	-0,14*	-0,09	0,82*††	-	-	-	-
6. Competence	-0,13*	-0,12	-0,04	0,77*††	0,66*††	-	-	-
7. Self-determination	-0,14*	-0,15*	-0,06	0,82*††	0,52*††	0,48*†	-	-
8. Impact	-0,23*	-0,14*	-0,19*	0,74*††	0,41*†	0,33*†	0,56*††	-
9. Work engagement	-0,19*	-0,06	-0,17*	0,45*†	0,52*††	0,32*†	0,27*	0,29*

\* Statistically significant  $p \leq 0,01$

† Correlation is practically significant  $r \geq 0,30$  (medium effect)

†† Correlation is practically significant  $r \geq 0,50$  (large effect)

Statistically significant negative correlation coefficients were found between total job insecurity and work engagement. Higher levels of job insecurity correlate with lower levels of experience of engagement. Affective job insecurity, which is uncertainty about job continuity, correlate statistically negatively with work engagement. No practically significant correlation was obtained between any of the job insecurity sub-scales and work engagement. Based on the above-mentioned, hypothesis 2, stating that a significant negative relationship exists between job insecurity and work engagement, can therefore only be partially accepted. A practically significant correlation of medium effect was obtained between the total psychological empowerment, competence and the work engagement scale. The meaning sub-scale obtained a practically significant correlation of large effect with work engagement. Work engagement correlates statistically significantly with self-determination and impact. This indicates that higher levels of psychological empowerment will be associated with

higher levels of job work engagement. Based on the above-mentioned, hypothesis 3 stating that a significant relationship exists between psychological empowerment and work engagement can therefore be accepted.

Next, multiple regression analyses were performed to test whether job insecurity predicts psychological empowerment, and whether job insecurity and psychological empowerment predict work engagement. Firstly, multiple regression analyses were carried out with job insecurity as independent variable and psychological empowerment as dependent variable.

Table 4

*Regression Analysis – Job Insecurity: Psychological Empowerment*

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	p	F	R	R <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>
	B	SE	Beta						
1						10,58*	0,22	0,05	0,04
	(Constant)	74,44	3,01						
	Affective JI	-0,38	0,14	-0,13	-2,66				0,01*
	Cognitive JI	-0,69	0,18	-0,18	-3,85				0,00*

\* $p < 0,05$  – statistically significant

From Table 4, it is evident that job insecurity was found to have a statistically significant amount of predictive value with regard to psychological empowerment ( $p \leq 0,05$ ). An  $R^2$  of 0,05 was obtained, suggesting that job insecurity predicted 5% of the variance in psychological empowerment. Affective and cognitive job insecurity do have significant predictive value with regard to psychological empowerment. Hypothesis 4, stating that job insecurity predicts psychological empowerment, can be accepted.

Next, the possible predictive value of job insecurity and psychological empowerment as independent variable and work engagement as dependent variable was investigated.

Table 5

*Regression Analysis – Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment: Work Engagement*

Model	Unstandardised coefficients	Standardised coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
	<i>B SE</i>	Beta						
1					10,89*	0,22	0,05	0,05
(Constant)	90,53 5,14		17,62	0,00*				
Affective JI	- 086 0,18	-0,22	-4,50	0,00*				
Cognitive JI	-0,62 0,35	-0,84	-1,75	0,08				
2					37,61*	0,55	0,30	0,29
(Constant)	39,08 6,99		5,59	0,00*				
Affective JI	-0,50 0,16	-0,14	-3,22	0,01*				
Cognitive JI	-0,14 0,31	-0,02	-0,44	0,66				
Competence	-0,20 0,32	-0,03	-0,61	0,54				
Meaning	2,70 0,31	0,52	8,88	0,00*				
Impact	0,52 0,25	0,10	2,05	0,04*				
Self-determination	-0,34 0,30	-0,06	-1,12	0,26				

\* $p < 0,05$  – statistically significant

From Table 5 it is evident that affective job insecurity was found to have a statistically significant amount of predictive value with regard to work engagement ( $p \leq 0,05$ ). An adjusted  $R^2$  of 0,05 was obtained, suggesting that affective job insecurity, that is uncertainty about job continuity, predicted 5% of the variance in work engagement. Van Greunen (2004) reported that 10% of the variance in work engagement is predicted by the two job insecurity subscales. Based on the above-mentioned, hypothesis 6 stating that job insecurity predicts work engagement can therefore be partially accepted.

A statistically significant increase in the  $R^2$  was obtained when the sub-scales of psychological empowerment was entered into the regression analysis (change in  $R^2 = 25\%$ ). Both meaning and impact are predictors of work engagement, with meaning the strongest

predictor. Meaning and impact predicted 25% of the variance in work engagement. Results further showed that competence and self-determination did not have a significant amount of predictive value with regard to work engagement. Based on the results support was found for Hypothesis 5.

## DISCUSSION

The objectives of this research were to determine the relationship between insecurity, psychological empowerment and work engagement. Further objectives included determining whether job insecurity can be used to predict the level of psychological empowerment, and whether job insecurity and psychological empowerment can be used to predict the level of work engagement.

Psychological empowerment showed a practically significant positive correlation of medium effect with the work engagement scale, implying that increased levels of psychological empowerment are associated with higher levels of work engagement. A practically significant positive correlation of large effect was obtained between meaning and work engagement. This shows that when employees' levels of meaning-related work increases, their levels of work engagement also increase. Nelson and Simmons (2003) confirm this by stating that, even if the situation is demanding, meaningful work promotes engagement.

No practically significant correlation coefficients were found between the job insecurity scale and the psychological empowerment scale or its sub-dimensions. Sauer (2003) confirms insignificant correlations between the job insecurity scale and psychological empowerment as well as its sub-dimensions. These findings contradict other available literature, where researchers agree that perceived powerlessness (lack of psychological empowerment) is an important variable in the study of job insecurity (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Probst, 2003).

Greasly et al. (2004) found that workers who perceive themselves as empowered, experience reduced levels of job insecurity (emotional strain). Moeletsi (2003) reported a practically significant negative correlation of medium effect between total job insecurity and total psychological empowerment. She reported practically significant negative correlations of

medium effect between cognitive job insecurity and competence, self-determination and impact.

No practically significant correlation was obtained between job insecurity and work engagement. Van Greunen (2004) also found no practically significant correlations between job insecurity and its subscales, and work engagement and its subscales. However, a statistically significant negative correlation of medium effect was obtained between affective job insecurity subscale and the work engagement scale. Literature confirms that job insecure individuals will be less engaged towards their work (May et al., 2004).

Affective job insecurity predicted 5% of the variance in work engagement. It was found that cognitive job insecurity did not have a significant amount of predictive value with regard to work engagement. Literature supports these findings by stating that individuals' reactions to job insecurity include reduced work effort (De Witte, 2005; Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). The lack of high levels of energy may be indicative of a lack of vigour, which indicates low levels of work engagement (Maslach et al., 2001).

Both meaning and impact are predictors of work engagement, with meaning the strongest predictor. Meaning and impact predict 25% of the variance in work engagement. Results further showed that competence and self-determination did not have a significant amount of predictive value with regard to work engagement.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

According to May et al. (2004), meaningfulness and availability play significant roles in leading to engagement. Meaningfulness is the psychological energy resulting from the feeling that job tasks are valuable, while availability refers to maintaining the psychological, emotional and physical resources to immerse the self in work (Ford & Poms, 2005). Nelson and Simmons (2003) found that meaningful work promotes engagement. Managers must create work environments where people experience their work as meaningful and that they can influence events. By clarifying expectations with subordinates, managers will have a better understanding of what will be experienced by people as meaningful.

Sarmiento, Laschinger, and Iwasiw (2003) report that empowerment and burnout were significant predictors of job satisfaction, with empowerment the stronger one. A significant

relationship between psychological empowerment and engagement was found. With larger spans of control, managers experience more pressure to deliver with less time to develop and support their people. In the current business environment it is crucial that managers empower their people. That will enable them to optimise their potential and productivity. The manager plays an importance role as leadership in creating engaging, satisfying work environments (Greco et al., 2006).

Research by Greco et al. (2006) suggests that leaders must develop structures that empower people and create a greater sense of fit between expectations of work life quality and organisational goals thereby creating greater work engagement. This can positively impact on recruitment and retention, absenteeism and job satisfaction.

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## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, the conclusions and limitations regarding the literature and empirical study are discussed. Recommendations for the organisation and future research are also made.

#### 5.1 CONCLUSIONS

The first empirical objective of this study was to determine the reliability and validity of the Measuring Psychological Empowerment questionnaire (PEQ), and to determine whether there are differences in the levels of demographic groups. Menon (2001) defines psychological empowerment as a cognitive state characterised by a sense of perceived control, competence, and goal internalisation, and Spreitzer (1995) defines psychological empowerment as a motivational construct manifested in four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Together these four cognitions reflect an active, rather than a passive, orientation to a work role.

The scales showed acceptable internal consistencies. Structural Equation Modelling confirmed a four-factor model for PEQ, as well as construct equivalence of the scales for two randomly selected samples. Statistically significant differences were found between the levels of psychological empowerment of employees in terms of age, race, tenure, position within the company and type of industry. Practically significant differences were also found between organisational levels and different types of industries.

The second empirical objective was to conceptualise leader empowering behaviour and study the relationship with job satisfaction and organisational commitment. According to Bell (2004) the biggest challenge facing management today is how to create an atmosphere of camaraderie in the business environment, and how to relate to one's employees on a personal level while maintaining a stringent attitude towards performance. This challenge is placed in the hands of the leader who is expected to display empowering behaviour. Robbins (2003) indicates that the success or failure in any organisation is determined by how its leadership optimises the use of its human capital.

Spreier, Fontaine, and Malloy (2006) identified six styles of leadership that managers and executives use to motivate, reward, direct and develop others. These are directive, which entails strong, sometimes coercive behaviour; visionary, which focuses on clarity and communication; affiliative, which emphasises harmony and relationships; participative, which is collaborative; and democratic, pacesetter, which is characterised by personal heroics and coaching, which focuses on long-term development and mentoring (Spreier et al. 2006).

According to Pitts (2005), leaders who focus on the human aspect of leadership, treating subordinates equally and valuing their work, serve to empower those below them in the formal hierarchy. Democratic leaders who value the input of subordinates and provide only general supervision empower employees to make good decisions, take risks, and do their work well. Delegation of authority, accountability for outcomes, leading by example, encouraging, showing concern, participative decision making, information sharing, coaching and developing of people have been identified as leadership behaviours that will empower people (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Konczak, Stelly, & Trusty, 2000).

The empirical results confirmed a one-factor model of leadership empowerment behaviour. The scales for LEBQ, MSQ and OCQ showed acceptable internal consistencies. The results demonstrated a significant relationship between leader empowering behaviour, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. The results indicated that leader empowering behaviour has significant predictive value towards job satisfaction.

The third empirical objective was to determine the relationships between psychological empowerment, job insecurity, and work engagement of employees in selected organisations. Van Vuuren (1999) conceptualises job insecurity as the concern felt by a person for the continued existence of his or her job and identifies three components. The first refers to a subjective experience or perception. The second to the uncertainty about the future and the third component includes doubts concerning the continuation of the job. Probst (2002) developed an integrated model of job insecurity stating that job insecurity occurs as a result of multiple antecedents that may stimulate the perception that the future of one's job is endangered. Failure to cope with potential future unemployment may have significant

consequences. Such consequences may affect employees' psychological empowerment (Probst, 2002).

According to Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzáles-Romá and Bakker (2002), engagement consists of the following three dimensions: Vigour is characterised by high energy levels and mental resilience when working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, not easily becoming fatigued, and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Dedication refers to strong involvement in one's work, characterised by enthusiasm and pride in one's job, and feeling inspired and challenged by it. Absorption is characterised by concentrating fully on one's work. It refers to a pleasant state where one is totally immersed in one's work and forgets everything around you.

Psychological empowerment showed a practically significant positive correlation with work engagement, implying that increased levels of psychological empowerment are associated with higher levels of work engagement. A practically significant positive correlation of large effect was obtained between meaning and work engagement. This shows that when employees' levels of meaning-related work increase, their levels of work engagement also increase. Nelson and Simmons (2003) confirm this by stating that even if the situation is demanding, meaningful work promotes engagement. No practically significant correlation coefficients were found between the job insecurity scale and psychological empowerment. Affective job insecurity predicted engagement significantly.

The last objective was to determine to what extent job insecurity and psychological empowerment will predict job work engagement in selected organisations. Affective job insecurity predicted 5% of the variance in work engagement. It was found that cognitive job insecurity did not have a significant amount of predictive value with regard to work engagement. Both meaning and impact are predictors of work engagement, with meaning the strongest predictor. Meaning and impact predict 25% of the variance in work engagement. Results further showed that competence and self-determination did not have a significant amount of predictive value with regard to work engagement.

In Figure 1 the model of the healthy work organisation by Wilson, Dejoy, Vandenberg, Richardson, and McGrath (2004) aligns the objectives of the study into context. The constructs used in this study are indicated in capital letters.

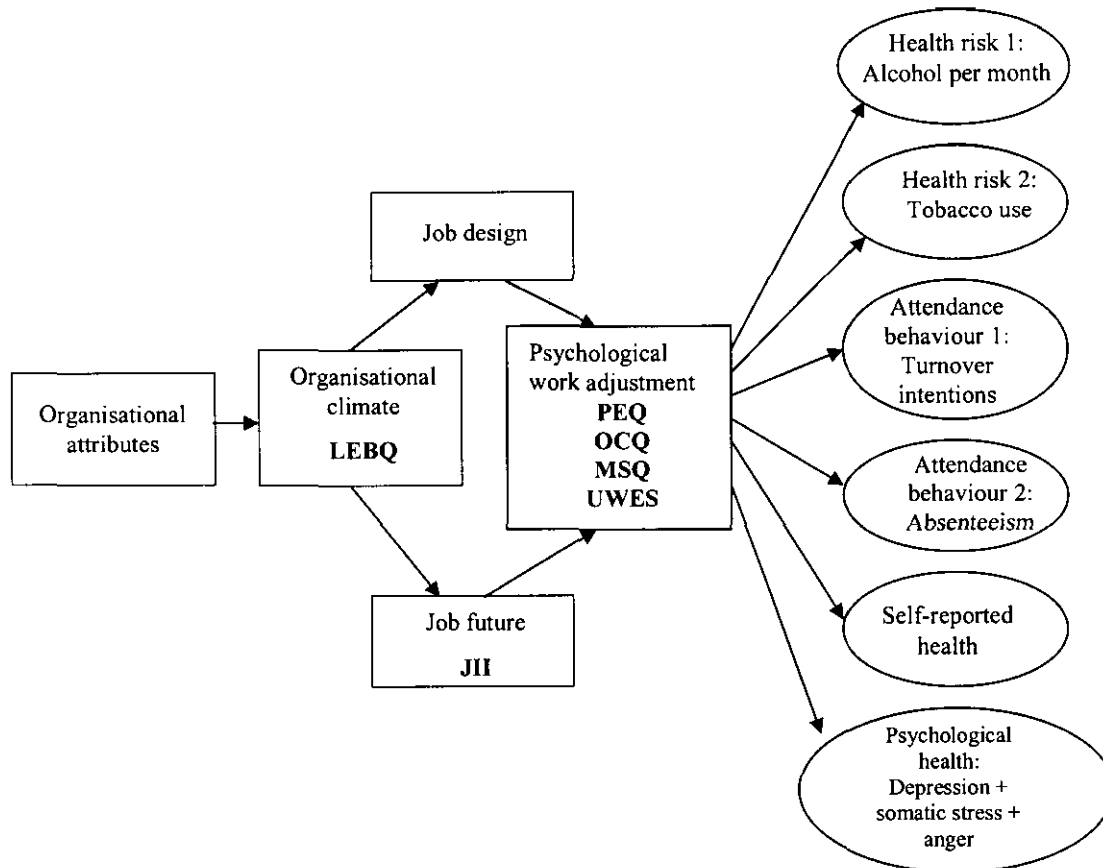


Figure 1. Model of healthy work organisation (Wilson et al., 2004)

According to Wilson et al. (2004) the healthy work organisation concept centres on the premise that it should be possible to identify the job and organisational characteristics of healthy organisations and such organisations should have healthier and more productive workers. For an organisation to have such a healthy and more productive workforce, it must have leaders that empower their followers in all aspects of the business. They stated that employees' perceptions of the organisation shape their perception of the climate (leader empowering behaviour), which impacts on the current and future relationship with the organisation (job insecurity), ultimately impacting on their work adjustment (psychological empowerment, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement), health and well-being.

## **5.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The use of a cross-sectional study design presents a limitation. It is the view of the researcher that this study must be viewed as a starting point for a longitudinal research project, which could focus on job insecurity, leader empowering behaviour, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and psychological empowerment over a period of time. Longitudinal data would allow for a better understanding of the true nature of psychological empowerment. Longitudinal research will enable the researcher to develop causal models.

The sample size obtained in some of the articles was not fully representative; a more representative sample would have been an ideal. Another limitation of this study is that measurements were based on self-reports only. It must be kept in mind that a self-report questionnaire has limitations.

Another limitation is the factor structures of the Leader Empowering Behaviour Questionnaire (LEBQ), as well as the Utrecht Work Engagement (UWES) scale. Factor analysis of eigenvalues and scree plot indicated one-factor models for both the instruments. Further research needs to be done on the constructs.

## **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.3.1 Recommendations for the organisations**

Based on the findings of this study and the challenges of talent management it is important that organisations pro-actively develop strategies to improve the levels of perceived empowerment, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment and work engagement of employees. It is the opinion of the researcher that this will influence employees' intention to leave and ultimately reduce turn-over rates of talented people.

Organisations need to create environments where people can optimise their potential and add value to the organisation. It is this researcher's opinion that the manager (as leader) will play a very important role in creating this culture. A number of steps would be recommended.

Firstly the manager must be developed as people developer. To be able to be a good developer of people managers must be coached and developed to:

- Understand human behaviour in an organisational context.
- Understand and apply a competency-based assessment process to assess potential.
- Observe behaviour and give feedback.
- Facilitate the compilation of learning and development plans.
- Act as coach and mentor. Structured coaching and mentorship programmes could be developed so as to give guidelines and guidance to the appointed leaders who would empower their subordinates through coaching and mentoring.

Secondly, managers must be able to manage expectations. This will ensure that managers treat employees as individuals. Birt, Wallis and Winternitz (2004) identify challenging and meaningful work, advancement opportunities, manager integrity and quality, empowerment and responsibility and new opportunities as the most important reasons why talented people will stay on in a company. These expectations must be clarified during the appointment process. In fact, companies can spend more time and effort during the selection process to ensure a good fit between the organisation's culture and the person. This can be the starting point of creating perceptions of empowerment. Woodruffe (2006) supports Birt et al. (2004) when he names the following non-financial motivators that can be important for people: advancement, autonomy, civilised treatment, employer commitment, pleasant working environment, support, being challenged, meaningful assignments and respect for the individual's work or life balance. The results of this study indicate that there is a strong correlation between what is important to people and the expected leadership empowering behaviour.

Thirdly, it is important that the organisation conducts employee-satisfaction audits from time to time. This will enable managers to react pro-actively to potential resignations and a lack of engagement towards the organisation. The results of such surveys have to be communicated to all role-players and action plans need to be developed.

A next step is to develop managers as retention experts, playing the following roles:

- Trust builder who builds trust and confidence with employees.
- Esteem builder, helping people to have confidence in them selves.

- Climate builder, developing a safe, enjoyable and fulfilling workplace.
- Flexibility expert, managing individual needs.
- Talent developer and coach, managing commitment, loyalty and personal development.
- Retention monitor, identifying and managing potential retention problems (Frank, 2006).

Lastly the manager must achieve leader empowering behaviour through:

- Delegation of authority, whereby employees could be given specific projects to complete with the necessary accountability and resources.
- Accountability, where subordinates are made responsible and accountable for performance, results and decisions.
- Self-directed decision making, to allow employees to make decisions about issues that affect work, rather than telling employees how things should get done.
- Information sharing among employees as soon as it is available.
- Participative decision making, by involving employees in decision making processes, and allowing a sense of ownership in implementing and execution of their duties.
- Coaching and developing people to become competent and to optimise potential.
- Creating meaningful work by means of job enrichment, job enlargement, multi-skilling, and multi-tasking.
- Improving employees' "impact" by allowing a great deal of control over what happens in their environment.

It is the personal opinion of the researcher that we should start with leadership development at an earlier stage by developing the leadership skills of children. South African managers are characterised by commitment, drive for results, energy and willingness to work hard and learn. We are, however, not competent in understanding and managing the dynamics of people's behaviour. This research highlighted the relationship between leadership behaviour and psychological empowerment on the one hand and energy (engagement) and job security on the other hand, as well as the influence on job satisfaction and organisational commitment. This information is valuable in the development of strategies to manage talent and performance.

### **5.3.2 Recommendations for future research**

The results of this research were obtained from a relatively small sample of selected organisations in South Africa, which might probably have limited generalisation of the findings. It is therefore recommended that a larger population group that is representative of the population on a national level be used in a sample.

The LEBQ needs further research on a larger sample group to determine the applicability and factor-structure within the South African context. The sub-scale information sharing must also be awarded more attention with the aim of improving the validity of the whole questionnaire. The further refinement and development of the instrument can add value to empowerment processes in South Africa.

More longitudinal studies should be conducted on the same constructs (leadership empowering behaviour, job insecurity and psychological empowerment) to organisations for the purpose of comparing the results and findings.

Studies with regard to empowerment should focus more on outcomes of psychological empowerment. This will provide a general understanding of the impact of psychological empowerment on aspects like turnover, absenteeism, level of drugs and alcohol use, safety, mental and physical health.

## **5.4 CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY FIELD**

This research made the following contribution to Industrial Psychology as a science:

### **5.4.1 Validation of an instrument to measure Psychological Empowerment**

Although empowerment has become a buzzword that is used in many different contexts, for example political, economical, and organisational empowerment, no or little comprehensive research exists in South Africa on the topic. Despite the increasing popularity of the concept empowerment, very few companies today are truly empowered and programmes intended to empower meet with very little success. This is the first research of this nature (number of

respondents and demographical groups) on the topic in South Africa. In the past research was limited to either smaller examples, or focused in one specific organisation. With this research it was possible to compare data across different industries. A standardised measuring instrument for psychological empowerment which has been proven valid and reliable within South Africa would be beneficial in various ways:

- It could be used to assess the perceived empowerment levels within organisations objectively. An empowered team or organisation will be more successful than a disempowered team or organisation. An objective analysis will direct interventions towards specific teams or business units.
- It could be used to assess the perceived empowerment level on an individual level. One way to define empowerment is to describe it as the optimisation of potential. People who feel competent and in control of their work environment will direct their energy towards positive outcomes. This is supported in the positive psychology field, and specifically the positive organisational psychology, with the focus on self-efficacy and meaning. People feeling powerless will waste energy in unproductive directions. In a coaching, counselling or mentorship relation this instrument can provide useful information for stimulating growth and development.
- It could be used as a reliable tool to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. Pre- and post-test results could be compared after an organisational development intervention. Completion time and understandable language make it an instrument that can be used at different levels.
- It can provide valuable information as part of an organisational climate study at the start of a change management intervention.

#### **5.4.2 Facilitating individual and organisational wellness**

The information obtained in this study can be of value when facilitating organisational development interventions, individual development, talent management strategies and training programmes in companies.

This study indicated that specific leadership behaviours positively influence job satisfaction and organisational commitment. The results identified delegation of authority, accountability

for outcomes, leading by example, encouraging, showing concern, participative decision making, information sharing, coaching and developing of people as leadership behaviours that will empower people and lead to satisfaction and commitment. It is the researcher's opinion that satisfaction and commitment will correlate with lower levels of turnover and intention to leave. The retention of talented people will be of the utmost importance for any company that wants to remain competitive. It is this researcher's opinion that the best retention strategy is people development, but at the same time, South African managers in general are not very good with people development. By concentrating on specific dimensions of leadership, training will be focused and needs-driven.

Not only will leader empowering behaviour contribute to the perceived empowerment, personal development, higher levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment and engagement of subordinates, but it will also lead to managers experiencing one of the most rewarding feelings, that is to see people optimising their potential.

#### **5.4.3 Facilitating individual energy management**

Scientific information on the relationship between psychological empowerment on the one hand and energy (engagement) and job security on the other hand is valuable in the development of strategies to manage energy and performance. Engagement, as talent management, is the buzz word in the business world today. Evidence of the impact of engagement on individual and organisational performance is frequently reported in the subject journals. This study illustrated that enhancing empowerment will add value to the organisation and the individual by having higher levels of engagement. Engaged employees are involved in and enthusiastic about their job, leading to happier and more productive people. The importance of the influence of meaning on engagement was once again illustrated. Coaches and mentors can facilitate a process to create meaning in the protégé's job.

#### **5.4.4 Indicating the need for a validated instrument to measure leader empowering behaviour**

Another contribution of this study is the indication that we need to spend some time and energy in South Africa to develop an instrument that will be valid and reliable in measuring leadership empowering behaviour within our unique situation. A one-construct instrument is not specific enough. A multi-factor instrument will provide behavioural, specific feedback for coaching and development purposes. This research was a first step in indicating the role of leadership empowering behaviour.

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