




**Role clarity, psychological empowerment
and individual work performance of trainee
accountants**

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requirements for the degree *Masters of Commerce in
Industrial Psychology* at the North-West University

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COMMENTS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The editorial style of the first chapter of the mini-dissertation follows the format prescribed by the Programme in Industrial Psychology (Vanderbijlpark Campus) of the North-West University.
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- This mini-dissertation is submitted in the form of a research article.
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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS AND DECLARATIONS

This research study was designed and carried out by two researchers at North-West University, Vanderbijlpark Campus. In the table below, the contributions of each researcher are indicated.

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Dr J Bosman

Supervisor, conceptualiser, statistician, and critical reviewer of the overall research study.

Furthermore, with this statement, the author and co-author declare and confirm their roles in this research study. This declaration also indicates that all authors are in agreement that the appropriate format was used for the submission of this mini-dissertation at the North-West University. All authors are also in agreement that the contents of this research study and any modified version thereof may be used and publicised by an author in peer-reviewed academic journals and/or presented at academic conferences.

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ETHICS CLEARANCE



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**EMS-REC FEEDBACK: Round Robin
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Your ethics application on, *Role clarity, psychological empowerment and individual work performance of trainee accountants*, that served on the EMS-REC meeting of 25 October 2019, refers.

Outcome:

Approved as a minimal risk study. A number NWU-01328-19-A4 is given for three years of ethics clearance.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bennie Linde'.

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SUMMARY

Title: Role clarity, psychological empowerment and individual work performance of trainee accountants

Key terms: Role clarity, psychological empowerment, individual work performance, trainee accountants, young professionals, millennials, quantitative, moderator

There is a constant demand for top-performing trainee accountants because once they qualify as chartered accountants, they can contribute meaningfully to the South African economy. Trainee accountants work in a highly regulated environment. Furthermore, they work in an environment that is characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA), which presents some challenges for young professionals. It is essential for organisations that employ trainee accountants to provide the necessary resources, such as role clarity and psychological empowerment, to ensure that trainees overcome challenges and perform effectively.

The study was conducted using a quantitative research approach, in the form of a cross-sectional design, with a convenient, non-probability sample of 348 ($n = 348$) trainee accountants. A biographical questionnaire was used to profile the participants, and the Measures of Role Conflict and Ambiguity Questionnaire (MRCAQ), Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire (PEQ) and the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) were used to investigate the relationships between the three constructs. To determine the relationships between the constructs, correlations were tested. The factor structure for role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and individual work performance was determined by using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

A statistically significant positive relationship was found between role clarity and meaning, competence, self-determination and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment and task performance, as well as contextual performance dimensions of individual work performance. Role clarity and counterproductive work behaviour dimension of individual work performance were found to have a statistically significant negative relationship. Moreover, meaning, competence, self-determination and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment and contextual performance and task performance dimensions of individual work performance were found to have a statistically significant positive relationship. Meaning, competence, self-determination and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment and counterproductive work behaviour dimension of individual work performance, were found to

have a statistically significant negative relationship. The results further indicate that the relationship between role clarity and task performance, as well as contextual performance dimensions of individual work performance, was moderated by lower order psychological empowerment factors. The relationship between role clarity and counterproductive work behaviour dimension of individual work performance was not moderated by meaning, competence, self-determination and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment.

Audit firms should develop strategies on how to clarify trainee accountants' role and ensure that they are psychologically empowered so that their performance is enhanced. Future research recommendations were provided.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The mini-dissertation focused on investigating the relationships between role clarity, psychological empowerment and individual work performance of trainee accountants. This study further attempted to establish whether lower order psychological empowerment dimensions moderate the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance of trainee accountants.

Chapter 1 comprises the problem statement, a literature review, research questions, research hypotheses, research design, research method, ethical considerations and chapter division.

1. Problem Statement

The global business environment has undergone steady, yet profound changes. The work environment is characterised by constant change, an unpredictable business climate and economic uncertainty (Othman & Mahmood, 2019). Organisations have to deal with changes caused by disruptive innovations, technological developments, globalisation, government regulations and various industry changes (Du & Chen, 2018; Millar et al., 2018). Organisations function in an environment that is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) (Potsangbam, 2017). Volatility refers to the rate at which change occurs and change that is relatively unstable and unpredictable; uncertainty refers to a lack of knowledge and does not allow opportunities to make predictions; complexity relates to the number of aspects that must be considered in decision-making, as well as their variety; and ambiguity refers to the lack of clarity (Bennett, & Lemoine, 2014). Employee roles, responsibilities and team dynamics are constantly changing in a VUCA environment (Potsangbam, 2017). The meaning of performance has also become progressively more intricate, ambiguous and dynamic, and these changes have become the norm in the work environment (Potsangbam, 2017). Performance has become a complex phenomenon; this is due to advancements in the economic and technological changes and enhancements.

The environment in which trainee accountants work is characterised by high demands caused by long working hours, tight deadlines, stress, regulations, workload issues, role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload (Forgarty et al., 2000; Hermanson et al., 2016; Mete et al., 2014). The demands of the audit environment may have negative consequences, such as preventing employees from working at their best because they lack the necessary characteristics to contribute successfully to the organisation's and work team's effectiveness (Asad & Khan, 2003; Wright & Bonett, 1997). Audit firms are usually the first real work environment in which young accounting graduates begin the first phase of

their careers. Therefore, they may lack the practical experience required to deal with the work demands.

An employee's workplace environment plays a vital role in the employee's performance as it affects their contribution to the organisation (Lynch, 2007). Organisations that train young professionals such as trainee accountants face a challenge in managing performance in the current VUCA environment (Du & Chen, 2018). The VUCA environment increases pressure on the performance of young trainees (Deloitte Millennial Survey, 2018). According to the Deloitte Millennial Survey (2018), young trainees feel that they are not well equipped to succeed in the Fourth Industrial Revolution and seek organisations that will assist them in developing the skills required as work positions evolve. Trainees working in a VUCA environment have a limited understanding of their roles and often go on an exploration process of trying to figure out what their work roles entail and what they want from their work (Meyer et al., 2018). Young trainees expect to be given clear instructions and performance feedback (Lourenco & Cronan, 2017). In the first year of training, young trainees are often challenged when they experience that the beliefs they had of work and the reality of practice are different (Higgins, 2017).

According to the Deloitte Millennial Survey (2018), there is an inconsistency between the young professionals' belief of what organisations should achieve and what the organisation prioritises. Trainees become anxious and uncertain as a result of the inconsistent perceptions of their work performance (Frögéli et al., 2019). The inconsistencies are aggravated by mentors having too much of their own work and not allocating enough time to clear the roles of the young professionals (Lourenco & Cronan, 2017). According to Henderson et al. (2016), reporting to several managers and working with more than one team along with abstract and complex tasks can compromise role clarity. Role clarity is defined as the extent to which work tasks, goals and expectations are clearly communicated to the employees and the employees understand what is required of them (Ritter et al., 2016; Sawyer, 1992). Moreover, role clarity is intended to minimise confusion in employees' work by clearing the expectations about what should be done (Henderson et al., 2016).

There are high numbers of trainees entering the labour market worldwide (Robak, 2017). Lourenco and Cronan (2017) indicated that the US Department of Labour predicted that 50% of America's workforce in 2020 would be constituted by young professionals. According to Statistics South Africa (2019), approximately 48.3% of young people were employed in various organisational sectors in South Africa. It is therefore crucial for organisations to build a labour force of competent young professionals who can be retained and assist

organisations to achieve strategic objectives. According to Thangavelu and Sudhahar (2017), there is a significant correlation between the employees' age group, experience and performance feedback. The study indicated that the relationship between the constructs was stronger amongst young professionals compared to the older professionals (Meyer et al., 2018; Thangavelu & Sudhahar, 2017). Furthermore, age is related to the individual's change in response to facing new challenges and responsibilities and this has an influence on the individual's performance effectiveness (Meyer et al., 2018).

Meyer et al. (2018) argue that young trainees tend to have low role clarity because they have limited work experience and limited work role understanding. Conversely, Rodriguez and Rodriguez (2015, p. 855) indicate that "clarity is not a commodity that is easily gained with thousands of data to digest every day". A lack of role clarity inhibits employees from aligning with the organisational strategies and objectives (Yadav & Rangnekar, 2013).

Furthermore, a lack of role clarity causes employees to experience anxiety and tension, which result in decreased levels of productivity (Thangavelu & Sudhahar, 2017). Researchers indicate that the more unclear the roles, the more employees are inclined to stay off work, experience dissatisfaction, stress, and as a result, performance levels decrease (Ritter et al., 2016; Vaananen et al., 2004). From the above it is clear that it is crucial for organisations to ensure that employees experience role clarity in order to align their individual work performance with the organisational strategy. Employees who receive clear task-related instructions and guidance have more certainty as they understand the role that they should play in the organisation (De Villiers & Stander, 2011).

The relationship between role clarity and work performance is not straightforward. Research has established that role clarity influences psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995). Psychological empowerment is referred to as the individuals' perception of control that they have about their own work (Spreitzer, 1995). Psychological empowerment is the state that individuals experience when they realise that they have the competence and autonomy to complete meaningful tasks (Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2018).

Hamed (2010) argues that role clarity is a predictor of psychological empowerment as employees must know what their roles entail and how to carry out the work function in order to determine if they have the competency to carry out tasks appropriately. Employees experience meaning and feel competent when they have clear work goals and know how to achieve them (Hamed, 2010; Park & Gursoy, 2012). In turn, psychological empowerment is positively related to performance (Stander & Rothmann, 2009). Employees who experience

meaning in their work feel a sense of belonging and this can enhance commitment and performance (Stander & Rothmann, 2010).

It is critical for young trainees to identify with their work because this allows them to perform at their best (Martins & Martins, 2014). It is argued that psychological empowerment increases employee participation and self-determination, which ultimately lead to individual and organisational performance (Hamed, 2010; Liu et al., 2019).

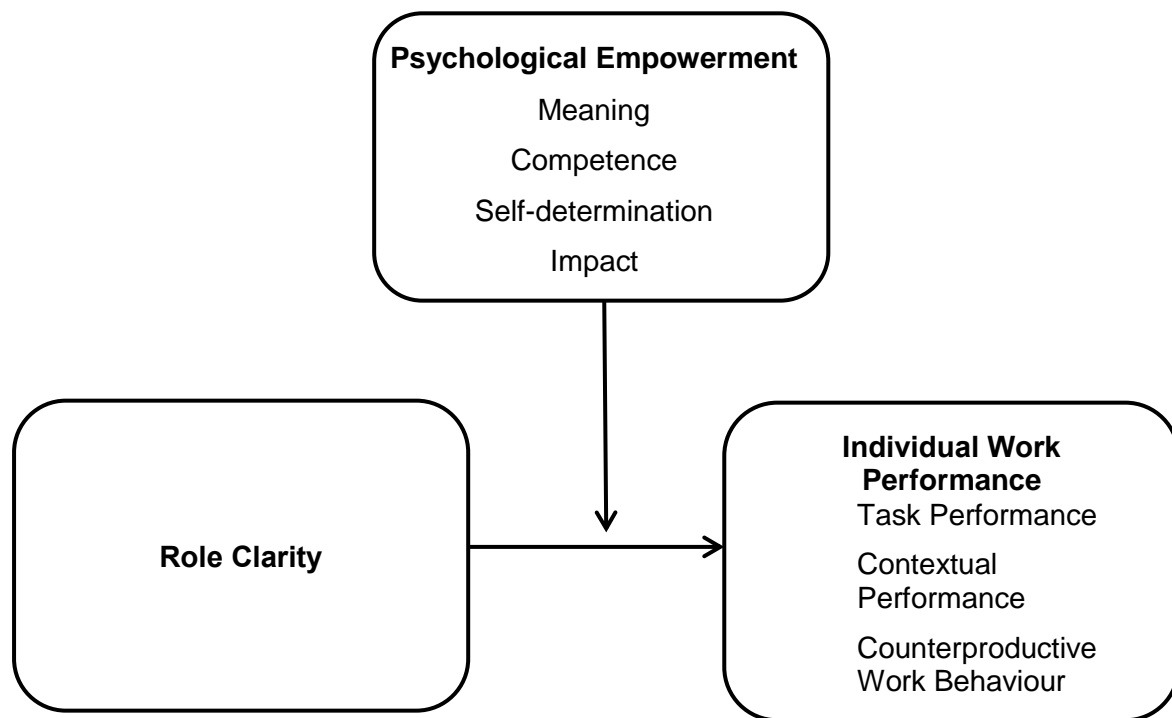
Currently, there is limited research that focuses on the relationship between role clarity, psychological empowerment and individual work performance of trainee accountants in a South African context. The present study makes a contribution in this regard. It will provide theoretical insight into the relationship between role clarity, psychological empowerment and individual work performance. Furthermore, the research findings will help organisations build a talent pool of trainee accountants to improve their skills and knowledge capital, which will practically contribute towards informing organisational intervention design and implementation to improve performance of trainee accountants working in a VUCA environment.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and individual work performance, and the possible moderating effect of lower order psychological empowerment dimensions on the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance of trainee accountants.

Based on the above, this study proposes the following hypothesised model in Figure 1.

Figure 1

A Hypothesised Model of Role Clarity and Individual Work Performance with Psychological Empowerment as a Moderator



2. Literature Review

In order to conceptualise the discussion above, a theoretical overview of role clarity, psychological empowerment and individual work performance will be provided below.

2.1. Role Clarity

There are numerous definitions of role clarity, although they have a common thread in that they relate to clear instructions. For example, De Villiers and Stander (2011) define role clarity as the degree to which an individual understands their work, as well as how it contributes to the organisation. Wang et al. (2016) define role clarity as the individual's belief that they have received clear instructions on what they are expected to do and how they are expected to conduct themselves in their position. Hall (2008) defines role clarity as the expectations and behaviours that an employee believes to be associated with work. Role clarity functions to minimise confusion in an employee's job function by knowing the work expectations (Henderson et al., 2016). As conceptualised by Hall (2008), role clarity consists of two aspects, namely goal clarity and process clarity. Goal clarity refers to the extent to which the results and targets of the work tasks are distinctly expressed, whereas process clarity refers to the degree to which an individual is certain about how to carry out the work

function (Hall, 2008). Role clarity is viewed as the degree of sureness, as opposed to vagueness of work expectations (Frögéli et al., 2019). For the purpose of this study, role clarity is conceptualised according to Kahn et al.'s (1964) view, who define role clarity as the extent to which an individual's work objectives and duties are conveyed clearly and whereby the individuals comprehend the procedures and behaviour required to accomplish the work objectives (Wang et al., 2016).

A lack of clear expectations will result in misdirected and ineffective behaviour in carrying out tasks, which ultimately leads to a decrease in performance (Hall, 2008; Ritter et al., 2016). There is less uncertainty when employers provide employees with clear guidelines on how work should be conducted (De Villiers & Stander, 2011). According to Schermuly et al. (2013), as well as Ritter et al. (2016), an employee's experience and perception of the work role is formed by the supervisors, who are also referred to as the "role sets". It is therefore crucial that supervisors provide full information regarding tasks and goal expectations (Schermuly et al., 2013). Employees perform better when provided with information regarding the goal and what is expected of them in their job roles (Frögéli et al., 2019). In a study about performance of a strategic business unit, it was found that the business unit performed better when employees were given information on performance expectations (Hall, 2008). Henderson et al. (2016) argue that role clarity facilitates collaborative work practices and promotes trust among team members. Researchers have shown that role clarity is associated with increased employee psychological empowerment (Hall, 2008; Spreitzer, 1995; Spreitzer et al., 1997; Wang et al., 2016).

2.2. Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment is related to how individuals think of themselves with regard to their roles at work (Stander & Rothmann, 2009; Stander & Rothmann, 2010). Psychological empowerment is a process that takes place when individuals feel they have control over their work and it is shaped by their perception of the organisational environment (Bester et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2019; Spreitzer, 1995; Stander & Rothmann, 2009). According to Silén et al. (2019), and Spreitzer (1995), psychological empowerment is defined as a multifaceted notion of motivation that consists of four dimensions, namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact.

Meaning has been referred to as the connection that employees have with their work (Spreitzer, 1995; Stander & Rothmann, 2010). Employees experience meaning when they believe that they add value through the work that they perform (Stander & Rothmann, 2010).

It is the extent to which the employees take responsibility for their own work and perform towards achieving work-related goals (Feiz et al., 2017). Meaning is the intrinsic value that employees find in their jobs (Wang et al., 2016). Employees who experience meaning are able to display innovative behaviour and solve work-related issues (Liu et al., 2019; Schermuly et al., 2013; Vrhovnik et al., 2018).

Competence demonstrates that employees trust that they have what it takes and possess the correct attributes to perform their work successfully (Spreitzer, 1995; Stander & Rothmann, 2009). Psychologically empowered employees see themselves as competent and are always ready to control their work and the results thereof (Feiz et al., 2017). Competent employees endure challenges, persist through difficult tasks and perform efficiently (Spreitzer, 1995; Vrhovnik et al., 2018).

Self-determination is when employees feel that their work is within their control and they have the autonomy to do it the way they feel is best (Spreitzer, 1995; Stander & Rothmann, 2009; Stander & Rothmann, 2010). Liu et al. (2019) argue that psychologically empowered employees believe that they have self-determination over their work performance and have an impact on their work environment. Employees can achieve work goals successfully when they have the autonomy to perform tasks in the way they see fit (Wang & Long, 2018). Employees who score high in self-determination can handle stressful conditions, are innovative, resilient, are able to adapt, and have self-control (Vrhovnik et al., 2018).

Impact refers to the amount of influence the employee has over the achievement of a work-related goal (Spreitzer, 1995; Stander & Rothmann, 2009; Stander & Rothmann, 2010). It is the employee's contribution and the feeling of making a difference when performing a task (Silén et al., 2019). According to Vrhovnik et al. (2018, p. 114), "impact also refers to the ability of an individual to attract others to listen to his idea". Impact is linked to the employees' ability to withstand difficult circumstances and be able to perform (Spreitzer, 1995; Wang & Long, 2018). Furthermore, impact refers to the extent to which an employee's behaviours produce anticipated positive effects on the work environment (Muduli, 2016). Self-determination and impact aid in the implementation of ideas (Schermuly et al., 2013).

Individuals who are empowered believe that they can operate independently and have an influence; they are more inclined to be innovative, and they are less bound by restrictions (Spreitzer, 1995). Huertas-Valdivia et al. (2018) argue that empowered employees will most likely predict problems, exhibit resourcefulness, sustain control within the sight of risk or vulnerability, and manage customer and organisational issues effectively and professionally

by utilising their imaginative individual judgment. Yao et al. (2013) further state that empowered employees play an active role in the environment in which they work, and this therefore results in effectiveness of work. It has been indicated that employees perform better when given feedback, autonomy and social support (Feiz et al., 2017).

According to Hall (2008), role clarity is related to all four dimensions of psychological empowerment. Employees can find meaning in their jobs when they understand their jobs (Frögéli et al., 2019). When expectations are clearly set out, employees can align their skills and abilities in order to ensure that they have the competencies to achieve work goals (Hall, 2008). Clear communication of work expectations enables employees to seek assistance when they feel that they do not possess adequate competencies to perform the work effectively (Frögéli et al., 2019). The initiative that the employees take to learn work-related skills indicates the employee's self-determination level (Hall, 2008; Hamed, 2010). A lack of role clarity makes employees feel helpless in that they have no control over their work and therefore cannot contribute effectively towards the set goals (Hall, 2008).

Employees who are empowered are more inclined to have favourable ideas about their jobs, as well as higher levels of satisfaction and performance (Bester et al., 2015). Empowerment increases the employees' perception of control and motivates them to engage in work (Silén et al., 2019; Stander & Rothmann, 2009). Research by Spreitzer (1995) and Yao et al. (2013) also confirms that empowerment is positively related to job performance. Empowerment leads to critical business-related consequences, for example job satisfaction, decreased strain and intention to leave, and increased task performance (Schermyly et al., 2013).

2.3. Individual Work Performance

Koopmans (2015) and Koopmans et al. (2011) define Individual work performance as behaviours or activities that are important to the organisation's goals and objectives, with the emphasis on the employees' behaviours or activities rather than the outcomes of the activities. Performance is defined as the measure of an individual's capacity to execute specific work-related tasks and it is affected by aspects such as knowledge, instruction, preparation and practice (Koopmans, 2015). Ritter et al. (2016) and Yadav and Rangnekar (2013) further argue that employee performance decreases due to unclear and unpredictable roles. Individual work performance is characterised by three dimensions, namely task performance, contextual performance and counterproductive work behaviour (Koopmans, 2015).

Task performance is defined as the capability with which individuals carry out crucial substantive or specialised tasks (Koopmans, 2015; Koopmans et al., 2011). The task performance refers to behaviours that contribute effectively towards organisational goals and the descriptions of task performance include work quantity and quality, job skill and knowledge (Koopmans, 2015; Registe, 2017). According to Yao et al. (2013), psychological empowerment has a significant positive effect on task performance.

Contextual performance is described as “behaviours that support the organisational, social and psychological environment in which the technical core must function” (Koopmans, 2015, p. 3). Yao et al. (2013) argue that contextual performance refers to the employee’s characteristics. Behaviours such as exhibiting effort, supporting peer and team performance, cooperating, and communicating, are all part of the contextual performance dimension (Koopmans, 2015).

Counterproductive work behaviour is defined as behaviour that is harmful to the organisation and includes behaviours such as theft, absenteeism, and substance abuse (Koopmans et al., 2011). Registe (2017) argues that counterproductive work behaviour does not only affect the organisation, but it also causes harm to the individual.

Henderson et al. (2016) and Spreitzer et al. (1997) indicate that levels of role clarity impact on employees’ individual performance. Low levels of role clarity demotivate employees to perform and, conversely, high levels of role clarity motivate employees to enhance performance (Henderson et al., 2016). Thangavelu and Sudhahar (2017) found that there is a significant correlation between role clarity and performance, whereas Anderson and Stritch (2016) more specifically found that there is a significant relationship between role clarity and the task performance dimension of individual work performance. Employees perform effectively when they clearly understand the requirements of the task (Macinati et al., 2017). A lack of role clarity, on the other hand, has been found to predict employee counterproductive work behaviours (Ritter et al., 2016).

Sun (2016), as well as Tuuli and Rowlinson (2007), indicate that psychological empowerment is significantly and positively related to individual performance. Individual work performance is ultimately predicted by psychological empowerment through job satisfaction (Sun, 2016). Sun (2016) and Tuuli and Rowlinson (2007) posit that two dimensions of psychological empowerment, namely competence and impact, significantly explain changes in performance. Huang (2017) further indicates that employees who are

motivated to perform their work develop meaning. According to Sun (2016), the meaning and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment are related to task performance and contextual performance dimensions of individual work performance. Competent employees feel they make an impact and are able to influence work-related outcomes (Gregory & Albritton, 2010; Liu et al., 2019). Employees who possess high levels of psychological empowerment are likely to be proactive in their roles when they believe that they have the necessary capability to undertake their work (Huang, 2017; Kundu et al., 2018).

2.4 Theoretical Framework

A study on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory showed that job resources are positively related to performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Job resources refer to the physical, psychological, social and organisational aspects of the job that are useful in achieving organisational goals, promote personal growth and development, as well as enhance the positive state of work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001; Hakanen et al., 2008). Job resources on the organisation's work level include role clarity, task significance and work performance feedback (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job resources are assumed to be motivational in nature, because they promote learning and performance of employees (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). According to Tremblay and Messervey (2011), personal resources refer to resources related to resilience and individuals' self-assessment that empowers them to control and have an impact on their environment. Personal resources act as a moderator in the relationship between job demands and job strain, therefore indicating that personal resources may have an impact on employee motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Tremblay & Messervey, 2011). In the context of the JD-R theory, role clarity may be viewed as a job resource, psychological empowerment as a personal resource and individual work performance as an outcome.

3. Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated based on the above-mentioned problem statement and literature review:

- How is the relationship between role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and individual work performance conceptualised in literature?
- What is the relationship between role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and individual work performance of trainee accountants?
- Do lower order psychological empowerment dimensions moderate the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance?

- What recommendations can be made for practice and future research regarding the relationship between role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and individual work performance of trainee accountants?

4. Research Objectives

4.1. General Objectives

The aim of this paper was to investigate the relationship between role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and individual work performance and the possible moderating effect of lower order psychological empowerment dimensions on the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance of trainee accountants.

4.2. Specific Objectives

The study aimed to:

- Conceptualise the relationship between role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and individual work performance according to literature;
- Determine the relationship between role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and individual work performance of trainee accountants;
- Determine whether lower order psychological empowerment dimensions moderate the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance; and
- Make recommendations for practice and future research regarding the relationship between role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and individual work performance of trainee accountants.

5. Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Lower order psychological empowerment dimensions moderate the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance.

6. Research Design

6.1. Research Approach for Empirical Study

This research was conducted from a postpositivist worldview. Postpositivist worldview is also referred to as scientific method or empirical science (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Postpositivism is concerned with constructing a hypothesis and gathering data in order to determine whether the hypothesis should be rejected or accepted (Alghamdi, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The relationships between constructs, namely role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and individual work performance, were

hypothesised and the aim of the research was to verify the hypothesis by using valid and reliable measuring instruments. Furthermore, the study focused on role clarity and individual work performance of trainee accountants and lower order psychological empowerment dimensions as moderators.

A quantitative research approach was followed in the study. Quantitative research is defined as research that measures variables that vary and are summarised and interpreted using statistical analysis (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018). A cross-sectional design was used for the purpose of this study. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), cross-sectional design is a process whereby data is collected at a specific point in time. Questionnaires were utilised to gather information on the constructs being measured. The research design was descriptive in nature, whereby characteristics of existing phenomena were expressed (Salkind, 2012). According to De Vos et al. (2011), descriptive research highlights the occurrence of conditions, relationships and associations of factors at a given time within a specific population.

6.2. Research Method

6.2.1. Literature Review

The literature review focused on previous research conducted on role clarity, psychological empowerment and individual work performance, as well as possible relationships between these constructs. The inclusion criteria consisted of articles published between 1970 and 2021. The articles were accessed through databases such as EbscoHost, PsycArticles, PsycInfo, Google Scholar, Science Direct, SAE Publications, Emerald and JSTOR. Keywords utilised to search for research papers included role clarity, psychological empowerment, individual work performance, young professionals, millennials, quantitative and moderation. Literature used for this study was found in books, electronic journals and scientific journals. Information was gathered from the following scientific journals: *Academy of Management Journal*, *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Behavioural Research in Accounting*, *Current Issues in Auditing*, *Inside Knowledge*, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, *Journal of Personnel Psychology*, *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, *Journal of Research in Personality*., *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, *Personnel Review*, *Social Behaviour and Personality*, *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*, *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology*, and *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*.

6.2.2. Research Participants

Participants comprised a heterogeneous work force consisting of trainee accountants younger than 36 years who were employed in organisations belonging to a specific professional body and working towards meeting the criteria of a specific professional certification in any South African company that has been accredited to provide training for trainee accountants. According to the National Youth Commission Act (1996), people aged 14 to 35 years are considered to be youth in South Africa. A convenient, non-probability sampling technique was used, which entails choosing participants based on their accessibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The estimated sample size (n) was 348. According to Byrne (2012), a sample size that is higher than 200 is ideal when structural equation modelling is the statistical technique used. A large sample would give accurate conclusions about the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

6.2.3. Measuring Instruments

A biographical questionnaire, the Measures of Role Conflict and Ambiguity Questionnaire (MRCAQ), Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire (PEQ) and the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPPQ) were utilised to investigate the relationships between role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and individual work performance.

In order to profile the participants, a biographical questionnaire was utilised to collect the participants' demographic information, such as age, race, gender, home language, educational qualification, job title and duration in the position.

The MRCAQ, developed by Rizzo et al. in 1970, was utilised to measure role clarity. Six items from this questionnaire were used to determine role clarity. The items are rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). An example of items includes "I know what my responsibilities are". High scores indicate high role clarity (or low role ambiguity). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be .85 in a sample of call centre employees for a commercial bank in the United Kingdom (Mukherjee & Malhotra, 2006). Henderson et al. (2016) found a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .91 in a sample of global project team members within the engineering and manufacturing industry from Northern Europe, Asia, Central Europe and Northern America. A study using a sample of

employees working in a South African business unit in a chemical organisation found a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .76 (Mendes & Stander, 2011).

The PEQ, developed by Spreitzer (1995), was used to measure psychological empowerment of trainee accountants. The questionnaire consists of 12 items. The PEQ comprises three items for each of the four dimensions, namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. The instrument consists of a 7-point Likert-type rating scale that ranges from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Examples of items in each dimension are as follows: "The work I do is meaningful to me" (meaning), "I have mastered the skills necessary for my job" (competence), "I have significant autonomy in determining how to do my job" (self-determination), and "I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department" (impact) (Schermuly et al., 2013; Spreitzer, 1995; Stander & Rothmann, 2010). De Villiers and Stander (2011) report a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .88 (meaning), .81 (competence), .85 (self-determination) and .77 (impact) in a sample of South African regional managers and sales consultants who work in the financial industry. A study by Wang and Long (2018) found a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .82 (meaning), .92 (competence), .87 (self-determination) and .89 (impact) for a sample of employees who work for a technology company in China.

The IWPQ, developed by Koopmans et al. (2015), measures three dimensions of individual work performance, namely task performance, contextual performance and counterproductive behaviour. The IWQP collectively measured individual work performance. The original instrument is in Dutch and was adapted to US English (Koopmans, 2015). The IWPQ consists of 18 questions in three sub-scales. The questionnaire comprises a 5-point frequency rating scale ranging from 1 (*seldom*) to 5 (*always*) for the task and contextual performance sub-scales (Koopmans et al., 2015). The counterproductive work behaviour scale ranges from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*often*). The IWPQ scale includes questions like "I was able to plan my work so that I finish it on time" (task performance), "On my own initiative, I started new tasks when my old tasks were completed" (contextual performance), and "I complained about minor work-related issues at work" (counterproductive work behaviour). The IWPQ is applicable to various types of professions (Koopmans et al., 2015). The IWPQ has shown internal consistency for all three dimensions of individual work performance. Koopmans et al. (2015) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .78 (task performance), .85 (contextual performance) and .79 (counterproductive work behaviour) in a sample of American employees in the medical industry. Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .89 (task performance), .91 (contextual performance) and .68 (counterproductive work behaviour)

were reported for a study with a sample of South African IT professionals (Van der Vaart, 2021).

6.2.4. Research Procedure

After ethical approval was obtained from the North-West University's Ethics Committee (NWU-01328-19-A4), data was collected from a group of trainee accountants in Gauteng who belong to professional bodies and are working towards meeting the criteria of a specific professional certification in audit firms. Once permission/access was granted by the Human Resources Talent Manager, a link for the questionnaire, along with the letter of consent, was distributed to the participants via e-mail by their HR representative. The questionnaire was uploaded on QuestionsPro in order to collect data from participants. A letter of consent was attached to the questionnaire, which indicated the purpose of the study, the fact that participation was strictly voluntary, that there was an option to withdraw from the study at any time and that confidentiality would always be maintained. Participants were allowed to complete the questionnaire at a time that was convenient to them. The questionnaire took approximately 15 minutes to complete. The participants were given four weeks to complete the questionnaire and within that period, a reminder e-mail was sent to participants to remind them to complete the questionnaire. Once data collection was complete, the researcher started the data analysis process.

6.2.5. Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis of this research was conducted with the aid of Mplus Version 8.5 statistical program and Jamovi 1.6.8.0 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2020; The Jamovi Project, 2020). The best fitting model and the test for hypothesis were found by using structural equation modelling (SEM) (Hooper et al., 2008). The distribution of the data was analysed using descriptive statistics in the form of means, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis as it provides information on which statistics are appropriate for the data. According to Gravetter and Wallnau (2013), descriptive statistics are procedures utilised to summarise and organise information in order to determine the relationships that exist between constructs. Inferential statistics were used to indicate whether hypothesised relationships between variables could be accepted or rejected. Inferential statistics enable researchers to make generalisations about the population from which the sample was taken (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013). The skewness and kurtosis were considered when the structural models and competing measurements were tested using the maximum likelihood robust (MLR) estimator (Byrne, 2012).

Structural equation modelling, as implemented in Mplus, was used to test the measurement model (i.e. factorial validity) and structural model of role clarity, psychological empowerment and individual work performance. According to Wang and Wang (2012, p. 4), a measurement model describes “how well the observed indicator variables serve as a measurement instrument for the underlying latent variable or factors”. A measurement model is the non-directional relationship between variables that are latent and observed (Wang & Wang, 2012). Conversely, a structural model is the directional relationship between latent variables whereby regression structures are specified (Wang & Wang, 2012). The instruments’ construct validity was determined by performing the confirmatory factor analyses (CFA). The factor scores from the CFA model were exported into a new dataset to conduct the moderation analyses using Jamovi 1.6.8.0 (The Jamovi Project, 2020).

The model had to be assessed in order to determine how well it fits the information through the endorsement of the model's parameter estimate (Byrne, 2012). Fit indices, namely the Chi-square statistic (χ^2), which is the test for absolute fit of model, degrees of freedom (df), the standardised root means square residual (SRMR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), were utilised to interpret the fit of the model. RMSEA and SRMR figures below .08 indicated a close fit between the model and the data (Byrne, 2012). The goodness-of-fit indices, such as the incremental fit indices, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), were utilised in this study. In order for TLI and CFI to be accepted, the values had to be above .95 as this indicates a close fit between the model and the data (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

A 95% ($p < 0.05$) confidence interval (CI) indicates statistical significance (Kline, 2016). According to Cohen et al. (2003), practical significance will be indicated by effect sizes; this means that values between 0.30 and 0.50 indicate medium effects and large effects are indicated by values that are above 0.50. The constructs’ internal consistency was assessed and Mplus 8.5 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2020) was used to calculate the Cronbach’s alpha (α) internal consistency reliability coefficients and McDonald’s omega (ω).

6.2.6. Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations have been categorised as per the recommendations of Creswell and Creswell (2018). The ethical considerations of this study explain the manner in which ethical risks were mitigated from the initial stage, prior to conducting the research study, right through to the dissemination of the research results.

Ethical consideration prior to conducting the study

Ethical clearance was obtained from the North-West University Ethics Committee prior to commencement of the proposed research. Permission was obtained from the gatekeepers in the audit firm.

Ethical consideration when the study commences

When the study commenced, participation was voluntary and done through informed consent. The purpose of the research was communicated to participants. This communication enabled participants to be cognisant of their rights and the possible risks and benefits related to the research. The information enabled the participants to make informed decisions when granting consent. The research was conducted in a fair manner and did not cause harm to participants. Furthermore, the participants were made aware that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time they wished to do so and that they would not be prejudiced in any way.

Ethical consideration during data collection

In order to avoid any deception when collecting data, communication regarding the purpose of the study and data usage was provided to the participants. Prior to providing data, the participants signed an informed consent form in order to indicate that they agreed to the provisions of the research study. All data collected was confidential and anonymous. No identifying information was requested from the participants. The gatekeepers sent the participants the informed consent forms and the questionnaires directly. Participants were given the researcher's and the research supervisor's contact details in order to provide an opportunity for them to ask any questions and to ensure that everything was clear. Participants were not compensated for their participation in the study.

Ethical consideration in analysing data

Data was interpreted accurately. Anonymity was maintained when analysing data. The researcher used the services of a qualified statistician to assist in the analysis of the data. The statistician was requested to sign a confidentiality agreement, which indicated that they would not divulge any information about any aspect of the data results. The findings of the study were reported in a way that did not make it possible for the reader to know the participants' identities. This means that the research results did not include the participants' personal details such as their names, addresses or the identities of their employers.

Ethical consideration in reporting, sharing and storing data

Once the data had been analysed statistically, it was reported and interpreted to form part of a mini-dissertation used for academic purposes. Participants received research feedback via e-mail. Clear and straightforward language was used to communicate information when reporting and sharing data. Furthermore, unbiased and appropriate language was utilised to convey information to the participants. The research results were stored electronically on a password-protected computer.

7. Expected Contribution of the Study

7.1. Contribution for the Individual

The research aimed to determine the relationship between role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and individual work performance in order to understand the relationships between the three constructs, specifically focussed on trainee accountants. This research therefore creates awareness and helps individuals to understand the relationships between the three constructs.

7.2. Contribution for the Organisation

The work environment is constantly evolving and has become very unpredictable (Othman & Mahmood, 2019). This poses a challenge for managers to provide role clarity in an environment characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA). Given the increased number of young professionals in the work field, it will be valuable for organisations to understand the relationship between role clarity, psychological empowerment and individual work performance. The findings of this study can contribute towards informing organisational intervention design and implementation to improve performance of trainee accountants working in a VUCA environment.

7.3. Contribution for Industrial/Organisational Psychology Literature

A literature review showed that there are numerous studies on role clarity in relation to psychological empowerment, as well as in relation to psychological empowerment related to individual work performance. These studies did not study the three constructs in relation to each other, nor in relation to trainee accountants specifically, even though age has an impact on the manner in which individuals respond to work tasks and affects the individual's performance effectiveness. This study will be valuable to the Industrial/Organisational Psychology literature as it will contribute to the limited literature on the relationship between

role clarity, psychological empowerment and individual work performance of trainee accountants in South African organisations.

8. Chapter Division

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Research article: Role clarity, psychological empowerment and individual work performance of trainee accountants

Chapter 3: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

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CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Role clarity, psychological empowerment and individual work performance of trainee accountants

Abstract

Orientation: Audit firms are increasingly populated by young professionals who are faced with a number of challenges while working in the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) environment. It is therefore important to identify these challenges so that employers are able to address them and provide an ideal work environment where trainee accountants can perform effectively.

Research purpose: The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between role clarity, psychological empowerment and individual work performance; and to determine the moderating effect of lower order psychological empowerment dimensions on the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance of trainee accountants.

Motivation for the study: Audit firms have to build a pipeline of talented young trainee accountants who can contribute towards organisational effectiveness. It is therefore crucial to examine mechanisms that may possibly increase trainee accountants' individual work performance.

Research design, approach and method: A quantitative research study was utilised along with a cross-sectional design approach. The study consisted of a sample of 348 ($n = 348$) trainee accountants. The Measures of Role Conflict and Ambiguity Questionnaire (MRCAQ), Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire (PEQ) and the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) were utilised to gather data from the participants.

Main findings: A statistically significant positive relationship was found between role clarity and psychological empowerment; meaning, competence, self-determination and impact dimensions. Statistically significant positive relationships were found between role clarity and the task performance and contextual performance dimensions of individual work performance. A statistically significant negative relationship was found between role clarity and the counterproductive work behaviour dimension of individual work performance. Furthermore, a statistically significant positive relationship was found between meaning, competence, self-determination and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment and task performance as well as contextual performance dimensions of individual work performance. A statistically significant negative relationship was found between psychological empowerment and counterproductive work behaviour dimension of individual work performance. Meaning, competence, self-determination and impact dimensions of

psychological empowerment were found to moderate the relationship between role clarity and task performance and contextual performance dimension of individual work performance. However, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions were not found to moderate the relationship between role clarity and counterproductive work behaviour dimension of individual work performance.

Practical implications: The research findings provide audit partners, managers and supervisors with valuable insight on the effect of psychological empowerment on the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance. The information can be used to develop and implement interventions to improve trainee accountant performance.

Contribution/value add: The study contributes to the understanding of the relationship between role clarity, individual work performance and psychological empowerment. The research furthermore contributes to limited literature on the moderating effects of lower order psychological empowerment dimensions on the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance of trainee accountants in South Africa. The results of the study can be used to inform the process of designing and implementing organisational interventions used to improve trainee accountants' individual work performance.

Key words: Role clarity, psychological empowerment, individual work performance, trainee accountants, young professionals, millennials, quantitative, moderator

Introduction

Organisations seek out talented young trainees with high-performance potential, hoping that they will be competent in their roles and contribute to the organisational goals (Jonsson & Thorgren, 2017). Organisations need to have a large pool of individuals with high-performance potential to form part of their team (Björkman et al., 2013). Graduate training programmes aim to educate and train graduates while trying to meet both the employers' and trainees' expectations (Jonsson & Thorgren, 2017). As such, organisations implement graduate training programmes to obtain a return on investment and retain the best talent. The graduate training programmes provide an opportunity for new entrants to do on-the-job-training in order to become young professionals in the field. Young professionals place high value on income potential, career opportunities, and job security (Iovu & Demian, 2019). The challenge is that there are high numbers of students who graduate, but unfortunately organisations have limited vacancies and cannot accommodate all graduates, resulting in high unemployment (Đurić, 2016).

Unemployment leads to young professionals accepting roles that do not match their qualifications or skills (Iovu & Demian, 2019). Numerous factors affect young professionals' transition from the tertiary education setting to the work environment, such as the challenge of practically applying the theory that they have learned. According to Đurić (2016), the tertiary education system only focuses on a theoretical teaching system. It does not provide practical training, resulting in new job entrants not having adequate skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the world of work. Tertiary institutions should prepare students for the labour market by aligning the academic outcomes to the organisational and economic needs (Iovu & Demian, 2019).

The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) is a professional body which determines the entry requirements and regulates processes and policies of the accountancy profession (www.saica.co.za). Accountants work in a highly regulated industry and trainee accountants take on different functions in different types of entities, namely listed companies, unlisted companies, private companies, close corporations, partnerships, sole proprietorships and family businesses (Wessels, 2006). After attaining a Certificate in the Theory of Accounting (CTA), trainee accountants start their journey of SAICA training articles which are usually for a period of three years (www.saica.co.za). During this time trainees are required to complete competency assessments in the form of Initial Test of Competence (ITC) and Assessment of Professional Competence (APC) (www.saica.co.za). Trainees experience various challenges in their line of work. They have substantial workloads and are expected to work overtime (Eraut, 2003). They are also expected to

perform efficiently at work and to make academic progress, but they struggle to do this because they have too much work and are not able to allocate enough time to study (Selamat & Idris, 2016). Another challenge that trainees face is that most trainees have to attend classes and write examinations but their employers do not provide sufficient study leave (Selamat & Idris, 2016). The work demands, along with academic requirements, interfere with the trainees' ability to acquire work-related knowledge (Selamat & Idris, 2016). Another factor that limits the acquisition of work-related knowledge and performance is role ambiguity. Selamat and Idris (2016) believe that this can be resolved by enhancing the trainees' role clarity. Firms compete for the best talent and this means that trainees' roles have to be cleared and their expectations met (Selamat & Idris, 2016).

Trainees have limited practical work experience and therefore roles have to be clarified as soon as they are employed (Samie et al., 2015). Role clarity is the degree to which employees clearly understand what they are expected to do and how to perform in order to achieve work-related goals (Cäker & Siverbo, 2018). It is the degree to which performance expectations are communicated to individual employees (Frögéli et al., 2019). This helps individuals to determine if they will be able to take on the role or not. Trainees feel that a lack of communication about their roles and the actual trainee programme cause frustrations (Jonsson & Thorgren, 2017). According to Templer et al. (2020), a lack of role clarity is a main source of employee work-related stress and leads to undesirable work-related outcomes. Organisations that do not clarify trainee roles stand the risk of not retaining their talented trainees (Jonsson & Thorgren, 2017). A lack of role clarity leads to employees not being able to handle work-related challenges, resulting in a lack of productivity and work performance (Samie et al., 2015).

According to Templer et al. (2020), there is a relationship between role clarity and work performance because role clarity predicts employee work levels. Role clarity allows employees to come up with various effective plans and solutions to work-related problems (Widyastuti & Hidayat, 2018). Organisational productivity and efficiency are increased by employees who have high levels of individual work performance. Employee work performance can be further increased by ensuring that employees receive supervisory support (Pathak & Srivastava, 2020). It has been found that supervisor support, such as mentoring, is likely to provide detailed information about the role and therefore promotes role clarity (Cäker & Siverbo, 2018). Supervisor support promotes communication, which is used to clarify roles so that the subordinates know exactly what their roles entail (Mikael & Siverbo, 2018). According to Suan and Nasurdin (2013), organisations must promote their employees' competence to increase work performance. When employees perceive that their

expectations are met, and roles are clarified by the employer, their performance and commitment levels increase (Jonsson & Thorgren, 2017).

It is therefore important for experienced professionals to provide constant performance-related feedback so that the young professionals know how they are performing in their roles (Iovu & Demian, 2019). The experienced professionals should help to develop young professionals and make the transition from university to the labour market easier by providing context and background to how work is performed in the organisation (Bradbury, 2019). According to Iovu and Demian (2019), investing in young professionals' knowledge and skills increases their employability. Empowered employees can add value to organisations in the current work environment that is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA). According to Zhang et al. (2021), role clarity has an impact on the level of internal motivation, employee performance feedback and autonomy.

Employees whose roles are not clarified are less likely to experience psychological empowerment (Hall, 2008). According to Towsen et al. (2020), role clarity has a positive influence on the individual's psychological empowerment. Iqbal et al.'s (2020) research indicates that psychological empowerment positively influences performance through two constructs: meaning and self-determination. This also corroborates research by Towsen et al. (2020), which indicates that employees make an impactful contribution when they experience an increased level of meaning in their work and feel determined to perform in their roles. Young professionals seek employment that fulfils their intrinsic motivation and are loyal to organisations that enable them to achieve their goals (Aydogmu, 2019). Psychologically empowered employees are more likely to have the ability to handle work demands, feel competent and have internal motivation to perform effectively (Towsen et al., 2020). Furthermore, psychological empowerment is known to increase individuals' task performance and commitment levels (Towsen et al., 2020). Being psychologically empowered enables employees to appreciate their job roles and how they are aligned to their skills and abilities, which ultimately leads to increased levels of innovation, engagement, job satisfaction, and performance (Minai et al., 2020; Pathak & Srivastava, 2020).

This research aimed to investigate the relationship between role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions, individual work performance, and the possible moderating effect of lower order psychological empowerment dimensions on the relationship between role clarity and trainee accountants' individual work performance.

Literature Review

Role Clarity

Role clarity is the degree to which work goals and obligations are communicated effectively to employees, and they know the action required to accomplish specific work objectives (Cama, 2018). It is the extent to which the employees understand what their duties entail and what is expected of them. According to Cama (2018), the ambiguity in the current VUCA environment can be minimised by providing role clarity and by clearly communicating work expectations. New employees need clarity in their jobs (Samie et al., 2015). According to Pathak and Srivastava (2020), young employees must be provided with supervision. A study conducted with a sample of social workers found that older employees have more job satisfaction than younger employees because the older employees had role clarity (Pathak & Srivastava, 2020). Supervisors can provide various forms of support to new employees; the support can be in the form of information sharing to effectively deal with challenges and meet performance expectation levels (Samie et al., 2015). However, managers experience a lack of role clarity and may not clarify roles to subordinates due to the constant pressure of carrying out unpredictable goals in their roles (Mikael & Siverbo, 2018).

When role clarity is provided to employees, it can yield several positive outcomes. According to Suan and Nasurdin (2013), some of the positive results of role clarity include organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and performance (Tao & Campbell, 2019). Client satisfaction increases because employees can render quality service to clients (Suan & Nasurdin, 2013). Role clarity helps employees to focus on being productive and avoid time wasted trying to figure out the job requirements (Alarcon et al., 2010). Conversely, a lack of role clarity yields negative outcomes such as job tension, a lack of job performance, and satisfaction (Suan & Nasurdin, 2013). Employees may want to engage in work tasks, but if they do not have clear work goals and objectives, they cannot carry out the tasks (Alarcon et al., 2010). Karkkola et al. (2019) posit that a lack of role clarity may impact on employees in two different ways; some may become defensive and withdraw, while others may want to gather more information. Individuals who do not have clear goals and responsibilities are not able to contribute to group goals effectively. A lack of role clarity does not only affect individual employees, it also affects organisations in total (Cama, 2018). This means that all individuals who work in groups have to be provided with clear roles in order for group performance to improve (Cama, 2018). All team members must have role clarity so that they can support each other and work effectively to achieve organisational goals (Cama, 2018). According to Ayers (2015), performance evaluations may provide employees with more clarity regarding their roles and how their roles contribute meaningfully to the ultimate

organisational goals. Organisational values and goals are more identifiable when role clarity exists (Cama, 2018).

A literature review conducted on psychological empowerment and role clarity indicates that role clarity is related to psychological empowerment (Aryee & Chen, 2006). Aryee and Chen (2006) found a positive relationship between role clarity and psychological empowerment, which illustrates that an increase in role clarity results in an increase in psychological empowerment; the inverse is also applicable. Furthermore, psychological empowerment has been found to lead to significant levels of employee motivation and increased levels of perseverance in tasks, which improve task strategies (Hassan, 2013).

Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment is defined as the extent to which the individual considers the organisation's efficiency in improving the employee's sense of ability and flexibility in their jobs (Wang et al., 2019). Psychological empowerment is referred to as the individual's inherent motivation to participate in certain behaviours and repeat the encouraged behaviours (Baek-Kyoo et al., 2019). According to Lyu et al. (2019), psychological empowerment is a psychological resource that may minimise individuals' work-related burnout and improve work satisfaction and quality of life (Lyu et al., 2019). Researchers have studied psychological empowerment from various perspectives, namely the cognitive and psychological perspective and the structural and social perspective (Jha, 2019). The cognitive and psychological perspective focuses on how the employee feels about their decision-making power; conversely the structural and social perspective focuses on the support that the organisation provides to the employees when they are given decision-making power (Jha, 2019). According to Wang et al. (2019), psychological empowerment involves providing employees an opportunity to generate and enforce their own decisions. This can be done by enhancing motivation to carry out work activities and by fostering the feeling of self-reliance and freedom (Wang et al., 2019). Psychological empowerment is associated with motivation because it leads to the development and enhancement of motivation to achieve tasks by improving individual effectiveness (Wang et al., 2019). Individuals are said to be intrinsically motivated when they are given the choice to execute specified tasks (Jha, 2019). Individuals who receive enough support and resources to carry out their job tasks successfully experience higher psychological empowerment levels (Baek-Kyoo et al., 2019). Psychologically empowering work environments display positive organisational behaviours (Lyu et al., 2019).

According to Wang et al. (2019), psychological empowerment increases the individual's level of trust. Furthermore, it motivates the individual to participate in group exercises and this may enhance trust within a group (Wang et al., 2019). Psychological empowerment is also known to improve employee well-being and organisational efficiency (Baek-Kyoo et al., 2019). Empowered employees are more inclined to establish a substantial degree of organisational identity and recognise the organisational principles and goals as their own (Wang et al., 2019). Employees involved in organisational goals are usually motivated to work over and above their normal call of duty, as they feel proud to contribute to helping the organisation achieve its objectives. Psychological empowerment is demonstrated through four dimensions, namely meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. These dimensions provide a systematic structure that researchers can utilise to determine the possible impact of empowerment from an inherent motivation standpoint (Wang et al., 2019).

Meaning refers to the individual's perception of value that is related to work objectives (Baek-Kyoo et al., 2019). The value is based on the individual's own standards (Wang et al., 2019). Jena et al. (2019) argue that when employees experience meaning, they are more likely to recognise the impact that their role has on achieving organisational goals. Jena et al. (2019) further indicate that meaningful work has been said to be beneficial to employees and organisations as it is an essential aspect of empowerment. Organisational benefits of meaningfulness include work motivation, reduced absenteeism, job satisfaction, job engagement, career development, and employee empowerment. Employees feel empowered and their sense of meaning increases when they are involved in the organisational decision-making process (Jena et al., 2019). According to Jena et al. (2019), taking part in meaningful work has an intrinsic value for individuals, surpassing the extrinsic value that individuals place on money. Meaningful work is said to help individuals to acknowledge their developmental areas and enable individuals to develop (Jena et al., 2019).

Competence is the individual's belief in their capability to carry out work activities successfully (Tsevaridou & Matsouka, 2019). According to Chung (2018), competence is referred to as self-efficacy in an individual's work and is related to the individual's and work values. It is the individual's confidence that the work that is being produced is enough (Tsevaridou & Matsouka, 2019). Competence is said to motivate employees intrinsically and affects employee commitment levels (Chung, 2018; Iqbal et al., 2020).

Self-determination is the extent to which individuals believe that their actions are individually initiated and guided (Baek-Kyoo et al., 2019). It refers to the individual's freedom to

participate in specific behaviours (Wang et al., 2019). According to Tsevaridou and Matsouka (2019), self-determination is related to the various task options that individuals feel they have when performing work duties. Self-determination is said to be related to self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the individual's ability to assess their capability to perform activities that lead to the achievement of set goals (Wang et al., 2019). It reflects the individual's capacity to resolve challenges encountered in a specific activity (Wang et al., 2019). It is believed that individuals with an increased level of self-efficacy are more inclined to be tenacious when faced with challenges while performing crucial work activities (Wang et al., 2019).

Impact refers to the extent to which an individual believes that their actual behaviour affects the organisation, for example adding value to organisational policies, management processes, strategic or operational outcomes (Baek-Kyoo et al., 2019). Empowered employees are inclined to gain confidence when they make a positive impact through their behaviours and will most likely participate in activities they perceive to make a difference (Wang et al., 2019). Empowered employees are more likely to feel free to question organisational processes and share ideas on how to improve them (Samie et al., 2015).

According to Jha (2019), employees feel empowered when provided with an environment characterised by meaningful job resources such as role clarity. Samie et al. (2015) further state that a positive relationship between role clarity and intrinsic motivation leads to numerous positive outcomes, namely competence and commitment to the organisation. According to Karkkola et al. (2019), clear communication of employees' roles and expectations may contribute to employees being engaged in their work and increase the employees' sense of competence. Role clarity is significantly related to competence. Hassan (2013) found that a high level of role clarity improved employee satisfaction, which led to commitment and decreased turnover. Employees who know their job responsibilities and expectations are more inclined to take initiative and make decisions that impact on their work (Cama, 2018). Conversely, a lack of role clarity tends to make employees feel powerless, which affects their perception of the impact they make in their work roles negatively (Cama, 2018). Harter et al. (2002) postulate that employees cannot be engaged when there is a lack of role clarity. Role clarity enables employees to be aware of their job expectations and the processes required to fulfil their job roles, leading to increased levels of job performance (Karkkola et al., 2019).

Individual Work Performance

It is said that the world's economy is reliant on individual work performance because organisational, team and unit performance is determined by it (Campbell & Wiernik, 2015). The organisation's overall performance is affected by employee performance and employees who understand the value of their contribution to the organisation are likely to produce increased individual performance levels (Zeglat & Janbeik, 2019). It is also crucial for managers and human resource (HR) practitioners to comprehend the significance of individual work performance, as it helps to achieve organisational goals and improve overall organisational performance (Zeglat & Janbeik, 2019). Organisations have to recruit competent and committed employees to perform work tasks and duties to the best of their abilities. According to Aguinis and Kraiger (2009), individual work performance is defined as an individual's ability to perform their job tasks using their talent, skills, knowledge, motivation, and experience level. Conversely, Koopmans et al. (2014) define individual work performance as employee activities, behaviours or actions of employees instead of the actions' outcomes.

The main dimensions of individual work performance are task performance, contextual performance and counterproductive performance. Job performance is a framework that involves work activities under the supervision of employees and leads to organisational objectives (Ramos-Villagrasa et al., 2019). *Task performance* refers to a group of essential behaviours to accomplish core service and technical organisational tasks and duties (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016). According to Ramos-Villagrasa et al. (2019), it is related to the main job functions that are specified in the role.

Ramos-Villagrasa et al. (2019) define *contextual performance* as performance that leads to organisational strategic goals by adding value through its psychological and social setting. The contextual performance involves activities displayed by employees who are beyond their normal allocated duties. It takes into account the employee's initiative, ability to work in teams, and the level of excitement when doing their tasks (Ramos-Villagrasa et al., 2019). It has been said that the organisation's successful functioning is promoted in contextual efficiency, but not generally with a direct impact on employees (Ramos-Villagrasa et al., 2019).

Counterproductive work behaviour is defined as behaviour that damages organisational well-being (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002). Examples of counterproductive behaviour include purposefully performing work-related tasks incorrectly, constantly reporting late for work, being physically present at work but not performing work duties, and not following

organisational rules and regulations (Koopmans et al., 2014). Such delinquent behaviour activities are connected to detrimental organisational and personal effects (Aubé et al., 2009). When employees understand organisational goals and the individuals' work roles that they play, they can commit and be more productive at work (Zeglát & Janbeik, 2019).

Employees who are uncertain of their roles find it challenging to achieve high performance (Samie et al., 2015; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). To achieve role clarity and satisfactory work performance, employees have to know their job responsibilities and have knowledge of how to carry out their jobs (Karkkola et al., 2019). Supervisors can provide subordinates with advice related to how work tasks should be carried out, which provides them with role clarity (Hassan, 2013). However, Pathak and Srivastava (2020) further indicate that providing support does not necessarily guarantee that employees will pursue tasks aggressively that would lead to higher individual or organisational performance. A study by Samie et al. (2015) found a positive relationship between role clarity and job performance, which was also linked to the goals of the organisation, the pace at which work was done, available resources and the level of commitment to the organisational rules and regulations (Radhakrishnan, 2018). In addition, Kundu et al. (2019) indicate that role clarity is a crucial antecedent for employee-related outcomes such as job performance and job satisfaction. Radhakrishnan (2018) argues that clarification of roles, work objectives and performance expectations improves the individuals' perceived clarity of roles, which in turn increased work satisfaction and performance. Team functioning is grounded in role clarity (Grills, 2019). Role clarity encourages team performance because it reduces confusion and conflict amongst team members as they understand each other's roles; and it encourages team members to contribute equally towards the team goal (Grills, 2019).

According to Azizia et al. (2020), psychological empowerment plays an essential part in promoting organisational and individual performance. Avolio et al. (2004) state that psychological empowerment influences employee perception of work positively and leads to employee work performance. The lower order psychological empowerment dimensions are positively related to performance outcomes (Baek-Kyoo et al., 2019). According to Yang and Zhu (2016), individuals who experience work that is meaningful are more likely to understand the significance of work goals. This takes place when individual values are aligned with the work responsibilities and employee behaviours, which ultimately increase job satisfaction and performance. Employees with a high level of impact trust in their ability to complete work, leading to increased job performance and subsequent job impact (Yang & Zhu, 2016). Increased employee competence leads to improved performance (Salanova et al., 2011). According to Chiniara and Bentein (2016), competence predicts task

performance. Psychological empowerment encourages leaders to motivate their subordinates to commit to their work roles, which increases task performance (Minai et al., 2020). Psychologically empowered employees feel that they have authority to make decisions and take responsibility to carry out their work (Iqbal et al., 2020). Furthermore, psychologically empowered employees are able to show increased levels of commitment, which lead to optimal performance (Iqbal et al., 2020). Empowered employees add value to the organisation by being productive (Avolio et al., 2004). The audit industry can benefit from having empowered employees.

The audit industry plays a crucial role in any country's economy. Audits are conducted to provide a fair, professional and ethical opinion on different organisations' financial statements (Ismajli et al., 2019). Audited financial statements provide crucial information on how well the organisation is performing financially and they are also used to provide information on fraud (Ismajli et al., 2019; Mohd-Sanusi et al., 2012). These financials are also used by investors to determine if organisations are lucrative enough to invest in (Mohd-Sanusi et al., 2012). According to Ignatius Sehoole, Chartered Accountants (CAs) play an important role in trying to improve the economy, hence there is a constant demand for qualified CAs (Coci, 2020). It is therefore important to build and expand the pipeline of high-performing trainee accountants who can contribute towards improving South Africa's economy (Coci, 2020). It is important for organisations to ensure that they recruit talented trainee accountants who will contribute effectively towards meeting organisational goals and also qualify as competent Chartered Accountants. Organisations will benefit from acquiring information that will assist them when designing and implementing interventions to improve trainee performance. Based on the literature review, it is clear that several studies show the relationships between role clarity, psychological empowerment and individual work performance. However, no studies were found relating these constructs together and specifically in the context of the South African audit industry.

This research aims to investigate the relationship between role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and individual work performance, and the possible moderating effect of lower order psychological empowerment on the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance of trainee accountants.

Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Lower order psychological empowerment dimensions moderate the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance.

Method

Research Approach

A quantitative research approach was used to investigate the relationship between the variables; role clarity, psychological empowerment and individuals work performance. This study followed a cross-sectional design, because data was collected at a specific point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Participants

A total of 352 participants completed the questionnaires, of which 348 were usable for data analysis purposes. Table 1 shows the sample of trainee accountants' biographical characteristics. The sample consisted of 58% females and 42% males. Most of the participants were in the age group of 23 to 26 years (63%), followed by participants in the age group 27 to 30 years (25%). The majority of the research participants were Black (84%) and mostly spoke IsiXhosa (22%), followed by Northern Sotho (Sepedi) (16%), isiZulu (10%) and Southern Sotho (10%). A total of 54% of the trainee accountants were in possession of a postgraduate diploma qualification and 24% had Bachelor's degrees. Most of the trainee accountants who were part of the sample have been employed for 3 years (32%).

Table 1

Biographical and Occupational Characteristics (n = 348)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	146	42
	Female	202	58
Age	19-22 years	18	5
	23-26 years	221	63
	27-30 years	86	25
	31-35 years	23	7
Ethnicity	Black	294	84
	Asian	1	0.3
	Coloured	20	6
	Indian	16	5
	White	17	5
	Other	0	0
Home Language	Afrikaans	22	6
	English	41	12
	isiNdebele	1	0.3
	IsiXhosa	75	22
	isiZulu	36	10
	Northern Sotho	55	16
	Setswana	28	8
	isiSwati	11	3
	Southern Sotho	34	10

	Tshivenda	16	5
	Xitsonga	25	7
	Other	4	1
Highest qualification	Diploma	1	0.3
	Bachelor's Degree	82	24
	Postgraduate Diploma	189	54
	Honours degree	73	21
	B-Tech degree	0	0
	M-Tech degree	0	0
	Master's degree	3	1
	Doctoral degree	0	0
Tenure at the organisation	<12 months	93	27
	1 year	45	13
	2 years	94	27.1
	3 years	113	32
	4 years	3	0.9

Measures

Measuring Instruments

The biographical questionnaire, the Measures of Role Conflict and Ambiguity Questionnaire (MRCAQ), Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire (PEQ) and the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) were the measuring instruments used to collect data in this study.

A biographical questionnaire was used to gather trainee accountants' demographic information, namely gender, age, ethnicity, home language, educational qualification, and tenure at the organisation.

Six (6) items which measure role clarity from the MRCAQ developed by Rizzo et al. in 1970 were used to measure role clarity. A 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), was used to rate the items. Sample of items include "I know what my responsibilities are". High scores indicate high role clarity (or low role ambiguity). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .85 was found in a sample of UK commercial bank call centre employees (Mukherjee & Malhotra, 2006). Henderson et al. (2016) found a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .91 in a sample of global project team members within the engineering and manufacturing industry from Northern Europe, Asia, Central Europe and Northern America. Mendes and Stander (2011) found a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .76 in a sample of South African business unit employees in a chemical organisation.

The PEQ developed by Spreitzer (1995) was utilised to measure psychological empowerment of trainee accountants. The PEQ consists of 12-items and comprises three

items for each of the four dimensions, namely meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. The items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type rating scale that ranges from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Samples of items in each dimension are as follows: “The work I do is meaningful to me” (meaning), “I have mastered the skills necessary for my job” (competence), “I have significant autonomy in determining how to do my job” (self-determination), and “I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department” (impact) (Schermyly et al., 2013; Spreitzer, 1995; Stander & Rothmann, 2010). Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of .88 (meaning), .81 (competence), .85 (self-determination) and .77 (impact) in a sample of South African regional managers and sales consultants who work in the financial industry were reported by De Villiers and Stander (2011). Wang and Long (2018) found Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of .82 (meaning), .92 (competence), .87 (self-determination) and .89 (impact) for a sample of employees who work for a technology company in China.

The IWPQ developed by Koopmans et al. (2016) measures three dimensions of individual work performance, namely task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive behaviour. The original instrument, which is in Dutch, was adapted to US English (Koopmans, 2015). The IWPQ comprises three sub-scales and a total of 18 questions. The questionnaire is rated on a 5-point frequency rating scale, ranging from 1 (*seldom*) to 5 (*always*) for the task and contextual performance sub-scales (Koopmans et al., 2016). The counterproductive work behaviour scale ranges from 1 (“never”) to 5 (“often”). The IWPQ scale includes questions such as “I was able to plan my work so that I finish it on time” (task performance), “On my own initiative, I started new tasks when my old tasks were completed” (contextual performance), and “I complained about minor work-related issues at work” (counterproductive work behaviour). IWPQ has shown internal consistency for all three dimensions of individual work performance. Koopmans et al. (2016) reported Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of .78 (task performance), .85 (contextual performance) and .79 (counterproductive work behaviour) in a sample of American employees in the medical industry. Van der Vaart (2021) reported Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of .89 (task performance), .91 (contextual performance) and .68 (counterproductive work behaviour) in a sample of South African information technology (IT) professionals.

Procedure

Research Procedure

Once the North-West University’s Ethics Committee provided ethical approval (NWU-01328-19-A4), the researcher approached HR representatives from various audit firms in Gauteng to request permission to conduct the study among trainee accountants who belong to

professional bodies and are working towards meeting the criteria of specific professional certification. After permission was granted, the researcher distributed the questionnaire along with a letter of consent to the HR representatives. The HR representatives were requested to share the questionnaire with the trainees in order to adhere to the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 (POPI) (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 2013). The letter of consent indicated that participation in the survey was voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any time. Upon completion of the questionnaires, the data collected was analysed.

Statistical Analysis

In order to obtain the results for this study, statistical computer tools were used to conduct various statistical analyses. Reliability and factor analysis statistics were generated using the Mplus 8.5 (2020) (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2020). The factor scores from the CFA model were exported into a new dataset to conduct the moderation analyses in Jamovi 1.6.8.0 (The Jamovi Project, 2020) - the results of those analyses were included in the Microsoft Word file with the necessary plots. The R-statistical framework was utilised in order to conduct structural equation modelling (SEM) to determine the fit of the data to the suggested model (Hooper et al., 2008).

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed in order to determine the factor structure for role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and individual work performance. The following R indices were used in this study (Byrne, 2012): Absolute fit indices including degrees of freedom (*df*), the standardised root mean residual (SRMR), and the root means square error of approximation (RMSEA). SRMR and RMSEA values lower than 0.08 indicate acceptable fit (Byrne, 2012). Incremental fit indices included the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) and comparative fit index (CFI). CFI and TLI values higher than .90 generally indicate acceptable model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1995).

Results

This section presents the results of the statistical analysis of the data. Firstly, descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients and correlations between scales are presented. Secondly, the results of moderation analyses, including a simple slope analysis that focuses on the moderating role of the lower order Psychological Empowerment (PE) dimensions and the relation between Role Clarity (RCA) and Individual Work Performance (WP), are presented. Lastly, the results of model fit focusing on measurement model are presented.

Descriptive Statistics

The sample's demographic variable frequencies, as well as the mean and standard deviation, were examined using descriptive statistics. Summary statistics were also used to examine the sub-scale totals (see Table 2). Normality checks were performed prior to answering the research questions. Skewness coefficients, kurtosis coefficients and histograms were used to determine the normality of the variables. The results indicated normal distribution of all measurements.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Inter-correlations of the RCA, PE and WP

	RCA	PE_M	PE_C	PE_SD	PE_IM	WP_TP	WP_CP	WP_COUP
RCA	1.00							
PE_M	0.60‡**	1.00						
PE_C	0.67‡**	0.63‡**	1.00					
PE_SD	0.59‡**	0.55‡**	0.72‡**	1.00				
PE_IM	0.47†**	0.38†**	0.44†**	0.51‡**	1.00			
WP_TP	0.46†**	0.50†**	0.53‡**	0.47†**	0.26**	1.00		
WP_CP	0.45†**	0.47†**	0.58‡**	0.48†**	0.35‡**	0.70‡**	1.00	
WP_COUP	-0.28**	-0.35†**	-0.28**	-0.15**	-0.08**	-0.28**	-0.12*	1.00
Alpha	0.92	0.93	0.91	0.91	0.88	0.91	0.92	0.86
Mean	5.67	5.95	5.75	4.98	3.95	3.73	3.54	1.99
SD	1.10	1.17	1.14	1.50	1.56	0.91	0.57	0.91
Omega	0.92	0.92	0.92	0.91	0.89	0.91	0.92	0.87

Note: All values rounded to two decimal places. RCA = Role Clarity; PE = Psychological Empowerment; PE_M = Psychological Empowerment Meaning; PE_C = Psychological Empowerment Competence; PE_SD = Psychological Empowerment Self-determination; PE_IM = Psychological Empowerment Impact; WP_TP = Individual work performance Task Performance; WP_CP = Individual work performance Contextual Performance; WP_Coup = Individual work performance Counterproductive Work Behaviour

* Statistically significant ($p < .05$)

** Statistically significant ($p < .01$)

† Correlation is practically significant $r > 0.30$ (medium effect)

‡ Correlation is practically significant $r > 0.50$ (large effect)

Reliability

Cronbach's alpha (α) internal consistency reliability coefficients and McDonald's omega (ω) were calculated for each of the scales of the MRCAQ, PEQ, and the IWPQ. The results are presented in Table 2. According Foxcroft and Roodt, (2013), values of ≥ 0.70 on both Cronbach's alpha (α) and McDonald's omega (ω) are generally acceptable for use in group setting and individual decision-making. All the scales for this study meet this criterion, ranging between .76 and .93. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .76 was obtained for the MRCAQ scale. For the PEQ scale Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .88 (meaning), .81 (competence), .85 (self-determination) and .77 (impact) were obtained. With regard to the IWPQ scale, Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .78 (task performance), .85 (contextual performance) and .79 (counterproductive work behaviour) were obtained.

Correlations

The nature of the correlations between the variables was investigated using Pearson's correlation coefficients. The strength and direction of the relationship between two quantitative variables are described using Pearson's correlation coefficients (Huck, 2004).). The correlations between the variables are depicted in Table 2.

Correlations between Role Clarity (RCA), lower order Psychological Empowerment (PE) dimensions and Individual Work Performance (WP)

The relationship between RCA, PE dimensions and WP are reported in Table 2. The results indicate that a statistically significant positive correlation of large effect ($> .50$) was found between role clarity and meaning, as well as the competence and self-determination dimensions of psychological empowerment. A statistically significant positive relationship of medium effect ($> .30$) was found between role clarity and the impact dimension of psychological empowerment.

In terms of the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance, a statistically significant positive relationship of medium effect ($> .30$) was found between role clarity and task performance, as well the contextual performance dimension of individual work performance. However, a statistically significant negative relationship of small effect ($< .30$) was found between role clarity and the counterproductive work behaviour dimension of individual work performance.

Furthermore, a statistically significant positive correlation of large effect ($> .50$) was found between the competence dimension of psychological empowerment and contextual performance and task performance dimensions of individual work performance, suggesting

that as the competence dimension of psychological empowerment increases, so do contextual performance and task performance dimensions of individual work performance. A statistically significant positive correlation of medium effect ($> .30$) was found between the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment and individual work performance contextual performance dimension. Furthermore, there is a statistically significant positive correlation of large effect ($> .50$) between meaning dimension of psychological empowerment and task performance dimensions of individual work performance.

A statistically significant positive correlation of medium effect ($> .30$) was found between the psychological empowerment impact dimension and the contextual performance. Furthermore, a statistically significant positive correlation of small effect ($< .30$) was found between psychological empowerment impact dimension and task performance dimensions of individual work performance. With regard to the self-determination dimension of psychological empowerment, a statistically significant positive correlation of medium effect ($> .30$) was found with regard to the task performance and contextual performance dimensions of individual work performance. A statistically significant negative correlation of small effect ($< .30$) was found between all four lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and counterproductive work behaviour.

The moderating effect of Psychological Empowerment-Meaning (PE_M) on the relationship between Role Clarity (RCA) and Individual Work Performance-Task Performance (WP_TP)

Results of the moderation analysis, assessing the moderating role of PE_M on the relationship between RCA and WP_TP, are reported in Table 3. From the results it is evident that the conditional effect of RCA on WP_TP (i.e. the simple effect of RCA when PE_M = 0) is significant ($\beta = .235, p < .001$). Similarly, the conditional effect of PE_M on WP_TP (i.e. the simple effect of PE_M when RCA = 0) is significant ($\beta = .370, p < .001$). The interaction was also statistically significant ($\beta = .129, p < .001$), meaning the interaction effect is significantly different from zero and one can conclude that PE_M is a significant moderator of the relationship between RCA and WP_TP.

Table 3*Moderating Role of Psychological Empowerment-Meaning (PE_M)*

	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	p
RCA	0.235	0.0395	< .001
PE_M	0.370	0.0412	< .001
RCA * PE_M	0.129	0.0366	< .001

Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_TP). WP_TP = Individual Work Performance -Task Performance; RCA = Role Clarity; PE_M = Psychological Empowerment- Meaning; SE = Standard Error.

Next a simple slope analysis was conducted. Results of the simple slope analysis, assessing the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_TP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_M), are reported in Table 3.1. When examining the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_TP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_M), the moderating effect of PE_M was found to be significant at low ($\beta = .131, p .007$), high ($\beta = .340, p < .001$) and average levels ($\beta = .235, p < .001$) of PE_M.

Table 3.1*Simple Slope Results of RCA on WP_TP*

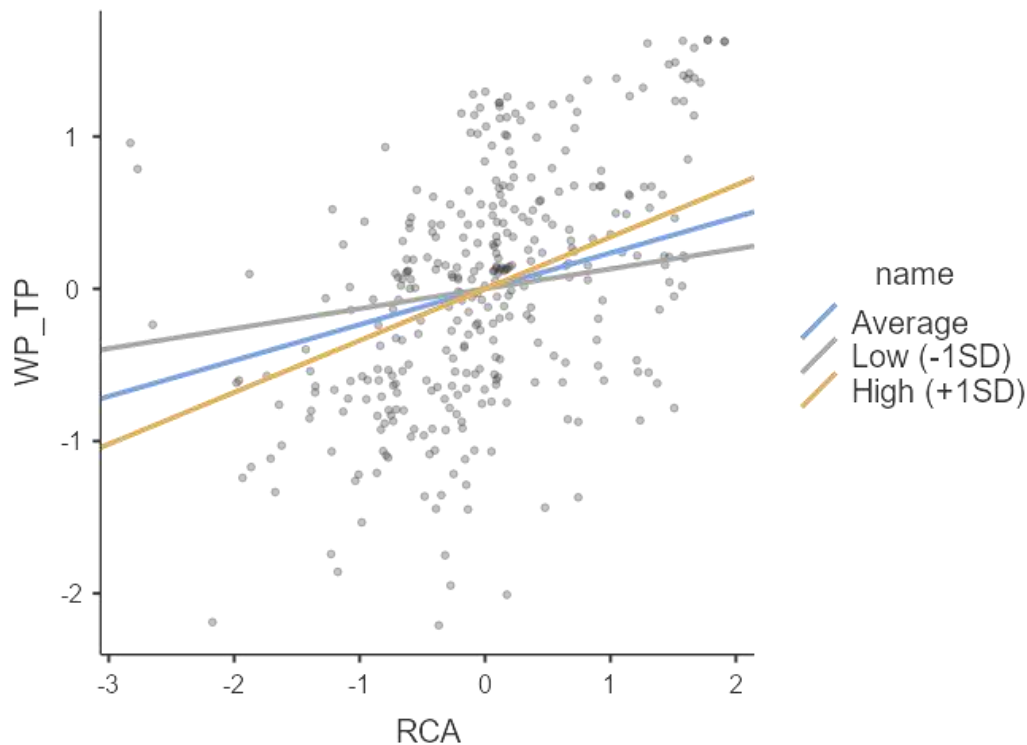
	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	P
Average	0.235	0.0399	< .001
Low (-1SD)	0.131	0.0483	0.007
High (+1SD)	0.340	0.0515	< .001

Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_TP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_M). WP = Individual Work Performance; WP_TP = Individual Work Performance-Task Performance; RCA = Role Clarity; PE_M = Psychological Empowerment – Meaning; SE = Standard Error.

Figure 1

The effect of PE_M on the relationship between RCA and WP_TP

Simple Slope Plot Results



Simple slopes analysis showed that when PE_M is one standard deviation below the mean, the relationship between RCA and WP_TP is significant ($\beta = .131, p .007$). When PE_M is at the mean, the relationship between RCA and WP_TP is significant ($\beta = .235, p <.001$). Similarly, when PE_M is one standard deviation above the mean, the relationship between RC and WP-TP is significant ($\beta = 0.340, p <.001$). Figure 1 shows that when PE_M is low, the slope was less steep, whereas the slope was steepest in the presence of high PE_M.

From the above it is evident that for all participants, an increase in role clarity was associated with an increase in the task performance dimension of individual work performance. However, for those with high levels of the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment, the relationship between role clarity and the task performance dimension of individual work performance was stronger. As such, the psychological empowerment meaningfulness dimension moderated the relationship between role clarity and the task performance dimension of individual work performance by strengthening the relationship between role clarity and the task performance dimension of individual work performance.

The moderating effect of Psychological Empowerment-Competence (PE_C) on the relationship between Role Clarity (RCA) and Individual Work Performance Task Performance (WP_TP)

Results of the moderation analysis, assessing the moderating role of PE_C on the relationship between RCA and WP_TP, are reported in Table 4. From the results it is evident that the conditional effect of RCA on WP_TP (i.e. the simple effect of RCA when PE_C = 0) is significant ($\beta = .136, p < .001$). Similarly, the conditional effect of PE_C on WP_TP (i.e. the simple effect of PE_C when RCA = 0) is significant ($\beta = .433, p < .001$). The interaction was also statistically significant ($\beta = .104, p < .001$), meaning the interaction effect is significantly different from zero and one can conclude that PE_C is a significant moderator of the relationship between RCA and WP_TP.

Table 4

Moderating Role of Psychological Empowerment-Competence (PE_C)

	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	p
RCA	0.136	0.0387	< .001
PE_C	0.433	0.0375	< .001
RCA * PE_C	0.104	0.0302	< .001

Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_TP). WP_TP = Individual Work Performance -Task Performance; RCA = Role Clarity; PE_C = Psychological Empowerment- Competence; SE = Standard Error.

The results of the simple slope analysis, assessing the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_TP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_C), are reported in Table 4.1. When examining the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_TP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_C), the moderating effect of PE_C was only found to be significant at high ($\beta = .2271, p < .001$) and average levels ($\beta = .1359, p < .001$) of PE_C.

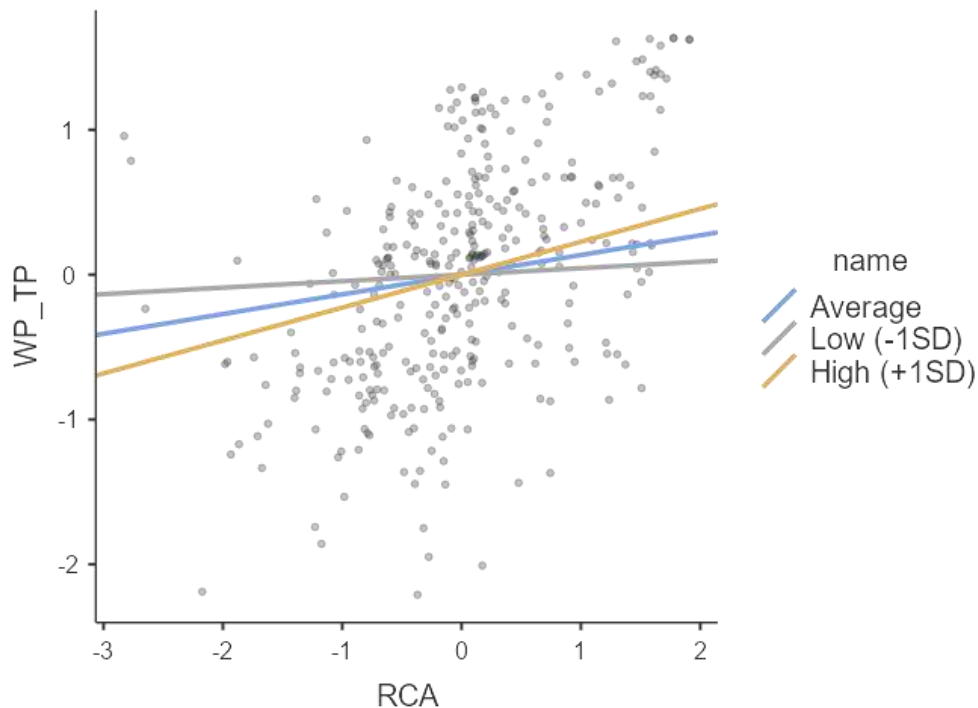
Table 4.1*Simple Slope Results of RCA on WP_TP*

	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	P
Average	0.1359	0.0390	< .001
Low (-1SD)	0.0447	0.0461	0.332
High (+1SD)	0.2271	0.0484	< .001

Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_TP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_C). WP = Individual Work Performance; WP_TP = Individual Work Performance-Task Performance; RCA = Role Clarity; PE_C = Psychological Empowerment – Competence; SE = Standard Error.

Figure 2

The effect of PE_C on the relationship between RCA and WP_TP

Simple Slope Plot Results

Simple slopes analysis showed when PE_C is one standard deviation below the mean the relationship between RCA and WP_TP is not significant ($\beta = .0447$, $p = .332$). When PE_C is at the mean, the relationship between RCA and WP_TP is significant ($\beta = .1359$, $p < .001$). Similarly, when PE_C is one standard deviation above the mean, the relationship between RCA and WP_TP is significant ($\beta = .2271$, $p < .001$). Figure 2 shows that when PE_C is low, the slope was less steep, whereas the slope was steepest in the presence of high PE_C.

From the above it is evident that for participants measuring at and above the mean of the competence dimension of psychological empowerment, an increase in role clarity was associated with an increase in the task performance dimension of individual work performance. However, for those with high levels of the competence dimension of psychological empowerment, the relationship between role clarity and the task performance dimension of individual work performance was stronger. As such, the psychological empowerment competence dimension moderated the relationship between role clarity and the task performance dimension of individual work performance by strengthening the relationship between role clarity and the task performance dimension of individual work performance.

The moderating effect of Psychological Empowerment Self Determination (PE_SD) on the relationship between Role Clarity (RCA) and Individual Work Performance Task Performance (WP_TP)

Results of the moderation analysis, assessing the moderating role of PE_SD on the relationship between RCA and WP_TP, are reported in Table 5. From the results it is evident that the conditional effect of RCA on WP_TP (i.e. the simple effect of RCA when PE_SD = 0) is significant ($\beta = .3171$, $p < .001$). Similarly, the conditional effect of PE_SD on WP_TP (i.e. the simple effect of PE_SD when RCA = 0) is significant ($\beta = .2186$, $p < .001$). The interaction was also statistically significant ($\beta = .0896$, $p < .005$), meaning the interaction effect is significantly different from zero and one can conclude that PE_SD is a significant moderator of the relationship between RCA and WP_TP.

Table 5

Moderating Role of Psychological Empowerment-Self-determination (PE_SD)

	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	p
RCA	0.3171	0.0411	< .001
PE_SD	0.2186	0.0388	< .001
RCA * PE_SD	0.0896	0.0321	0.005

Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_TP). WP_TP = Individual Work Performance -Task Performance; RCA = Role Clarity; PE_SD = Psychological Empowerment- Self Determination; SE = Standard Error.

The results of the simple slope analysis, assessing the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_TP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_SD), are reported in Table 5.1. When examining the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_TP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_SD), the moderating effect of PE_SD was

found to be significant at low ($\beta = .237, p < .001$), high ($\beta = 0.397, p < .001$) and average levels ($\beta = .317, p < .001$) of PE_SD.

Table 5.1

Simple Slope Results of RCA on WP_TP

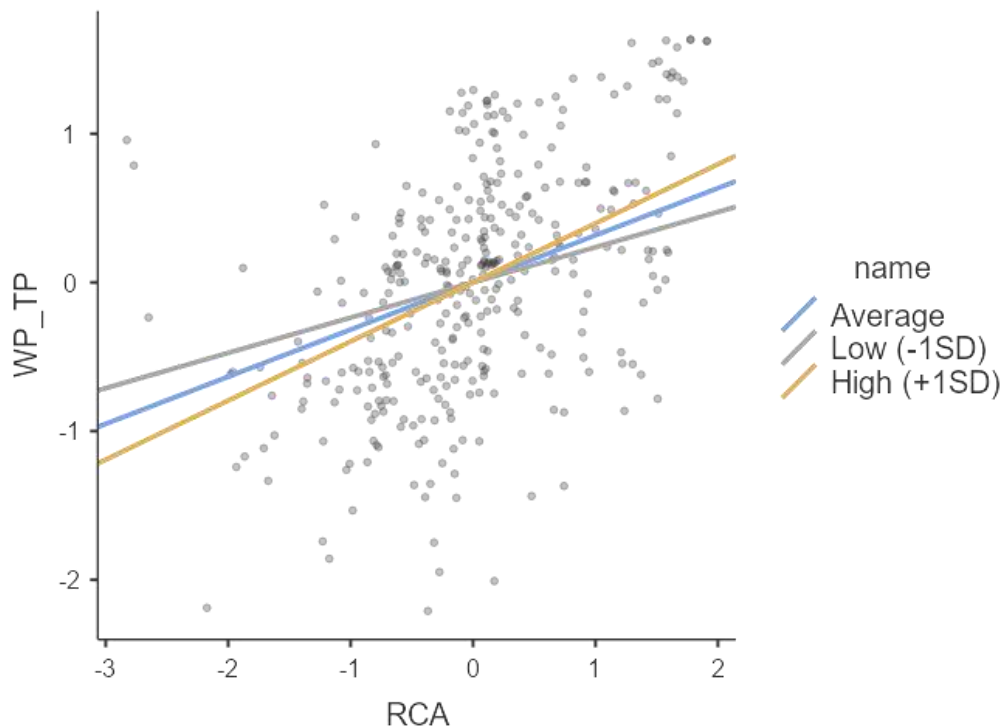
	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	p
Average	0.317	0.0413	< .001
Low (-1SD)	0.237	0.0484	< .001
High (+1SD)	0.397	0.0524	< .001

Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_TP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_SD). WP = Individual Work Performance; WP_TP = Individual Work Performance-Task Performance; RCA = Role Clarity; PE_SD = Psychological Empowerment – Self Determination; SE = Standard Error.

Figure 3

The effect of PE_SD on the relationship between RCA and WP_TP

Simple Slope Plot Results



Simple slopes analysis showed that when PE_SD is one standard deviation below the mean, the relationship between RCA and WP_TP is significant ($\beta = .0484, p < .001$). When PE_SD is at the mean, the relationship between RCA and WP_TP is significant ($\beta = .317, p < .001$). Similarly, when PE_SD is one standard deviation above the mean, the relationship between RCA and WP_TP is significant ($\beta = 0.397, p < .001$). Figure 3 shows that when PE_SD is

low, the slope was less steep, whereas the slope was steepest in the presence of high PE_SD.

From the above it is evident that for all participants, role clarity was associated with an increase in the task performance dimension of individual work performance. However, for those with high levels of the self-determination dimension of psychological empowerment, the relationship between role clarity and the task performance dimension of individual work performance was stronger. As such, the psychological empowerment self-determination dimension moderated the relationship between role clarity and the task performance by strengthening the relationship between role clarity and the task performance dimension of individual work performance.

The moderating effect of Psychological Empowerment Impact (PE_IM) on the relationship between Role Clarity (RCA) and Individual Work Performance Task Performance (WP_TP)

Results of the moderation analysis, assessing the moderating role of PE_IM on the relationship between RCA and WP_TP, are reported in Table 6. From the results it is evident that the conditional effect of RCA on WP_TP (i.e. the simple effect of RCA when PE_IM = 0) is significant ($\beta = .4620, p < .001$). The conditional effect of PE_IM on WP_TP (i.e. the simple effect of PE_IM when RCA = 0) is not significant ($\beta = .0207, p .624$). The interaction was statistically significant ($\beta = .0832; p .032$), meaning the interaction effect is significantly different from zero and one can conclude that PE_IM is a significant moderator of the relationship between RCA and WP_TP.

Table 6

Moderating Role of Psychological Empowerment-Impact (PE_IM)

	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	P
RCA	0.4620	0.0426	<.001
PE_IM	0.0207	0.0421	0.624
RCA * PE_IM	0,0832	0,0388	0.032

Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_TP). WP_TP = Individual Work Performance -Task Performance; RCA = Role Clarity; PE_IM = Psychological Empowerment- Impact; SE = Standard Error.

The results of the simple slope analysis, assessing the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_TP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_IM), are reported in Table 6.1. When examining the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable

(WP_TP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_IM), the moderating effect of PE_IM was found to be significant at low ($\beta = .462, p < .001$), high ($\beta = .533, p < .001$) and average levels ($\beta = .462, p < .001$) of PE_IM.

Table 6.1

Simple Slope Results of RCA on WP_TP

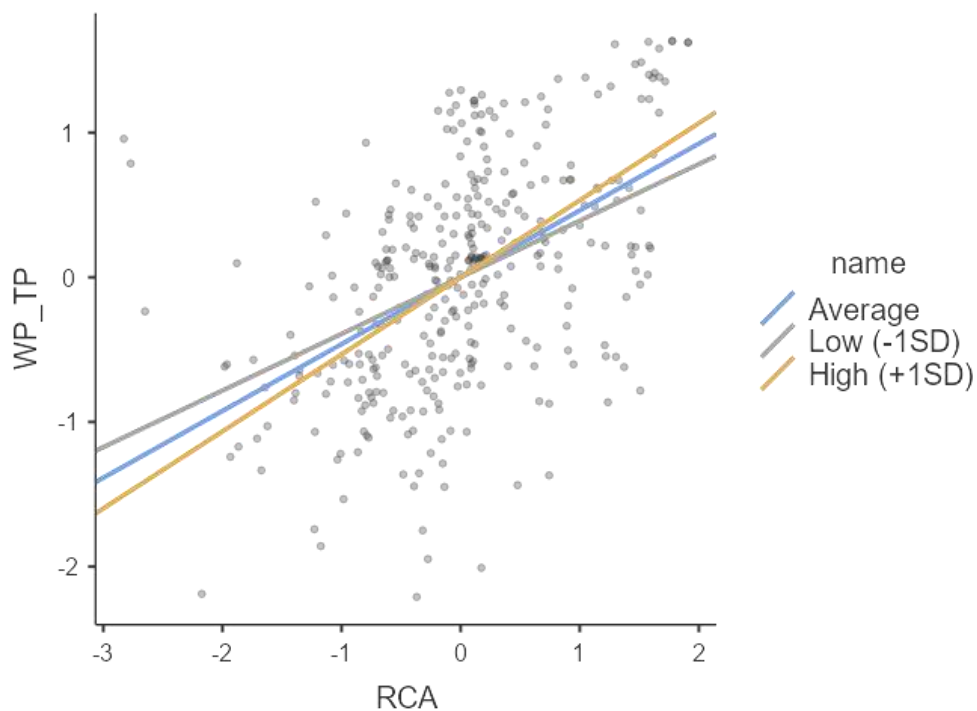
	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	p
Average	0.462	0.0428	< .001
Low (-1SD)	0.391	0.0498	< .001
High (+1SD)	0.533	0.0581	< .001

Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_TP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_IM). WP = Individual Work Performance; WP_TP = Individual Work Performance-Task Performance; RCA = Role Clarity; PE_IM = Psychological Empowerment – Impact; SE = Standard Error.

Figure 4

The effect of PE_IM on the relationship between RCA and WP_TP

Simple Slope Plot Results



Simple slopes analysis showed that when PE_IM is one standard deviation below the mean, the relationship between RCA and WP_TP is significant ($\beta = .391, p < .001$). When PE_IM is at the mean, the relationship between RCA and WP_TP is significant ($\beta = .462, p < .001$). Similarly, when PE_IM is one standard deviation above the mean, the relationship between

RCA and WP_TP is significant ($\beta = 0.533, p < .001$). Figure 4 shows that when PE_IM is low, the slope was less steep, whereas the slope was steepest in the presence of high PE_IM.

The above indicates that for all participants, role clarity was associated with an increase in the task performance dimension of individual work performance. However, for those with high levels of the impact dimension of psychological empowerment, the relationship between role clarity and the task performance dimension of individual work performance was stronger. As such, the psychological empowerment impact dimension moderated the relationship between role clarity and the task performance dimension of individual work performance by strengthening the relationship between role clarity and the task performance dimension of individual work performance.

The moderating effect of Psychological Empowerment Meaning (PE_M) on the relationship between Role Clarity (RCA) and Individual Work Performance (WP_CP)

Results of the moderation analysis, assessing the moderating role of PE_M on the relationship between RCA and WP_CP, are reported in Table 7. From the results it is evident that the conditional effect of RCA on WP_CP (i.e. the simple effect of RCA when PE_M = 0) is significant ($\beta = .212, p < .001$). Similarly, the conditional effect of PE_M on WP_CP (i.e. the simple effect of PE_M when RCA = 0) is significant ($\beta = .317, p < .001$). The interaction was also statistically significant ($\beta = .144; p < .001$), meaning the interaction effect is significantly different from zero and one can conclude that PE_M is a significant moderator of the relationship between RCA and WP_CP.

Table 7

Moderating Role of Psychological Empowerment–Meaning (PE_M)

	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	p
RCA	0.212	0.0348	< .001
PE_M	0.317	0.0363	< .001
RCA * PE_M	0.144	0.0323	< .001

Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_CP). WP = individual Work Performance; WP_CP = Individual Work Performance – Contextual Performance; RCA = Role Clarity; PE_M = Psychological Empowerment- Meaning; SE = Standard Error.

The results of the simple slope analysis, assessing the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_CP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_M), are reported in Table 7.1. When examining the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_CP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_M), the moderating effect of PE_M was

found to be significant when RCA was on the mean (average) ($\beta = .2117, p < .001$), low ($\beta = .0950, p .027$) and high ($\beta = .3284, p < .001$) of PE_M.

Table 7.1

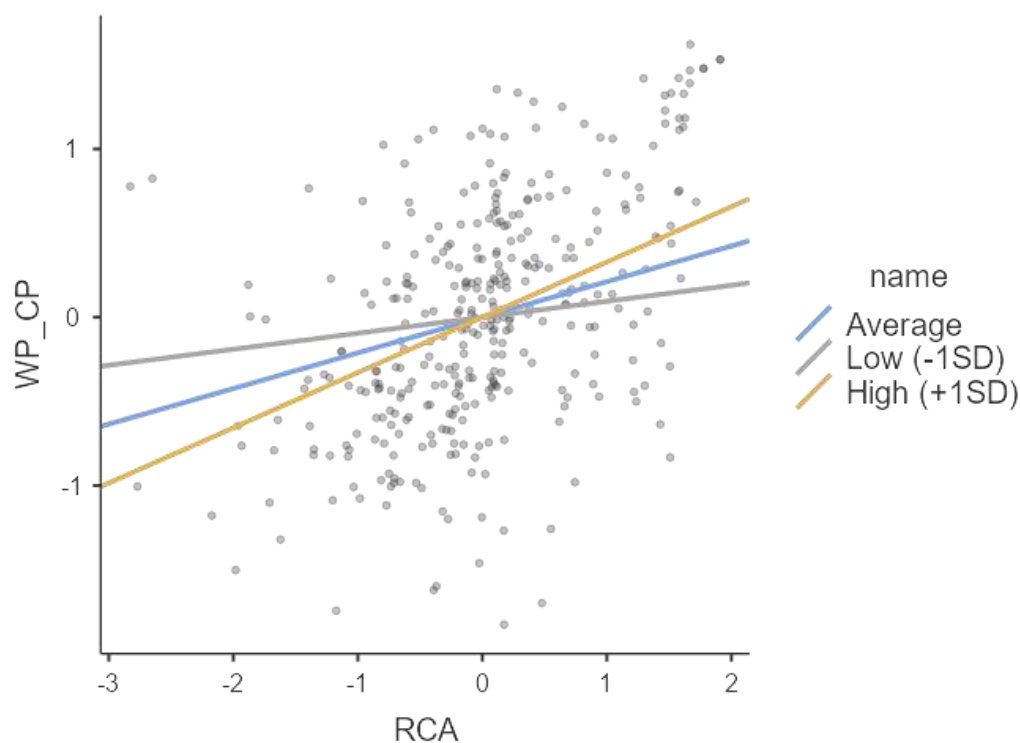
Simple Slope Results of RCA on WP_CP

	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	P
Average	0.2117	0.0354	< .001
Low (-1SD)	0.0950	0.0429	0.027
High (+1SD)	0.3284	0.0457	< .001

Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_CP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_M), WP = individual work performance; WP_CP = Individual Work Performance– Contextual Performance; RCA = Role Clarity; PE_M = Psychological Empowerment- Meaning; SE = Standard Error.

Figure 5

The effect of PE_M on the relationship between RCA and WP_CP



Simple slopes analysis showed that when PE_M is one standard deviation below the mean, the relationship between RCA when WP_CP is significant ($\beta = .0950, p .027$). When PE_M is at the mean, the relationship between RCA when WP_CP is significant ($\beta = .2117, p < .001$). Similarly, when PE_M is one standard deviation above the mean, the relationship between RCA when WP_CP is significant ($\beta = .3284, p < .001$). Figure 5 shows that when

PE_M is low, the slope was less steep, whereas the slope was steepest in the presence of high PE_M.

The above indicates that for all participants, role clarity was associated with an increase in the contextual performance dimension of individual work performance. However, for those with high levels of the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment, the relationship between role clarity and the contextual performance dimension of individual work performance was stronger. Therefore, the psychological empowerment meaning dimension moderated the relationship between role clarity and the contextual performance dimension of individual work performance by strengthening the relationship between role clarity and the contextual performance dimension of individual work performance.

The moderating effect of Psychological Empowerment Meaning (PE_C) on the relationship between Role Clarity (RCA) and Individual Work Performance (WP_CP)

Results of the moderation analysis, assessing the moderating role of PE_C on the relationship between RCA and WP_CP, are reported in Table 8. From the results it is evident that the conditional effect of RCA on WP_CP (i.e. the simple effect of RCA when PE_C = 0) is not significant ($\beta = .0423$, $p = .190$). The conditional effect of PE_C on WP_CP (i.e. the simple effect of PE_C when RCA = 0) is significant ($\beta = .4813$, $p < .001$). The interaction was also statistically significant ($\beta = .1168$; $p < .001$), meaning the interaction effect is significantly different from zero. One can conclude that PE_C is a significant moderator of the relationship between RCA and WP_CP.

Table 8

Moderating Role of Psychological Empowerment-Competence (PE_C)

	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	P
RCA	0.0423	0.0323	0.190
PE_C	0.4813	0.0312	< .001
RCA * PE_C	0.1168	0.0251	< .001

Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_CP). WP = individual Work Performance; WP_CP = Individual Work Performance – Contextual Performance; RCA = Role Clarity; PE_C = Psychological Empowerment- Competence; SE = Standard Error.

The results of the simple slope analysis, assessing the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_CP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_C), are reported in Table 8.1. When examining the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable

(WP_CP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_C), the moderating effect of PE_C was found to be significant only when RCA was high ($\beta = 0.1446$, $p < .001$) of PE_C.

Table 8.1

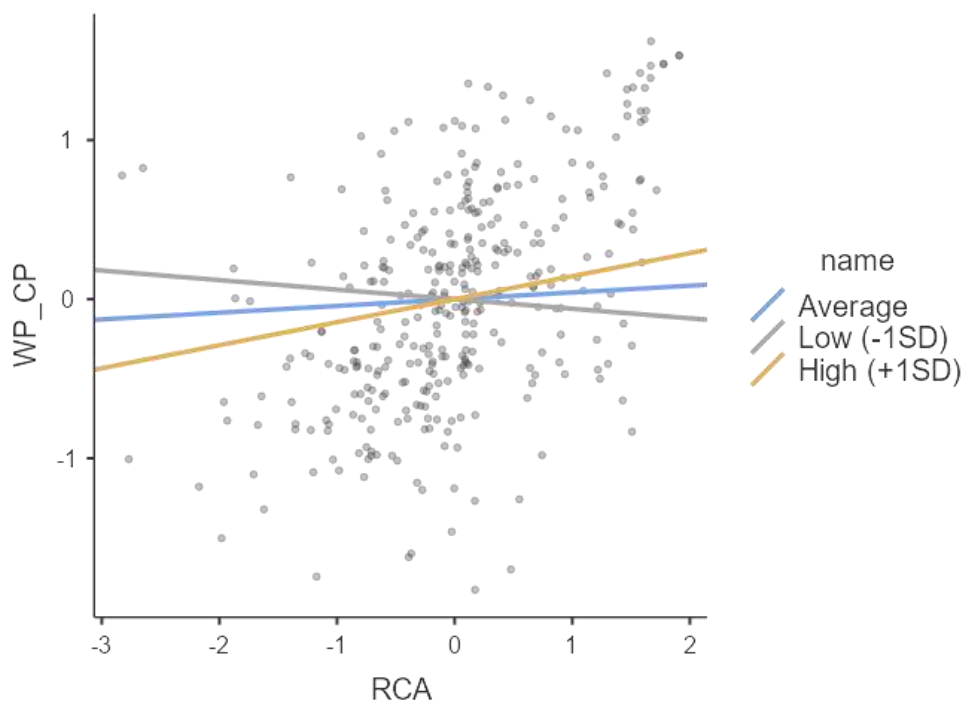
Simple Slope Results of RCA on WP_CP

	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	P
Average	0.0423	0.0327	0.196
Low (-1SD)	-0.0600	0.0387	0.121
High (+1SD)	0.1446	0.0406	< .001

Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_CP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_M), WP = individual work performance; WP_CP = Individual Work Performance– Contextual Performance; RCA = Role Clarity; PE_C = Psychological Empowerment- Competence; SE = Standard Error.

Figure 6

The effect of PE_C on the relationship between RCA and WP_CP



Simple slopes analysis showed that when PE_C is one standard deviation below the mean, the relationship between RCA and WP_CP is not significant ($\beta = -.0600$, $p .121$). When PE_C is at the mean, the relationship between RCA and WP_CP is not significant ($\beta = 0.0423$, $p < .196$). Conversely, when PE_C is one standard deviation above the mean, the relationship between RCA and WP_CP is significant ($\beta = .1446$, $p < .001$). Figure 6 shows

that when PE_C is low, the slope was less steep, whereas the slope was steepest in the presence of high PE_C.

The above indicates that for participants measuring high on psychological empowerment competence dimension, role clarity was associated with an increase in the contextual performance dimension of individual work performance. The psychological empowerment competence dimension moderated the relationship between role clarity and the contextual performance dimension of individual work performance by strengthening the relationship between role clarity and the contextual performance dimension of individual work performance.

The moderating effect of Psychological Empowerment Self Determination (PE_SD) on the relationship between Role Clarity (RCA) and Individual Work Performance (WP_CP)

Results of the moderation analysis, assessing the moderating role of PE_SD on the relationship between RCA and WP_CP, are reported in Table 9. From the results it is evident that the conditional effect of RCA on WP_CP (i.e. the simple effect of RCA when PE_SD= 0) is significant ($\beta = .2406$, $p < .001$). Similarly, the conditional effect of PE_SD on performance (i.e. the simple effect of PE_SD when RCA = 0) is significant ($\beta = 0.2462$, $p < .001$). The interaction was also statistically significant ($\beta = .0950$; $p < .001$), meaning the interaction effect is significantly different from zero and one can conclude that PE_SD is a significant moderator of the relationship between RCA and WP_CP.

Table 9

Moderating Role of Psychological Empowerment-Self-determination (PE_SD)

	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	P
RCA	0.2406	0.0357	< .001
PE_SD	0.2462	0.0337	< .001
RCA * PE_SD	0.0950	0.0279	< .001

Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_CP). WP = individual Work Performance; WP_CP = Individual Work Performance – Contextual Performance; RCA = Role Clarity; PE_SD = Psychological Empowerment – Self Determination; SE = Standard Error.

The results of the simple slope analysis, assessing the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_CP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_SD), are reported in Table 9.1. When examining the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_CP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_SD), the moderating effect of PE_SD was

found to be significant when RCA was on the mean (average) ($\beta = .241, p < .001$), low ($\beta = .156, p < .001$) and high ($\beta = .326, p < .001$).

Table 9.1

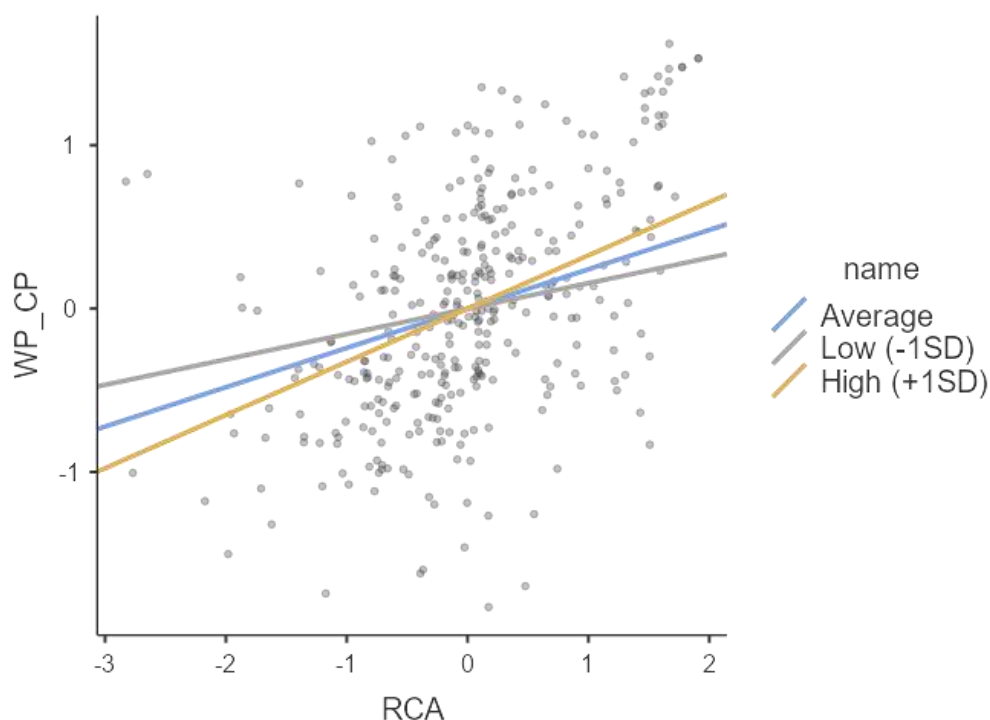
Simple Slope Results of RCA on WP_CP

	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	P
Average	0.241	0.0360	< .001
Low (-1SD)	0.156	0.0421	< .001
High (+1SD)	0.326	0.0456	< .001

Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_CP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_M), WP = individual work performance; WP_CP = Individual Work Performance – Contextual Performance; RCA = Role Clarity; PE_SD = Psychological Empowerment - Self Determination; SE = Standard Error.

Figure 7

The effect of PE_SD on the relationship between RCA and WP_CP



Simple slopes analysis showed that when PE_SD is one standard deviation below the mean, the relationship between RCA and WP_CP is significant ($\beta = .156, p < .001$). When PE_SD is at the mean, the relationship between RCA and WP_CP is significant ($\beta = .241, p < .001$). Similarly, when PE_SD is one standard deviation above the mean, the relationship between RCA and WP_CP is significant ($\beta = .326, p < .001$). Figure 7 shows that when PE_SD is low, the slope was less steep, whereas the slope was steepest in the presence of high PE_SD.

For all participants, role clarity was associated with an increase in the contextual performance dimension of individual work performance. However, for those with high levels of the self-determination dimension of psychological empowerment, the relationship between role clarity and the contextual performance dimension of individual work performance was stronger. The psychological empowerment self-determination dimension moderated the relationship between role clarity and the contextual performance dimension of individual work performance by strengthening the relationship between role clarity and the contextual performance dimension of individual work performance.

The moderating effect of Psychological Empowerment Meaning (PE_IM) on the relationship between Role Clarity (RCA) and Individual Work Performance (WP_CP)

Results of the moderation analysis, assessing the moderating role of PE_IM on the relationship between RCA and WP_CP, are reported in Table 10. From the results it is evident that the conditional effect of RCA on performance (i.e. the simple effect of RCA when PE_IM= 0) is significant ($\beta = .3719$, $p < .001$). Similarly, the conditional effect of PE_IM on performance (i.e. the simple effect of PE_IM when RCA = 0) is significant ($\beta = .0843$, $p = 0.023$). The interaction was also statistically significant ($\beta = .0844$; $p = .013$), meaning the interaction effect is significantly different from zero and one can conclude that PE_IM is a significant moderator of the relationship between RCA and WP_CP.

Table 10

Moderating Role of Psychological Empowerment-Impact (PE_IM)

	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	p
RCA	0.3719	0.0375	< .001
PE_IM	0.0843	0.0370	0.023
RCA * PE_IM	0.0844	0.0342	0.013

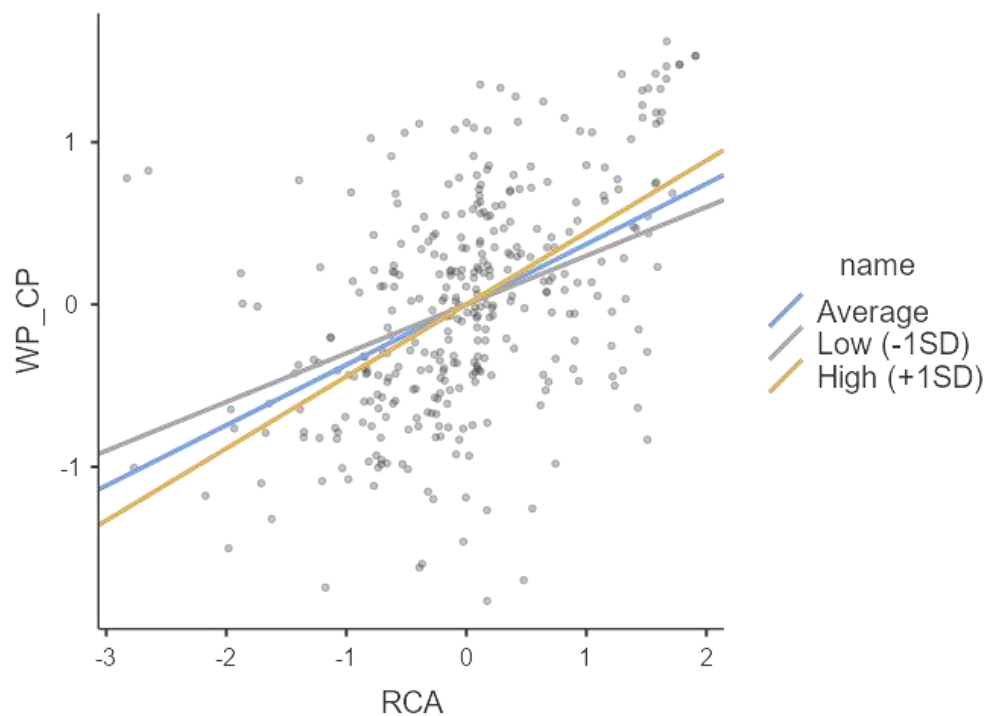
Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_CP). WP = individual Work Performance; WP_CP = Individual Work Performance – Contextual Performance; RCA = Role Clarity; PE_IM = Psychological Empowerment – Impact; SE = Standard Error.

The results of the simple slope analysis, assessing the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_CP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_IM), are reported in Table 9.1. When examining the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_CP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_IM), the moderating effect of PE_IM was found to be significant when RCA was on the mean (average) ($\beta = .372$, $p < .001$), low ($\beta = .300$, $p < .001$) and high ($\beta = .444$, $p < .001$).

Table 10.1*Simple Slope Results of RCA on WP_CP*

	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	P
Average	0.372	0.0377	< .001
Low (-1SD)	0.300	0.0439	< .001
High (+1SD)	0.444	0.0511	< .001

Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_CP) at different levels of the moderator (PE_M), WP = individual work performance; WP_CP = Individual Work Performance – Contextual Performance; RCA = Role Clarity; PE_IM = Psychological Empowerment - Impact; SE = Standard Error.

Figure 8*The effect of PE_IM on the relationship between RCA and WP_CP*

Simple slopes analysis showed that when PE_IM is one standard deviation below the mean, the relationship between RCA and WP_CP is significant ($\beta = .300, p < .001$). When PE_IM is at the mean the relationship between RCA and WP_CP is significant ($\beta = .372, p < .001$). Similarly, when PE_IM is one standard deviation above the mean the relationship between RCA and WP_CP is significant ($\beta = .444, p < .001$). Figure 8 shows that when PE_IM is low, the slope was less steep, whereas the slope was steepest in the presence of high PE_IM.

For all participants, role clarity was associated with an increase in the contextual performance dimension of individual work performance. However, for those with high levels

of the impact dimension of psychological empowerment, the relationship between role clarity and the contextual performance dimension of individual work performance was stronger. The psychological empowerment impact dimension moderated the relationship between role clarity and the contextual performance dimension of individual work performance by strengthening the relationship between role clarity and the contextual performance dimension of individual work performance.

The moderating effect of Psychological Empowerment Meaning (PE_M) on the relationship between Role Clarity (RCA) and Individual Work Performance Counterproductive Work Behaviour (WP_COUP)

Results of the moderation analysis, assessing the moderating role of PE_M on the relationship between RCA and WP_COUP, are reported in Table 11. From the results it is evident that the conditional effect of RCA on WP_COUP (i.e. the simple effect of RCA when PE_M= 0) is not significant ($\beta = -.0695, p .145$). The conditional effect of PE_M on WP_COUP (i.e. the simple effect of PE_M when RCA = 0) is significant ($\beta = -.2561, p < .001$). The interaction was not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.0236; p .570$), meaning the interaction effect is not significantly different from zero and one can conclude that PE_M is not significant moderator of the relationship between RCA and WP_COUP.

Table 11

Moderating Role of Psychological Empowerment-Meaning (PE_M)

	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	p
RCA	-0.0695	0.0477	0.145
PE_M	-0.2561	0.0495	< .001
RCA * PE_M	-0.0236	0.0416	0.570

Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_COUP). WP = individual work performance; WP_CP = Individual Work Performance – Counterproductive Behaviour; RCA = Role Clarity; PE = Psychological Empowerment; SE = Standard Error.

The moderating effect of Psychological Empowerment Meaning (PE_C) on the relationship between Role Clarity (RCA) and Individual Work Performance Counterproductive Work Behaviour (WP_COUP)

Results of the moderation analysis, assessing the moderating role of PE_C on the relationship between RCA and WP_COUP, are reported in Table 12. From the results it is evident that the conditional effect of RCA on WP_COUP (i.e. the simple effect of RCA when PE_C= 0) is significant ($\beta = -.11423, p .045$). Similarly, the conditional effect of PE_C on WP_COUP (i.e. the simple effect of PE_C when RCA = 0) is significant ($\beta = -.15080, p$

0.008). The interaction was however not statistically significant ($\beta = -.00263$; $p .941$), meaning the interaction effect is not significantly different from zero and one can conclude that PE_C is not significant moderator of the relationship between RCA and WP_COUP.

Table 12

Moderating Role of Psychological Empowerment-Competence (PE_C)

	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	P
RCA	-0.11423	0.0569	0.045
PE_C	-0.15080	0.0566	0.008
RCA * PE_C	-0.00263	0.0359	0.941

Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_COUP). WP = individual work performance; WP_CP = Individual Work Performance – Counterproductive Behaviour; RCA = Role Clarity; PE_C = Psychological Empowerment - Competence; SE = Standard Error.

The moderating effect of Psychological Empowerment Meaning (PE_SD) on the relationship between Role Clarity (RCA) and Individual Work Performance Counterproductive Work Behaviour (WP_COUP)

Results of the moderation analysis, assessing the moderating role of PE_SD on the relationship between RCA and WP_COUP, are reported in Table 13. From the results it is evident that the conditional effect of RCA on WP_COUP (i.e. the simple effect of RCA when PE_SD= 0) is significant ($\beta = -.22809$, $p < .001$). The conditional effect of PE_SD on WP_COUP (i.e. the simple effect of PE_SD when RCA = 0) is not significant ($\beta = .00131$, $p 0.980$). Similarly, the interaction was not statistically significant ($\beta = .01244$; $p .746$), meaning the interaction effect is not significantly different from zero and one can conclude that PE_SD is not significant moderator of the relationship between RCA and WP_COUP.

Table 13

Moderating Role of Psychological Empowerment-Self-determination (PE_SD)

	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	P
RCA	-0.22809	0.0503	< .001
PE_SD	0.00131	0.0529	0.980
RCA * PE_SD	0.01244	0.0385	0.746

Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_COUP). WP = individual work performance; WP_CP = Individual Work Performance – Counterproductive Behaviour; RCA = Role Clarity; PE_SD = Psychological Empowerment - Self Determination; SE = Standard Error.

The moderating effect of Psychological Empowerment Impact (PE_IM) on the relationship between Role Clarity (RCA) and Individual Work Performance Counterproductive Work Behaviour (WP_COUP)

Results of the moderation analysis, assessing the moderating role of PE_IM on the relationship between RCA and WP_COUP, are reported in Table 14. From the results it is evident that the conditional effect of RCA on WP_COUP (i.e. the simple effect of RCA when PE_IM= 0) is significant ($\beta = -.2564$, $p < .001$). The conditional effect of PE_IM on WP_COUP (i.e. the simple effect of PE_IM when RCA = 0) is not significant ($\beta = .0642$, $p 0.173$). The interaction was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.0262$; $p .558$), meaning the interaction effect is not significantly different from zero and one can conclude that PE_IM is not significant moderator of the relationship between RCA and WP_COUP.

Table 14

Moderating Role of Psychological Empowerment-Impact (PE_IM)

	95% Confidence Interval		
	Coefficient	SE	P
RCA	-0.2564	0.0425	< .001
PE_IM	0.0642	0.0472	0.173
RCA * PE_IM	0.0262	0.0447	0.558

Note: Shows the effect of the predictor (RCA) on the dependent variable (WP_COUP). WP = individual work performance; WP_CP = Individual Work Performance – Counterproductive Behaviour; RCA = Role Clarity; PE_IM = Psychological Empowerment - Impact; SE = Standard Error.

Model Fit

Table 15

Model Fit Statistics

Model	$\chi^2(df)$	P	CFI	TLI	RMSEA (90% CI)	SRMR
Model 1	34842,603 (630)	<.001	.96	.955	.083 (.079, .088)	.06

Note: χ^2 = chi-square; df = degrees of freedom; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR = Standardised Root Mean Square Residual.

Results of the model fit, examining the fit statistics with reference to the likelihood chi-square statistic (χ^2), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and the Standardised Root Means Square Residual (SRMR), are reported in Table 15. From the results it is evident that the likelihood chi-square statistic was statistically significant, which indicates that the null hypothesis of perfect fit for the model had to be rejected, $\chi^2(630) = 34842,603$, $p < .001$. In addition, the CFI (.96) and the TLI (.955) fell well at the recommended cut-off values of good fit (.95) and

acceptable fit (.90). The RMSEA (.088) was slightly above the cut-off for acceptable fit (.08) (Byrne, 2012). On the other hand, the SRMR, which is perhaps the most direct indicator of absolute fit, was .06, which shows that on average the residuals of the analysis were relatively small. Cho et al. (2020) indicate that SRMR values that are closer to zero indicate an acceptable level of fit and further stated that the SRMR cut off is .08. According to Shi et al. (2020, p. 12), "when comparing the performance of SRMR vs. RMSEA, the SRMR produced more accurate tests of close fit and confidence intervals across almost every condition tested". Therefore, we can infer that the model is reasonably consistent with the sample data and does not require re-specification.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between role clarity, psychological empowerment and individual work performance and the possible moderating effect of lower order psychological empowerment dimensions on the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance of trainee accountants.

The results of the study indicate that role clarity is related to higher levels of task and contextual performance and lower levels of counterproductive work behaviour. This is consistent with the study by Anderson and Stritch (2016) and Thangavelu and Sudhahar (2017), who found a relationship between role clarity and individual work performance. For this study's sample, this means that trainee accountants tend to experience higher individual work performance in the presence of role clarity. Employees who have a clear understanding of their job requirements and the processes necessary to deliver their tasks perform better on the job (Karkkola et al., 2019).

The results further show that role clarity is related to higher levels of meaning, competence, and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment. This is consistent with the findings by Hall (2008); Mendes and Stander (2011), and Wang et al. (2016). This implies that when trainee accountants are given clear job-related instructions and expectations they are empowered to take initiative to do their work, because they trust their ability to perform their work and feel that their work is within their control. The task performance dimension of individual work performance was related to higher levels of meaning, competence, impact and self-determination dimensions of psychological empowerment. The results are supported by Yao et al. (2013), who found that psychological empowerment has a significant influence on task performance. Furthermore, a positive relationship was found between the meaning, competence, impact and self-determination dimensions of psychological empowerment and contextual performance dimension of individual work performance. The

results are also consistent with the literature, which indicates that psychological empowerment positively influences performance (Iqbal et al. 2020). There was a negative relationship between the lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and counterproductive work behaviour dimension of individual work performance. Employees who are empowered are less likely to be involved in counterproductive work behaviour (Fatima et al., 2013).

Based on the literature review, it was postulated that psychological empowerment could potentially be a moderator of the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance. Various lower order psychological empowerment dimensions were found to influence the strength of the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance, as indicated below.

The meaning dimension of psychological empowerment was found to moderate the relationship between role clarity and the task performance dimension of individual work performance at low, average and high levels, with the strength of the relationship being strongest in the presence of high psychological empowerment (meaning).

The competence dimension of psychological empowerment was found to moderate the relationship between role clarity and the task performance dimension of individual work performance when psychological empowerment (competence) was at average and high levels, with the strength of the relationship being strongest at high levels.

The self-determination dimension of psychological empowerment was found to moderate the relationship between role clarity and the task performance dimension of individual work performance at low, average and high levels, with the strength of the relationship being strongest in the presence of high psychological empowerment (self-determination).

The impact dimension of psychological empowerment was found to moderate the relationship between role clarity and the task performance dimension of individual work performance at low, average and high levels, with the strength of the relationship being strongest in the presence of high psychological empowerment (impact).

The meaning dimension of psychological empowerment was found to moderate the relationship between role clarity and the contextual performance dimension of individual work performance at low, average and high levels, with the strength of the relationship being strongest in the presence of high psychological empowerment (meaning).

The competence dimension of psychological empowerment was found to moderate the relationship between role clarity and task performance dimension of individual work performance when psychological empowerment (competence) was at a high level.

The self-determination dimension of psychological empowerment was found to moderate the relationship between role clarity and the contextual performance dimension of individual work performance at low, average and high levels, with the strength of the relationship being strongest in the presence of high psychological empowerment (self-determination).

The impact dimension of psychological empowerment was found to moderate the relationship between role clarity and the contextual performance of individual work performance at low, average and high levels, with the strength of the relationship being strongest in the presence of high psychological empowerment (impact).

The results, however, indicate that none of the lower order psychological empowerment dimensions were found to moderate the relationship between role clarity and the counterproductive work performance dimension of individual work performance.

Summatively, it was therefore found that all lower order psychological empowerment dimensions, in other words meaning, competence, self-determination and impact, moderated the relationships between role clarity and the task and contextual performance dimensions of individual work performance. Practically this means that the relationship between role clarity and the task and contextual performance dimensions of individual work performance can be strengthened by psychologically empowering young professionals in terms of creating a sense of meaning, competence, self-determination and impact.

Based on the above, the hypothesis stating that lower order psychological empowerment dimensions moderate the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance can be partially accepted.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

When interpreting the findings, it is important to note the study's limitations. For the purpose of this study, a cross-sectional design approach was utilised. This means that causal relationships could not be tested amongst the constructs. Furthermore, due to data being collected at a particular point in time, it may limit the participants' opinions and attitudes about the constructs at a specific point in time. It is recommended that future research

should measure the constructs using a longitudinal design approach in order to determine causal relationships and obtain more insight about the participants' opinions and attitudes about the constructs over a long period.

This study used self-report surveys, which is a possible limitation because it may lead to common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012). In future, research could utilise various analysis or measurement methods to resolve issues related to common method bias (Lindell & Whitney, 2001).

Furthermore, the study used a subjective self-report evaluation of work performance. This may pose as a limitation as participants may answer the questions in a socially desirable manner (Koopmans et al., 2013). Participants may also exaggerate their abilities and performance. Future research could find value in using an objective evaluation of work performance as it may provide a true reflection of participants' performance.

Due to challenges related to data collection, the majority of the participants were young professionals from a specific audit firm in Gauteng. This could limit the generalisability of the study to all audit firms in South African. It is recommended that in future, participants from various audit firms in different provinces should be included in the study. This study was also limited to South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) trainee accountants. It is recommended that future research should consider including Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and South African Institute of Professional Accountants (SAIPA) trainee accountants as participants.

Recommendations for Practice

Although there are limitations, the study also has some recommendations for organisations. Organisations are constantly affected by what happens in the global and national economic, social and technological climate. Organisations also have many young trainee accountants joining the workforce after completing their tertiary studies. Therefore, it is essential for audit partners, managers, and supervisors to understand the challenges that young trainee accountants experience from working in a VUCA environment. According to Özçelik (2015), organisations have to develop new strategies to tackle young professionals' needs.

The research findings indicate that the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance task and contextual performance dimensions is consistently strengthened by lower order psychological empowerment dimensions. Therefore, it is recommended that trainee accountants' roles are clarified and for them to be psychologically empowered so that

they are able to perform in their jobs. According to Mukherjee and Malhotra (2006), feedback, engagement in decision-making and team support are three important determinants of role clarity (Kundu et al. 2019). Lourenco and Cronan (2017) further elaborate that role clarity and feedback about performance is vital to young trainees. Focusing on these variables could help organisations to increase employee role clarity and psychological empowerment. It is the leaders' responsibility to provide role clarity by ensuring that employees receive sufficient information related to role performance expectations (Towsen et al., 2020). It is recommended that managers train employees to improve their knowledge of job roles and ensure that they have the experience and competencies to perform those tasks effectively (Kundu et al. 2019; Stander & Rothmann, 2010). Role clarity could practically be increased by developing precise role descriptions as well as communicating role expectations to existing trainee accounts and new recruits. Organisations could empower their employees through knowledge and performance-related information sharing (Spreitzer, 1995). Employees who are given performance-related information are able to take control of their own work and make an impact. Empowered employees are more likely to carry out their job tasks because they perceive themselves as competent and able to make a meaningful contribution in their work and work environment (Spreitzer, 1995). Experienced employees must give young professionals constant feedback regarding their job performance (Iovu & Demian, 2019). This will help young professionals to be aware of their performance and how to possibly improve it. It is crucial to provide performance-related feedback as it is essential for the improvement of role clarity (Hassan, 2013). According to Stander and Rothmann (2010), managers could foster an autonomy-friendly work environment by considering employees' opinions, providing more options, and fostering self-determination. It is recommended that employees be rewarded for the contribution that they make in their work as this would provide meaning in their work (Spreitzer, 1995). Giving employees an opportunity to work autonomously and to share their opinions, gives them a sense of meaning (Siegall & Gardner, 2000). It also allows them the opportunity to make an impact as they feel that they make a valuable contribution towards their work and organisational performance (Siegall & Gardner, 2000).

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CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

This chapter aims to discuss the conclusion of this study based on the research objectives. Furthermore, the study's limitations and recommendations for practice and future research are also discussed.

3.1. Conclusions

The general aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions, individual work performance, and the possible moderating effect of lower order psychological empowerment dimensions on the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance of trainee accountants.

The study's objective was to first conceptualise the relationship between role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and individual work performance according to literature.

Role clarity is defined as the degree to which work tasks and goals are communicated and employees understand the requirements of their work functions (Kahn et al., 1964). Employees and organisations are affected by a lack of role clarity (Cama, 2018). Henderson et al. (2016) state that role clarity functions to let employees know what their work expectations are and it is intended to reduce confusion in an employee's day-to-day work tasks. Employees who know their work expectations and required behaviour perform effectively without wasting time trying to work out what the job requirements are (Alarcon et al., 2010). According to Meyer et al. (2018), trainees are challenged because they do not have an in-depth understanding of their roles and often have to spend time determining their roles. A lack of role clarity poses a threat to the employee and organisational performance (Samie et al., 2015; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). This is because employees who do not know what their roles entail will not carry out their work tasks effectively and therefore will not achieve high performance (Karkkola et al., 2019; Suan & Nasurdin, 2013). Role clarity does not only affect individuals; it also affects team performance.

Role clarity makes it easy for teams to work collaboratively, leading to team members trusting each other (Henderson et al., 2016). Therefore, team performance and organisational performance also improve because employees will have clarity on how to carry out their work roles (De Villiers & Stander, 2011). Employees who are empowered are inclined to have a positive outlook about their work and tend to perform and be more satisfied with their work (Bester et al., 2015).

Literature defines psychological empowerment as a multi-layered notion of motivation (Silén et al., 2019; Spreitzer, 1995). Psychological empowerment strengthens the employees' desire to accomplish work-related duties (Wang et al., 2019). Organisations that have empowered employees can withstand and adapt to different economic challenges (Mendes & Stander, 2011). Psychological empowerment comprises four dimensions, namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact (Spreitzer, 1995).

Meaning refers to the connection that individuals have with their work (Stander & Rothmann, 2010). Meaning is experienced when employees take responsibility for their work and feel that they add value to the accomplishment of organisational goals (Feiz et al., 2017; Jena et al., 2019). *Competence* refers to the individual's perception that they have the attributes required to complete work-related tasks effectively (Feiz et al., 2017; Spreitzer, 1995; Tsevaridou & Matsouka, 2019). Competence affects the individual's commitment level and intrinsically motivates them (Chung, 2018; Iqbal et al., 2020). *Self-determination* is the extent to which employees feel they have control over their work and have the freedom to do work their way (Baek-Kyoo et al., 2019; Spreitzer, 1995; Stander & Rothmann, 2009; Stander & Rothmann, 2010). Self-determined employees are creative; they can manage stress, solve problems and have the ability to adapt to different work environments (Vrhovnik et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2019). *Impact* refers to the amount of influence the individual has in accomplishing organisational goals (Spreitzer, 1995; Stander & Rothmann, 2009; Stander & Rothmann, 2010). It is related to the extent to which employees add value and make a positive contribution to organisational processes (Baek-Kyoo et al., 2019; Muduli, 2016). Impact and self-determination help individuals implement ideas (Schermyly et al., 2013).

Individual work performance is defined as the individual's behaviour that is crucial to organisational goal achievement (Koopmans, 2015; Koopmans et al., 2011). It focuses on the individuals' ability to carry out specialised work tasks using their skills, knowledge, talent and experience (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). Literature states that it is the behaviour or actions displayed by the individuals and not the outcomes of the behaviour (Koopmans et al., 2014). Individual work performance consists of three dimensions: task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behaviour (Koopmans, 2015).

Task performance is defined as the individual's ability to perform core work activities (Koopmans, 2015; Koopmans et al., 2011). It refers to the fundamental behaviours used to achieve crucial organisational tasks and goals (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Koopmans, 2015; Registe, 2017). It is the main job responsibilities of a job (Ramos-Villagrasa et al., 2019).

Contextual performance refers to the performance that adds value to the organisational environment in which core functioning occurs (Koopmans, 2015; Ramos-Villagrasa et al., 2019). According to Koopmans, (2015) and Yao et al. (2013), contextual performance is characterised by behaviour such as taking the initiative, participating in teamwork, and the ability to facilitate communication (Koopmans, 2015; Ramos-Villagrasa et al., 2019). *Counterproductive work behaviour* is harmful behaviour that employees may display (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002). According to Registe (2017), this behaviour has a negative effect on both the individual and the organisation. Examples of counterproductive behaviour include substance abuse, absenteeism, presenteeism, late coming and theft (Koopmans et al., 2011; Koopmans et al., 2014). A literature review conducted indicates the relationship between individual work performance, role clarity and psychological empowerment.

Samie et al. (2015) found a positive relationship between role clarity and job performance (Radhakrishnan, 2018). According to Kundu et al. (2019), role clarity is an essential antecedent for job performance. Anderson and Stritch (2016) found a relationship between role clarity and individual work performance task performance dimension. Team performance is also reliant on role clarity, as it minimises misunderstanding between team members and promotes equal work effort from each team (Grills, 2019). A literature review indicates that there is a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and role clarity (Aryee & Chen, 2006; Hall, 2008; Mendes & Stander, 2011; Wang et al., 2016). According to Sun (2016) and Tuuli and Rowlinson (2007), psychological empowerment is positively related to individual performance. Furthermore, literature indicates that psychological empowerment predicts individual work performance (Arslan & Zaman, 2014; Kundu et al., 2019; Tuuli & Rowlinson, 2007). Sun (2016) and Tuuli and Rowlinson (2007) posit that two dimensions of psychological empowerment, namely competence and impact, significantly explain changes in performance. Research by Sun (2016) indicates that meaning and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment are related to task performance and contextual performance dimensions of individual work performance.

Job resources are the physical, psychological, social, and organisational characteristics of a job that help to achieve organisational goals, support personal growth and development, and improve positive work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001; Hakanen et al., 2008). According to Bakker and Demerouti (2017), job resources are positively associated to performance. Role clarity, task significance, and work performance feedback are examples of job resources at the organisational level (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job resources are considered to be motivating since they encourage employees to learn and perform better (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Personal

resources are resources that are related to the individuals' self-assessment that enable them to influence their work environment (Tremblay & Messervey, 2011). Personal resources may have an impact on employee motivation because they act as a moderator in the relationship between job demands and job strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Tremblay & Messervey, 2011).

The second objective was to determine the relationship between role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and individual work performance of trainee accountants.

Understanding the relationship between role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions, and individual work performance is essential for organisations that hire young professionals, because it impacts on the performance and profitability of the organisation. A statistical analysis was carried out to determine the relationships between role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and individual work performance of trainee accountants. The results of this study indicate that there is a practical and statistically significant positive relationship between role clarity and lower order psychological empowerment dimensions. This is consistent with the findings by Aryee and Chen (2006), Hall, (2008), Mendes and Stander (2011), and Wang et al. (2016), who found that role clarity is positively correlated to psychological empowerment. According to Huang (2017), and Kundu et al. (2019), employees who have a high level of psychological empowerment are more inclined to take initiative in their jobs when they believe they have the skills to do the job.

The study found a statistically significant positive relationship between role clarity and individual work performance (task performance and contextual performance). The study results corroborate Thangavelu and Sudhahar's (2017) findings, who found a significant relationship between role clarity and performance. Employees are motivated to improve performance when their roles are clear (Henderson et al., 2016). In contrast, a statistically significant negative relationship of small effect was found between role clarity and counterproductive work behaviour dimension of individual work performance. This suggests that when trainee accountants are provided with clear guidelines and expectations of their roles they are more likely to decrease negative or harmful behaviours at work.

Furthermore, a statistically significant positive relationship was found between lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and contextual performance and task performance dimensions of individual work performance. The finding therefore is in agreement with

research by Spreitzer (1995) and Yao et al. (2013), who found a positive relationship between empowerment and job performance. Similarly, Azizia et al. (2020), Baek-Kyoo et al. (2019) and Schermuly et al. (2013) found that lower order psychological empowerment dimensions are associated with improved performance. A statistically significant negative relationship of small effect was found between meaning, competence, self-determination and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment and counterproductive work behaviour dimension of individual work performance. The study's findings correspond with the work by Fatima et al. (2013), who found that higher levels of empowerment lead to reduced levels of counterproductive work behaviour.

The third objective was to determine whether lower order psychological empowerment dimensions moderate the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance.

According to the study's findings, the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance (task performance and contextual performance) was found to be moderated by lower order psychological empowerment factors. The findings further indicate that the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance (task performance contextual performance) was significant at low, average and high levels of psychological empowerment (meaning), with the relationship being strongest at high levels of psychological empowerment (meaning). The relationship between role clarity and individual work performance (task performance) was statistically significant at average and high levels of psychological empowerment (competence), again being strongest at high levels of psychological empowerment (competence). The relationship between role clarity and individual work performance (contextual performance) was significant only at high levels of psychological empowerment (competence). The relationship between role clarity and individual work performance (task performance and contextual performance) was significant at low, average and high levels of psychological empowerment (self-determination). The relationship between role clarity and the task and contextual performance dimensions was most pronounced at high levels of psychological empowerment (self-determination) The relationship between role clarity and individual work performance (task performance and contextual performance) was significant at low, average and high levels of psychological empowerment (impact), with the relationship being strongest at high levels of psychological empower (impact). Conversely, the relationship between role clarity and individual work performance (counterproductive work behaviour) was not moderated by lower order psychological empowerment dimensions.

Overall, it was found that lower order psychological empowerment dimensions, namely meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact, moderate the relationship between role clarity and the task and contextual performance dimensions of work performance. In practice, this means that by psychologically empowering young professionals in terms of establishing a perception of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact, the relationship between role clarity and task and contextual performance dimensions of work performance can be reinforced.

Role clarity was proposed as a job resource, psychological empowerment as a personal resource, and individual work performance as an outcome in the context of the JD-R framework. The results of this study therefore indicate that the lower order psychological empowerment dimensions of meaning, competence, self-determination and impact are personal resources that moderate the relationship between the job resource, role clarity and the outcomes of task and contextual work performance.

3.2. Limitations

This section of the research consists of different limitations that should be noted. The cross-sectional design approach used in the research did not allow the researcher to test causal relationships amongst the constructs, as data was collected at a particular point in time. Since this data was obtained at a given moment, it may have limited the participants' opinions and attitudes regarding the constructs at that time. Self-report surveys were used in the research; this was therefore a possible limitation. According to Podsakoff et al. (2012), this may lead to common method bias. The constructs may not be measured or may lead to the relationship between constructs being exaggerated (Van der Vaart, 2021). A subjective self-report evaluation of work performance used in the study is a possible limitation because participants could provide answers that they perceive as socially acceptable (Koopmans et al., 2013). Furthermore, participants may exaggerate their capabilities. The researcher had some challenges in data collection and as a result, the majority of the study's sample consisted of young professionals from a specific audit firm in Gauteng. This may limit the study's generalisability to all audit firms in South Africa.

3.3. Recommendations

3.3.1. Recommendations for Future Research

Several recommendations for future research have been provided. It is recommended that a longitudinal research design should be used in future research to address the cross-sectional restriction of this research. Longitudinal research design would provide information

related to the participants' opinions and attitudes about the constructs over a long period. Causal relationships could also be determined.

It is recommended that in the future, researchers should use a variety of analytic or measurement methods to address challenges linked to common method bias (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). Future research could benefit from utilising an unbiased self-report evaluation of work performance because it could provide a more accurate representation of participants' performance. Research should be extended to participants from numerous audit firms in different provinces, as this would provide insight on perceptions of trainee accountants across South Africa. It is also recommended that in future, researchers should think about including participants that are pursuing careers in Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and South African Institute of Professional Accountants (SAIPA) trainee learnerships.

3.3.2. Recommendations for Practice

As per the study's objective, this is to make recommendations for practice regarding the relationship between role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and individual work performance of trainee accountants. The findings of this study show that a significant relationship exists between role clarity, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions and individual work performance. Furthermore, lower order psychological empowerment dimensions strengthens the relationship between role clarity and two of the individual work performance dimensions, namely task performance and contextual performance. It is therefore essential that audit firms design interventions that focus on improving role clarity, and increasing lower order psychological empowerment dimensions.

Employees prefer to work in environments where they are provided with enough clarity about their duties (Samie et al., 2015). It is recommended that role clarity should be prioritised and form part of the onboarding process. Employers should therefore ensure that they clarify trainee roles and expectations as soon as recruits join the organisations (Jonsson, & Thorgren, 2017; Stander & Rothmann, 2009). This can practically be done by providing a detailed job description that a direct manager or human resource representative can go through with the recruit. The job descriptions should be updated annually or bi-annually when the trainee performance evaluation is conducted. This is to ensure that trainee accountants at all levels of their learnerships have role clarity.

It is suggested that audit leaders should provide clear and honest performance feedback to trainee accountants. This will help them to gauge their own understanding of their work roles

and give them an opportunity to communicate any discrepancies in their roles. As much as clarifying roles is important, psychologically empowering employees is equally important. Role clarity as a work-related resource has the likelihood to enhance psychological empowerment (Towsen et al., 2020). Providing role clarity to employees could enhance empowerment perceptions (Stander & Rothmann, 2009). Employees who know their employment requirements find a sense of meaning in their work (Frögéli et al., 2019).

It is further recommended that audit managers and supervisors ensure that trainee accountants are psychologically empowered. This can be done by educating audit leaders on organisational support and employee empowerment (Stander & Rothmann, 2009). Knowledge and information sharing amongst team members should be encouraged as it improves employee competence levels. Employees who are psychologically empowered believe they can make decisions and assume responsibility for their work. Trainee accountants should be empowered by giving them some form of control over their work (Jha, 2019; Samie et al., 2015). Having control over their work would give them meaning and allow them to make an impact on the organisation.

3.4. Chapter Summary

The conclusions on each of the study's objectives were discussed both empirically and theoretically in this chapter. Limitations of the study were detailed and further recommendations for practice and future research were also provided.

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