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**LINKING LEADERSHIP EMPOWERMENT BEHAVIOR TO EMPLOYEE
ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS: TESTING THE
MEDIATING ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT**

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ABSTRACT

To improve their overall flexibility and efficiency, many organisations have replaced traditional hierarchical management structures with empowered (semi-autonomous or self-managing) work teams. Managers, once charged with directing and controlling work, are now asked to take on a new set of roles and responsibilities in order to lead these teams (Lawler, 1992). Arnold and colleagues (2000) identified five categories of empowering leadership behavior and constructed and validated a scale for measuring those behaviors. We build on their work by investigating how these behaviors relate to employee attitudes and behavioral intentions. We do so by developing a model in which psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995, 1996; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) mediates the relationship between empowering leadership behavior and employee job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment. We also modeled the relationship between these employee attitudes and intention to stay as a final outcome variable. Based on a sample of 381 service employees from four companies, we empirically tested this model using structural equation modeling in AMOS.

Our results show that psychological empowerment is partially mediating the relationship between perceived empowering leadership behavior and employee job satisfaction and affective commitment. This indicates that perceived leadership behavior does relate to employee attitudes through its impact on employee motivation. However, leadership behavior also shows to be directly related to employee attitudes, which in turn are strongly related to an employee's intention to stay working for the organisation. Implications for theory and managerial practice are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

In the past few decades, a complex set of socio-economic pressures, such as the intensifying global economic competition, advances in technology and the shift to a service-oriented economy, have forced organisations to become more flexible and efficient in order to survive (Ahearne, Mathieu & Rapp, 2005; Arnold, Arad, Rhoades & Drasgow, 2000). Given this new organizational reality, both theorists and academics have argued that hierarchical structures and leadership techniques which have traditionally dominated management practices should be complemented with management practices aimed at the empowerment of employees (e.g. Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Forrester, 2000). In practice the benefits of empowerment have not always been realised. It is argued that the inhibiting factors can be attributed to the implementation of empowerment practices, indicating the important role of external management. If managed effectively, leadership can be an important driver of the success of empowered organisations (Ahearne, Mathieu & Rapp, 2005).

Despite the extensive theoretical work on the importance of empowering practices and structures in general, empirical work, trying to identify the specific leader behaviors and management skills that are required in empowered contexts, remains scarce (Arnold et al., 2000). Preliminary research has evidenced that transformational and charismatic leadership (Kark, Shamir & Chen, 2003; Thomas & Velthouse, 2001; House, 1977) and managerial roles (Ugboro & Obeng, 2000) are related to some facets of psychological empowerment such as self-efficacy perceptions and self-esteem. However, these studies often adopt a narrow definition of the concept of empowerment, focusing on only a limited set of indicators instead of on its' multiple dimensions. This study aims to contribute to the research field by adopting Spreitzer's (1995) broader conceptualization of the psychological empowerment concept (meaning, competence, self determination and impact) in order to enable integrated conclusions regarding the relationships between leadership techniques and psychological empowerment (e.g. Kark et al., 2003).

In a recent study by Arnold et al. (2000) the construct Leadership Empowerment Behavior (LEB) has been introduced to represent the unique role of leaders in empowered work contexts. This study aims to further validate the construct of empowering leadership behavior as identified by Arnold et al. (2000). The focus hereby will be on the applicability of the LEB construct in more individualized

working contexts, as Arnold et al. (2000) concentrated on the empowered team context.

In their study Arnold and colleagues (2000) stress the importance of further research towards the relationships between LEB, empowerment and work outcome variables. This research is the first to study the relationship between LEB and the multi-dimensional conceptualization of psychological empowerment. As such, our study contributes both to the further validation of these constructs as to research on the relationship between empowering leadership behavior (the structural view of empowerment) and psychological empowerment (the psychological view of empowerment). As to date, integrative research, investigating the relationship between the structural and psychological approach towards empowerment is relatively scarce (Seibert, Silver & Randolph, 2004), because recent empowerment literature has followed the general trend in OB research to emphasize the role of the individual and has thereby mainly focused on psychological empowerment. This study aims to establish a relationship between both perspectives of empowerment.

Our model further relates the construct of psychological empowerment to employee attitudes as job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment, thereby relating LEB and psychological empowerment to work outcome variables. Several studies have already examined the relationships between the different individual dimensions of psychological empowerment and employee attitudes job satisfaction and organisational commitment (e.g. Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Thomas & Tymon, 1994; Spreitzer, Kizilos & Nason, 1997). In the conceptual work on empowerment however, it has been argued that it is only together that the dimensions produce the proactive essence of employee empowerment. As mentioned by Spreitzer (1995), building on the work of Thomas and Velthouse (1990): “The four dimensions are argued to combine additively to create an overall construct of psychological empowerment. In other words, the lack of any single dimensions will deflate, though not completely eliminate, the overall degree of felt empowerment.” (Spreitzer, 1995, p. 1444) In this study, we will therefore examine the relationship between LEB and the overall construct of psychological empowerment, job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

Job satisfaction and organizational commitment have been linked with different final outcome variables, such as for example performance. One outcome variable that has gained in importance over the past few decades is employee

turnover, or more specifically voluntary employee turnover. The pressure for financial performance has led to an increase in voluntary turnover in many organisations (Lambert, Hogan & Barton, 2001). The intention to stay or leave a job has now been recognized as the final cognitive step in the decision making process of voluntary turnover (Lambert, Hogan & Barton, 2001; Lee & Mowday, 1987). This indicates the importance of studying the employee's intention to stay with the organisation.

Before elaborating on the theoretical background, we present an overview of our model, along with the hypothesized relationships in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

THEORY

Perspectives on empowerment

Two general perspectives on empowerment can be derived from the literature: (1) a macro perspective, considering the various organizational empowering structures and policies (such as the managerial role); and (2) a micro perspective, focusing on empowerment as a specific form of intrinsic motivation at the level of the employee (Liden & Arad, 1996). Although both perspectives are considered to be complementary, prior research that has tried to link them is relatively scarce. In the present study, we aim to develop and test a model that addresses the relationship between the macro perspective and micro perspective of empowerment.

The first perspective, i.e. the macro perspective or the structural view has concentrated around organizational and managerial practices aimed at empowering employees at lower organizational levels. As such, the notion of empowerment differs from traditional practices in the sense that it involves the delegation of decision making responsibilities and the provision of access to information and resources to the lowest possible hierarchical level (Bowen & Lawler, 1992, 1995; Rothstein, 1995). Central to the notion of structural empowerment is that it entails the installation of empowering organization configurations and specific managerial behaviors and skills, such as the delegation of decision-making prerogatives to employees, along with giving employees the discretion to act on their own (Mills & Ungson, 2003). It can be argued that empowering leadership behavior or LEB, is a central element of structural

empowerment, since this concept recognises the importance of the role of the leader in shaping the structures of the organisation.

A second perspective on empowerment focuses on the perceptual or psychological dimensions of empowerment at the level of the individual employee (Liden et al., 2000). This perspective on empowerment concentrates on the individual experience of empowerment, i.e. what individuals have to feel in order for interventions to become effective rather than specific management practices intended to empower individuals (Spreitzer et al., 1997). Elaborating on the work of authors such as Conger and Kanungo (1988) and Spreitzer (1995) we distinguished four psychological empowerment dimensions, which reflect four distinct cognitions regarding employees' orientations towards their work. These four empowerment dimensions represent (1) meaningfulness, i.e. the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an employee's own ideals and standards; (2) competence, i.e. an employee's belief in his or her capability to perform task activities skillfully; (3) self-determination, i.e. perception of autonomy in the initiation and continuation of work behaviors and processes; and (4) impact, i.e. the degree to which an employee perceives being able to influence strategic, administrative or operating outcomes at work. Together, these four cognitions reflect an active, rather than a passive orientation to a work role. The four dimensions are argued to combine additively to create an overall construct of psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995).

As stated in the introduction little research has focused on the relationship between these two perspectives on empowerment. One of the exceptions is a study by Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian and Wilk (2001) which revealed that psychological empowerment can be considered as an outcome of structural empowerment. In addition, a more recent study by Seibert et al. (2004) linked the structural empowerment climate to psychological empowerment, revealing that psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between the empowerment climate and individual job performance. These preliminary research findings confirm the growing need to relate both views on empowerment, as both forms of empowerment can complement each other in affecting employee behaviors and attitudes.

Impact of empowering leadership behavior on psychological empowerment

There is an increasing awareness of the need for more research on the topic of leadership in empowered organisations (Conger, 1989). The leadership requirements of the more traditional working environment are only partially relevant for the empowered working environment (Ahearne, Mathieu & Rapp, 2005). Researchers like Walton and Hackman (1986), Manz and Sims (1987), Conger and Kanungo (1988) and Thomas and Velthouse (1990) have all stated that traditional leadership measures do not encompass the full spectrum of leadership behaviors required in empowering working contexts. This is resembled by the number of new leadership behaviors that have been suggested in the literature (Manz & Sims, 1987; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Conger, 1989; Arnold et al., 2000).

Although there is a growing theoretical interest in empowering leadership, research on the actual practices that leaders should employ to create a sense of empowerment as well as the contexts most suited for these practices has been limited (Conger, 1989). This empirical shortcoming has been recognised by Arnold and colleagues (2000). Arnold et al. (2000) have introduced the construct of Leadership Empowerment Behavior (LEB) to empirically justify the unique role of leaders in empowered contexts. On the basis of their empirical research they were able to construct a measurement scale for empowering leadership behavior consisting of a total of five factors, namely leading by example, coaching, participative decision making, informing and showing concern/ interacting with the team.

Leadership behavior is believed to contribute to empowerment to the extent to which it is able to affect an individual's or team's perception of meaning, competence, self determination and/or impact (Spreitzer, 1996). Theory of Bandura (1986), stating that empowerment related dimensions can be influenced by providing emotional support, words of encouragement, positive persuasion, models of success and the experience of mastering a task with success, provides further theoretical support for these five dimensions of LEB.

In this research empowering leadership behavior (LEB) is linked to the construct psychological empowerment based on Spreitzer's four dimensions. We hereby expect that LEB will be positively related to employees' experiences of psychological empowerment.

Hypothesis 1: LEB will be positively related to employees' experiences of psychological empowerment.

Impact of psychological empowerment on job satisfaction and organizational commitment

A growing body of research has demonstrated the link between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction (e.g. Seibert, Silver & Randolph, 2004; Spreitzer, 1995; Spreitzer, Kizilos & Nason, 1997). Spreitzer et al. (1997) found a positive link between the four dimensions of psychological empowerment and job satisfaction, where the correlation was strongest for the dimension meaningfulness. The importance of a personally *meaningful* job for the employee's satisfaction has already been noted by theorist as Herzberg (1959) and Hackman and Oldman (1980). The underlying argument is that employees who perceive their jobs to be significant and worthwhile feel higher levels of work satisfaction than employees who see their jobs as having little value. This is consistent with Locke's notion of personal value fulfillment, which is based on the belief that work satisfaction results from the perception that one's work fulfills or allows the fulfillment of one's desired work values. Theory further indicates that employees who feel *confident* that they will succeed are happier with their work than employees who fear that they might fail (Martinko & Gardner, 1982). As task autonomy and decision-making latitude, *self determination* gives the individuals a sense of control over their work causing them to attribute more of the work to themselves than to other individuals resulting in more satisfaction (Thomas & Tymon, 1994). Finally, theory on the *impact* dimension states that individuals should get a sense of job satisfaction when they feel that they have been directly involved in outcomes that affect the organization (Ashforth, 1989).

These arguments give theoretical and empirical support for the relationship between the dimensions of psychological empowerment and job satisfaction. In this study we therefore expect to find a positive relationship between the overall construct of psychological empowerment and job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2a: Psychological empowerment will be positively related to job satisfaction.

Research has also examined, although to a lesser extent, the relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment. Mento, Cartledge and Locke (1980) and Liden, Wayne and Sparrowe (2000) argue that a sense of meaning in the job contributes to a higher commitment. The theoretical argument behind this relation might be that empowerment contributes to a sense of commitment to the organisation through a process of reciprocation. Employees who appreciate decision latitude, challenge and responsibility as well as the feelings of meaning, impact, self-determination and mastery that result from these conditions, are more likely to reciprocate by feeling more committed to the organisation.

Based on theory we expect to find a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 2b: Psychological empowerment will be positively related to organizational commitment.

Impact of organizational commitment and job satisfaction on intention to stay

The relation between employee attitudes and turnover has been subject of multiple research papers. In these studies predictive models of voluntary turnover have been developed, where job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intention to quit or stay are considered as the most important variables.

Since the direct relationships between job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover are weak, researchers have proposed that the relationship between employee attitudes and turnover is moderated by the intention to stay or leave a job. Multiple models have been set up to test the relationships between job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover attitudes and behavior. One of these models, for example, states that job expectations and values influence affective responses as job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Steers & Mowday, 1981). These in turn influence the intent to quit or stay with the organisation leading to the individual's actual staying or quitting behavior (Lee & Mowday, 1987). These models all make the assumption that employee attitudes as job satisfaction and organisational commitment influence the employee's intent and decision to stay or quit the organisation.

Most of the empirical research has examined the negative implications of job satisfaction and organisational commitment on turnover, thereby taking intention to quit as a mediating variable (e.g. Lambert, Hogan & Barton, 2001; Lee & Mowday, 1987).

This research will test the positive impact of job satisfaction and organisational commitment on the employee's intent to stay with the organisation.

Hypothesis 3a: Job satisfaction will be positively related to intention to stay.

Hypothesis 3b: Organizational commitment will be positively related to intention to stay.

METHOD

Sample and data collection

A web based survey was administered during normal working hours to frontline employees in four service organizations active in people related services such as temporary staffing and health insurance. All respondents spend considerable time in direct contact with customers. To foster collaboration, one week prior to sending out our request to fill out the survey, respondents received a motivating mail from their HR-director. Respondents were given two weeks to respond. After that time, a reminding mail was sent, again by the HR-directors of the companies.

In total, 743 employees were invited to collaborate to the study and 413 surveys were filled out of which 381 were useful for our analyses (no missing values) resulting in an overall response rate of 51 %. A majority of the total employee sample is female (73.4%) with an average age between 31 and 35 years. 1.1% holds a primary school diploma, 23% a high school diploma, 48.5% a bachelor and 27,4% a master degree. Average seniority is between 6 and 10 years.

Insert Table 1 about here

Measures

Table 1 provides the basic statistics and inter-correlations between the first order constructs included in our model. We discuss the measures below.

Leadership empowering behavior. The five dimensions of leadership empowering behavior (leading by example, participative decision making, coaching, informing and showing concern / interacting with the team) were measured using the scales proposed by Arnold et al. (2000). Because their scales have been originally developed to assess leadership empowering behavior in a team context as opposed to in a more individualised context, we re-evaluated the psychometric properties of the scales. Based on confirmatory factor analyses using SEM, some items were deleted because of low loadings to the underlying construct, but in general, the five factor structure found by Arnold et al. (2000) was confirmed. All dimensions were rated on a five point response scale, where 1 = 'never' and 5 = 'always' was used. The first LEB dimension, leading by example, was measured by three items (e.g. "Sets high standards for performance by his/her own behavior"). The second LEB dimension, participative decision making was measured by five items (e.g. "Considers my work group's ideas when he/she disagrees with them"). The third LEB dimension, coaching, was measured by twelve items (e.g. "Encourages work group members to solve problems together"). The fourth dimension, informing, was measured by six items (e.g. "Explains how my work group fits into the company") and the fifth dimension, showing concern / interacting with the team, was measured by eight items (e.g. Takes the time to discuss work group member's concerns patiently). Cronbach alpha reliabilities for these scales ranged from .82 to .94. For the analyses, these different scales were finally combined into an overall LEB construct.

Psychological empowerment was measured by the scale developed by Spreitzer (1995). Each of the four empowerment dimensions (i.e. meaningfulness, competence, self determination and impact) was measured by three items (e.g. "The work that I do is very important to me"). Items were rated on a five point response scale, ranging from 'totally dissatisfied' to 'totally satisfied'. Reliabilities of these scales ranged from .83 to .91. For the analyses, these different scales were finally combined into an overall psychological empowerment construct.

Job satisfaction was measured by five items from Churchill, Ford & Walker (1974) and Hartline & Ferrell (1993). These items (e.g. "Indicate how satisfied you

are with your co-workers”) tapped into different aspects of employee satisfaction such as satisfaction with the job in general or support from the organisation. Items were rated on a 5-point scale, ranging from ‘totally dissatisfied’ to ‘totally satisfied’. Reliability for the scale (Cronbach’s alpha) in this sample was .78.

Organizational commitment was measured by seven items (e.g. “I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for”) from the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Mowday, Steers & Porter 1979). These items reflect the affective component of organizational commitment. Items were rated on a five point Likert scale, ranging from ‘totally disagree’ to ‘totally agree’. Reliability for the scale (Cronbach’s alpha) in this sample was .91.

Intention to stay was measured by five items (e.g. “What’s the chance that you will be working for this company in one year?”) adapted from Bluedorn (1982). Items were rated on a five point response scale, ranging from ‘very small’ to ‘almost sure’. Reliability for the scale (Cronbach’s alpha) in this sample was .92.

Analysis

Measurement properties were assessed by examining the factor structure underlying the items and the correlations between the constructs. The hypotheses were simultaneously tested in a structural model, using maximum likelihood estimation in AMOS (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999). The outcome variables (job satisfaction, affective commitment and intention to stay) were each represented by two standardized composite indicators. For the multidimensional constructs (LEB and psychological empowerment) we used a separate indicator for each of the underlying dimensions. Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) has several advantages. First, it provides a systematic basis for evaluating the ‘fit’ of the hypothesized model to data based on a χ^2 -statistic, incremental fit indices (e.g. nonnormed-fit-index, comparative fit index) and other indicators of absolute fit including Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (MacCallum & Austin, 2000). Second, it provides control over measurement error that can constitute over 50 percent of the observed variance and often introduces substantial bias in estimated effects and hypothesis testing (Ping, 2001).

RESULTS

In terms of overall fit, Table 2 reveals the following fit statistics: $\chi^2 = 231,63$, $df = 82$, $p < .001$, $GFI = .92$, $NFI = .93$, $NNFI = .94$, $CFI = .95$, $SRMR = .03$, $RMSEA = .07$ (90% CI = .06 to .08). The relative fit indicators exceed .92 and the absolute fit indicators suggest that the residuals are small ($< .07$) and tightly distributed (cf. 90 % confidence interval of $RMSEA = .06$ to .08). Consistent with this, the parsimony fit indicator, $NNFI$, exceeds .94, indicating that the model has adequate over-identifying restrictions for parsimony. Based on these statistics, we conclude that our model provides an adequate fit to the data.

Insert Table 2 about here

The regression weights enable us to draw some conclusions concerning the hypothesised relationships. Hypothesis 1 theorised that LEB would be positively related to psychological empowerment. Our structural model supports this hypothesis ($B = .51$; $p \leq .001$). As can be seen in table 2, LEB has a direct effect on job satisfaction ($B = .73$; $p \leq .001$) and organisational commitment ($B = .22$; $p \leq .01$) as well. The relationship between LEB and job satisfaction is even stronger than the relationship between LEB and psychological empowerment.

The relationships between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction was also confirmed (H2a: $B = .23$; $p \leq .01$) as well as the relationship between psychological empowerment and the affective organisational commitment (H2b: $B = .64$; $p \leq .001$). Hereby the data provide stronger support for the relationship between psychological empowerment and affective commitment than to the relationship between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction. This can be partially explained by the strong direct effect of LEB on job satisfaction.

Hypotheses 3a and 3b test the relationships between job satisfaction (3a), organisational commitment (3b) and intention to stay. The structural model provides support for the relationship between job satisfaction (H3a: $B = .57$; $p \leq .001$), organisational commitment (H3b: $B = .34$; $p \leq .01$) and intention to stay.

Overall these results indicate support for the conceptual model that was put forward in the theoretical framework. Empowering leadership behavior enhances psychological empowerment, which in turn influences job satisfaction and

organisational commitment. Although we found direct relationships between LEB and job satisfaction and organisational commitment, part of these effects are mediated by psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment can thus be seen as a partially mediating variable between LEB and employee attitudes. Finally, our model indicates a direct relationship between organisational commitment and job satisfaction and intention to stay, the central outcome variable of this research.

DISCUSSION

The overall aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between leadership empowerment behavior, employee psychological empowerment and employee attitudes and behavioral intentions. Below, we discuss some noteworthy implications of this study and its findings. First, as suggested by Arnold et al. (2000), we provide further validation of the LEB construct in an individualized working context. The psychometric properties of the LEB scale and its subdimension show to be solid and generalisable across different working contexts. While Arnold's original study assessed leadership empowerment behavior in a team context, our study indicates that the instrument is also useful in working context where teamwork is not a core feature of the job.

Second, our study indicates that psychological empowerment is a relevant construct to, at least partially, explain how leadership empowerment behavior relates to employee job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Research focusing on the relationship between leadership and employee motivation traditionally makes a strict distinction between intrinsic motivation and contextual elements. Intrinsic motivation is assumed to be influenced mainly by personal and job content characteristics such as task identity, skill variety, task significance and feedback (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Contextual elements, such as leadership characteristics, are generally assumed to function as moderating variables in explaining how individual cognitions and affect relate to employee attitudes and behavior. Our findings suggest however that leadership empowerment behavior seems a factor that should not be neglected in theorizing on how intrinsic motivation takes shape. This suggests, in line with Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977; 1986; 2001) that boundaries between intrapersonal cognitive processes and work environmental influences is not that clear cut and that it could be useful to model leadership

characteristics as an antecedent rather than as a moderating variable in motivational models. Exploring direct links between job characteristics and leadership behavior could then be a useful starting point for future research in this direction.

Third, the results indicate substantial direct relationships between leadership empowerment behavior and job satisfaction and organisational commitment. A comparison of the direct and indirect relationships between those variables indicates that psychological empowerment seems especially relevant in explaining the relationship between LEB and organisational commitment.

Fourth, our study confirms the importance of employee job satisfaction and organisational commitment in explaining employee loyalty to the company. Job satisfaction seems to be a more important antecedent of intention to stay than the affective commitment component of organisational commitment. This suggests that the nature of the relationship between supervisors and employees has a stronger impact on employees' decision to stay with a company than the extent to which they identify themselves with the organisation. These findings are consistent with previous research, where job satisfaction is seen as the key mediating variable between the work environment and turnover intentions (Lambert, Hogan & Barton, 2001). By shaping this direct work environment leaders are able to increase satisfaction levels, and to ultimately lower turnover intent.

Study limitations

To put this article's findings and implications in the right perspective, it is important to discuss the study limitations. First, common-method variance may have biased the validity of the structural relationships. Common method bias is likely to uniformly inflate correlations between constructs and thus the strength of the relationships found between them. Common method seems however less problematic when interpreting the relative strength of relationships between constructs, especially when they are simultaneously assessed in a structural model.

Another limitation of our study is its cross sectional nature. This restricts us from clearly pinpointing the temporally causal relationships within the process of empowerment and its influence on employee attitudes and behavioral intentions. Additional studies that use longitudinal or field experimental design to account for more rigorous tests of causality are therefore needed.

A third important limitation is that data for our empirical test were provided by frontline service employees from three Belgian service companies. Consequently, more research in distinct employee samples (e.g. non front line jobs) and other business contexts is needed to check the generalisability of our findings.

Managerial implications

Employee empowerment is of critical importance in today's competitive work environment, since it can give a company a sustained competitive advantage. This study stresses the importance of leadership behavior in such endeavors. We show that empowering employees through (empowering) leadership behavior is a valuable option to increase frontline employee job satisfaction, organisational commitment and their intention to stay with the organisation.

In this study we found a strong direct link between empowering leadership behavior and employee attitudes. These findings indicate the important role of leaders in directly shaping employee attitudes, especially job satisfaction. Leaders can thus be important for an organisation to facilitate changes. In literature, leaders are often described as the 'forgotten group' (Ahearne & Rapp, 2005). Though this research shows that the way leaders help shaping employees work experiences plays an important role, indicating that the role of the leader may have been underestimated in previous research.

The LEB dimensions provide organisations with concrete behavior that leaders should show in order to increase their employee's feeling of empowerment, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. For practioners, this means that leaders should emphasize leadership behaviors, such as leading by example, participative decision making, coaching, informing and showing concern/ interacting with the team. By giving examples leaders are able to model the preferred behavior thereby increasing role clarity and decreasing role conflict, two important antecedents of employee satisfaction (Jones, Katak, Futrell & Johnston, 1996). The involvement of employees in decision making can increase their feelings of empowerment by showing that they have an impact on the processes within the organisation. Coaching may provide guidance and clarification for employees thereby increasing their feelings of empowerment. Constant communication of organisational changes and how these changes affect the employees keeps the employees connected with their

workplace (job satisfaction) and the organisation as a whole (organisational commitment). By showing concern leaders are able to help their employees cope with private and organisational changes. Guidance, recognition, coaching and support are thus all important behaviors to positively influence employee attitudes and employee intentions (Jones, Katak, Futrell & Johnston, 1996). The LEB assessment can function as a useful tool, as part of leadership development programmes, to increase supervisor effectiveness in fostering employee attitudes, and consequently their loyalty to the company.

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FIGURE 1:

Conceptual framework

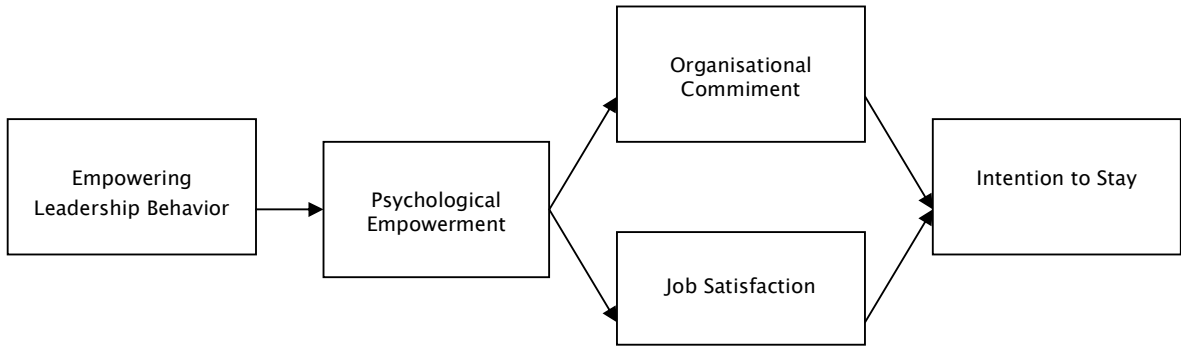


TABLE 1:**Means, standard deviations and correlations among first order constructs^a.**

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Leading by example	3.43	.85	<i>.82^b</i>											
2. Participation	3.72	.75	<i>.41^c</i>	<i>.88</i>										
3. Coaching	3.49	.77	<i>.59</i>	<i>.69</i>	<i>.94</i>									
4. Informing	3.41	.84	<i>.51</i>	<i>.58</i>	<i>.71</i>	<i>.94</i>								
5. Concern / interacting	3.57	.78	<i>.46</i>	<i>.67</i>	<i>.72</i>	<i>.56</i>	<i>.92</i>							
6. Meaning	4.20	.69	<i>.26</i>	<i>.28</i>	<i>.30</i>	<i>.30</i>	<i>.28</i>	<i>.83</i>						
7. Competence	4.11	.64	<i>.08</i>	<i>.14</i>	<i>.12</i>	<i>.11</i>	<i>.21</i>	<i>.48</i>	<i>.86</i>					
8. Self determination	3.82	.78	<i>.24</i>	<i>.37</i>	<i>.32</i>	<i>.30</i>	<i>.36</i>	<i>.48</i>	<i>.39</i>	<i>.87</i>				
9. Impact	3.32	.81	<i>.24</i>	<i>.35</i>	<i>.29</i>	<i>.31</i>	<i>.30</i>	<i>.49</i>	<i>.33</i>	<i>.60</i>	<i>.91</i>			
10. Job satisfaction	3.52	.57	<i>.38</i>	<i>.42</i>	<i>.53</i>	<i>.49</i>	<i>.50</i>	<i>.42</i>	<i>.23</i>	<i>.36</i>	<i>.38</i>	<i>.78</i>		
11. Affective commitment	3.61	.71	<i>.23</i>	<i>.23</i>	<i>.32</i>	<i>.31</i>	<i>.31</i>	<i>.48</i>	<i>.25</i>	<i>.27</i>	<i>.34</i>	<i>.69</i>	<i>.91</i>	
12. Intention to stay	4.24	.93	<i>.19</i>	<i>.18</i>	<i>.15</i>	<i>.13</i>	<i>.22</i>	<i>.24</i>	<i>.18</i>	<i>.10</i>	<i>.21</i>	<i>.47</i>	<i>.40</i>	<i>.92</i>

^a = $N = 381$. Construct mean and standard deviation based on average mean and standard deviation of observed items' raw score per first order construct

^b = Entries on the diagonal are Cronbach's alphas.

^c = Correlations > .06, $p < .05$; correlations > .09, $p < .01$; correlations > .10, $p < .001$

TABLE 2:

Estimated parameters en fit statistics for the structural model

Independent Variable		Dependent Variable							
		Psychological Empowerment		Job satisfaction		Affective commitment		Intention to stay	
		B (S.E.)	t-value	B (S.E.)	t-value	B (S.E.)	t-value	B (S.E.)	t-value
Leadership behavior	empowerment	.51 (.07)	7.29***	.73 (.09)	8.11***	.22 (.08)	2.75**	---	---
	Psychological empowerment	---	---	.23 (.06)	3.83**	.64 (.09)	7.11***	---	---
	Job satisfaction	---	---	---	---	---	---	.57 (.14)	4.07***
	Affective commitment	---	---	---	---	---	---	.34 (.11)	3.09**
		<i>R</i> ² = .25		<i>R</i> ² = .58		<i>R</i> ² = .33		<i>R</i> ² = .27	

*** = $p \leq .001$ (critical t-value = 3.14)

** = $p \leq .01$ (critical t-value = 2.33)

* = $p \leq .05$ (critical t-value = 1.65)

--- = relationship not hypothesized /specified

Fit: $\chi^2=231.63$, $df = 82$ ($p < 0.001$), GFI = 0.92, NFI = 0.93, NNFI = 0.94, CFI = 0.95, SRMR = 0.05, RMSEA = 0.07 (90 % CI = .06 to .08).