

## THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT IN THE EFFECT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT

Yildirim F., Naktiyok S.\*

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of transformational leadership shown by managers and organizational support on employee empowerment. With this purpose, the study uses transformational leadership, organizational support, and employee empowerment variables and contributes to the field by adding organizational support as the mediator variable. Data collection was performed through surveys distributed to 350 employees and 191 surveys were collected. The data were analysed by structural equation model. It was found that transformational leadership and organizational support have positive effects on employee empowerment. Although organizational support plays a mediator role in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee empowerment, this role is not at a significant level.

**Key words:** organizational support, transformational leadership, employee empowerment, management, structural equation model

DOI: 10.17512/pjms.2017.16.1.25

*Article history:*

*Received August 7, 2017; Revised September 26, 2017; Accepted October 3, 2017*

### Introduction

Transformational leadership has been used as an important concept in organizations in the last two decades. Reveal of situations where followers need to be convinced towards their expectations has placed this leadership style in an important position in terms of transformational leaders (Kearney, 2008). G. Yukl who defines transformational leadership as a process to provide loyalty to objectives through employee empowerment, supports the idea of having employees in more active roles and giving them authority as active participants (Ozalp, 2000). Transformational leadership that tries to make followers more active by giving them certain authorities, allows members of organizations to be involved in decision making. This leadership style uses a more sensitive approach to the needs of employees and makes their tasks more effective in alignment with organizational objectives by establishing a mutual motivation relationship (Demir and Okan, 2008). When we look at the “transformational leader” definition that presents transformational leadership style, we can define this type of leader as the leader who determines a good vision for the future, has an effective communication

---

\* **Fatih Yildirim**, PhD, Erzurum Technical University, Faculty of Business and Administrative Sciences, Business Administration Department; **Serkan Naktiyok**, PhD, Kafkas University, Tourism Faculty, Business Administration Department, Turkey

✉ Corresponding author: fatih.yildirim@erzurum.edu.tr

✉ naktiyok@kafkas.edu.tr

style, establishes strong bonds with subordinates, and has management skills (Bass, 1985). Organizational support can be defined as employees' beliefs in how much an organization values tasks that they performed and contributed to the organization, and how much importance an organization puts on employee interest and benefits (Eisenberger et al., 1986). The organizational support theory highlights the necessity of employees to feel safe in their organizations. Organizational support, with this trust, increases the efficiency of the workforce. It also expresses the overlap of employees' general beliefs on how much their contributions are recognized by the organization and organizational values by meeting employees' social and emotional needs. Organizational support can be defined as the extent that the organization values the activities performed and contributions made by employees (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Employees with high organizational support perception generally tend to show helpful behaviors towards their organization by making efforts aligned with the organization's interest. Therefore, the foundation of perceived organizational support is evaluated according to the social interaction theory. According to this theory, employees adjust their efforts and performances aligned with their expectations while doing their tasks. Rewards that will be presented by the organization in return for employees' efforts affect their attitudes and behaviors in doing their tasks (Kaplan, 2010). In addition organizational support opens the way for innovation in organizations. Employee empowerment, defined as increasing motivation of employees and involving them in the decision making process (Vogt and Murrell, 1990), provides improved alternatives for employees to have better performances, to provide more quality services to customers, and reaching organizational goals. Another definition of employee empowerment is to allow decision making and approving to be used in human resources in the classical management concept (Gandz, 1990).

### **Literature Review and Hypotheses Development**

Employees are given more responsibilities with employee empowerment and at the end of the job, they become more responsible. This concept, again, involves motivational empowerment of employees. In today's world, work environments in organizations are more flexible and they include the feeling of solidarity within the organization. This helps employees to be more meticulous about their jobs which creates a bond between employees and the organization, and affects the organizational support perception of employees positively (Barutcugil, 2002; Dogan, 2003). It is important to identify the type of organizational support that fits the organization in order for employee empowerment to be successful.

Defining the support limits for employees is important both for employees and managers. Not every employee would be willing to take on the same responsibility regarding the job. This situation requires the right employee empowerment both for employees and the organization. Employee empowerment performed right and efficiently will increase organizational support perception of employees (Dogan,

2003). Transformational leaders help employees to gain vision. They give employees additional missions to have them contribute to this vision. By making changes in the organizational culture, they make employees believe in themselves, that they can do more than they think they can, teach them how to be self-confident, and that what they do is important (Eraslan, 2006).

Transformational leaders place importance on the opinions of employees regardless of their position in the organization and they make them part of the process. The importance put on employees and increasing employees' effectiveness in the organization and their self-confidence are the fundamentals of employee empowerment (Sancar, 2012).

A study conducted by Patrick and Laschinger (2006) on 126 nurses in an acute care hospital in Canada examines the relationship between perceived organizational support and empowerment, and the effects of these factors on satisfaction of mid-level nurse managers. The study shows a positive relationship between perceived organizational support and empowerment. Additionally, the study shows that the combination of perceived organizational support and empowerment has a determining effect on the satisfaction of mid-level nurse managers.

The positive perception of organizational support by employees plays an important role in retaining them in the organization and promoting to managerial positions by empowering them (Patrick and Laschinger, 2006). Butts et al. (2009) examined the relationships between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction, organizational support, job performance, empowerment and work stress by using structural equation modelling. The study showed a positive relationship between organizational support and empowerment (Butts et al., 2009).

Another study conducted by Hau-siu Chow et al. (2005) focuses on organizational support, empowerment, and access to developmental experience and their effects on customer orientation and performance outcomes. The study showed that there is a meaningful relationship between organizational support and other factors (Hau-siu Chow et al., 2005).

Avolio et al. (2004) conducted a study on 520 nurses at a public hospital in Singapore to determine whether psychological empowerment has a mediating effect on the effect of transformational leadership on organizational loyalty.

According to the results of the study, there is a positive and meaningful relationship between transformational leadership and empowerment. The study also showed that empowerment has a mediating role on the effect of transformational leadership on organizational loyalty (Bruce et al., 2004).

Jung and Sosik (2002) performed a study on groups from 47 companies in Korea to examine whether there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and the perception of empowerment, group loyalty and group efficiency. In relation to the information presented above, the hypotheses below were developed.

*H<sub>1</sub>: Transformational leadership affects employee empowerment positively.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: Transformational leadership affects organizational support positively.*

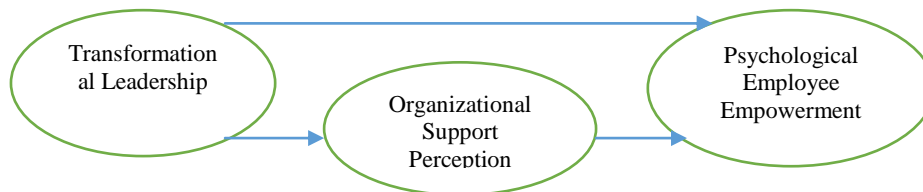
*H<sub>3</sub>: Organizational support affects employee empowerment positively.*

*H<sub>4</sub>: Organizational support has a mediator role in the transformational leadership and employee empowerment relationship.*

### The Purpose and the Model of the Study

The purpose of this study is based on the fact that organizations need to use employee empowerment practices, one of the most effective tools to adapt to the fast-changing world. The purpose is to examine the effect of transformational leadership on employee empowerment and to determine what kind of effect the perception of organizational support has on this change.

Although there is much research on the effect of transformational leadership on employee empowerment, this research is different from others as it examines the mediator role of organizational support in this relationship. The conceptual relationships between dependent and independent variables used in this study are presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. The Research Model**

### Managerial Implication

#### *Population and Sample*

An appropriate sample where the variables in the research model can be measured is aimed. Therefore, for the population of the study, organizations operating in the industrial region of Erzurum, the most developed city of East Anatolia Region, are chosen. These organizations provide their products and services to the whole region, and to Georgia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, and Nakhchivan. Organizations are in a strong competition and they empower their employees to survive. In addition to employee empowerment, they have transformational leadership characteristics to direct employees to goals.

Therefore, these organizations are determined to be a good fit for the purpose and model of the research. The population of the study consists of employees of 350 organizations that operate in the organized industrial area of Erzurum. The sample size is determined as 183 with a confidence level of 95% and error margin of 5% (Sample Size Calculator - <http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>).

Surveys were hand delivered to employees of 195 organizations and collected by the researchers. Random sampling is used in choosing the sample. 4 of the surveys

collected were missing information and evaluated as errored. As a result, the survey number of the study is 191.

### ***Data Collection Tools***

Information related to the scales used in this research is presented in the next section. For the scales, first item analysis was performed, and Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients were examined. Both explanatory and confirmatory factor analyses were performed to test the reliability of the scale. Additionally, content, convergence and discriminant validity were analysed.

Surveys were prepared according to translation and reverse-translation methodology to provide face validity. The surveys, originally in English, were first translated to Turkish by experts, and then reverse-translated to English. As a result, no meaning loss is determined in terms of linguistics.

*Transformational leadership:* Global Transformational Leadership Scale, developed by Carless et al., is used to measure transformational leadership behaviors of managers in the first section of the survey. This scale consisting of a total of 7 items is a non-dimensional scale that measures transformational leadership that includes complex leadership behaviors (Carless et al., 2000).

High averages obtained from the scale shows the excess of transformational leadership behaviors. Researchers developed the scale found the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for the scale as 0.93 (Carless et al., 2000). This information supports the result that the scale provides a reliable measurement of transformational leadership. An important aspect of the scale is that it is easy to evaluate due to the small amount of items it has.

*Organizational support:* The second part of the survey is related to measuring employees' perception of organizational support. This scale of organizational support was developed by Eisenberger et al. (1990), and consists of 10 items. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient is found to be 0.97. This value of Cronbach alpha supports that the scale provides a reliable measure of organizational support perception.

*Employee empowerment:* The scale used to measure the level of employee empowerment of organizations was developed by Spreitzer (1995) and consists of 12 items. The original scale has 4 dimensions but according to the confirmatory factor analysis performed, it is evaluated as 4 questions and one dimension. Also, all scales are 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1- strongly disagrees to 5- strongly agree.

### **Findings**

The results of confirmatory factor analysis related to dependent and independent variables, and non-standardized coefficients are presented below. Related fit index is presented in Table 1a, 1b.

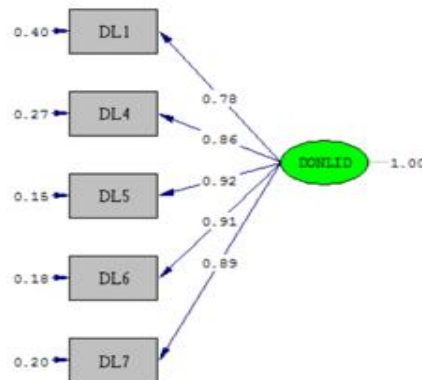
**Table 1a. Goodness of Fit Index obtained from confirmatory factor analysis**

Variable	Values						
	$\chi^2$	(sd)	$\chi^2/sd$	CFI NFI	NNFI	AGFI	RMSEA
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP	8.60	5	1.72	1.00 0.99	0.99	0.95	0.062
ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT	18.02	14	1.28	1.00 0.99	1.00	0.95	0.039
EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT	3.88	2	1.94	1.00 0.99	0.99	0.95	0.070

**Table 1b. Fit Index Acceptance Values (Meydan ve Şeşen, 2011: 37)**

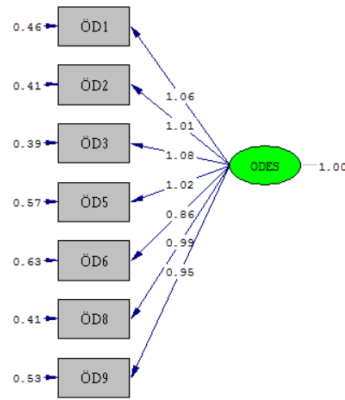
Abbreviation	Meaning	Acceptance value
$\chi^2$	Chi-square	-
Sd	Degrees of freedom	-
$\chi^2/sd$	Chi-square/degrees of freedom	$\leq^a, \leq^b$ (a: excellent fit, b: good fit)
RMSEA	Root mean square error of approximation	0.05 < (tolerans 0.08)
CFI	Comparative fit index	0.90 $\leq$
NFI	Normed fit index	0.90 $\leq$
NNFI	Nonnormed fit index	0.90 $\leq$
AGFI	Adjusted goodness of fit index	0.90 $\leq$

According to Figure 2, the second and third questions were eliminated due to effecting fit index negatively.



**Figure 2. Results of confirmatory factor analysis related to transformational leadership**

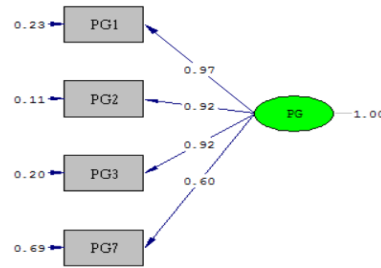
According to Figure 3, 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> questions were eliminated as they affected the fit index negatively.



Chi-Square=18.02, df=14, P-value=0.20582, RMSEA=0.039

**Figure 3. Results of confirmatory factor analysis related to organizational support**

According to figure 4, employee empowerment is evaluated as one dimension due to the related modifications.



Chi-Square=3.88, df=2, P-value=0.14395, RMSEA=0.070

**Figure 4. Results of confirmatory factor analysis related to employee empowerment**

According to Table 1a, all the variables in the study showed good fit in the confirmatory factor analysis. Statistical values and correlation coefficients of variables are given in Table 2.

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients of variables**

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	1	2	3
<b>1-Transformational leadership</b>	3.69	1.08	<b>1</b>		
<b>2-Organizational support</b>	3.43	1.02	0.770**	<b>1</b>	
<b>3-Employee empowerment</b>	4.18	0.89	0.440**	0.432**	<b>1</b>

\*\* Correlation is meaningful at the level of 0.01 \*Correlation is meaningful at the level of 0.05

According to the results of correlation analysis presented in Table 2, transformational leadership has a strong meaningful and positive relationship with organizational support. Also, transformational leadership has a positive and meaningful relationship with employee empowerment. Positive and meaningful relationships were found between organizational support and employee empowerment. After confirming the structural characteristics of variables used in the study, path analysis is performed to test whether the model as a whole and hypotheses were confirmed or not. Abbreviations used in the study are; DL=Transformational leadership, OD=Organizational support, PG=Employee empowerment. The results of path analysis showing goodness of fit values and regression coefficients are summarized in Figure 5.

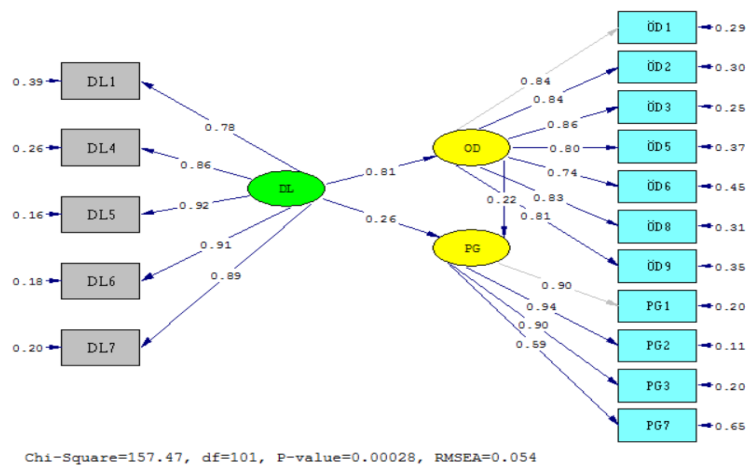


Figure 5. Path analysis results of the research model

Figure 5 presents the beta coefficients of variables used in the model, and Table 3 presents the goodness of fit values of the model.

Table 3. Goodness of fit index of path analysis (p= 0.00)

RMSEA	0.054
X <sup>2</sup>	157.47
X <sup>2</sup> / sd	1.55
CFI	0.99
AGFI	0.87
NFI	0.98
NNFI	0.99

Also, in variables that have meaningful beta coefficients, the importance degree of the coefficient (p value) is shown in parenthesis. Values of fit show that the suggested research model shows an acceptable fit. It is seen that transformational



leadership increases organizational support ( $\beta=0.81$ ,  $p<0.10$ ). Additionally, transformational leadership directly increases employee empowerment ( $\beta=0.26$ ,  $p<0.10$ ). When the path coefficients are examined, it is seen that organizational support does not affect employee empowerment directly. Therefore, no mediator effect is found. According to the t values given in figure 6, there is a meaningful relationship between transformational leadership and organizational support and employee empowerment while there is no meaningful relationship between organizational support and employee empowerment.



Figure 6. T value scores of the research model

The results of hypotheses related to direct effects are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Hypothesis Test Results

Path	Hypothesis	$\hat{\alpha}$ (standardized)	T value	Result
TL→EE	H <sub>1</sub>	0.56	4.21	Accepted
TL→OS	H <sub>2</sub>	0.13	1.63	Accepted
OS→EE	H <sub>3</sub>			Rejected
TL→OS→EE	H <sub>4</sub>			Rejected

In Table 4, H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub> hypotheses are accepted while H<sub>3</sub> and H<sub>4</sub> are rejected.

### Conclusions

The results of this study show that as transformational leadership increases in the organization, the level of employee empowerment increases. Similar results were obtained by Jung and Sosik (2002) in their study conducted in Korea and Avolio et al. (2004) in Singapore. Therefore, if an organization wants to implement employee empowerment practices, then leaders need to have transformational leadership characteristics. In other words, it is important for managers to encourage collaboration by establishing a trusted environment with employees. Also, managers should inspire employees with their competence and help employees embrace the organization's vision. Managers should encourage employees and praise their successes. On the other hand, as transformational leadership level increases, the perception of organizational support increases. In alignment with our

results, Patrick and Laschinger (2006) as well as Butts et al. (2009) obtained similar results in their studies. In other words, employees' perception of support increases as trust is established between managers and employees and as managers encourage employee improvement. When this environment is established, employees perceive that the organization helps them, that their job is enjoyable, that they are taken seriously, that they are not taken advantage of and that the organization is proud of their success. Neither direct nor indirect effect of organizational support is seen on employee empowerment. The evaluation of employee empowerment psychologically and as one dimension can be the main reason why this effect was not seen. It is suggested that structural employee empowerment be included in the study in further research.

The results of this study show the importance of transformational leadership in terms of employee empowerment. Today, organizations provide transformational leadership training to managers in order to encourage employee empowerment. Transformational leadership is also very important in establishing organizational support. According to characteristics of transformational leadership, loyalty and collaboration should be encouraged in organizations; managers should keep their promises and inspire their employees; organization's vision should be embraced by employees; managers should be encouraging and recognize success.

### Implications and Limitations

This study is not free of limitations. The field research was conducted only in one city and on employees who work in an organized industry. It would be more helpful to conduct a study in sectors, where employee empowerment is more important and the tenure in the organization is longer, in order to understand better leadership and organizational support variables that effect employee empowerment. Additionally, results of longitudinal studies conducted in certain intervals are more efficient. Therefore, reasons that effect employee empowerment can be revealed by measurements conducted in certain intervals.

### References

- Avolio B.J., Zhu W., Koh W., Bhatia P., 2004, *Transformational Leadership and Organizational Commitment: Mediating Role of Psychological Empowerment and Moderating Role of Structural Distance*, "Journal of Organizational Behavior", 25(8).
- Barutcugil I., 2002, *Organizasyonlarda Duyguların Yönetimi*, İstanbul: Kariyer Yayınları,.
- Bass B.M., 1985, *Leadership beyond Expectation*, New York: Free Press.
- Butts M.M., Vandenberg R.J., DeJoy D.M., Schaffer B.S., Wilson M.G., 2009, *Individual Reactions to High Involvement Work Processes: Investigating The Role of Empowerment and Perceived Organizational Support*, "Journal of Occupational Health Psychology", 14(2).
- Carless S.A., Wearing A.J., Mann L., 2000, *A Short Measure of Transformational Leadership*, "Journal of Business and Psychology", 14(3).
- Demir H., Okan T., 2008, *Etkileşim ve Dönüşümsel Liderlik: Bir Ölçek Geliştirme Denemesi*, "Yönetim", 19(61).

- Dogan S., 2003, *Personel Güçlendirme: Empowerment*, 1. Basım, Sistem Yayıncılık, İstanbul.
- Eisenberger R. Aselage J., Sucharski I.L., Jones J.R., 1986, *Perceived Organizational Support, The Employment Relationship: Examining Psychological and Contextual Perspectives*, (Eds.) J. Coyle-Shapiro, L. Shore, S. Taylor, L. Tetrick, Oxford University Press.
- Eisenberger R., Fasolo P., Lamastro V.D., 1990, *Effects of perceived organizational support on employee diligence, innovation, and commitment*, "Journal of Applied Psychology", 53.
- Eraslan L., 2006, *Liderlikte Post-Modern Bir Paradigma: Dönüşümcü Liderlik*, Uluslararası İnsan Bilimleri Dergisi.
- Gandz J., 1990, *The Employee Empowerment Era*, "Business Quarterly", Autumn, 74.
- Hau-siu Chow I., Wing-chun Lo T., Sha Z., Hong J., 2005, *The impact of developmental experience, empowerment, and organizational support on catering service staff performance*, "International Journal of Hospitality Management", 25(3).
- Joung D.I., Sosik J.J., 2002, *The Role of Empowerment, Cohesiveness, and Collective-Efficacy on Perceived Group Performance*, "Sage Journals", 33(3).
- Kaplan M., 2010, *Otel İşletmelerinde Etiksel İklim ve Örgütsel Destek Algularının Örgütsel Bağlılık Üzerindeki Etkisi: Kapadokya Örneği*, İzmir: Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü.
- Kearney E., 2008, *Age Differences Between Leader and Followers as a Moderator of the Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Team Performance*, "Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology", 81.
- Meydan C.H., Şeşen H., 2011, *Yapısal Eşitlik Modellemesi: AMOS Uygulamaları*, Ankara: Detay Yayıncılık.
- Ozalp I., 2000, *İşletme Yönetimi*. Eskişehir: Anadolu Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Patrick A., Laschinger H.K., 2006, *The effect of structural empowerment and perceived organizational support on middle level nurse managers' role satisfaction*, "Journal of Nursing Management", 14(1).
- Sample Size Calculator*, 2016, Available at: <http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>; Access on: 14.10.2016
- Sancar A., 2012, *Personel Güçlendirme Algısı İle Dönüştürücü Liderlik Arasındaki İlişkiler: Kamu Kuruluşunda Bir Araştırma*, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Gazi Üniversitesi.
- Spreitzer G.M., 1995, *Psychological Empowerment in the Workplace: Dimensions, Measurement, and Validation*, "Academy of Management Journal", 38(5).
- Vogt J., Murrell K., 1990, *Empowerment in Organizations*, Amsterdam: Preper and Co.

### **MEDIACYJNA ROLA WSPARCIA ORGANIZACYJNEGO W DZIAŁANIU TRANSFORMACYJNEGO PRZYWÓDZTWA W ZAKRESIE WZMOCNIENIA PRACOWNIKÓW**

**Streszczenie:** Celem tego badania jest zbadanie wpływu przywództwa transformacyjnego wykazanego przez menedżerów i wsparcia organizacyjnego, na wzmocnienie pozycji pracowników. W tym celu badanie wykorzystuje transformacyjne przywództwo, wsparcie organizacyjne i zmienne uprawniające pracowników oraz przyczynia się do rozwoju tej dziedziny poprzez dodanie wsparcia organizacyjnego jako zmiennej mediatora. Zbieranie danych przeprowadzono za pomocą ankiet rozesłanych do 350 pracowników i zebrano 191 prawidłowo wypełnionych ankiet. Dane analizowano za pomocą modelu równania

strukturalnego. Stwierdzono, że przywództwo transformacyjne i wsparcie organizacyjne mają pozytywny wpływ na wzmocnienie pozycji pracowników. Chociaż wsparcie organizacyjne odgrywa rolę mediatora w związku między transformacyjnym przywództwem a wzmocnianiem pracowników, rola ta nie jest znacząca.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wsparcie organizacyjne, przywództwo transformacyjne, upodmiotowienie pracowników, zarządzanie, model równania strukturalnego

### 组织支持在转型领导对员工赋权影响中的媒介作用

**摘要:** 本研究的目的是考察管理者和组织支持对变革型领导对员工授权的影响。为此, 本研究使用变革型领导, 组织支持和员工授权变量, 并通过增加组织支持作为中介变量来为该领域做出贡献。通过对350名员工进行的调查收集数据, 并收集了191份调查。数据进行结构方程模型分析。发现变革型领导和组织支持对员工授权具有积极影响。虽然组织支持在变革型领导与员工授权之间的关系中扮演着中介角色, 但是这个角色并不是一个重要的层面。

**关键词:** 组织支持, 变革型领导, 员工授权, 管理, 结构方程模型