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When Does Employee Empowerment Lead to Job Satisfaction? An Integrative Conceptual Framework of Mechanisms, Boundary Conditions and Configurations.

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Employee empowerment is widely assumed to raise job satisfaction, yet the literature also reports empowerment initiatives that burden employees, fail to change how they experience their work or reduce satisfaction in some cultural settings. This conceptual paper develops a theory that explains how, when and for whom empowerment leads to job satisfaction. Combining problematisation, an integrative literature review, theory synthesis, model building and typology development, it uses self-determination theory as the core explanatory lens and integrates it with job characteristics, job demands-resources, social exchange and conservation of resources perspectives.

The resulting framework distinguishes structural from psychological empowerment and specifies two mechanisms linking them to job satisfaction: a motivational path through basic psychological need satisfaction and a relational path through perceived organisational support. Eight propositions describe these mechanisms, an inverted-U effect of structural empowerment under high demands and low resources, the moderating roles of power distance and individual differences, and a reciprocal gain spiral over time. A typology identifies four empowerment configurations: integrated empowerment, hollow empowerment, frustrated initiative and disempowerment. By replacing the assumption of a universal, linear empowerment-satisfaction relationship with a contingent, configurational and dynamic account, the paper offers guidance for designing empowerment practices matched to employees' resources, competence and cultural expectations, together with an agenda for future empirical research.

1. Introduction

Job satisfaction is among the most extensively studied constructs in organisational behaviour. It is associated with job performance, organisational citizenship, lower turnover and employees' broader subjective well-being (Judge et al., 2001; Bowling et al., 2010; Judge et al., 2017).

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Because satisfaction is shaped by how work is designed and managed, scholars and practitioners have long searched for managerial practices that can raise it. Employee empowerment is one of the most prominent of these practices. Since Kanter's (1977) analysis of power in organisations and the subsequent rise of high-involvement management (Lawler, 1986), organisations have delegated decision authority, shared information and rewards and developed employees' knowledge in the expectation that empowered employees will be both more effective and more satisfied (Bowen & Lawler, 1992).

Research largely supports this expectation. Psychological empowerment, defined as intrinsic task motivation reflected in feelings of meaning, competence, self-determination and impact (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995), is strongly and positively related to job satisfaction in meta-analytic evidence (Seibert et al., 2011; Llorente-Alonso et al., 2024). Longitudinal studies show that structural empowerment predicts later psychological empowerment and satisfaction (Laschinger et al., 2004), and multilevel research shows that unit-level empowerment climates shape individual empowerment and satisfaction (Seibert et al., 2004).

Nevertheless, a growing body of evidence challenges the view that empowerment raises satisfaction everywhere and for everyone. Robert et al. (2000) found that empowerment was associated with lower satisfaction among employees in India, a high power-distance context, while it was associated with higher satisfaction in other countries. Cheong et al. (2016) showed that empowering leadership can burden followers by increasing job-induced tension even as it enables them. Reviews also note that empowerment initiatives frequently fail to alter how employees experience their work, so that formal delegation does not translate into felt empowerment (Maynard et al., 2012). These findings indicate that the empowerment-satisfaction relationship is more complex than commonly assumed, yet the literature lacks an integrative theory explaining why empowerment produces satisfaction, when it fails to do so and for whom it is most effective.

This paper addresses that gap by asking: Through which mechanisms, and under which conditions, does employee empowerment lead to job satisfaction? Drawing on self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017) as the core explanatory lens, and integrating it with job characteristics, job demands-resources (JD-R), social exchange and conservation of resources theories, the paper develops a conceptual framework, eight propositions and a typology of empowerment configurations.

The paper makes three contributions. First, it specifies two complementary mechanisms, a motivational path through basic need satisfaction and a relational path through perceived organisational support, which together explain how both structural and psychological empowerment affect satisfaction. Second, it theorises boundary conditions, including a curvilinear effect of structural empowerment under high demands, the moderating role of power distance and the role of individual differences, thereby reconciling inconsistent findings. Third, it offers a configurational typology and a dynamic gain-spiral perspective that move the field beyond linear, single-level models. The paper is organised as follows: Section 2 describes the methodology; Section 3 reviews the core constructs; Section 4 presents the theoretical lenses and problematises existing assumptions; Section 5 develops the framework and propositions; Section 6 presents the typology; Section 7 discusses implications and a research agenda; and Section 8 concludes.

2. Research methodology

Conceptual papers contribute by integrating existing knowledge, bridging theories and

proposing new relationships rather than by testing hypotheses with empirical data (MacInnis, 2011; Gilson & Goldberg, 2015). Their rigour derives from a transparent research design, explicit selection of theories and a clear logic linking theoretical premises to new propositions (Jaakkola, 2020; Post et al., 2020). Table 1 positions this study within the four conceptual designs identified by Jaakkola (2020).

Table 1
Conceptual research designs and their use in this study

Design	Aim	Typical output	Use in this paper
Theory synthesis	Integrate fragmented findings into a higher-order understanding	Integrative view or new construct	Primary: integrates empowerment, satisfaction and motivation research into a two-path framework
Theory adaptation	Revise a domain theory with a method theory	Extended or re-scoped theory	Secondary: uses SDT, JD-R and COR theory to re-scope empowerment as contingent rather than universally beneficial
Model	Specify mechanisms, boundary conditions and outcomes	Nomological network and propositions	Applied: framework and propositions P1-P8 (Section 5)
Typology	Classify a phenomenon along theoretically derived dimensions	Ideal types with predicted outcomes	Applied: four empowerment configurations (Section 6)

Source: Adapted from Jaakkola (2020) and MacInnis (2011).

The study follows five stages (Figure 1). First, problematisation is used to identify and challenge the implicit assumption that empowerment monotonically and universally increases satisfaction (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). Second, an integrative literature review (Torraco, 2005; Snyder, 2019) examines three bodies of research: empowerment research in its structural, psychological and leadership forms; research on the nature and causes of job satisfaction; and motivational theories of work design and well-being. The review prioritised foundational theoretical works, meta-analyses and highly cited studies in peer-reviewed management and psychology journals, consistent with the aim of theory development rather than exhaustive coverage (Webster & Watson, 2002; Post et al., 2020). Third, theory synthesis combines these streams using SDT as the integrating lens. Fourth, model building specifies mechanisms and boundary conditions in the form of propositions that can be empirically tested (Whetten, 1989; Cornelissen, 2017). Fifth, a typology is derived as a set of ideal types defined by two theoretically central dimensions (Doty & Glick, 1994). The resulting framework is assessed against the criteria of originality, utility and parsimony (Corley & Gioia, 2011).

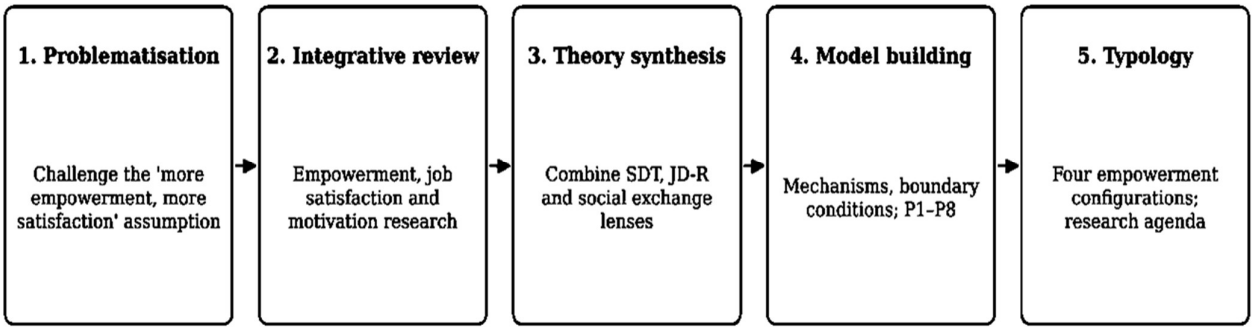


Fig. 1. Conceptual research design. Source: Authors' elaboration based on Jaakkola (2020) and Alvesson and Sandberg (2011).

3. Conceptual foundations

3.1. *Employee empowerment*

Empowerment research has developed along several complementary perspectives (Table 2). The structural perspective, rooted in Kanter's (1977) work, views empowerment as a set of organisational conditions that provide employees with access to power, information, resources, support and opportunities to learn. Bowen and Lawler (1992) and Lawler (1986) similarly describe empowerment as the distribution of power, information, rewards and knowledge to frontline employees. The psychological perspective shifts attention to employees' experience. Conger and Kanungo (1988) defined empowerment as a process that enhances self-efficacy, and Thomas and Velthouse (1990) conceptualised it as increased intrinsic task motivation. Spreitzer (1995) operationalised this view in four cognitions: meaning, the fit between work roles and personal values; competence, the belief in one's capability to perform work skilfully; self-determination, a sense of choice in initiating and regulating actions; and impact, the degree to which one can influence work outcomes. A third, leadership perspective focuses on empowering leader behaviours such as delegating authority, encouraging autonomous decision-making and coaching (Sharma & Kirkman, 2015; Lee et al., 2018). Finally, team empowerment extends the construct to collective levels (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Chen et al., 2007).

Table 2
Principal perspectives on employee empowerment

Perspective	Core definition	Level	Key sources	Expected link to job satisfaction
Structural	Organisational access to power, information, resources, rewards and learning opportunities	Organisation, unit	Kanter (1977); Bowen & Lawler (1992)	Indirect, through felt empowerment and perceived support
Psychological	Intrinsic task motivation: meaning, competence, self-determination, impact	Individual	Thomas & Velthouse (1990); Spreitzer (1995)	Direct and proximal, through need satisfaction
Leadership	Leader behaviours that share power and develop autonomy	Dyad, team	Sharma & Kirkman (2015); Lee et al. (2018)	Indirect; may enable or burden
Team	Collective sense of potency, meaningfulness, autonomy and impact	Team	Kirkman & Rosen (1999); Chen et al. (2007)	Indirect, through shared climate

Meta-analytic evidence shows that structural and leadership antecedents influence attitudes and behaviour largely through psychological empowerment (Seibert et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2018). The present framework therefore treats structural empowerment as the organisational input and psychological empowerment as the proximal experience through which that input becomes consequential for satisfaction. Empowering leadership is treated as a key source of structural empowerment at the level of the immediate work unit.

3.2. *Job satisfaction*

Locke (1976, p. 1300) defined job satisfaction as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences". Subsequent work clarified that satisfaction is an evaluative judgement with both cognitive components, beliefs about the job and its conditions, and affective components, emotional experiences at work (Weiss, 2002; Judge et al., 2017). Affective events theory adds that day-to-day work events generate emotional reactions that accumulate into overall attitudes (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Classic explanations of satisfaction emphasise job characteristics such as autonomy and task significance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Humphrey et al., 2007), intrinsic motivators versus hygiene factors (Herzberg et al., 1959) and dispositional factors such as core self-evaluations (Judge et al., 2005). This distinction between cognitive and affective components matters for empowerment because structural arrangements primarily shape employees' beliefs about their job conditions, whereas felt empowerment shapes their daily emotional experience of work.

Figure 2 traces the development of the two research streams and shows that, although they share theoretical roots, they have rarely been integrated within a single explanatory model.

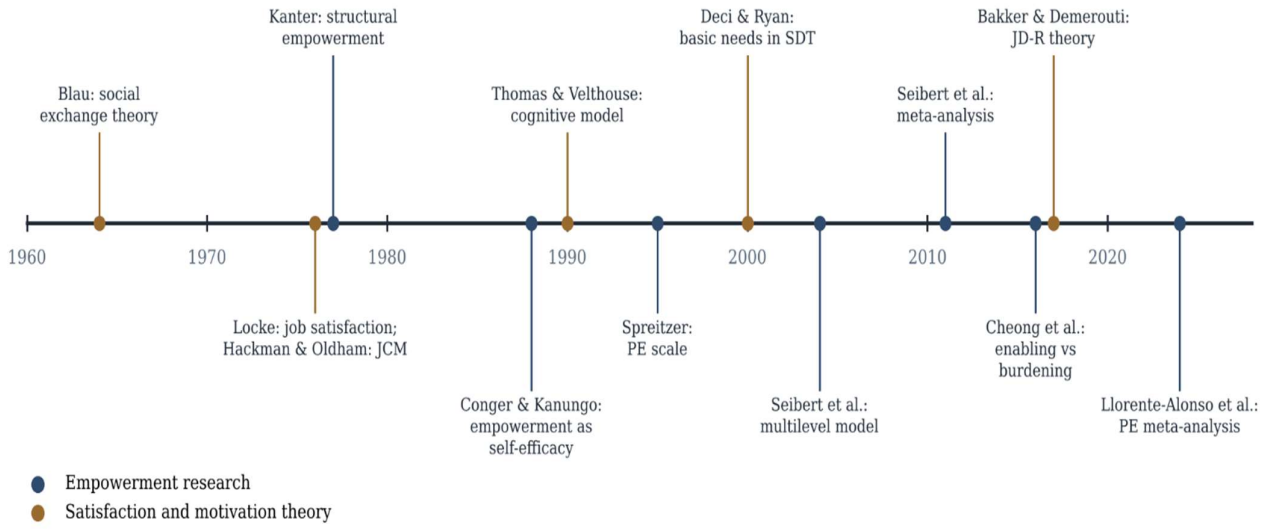


Fig. 2. Milestones in empowerment and job satisfaction research. Source: Authors' elaboration based on the reviewed literature.

4. Theoretical lenses and problematisation

4.1. *Integrating theoretical lenses*

Self-determination theory holds that well-being and autonomous motivation depend on the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In work settings, need satisfaction is consistently associated with job satisfaction, engagement and well-being (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Van den Broeck et al., 2016; Deci et al., 2017). SDT provides the core mechanism of the framework because the four empowerment cognitions map closely onto basic needs: self-determination corresponds to autonomy, competence to competence, and meaning and impact contribute to the experience of volitional, valued action. The job characteristics model provides a complementary design perspective, identifying autonomy and task significance as drivers of experienced responsibility and meaningfulness,

and growth need strength as a moderator (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Parker et al., 2017).

Social exchange theory explains a second, relational mechanism. When organisations share power, information and rewards, employees interpret these as signals of trust and investment and reciprocate with positive attitudes (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005); perceived organisational support captures this belief that the organisation values employees' contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Finally, the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) and conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018) clarify that empowerment can function as a resource or as a demand. Autonomy also entails responsibility, decisions and accountability. Warr's (2007) vitamin model and the "too-much-of-a-good-thing" effect (Pierce & Aguinis, 2013) suggest that beneficial job features can become harmful beyond an optimal level. Table 3 summarises the lenses and their contributions.

Table 3
Theoretical lenses integrated in the framework

Lens	Core mechanism	Contribution to the framework	Key sources
Self-determination theory	Satisfaction of autonomy, competence and relatedness needs	Core motivational mechanism (P2, P3)	Deci & Ryan (2000); Van den Broeck et al. (2016)
Job characteristics model	Autonomy and significance create meaningfulness and responsibility	Links structural design to felt empowerment (P1); growth need strength (P7)	Hackman & Oldham (1976); Humphrey et al. (2007)
Social exchange theory	Reciprocation of organisational investment	Relational mechanism through perceived support (P4)	Blau (1964); Eisenberger et al. (1986)
JD-R and vitamin model	Job features as resources or demands; non-linear effects	Burdening and curvilinear effects (P5)	Bakker & Demerouti (2017); Warr (2007)
Conservation of resources	Resource gain and loss spirals	Reciprocal dynamics over time (P8)	Hobfoll (1989); Hobfoll et al. (2018)
Cultural values theory	Fit between practices and societal values	Power-distance contingency (P6)	Hofstede (2001); Robert et al. (2000)

4.2. Problematising the empowerment-satisfaction assumption

Following Alvesson and Sandberg (2011), three assumptions underlying much empowerment research are identified and challenged. The first is the assumption of equivalence: that granting formal authority is equivalent to employees feeling empowered. Evidence that empowerment programmes often fail to change employees' experience (Maynard et al., 2012) suggests that structural and psychological empowerment can diverge, producing what this paper terms hollow empowerment. The second is the assumption of linearity: that more empowerment is always better. Research on the burdening effects of empowering leadership (Cheong et al., 2016) and on non-linear effects of job features (Warr, 2007; Pierce & Aguinis, 2013) suggests that, beyond a certain point and without adequate resources, additional responsibility can undermine satisfaction. The third is the assumption of universality: that empowerment has similar meaning and effects across cultures and individuals. Cross-cultural evidence (Robert et al., 2000; Kirkman & Shapiro, 1997) and the moderating role of growth need strength in work design research (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) challenge this view. The framework developed below

replaces these assumptions with a contingent, configurational and dynamic account.

5. Conceptual framework and propositions

Figure 3 presents the integrative framework. Structural empowerment influences job satisfaction through two paths: a motivational path, in which it fosters psychological empowerment and thereby basic need satisfaction, and a relational path, in which it signals organisational support. These effects are bounded by job demands and resources, cultural values and individual differences, and they unfold dynamically over time.

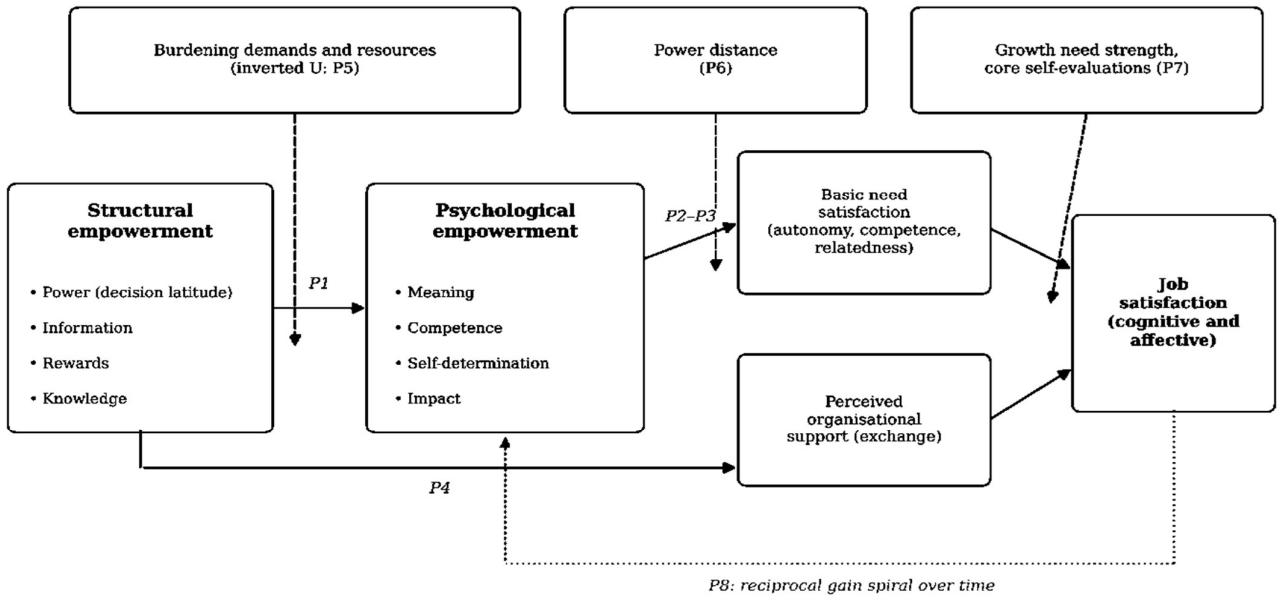


Fig. 3. Integrative framework of employee empowerment and job satisfaction
Note: Solid arrows denote main effects; dashed arrows denote moderating effects; the dotted arrow denotes a reciprocal effect over time. Source: Authors' elaboration.

5.1. *The motivational path*

Structural empowerment provides the objective conditions under which employees can experience their work as self-directed and consequential. Access to decision latitude enables self-determination; access to information and knowledge supports competence and impact; and rewards linked to contributions signal that one's work matters. Consistent with the job characteristics model and with longitudinal and multilevel evidence (Laschinger et al., 2004; Seibert et al., 2004), structural conditions are expected to shape psychological empowerment.

P1. Structural empowerment is positively related to psychological empowerment.

Psychological empowerment is expected to be a proximal antecedent of job satisfaction because it represents a positive, intrinsically motivated orientation to work (Spreitzer, 1995; Seibert et al., 2011). Its dimensions are not expected to contribute equally. From an SDT perspective, autonomy is the need most closely associated with volitional functioning (Deci et al., 2017), and work that is aligned with personal values is experienced as self-concordant, which is associated with higher satisfaction (Judge et al., 2005). Self-determination and meaning should therefore weigh more heavily in satisfaction than competence and impact, which relate more strongly to performance-oriented outcomes.

P2. Psychological empowerment is positively related to job satisfaction, and the meaning and self-determination dimensions exert stronger effects than the competence and impact dimensions.

SDT further specifies the mechanism. The empowerment cognitions are task assessments, whereas satisfaction is an evaluative and emotional response to the job as a whole. Need satisfaction connects the two: feeling empowered allows employees to experience autonomy and competence in their daily work, and those experiences generate the positive affect that accumulates into satisfaction (Van den Broeck et al., 2016; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

P3. Basic psychological need satisfaction mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction.

5.2. *The relational path*

Empowerment is also a social signal. Sharing power, information and rewards communicates trust and investment in employees, which fosters perceptions of organisational support and evokes reciprocal positive attitudes (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This relational path primarily shapes the cognitive component of satisfaction, that is, employees' evaluation of how well the organisation treats them, and can operate even when employees do not personally use the latitude they are granted.

P4. Structural empowerment is positively related to job satisfaction through perceived organisational support, independently of the motivational path.

5.3. *Boundary conditions*

Demands, resources and non-linearity. Empowerment transfers not only authority but also responsibility, uncertainty and accountability. When employees have sufficient time, skills and support, additional latitude remains a resource. When resources are scarce and demands are high, additional latitude becomes a burden that generates role overload and tension (Cheong et al., 2016; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The vitamin model implies that the benefits of autonomy level off and may reverse at high levels (Warr, 2007; Pierce & Aguinis, 2013). Figure 4 illustrates this expectation.

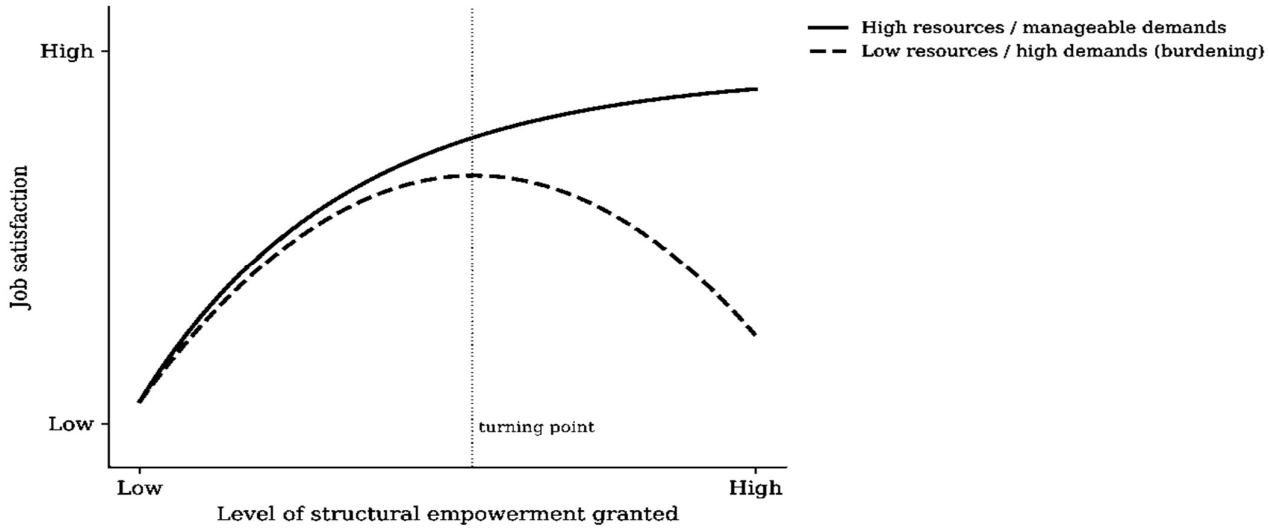


Fig. 4. Expected relationship between structural empowerment and job satisfaction under different resource conditions (illustrative)

Note: The curves are conceptual illustrations of Proposition 5, not empirical estimates. Source: Authors' elaboration based on Warr (2007) and Pierce and Aguinis (2013).

P5. The relationship between structural empowerment and job satisfaction is moderated by the balance of job demands and resources: it is positive and diminishing when resources are adequate, and inverted-U-shaped when demands are high and resources are low.

Power distance. In high power-distance cultures, employees expect decisions to be made by superiors, and delegation may be interpreted as an abdication of managerial responsibility or as a source of anxiety rather than as a sign of trust (Hofstede, 2001; Kirkman & Shapiro, 1997). Robert et al. (2000) observed that empowerment was associated with lower satisfaction among employees in India, whereas the association was positive in the United States, Mexico and Poland. Power distance should therefore weaken the translation of structural empowerment into felt empowerment and into satisfaction.

P6. Power distance, at the societal or individual level, weakens the positive relationship between structural empowerment and both psychological empowerment and job satisfaction, and may reverse it at high levels.

Individual differences. Employees differ in how much they value autonomy and growth. The job characteristics model proposes that growth need strength amplifies the effects of enriched jobs (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), and employees with positive core self-evaluations are more likely to perceive and pursue self-concordant goals (Judge et al., 2005). Both characteristics should strengthen the satisfaction benefits of felt empowerment.

P7. Growth need strength and core self-evaluations strengthen the positive relationship between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction.

5.4. *Dynamics over time*

Table 4
Summary of propositions

No.	Relationship	Type	Theoretical basis
P1	Structural → psychological empowerment	Main effect	Kanter (1977); Laschinger et al. (2004)
P2	Psychological empowerment → job satisfaction (meaning, self-determination strongest)	Main effect	Spreitzer (1995); Judge et al. (2005)
P3	Psychological empowerment → need satisfaction → job satisfaction	Mediation (motivational)	Deci & Ryan (2000); Van den Broeck et al. (2016)
P4	Structural empowerment → perceived support → job satisfaction	Mediation (relational)	Blau (1964); Eisenberger et al. (1986)
P5	Structural empowerment × demands/resources → job satisfaction	Curvilinear moderation	Warr (2007); Cheong et al. (2016)
P6	Power distance weakens structural empowerment effects	Moderation (cultural)	Hofstede (2001); Robert et al. (2000)
P7	Growth need strength and core self-evaluations strengthen psychological empowerment effects	Moderation (individual)	Hackman & Oldham (1976); Judge et al. (2005)
P8	Job satisfaction ⇄ empowerment over time	Reciprocal dynamics	Hobfoll et al. (2018); Wrzesniewski & Dutton (2001)

Finally, empowerment and satisfaction are likely to be reciprocally related. COR theory proposes that those who possess resources are better positioned to gain further resources, creating gain spirals (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Satisfied employees are more likely to engage in proactive behaviours such as job crafting, through which they reshape the boundaries of their jobs and expand their own latitude (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), and they are more likely to be trusted with further responsibility. Conversely, dissatisfaction can initiate a loss spiral in which employees withdraw and managers recentralise decisions.

P8. Job satisfaction and empowerment are reciprocally related over time: job satisfaction fosters subsequent structural and psychological empowerment, producing gain spirals, whereas dissatisfaction produces loss spirals.

Table 4 summarises the propositions and their theoretical grounding.

6. A typology of empowerment configurations

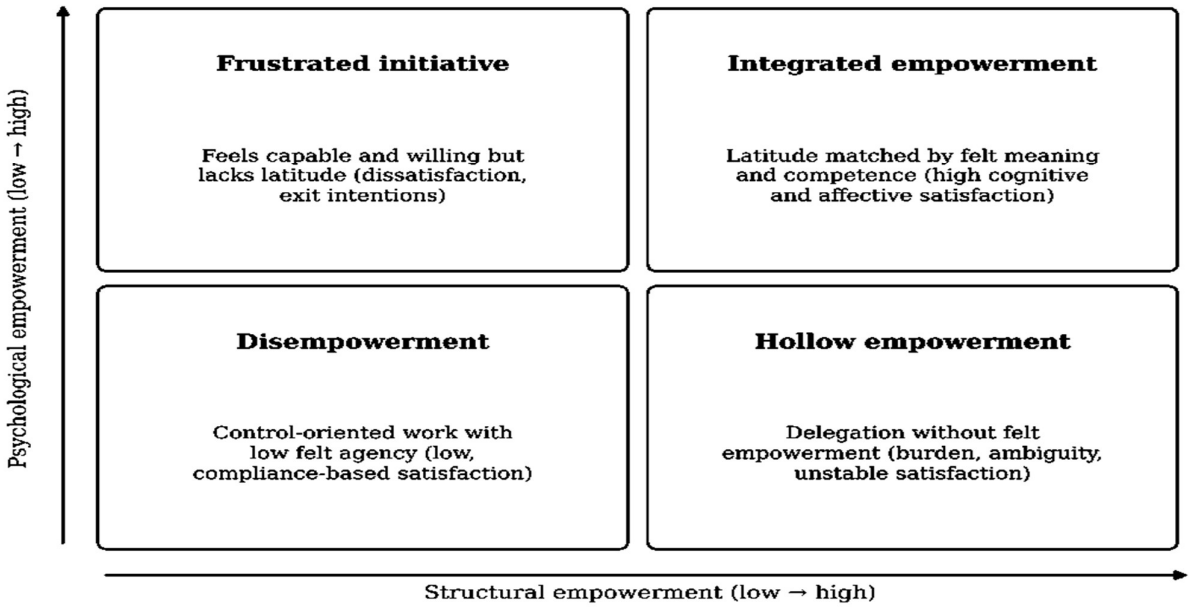


Fig. 5. Typology of empowerment configurations. Source: Authors' elaboration.

The problematisation of the equivalence assumption implies that structural and psychological empowerment should be examined jointly rather than interchangeably. Crossing the two dimensions yields four ideal-type configurations (Figure 5; Table 5). Consistent with Doty and Glick (1994), these are theoretical configurations with distinct predicted outcomes rather than mutually exclusive categories of employees; the same employee may move between configurations as conditions change.

Table 5
Characteristics and predicted satisfaction outcomes of empowerment configurations

Configuration	Structural	Psychological	Typical experience	Predicted job satisfaction
Integrated empowerment	High	High	Latitude, information and support are matched by felt meaning and competence	High on both cognitive and affective components; stable
Hollow empowerment	High	Low	Formal delegation without felt agency; responsibility experienced as burden or ambiguity	Moderate cognitive, low affective; unstable
Frustrated initiative	Low	High	Capable, motivated employees constrained by centralised control	Low; elevated risk of turnover intentions
Disempowerment	Low	Low	Control-oriented work with little felt agency	Low to moderate, based on extrinsic and compliance-based evaluations

Two configurations warrant particular attention. Hollow empowerment explains why empowerment initiatives can fail: when authority is delegated without the information, competence development and support needed to use it, employees experience demands rather than resources, consistent with P5. Frustrated initiative highlights a less discussed risk: employees with high growth need strength and felt competence who are denied latitude are likely to experience a misfit between their motivational orientation and their job, which undermines satisfaction and may prompt exit. Moving employees towards integrated empowerment therefore requires simultaneous attention to structural conditions and to the psychological experience of work.

7. Discussion

7.1. Theoretical contributions

This paper advances empowerment and job satisfaction research in three ways. First, it integrates two mechanisms that have typically been examined separately. The motivational path, grounded in SDT, explains how felt empowerment generates positive daily experiences of work, while the relational path, grounded in social exchange theory, explains how structural empowerment shapes employees' evaluation of their organisation. Distinguishing the two paths also links empowerment to the cognitive and affective components of satisfaction (Weiss, 2002), refining a literature that has largely treated satisfaction as a unitary outcome.

Second, the paper replaces the assumptions of equivalence, linearity and universality with an explicitly contingent account. By theorising an inverted-U relationship under high demands (P5) and the moderating role of power distance (P6), it offers explanations for null and negative findings that are otherwise difficult to reconcile with the dominant view (Robert et al., 2000; Cheong et al., 2016). Third, by introducing a configurational typology and a reciprocal gain-spiral perspective (P8), it moves beyond static, variable-centred models and responds to calls for multilevel and dynamic empowerment research (Maynard et al., 2012; Llorente-Alonso et al., 2024).

7.2. Practical implications

For managers and human resource professionals, the framework suggests four principles. First, empower holistically: delegation of authority should be accompanied by access to information, training and support, so that structural empowerment translates into felt competence and impact rather than hollow empowerment. Second, calibrate empowerment to resources: before extending latitude, managers should assess workload and support, since empowerment under resource scarcity may lower satisfaction (P5). Third, adapt to culture and individuals: in high power-distance contexts, empowerment may be introduced gradually, framed as development and accompanied by continued leader availability, while employees with high growth need strength may benefit from earlier and broader latitude (P6, P7). Fourth, build gain spirals: small, early experiences of successful autonomy can initiate reciprocal cycles of satisfaction and further empowerment (P8).

7.3. Research agenda

The propositions are designed to be testable. Table 6 outlines research questions and suitable designs.

Table 6
Agenda for future research

Theme	Illustrative research questions	Suggested designs
Dual mechanisms (P1-P4)	Do need satisfaction and perceived support mediate empowerment effects in parallel? Do they predict different satisfaction components?	Multi-wave surveys; structural equation modelling
Dimensional effects (P2)	Are meaning and self-determination stronger predictors of satisfaction than competence and impact?	Relative-weights and dominance analyses; meta-analysis
Non-linearity (P5)	At what level does structural empowerment cease to raise satisfaction under high demands?	Polynomial regression; response surface analysis; experience sampling
Culture (P6)	How do societal and individual power distance condition empowerment effects?	Multinational multilevel studies; cross-cultural experiments
Configurations	How prevalent are hollow empowerment and frustrated initiative, and what triggers movement between them?	Latent profile analysis; qualitative case studies
Dynamics (P8)	Do empowerment and satisfaction form gain and loss spirals over time?	Cross-lagged panel and diary designs
Changing work	How do remote work and algorithmic management alter structural and psychological empowerment?	Field studies; mixed methods

7.4. Limitations

As a conceptual paper, the study does not test its propositions empirically, and they should be treated as theoretically grounded expectations. The integrative review prioritised influential and synthesising works rather than an exhaustive systematic search, which may have omitted relevant contributions from specific sectors or regions. The framework focuses on individual-

level satisfaction; team-level and organisational-level outcomes deserve separate theorising. Finally, the typology simplifies continuous dimensions into four ideal types, and empirical work is needed to establish their prevalence and boundaries.

8. Conclusion

Employee empowerment remains one of the most promising managerial levers for improving job satisfaction, but its effects are neither automatic nor universal. This paper has argued that empowerment raises satisfaction when structural opportunities are translated into felt meaning, competence, autonomy and impact; when they are perceived as signs of organisational support; when they are matched by adequate resources; and when they fit employees' cultural expectations and individual needs. By specifying two mechanisms, three types of boundary condition, a reciprocal dynamic and four empowerment configurations, the paper provides an integrative foundation for future research and for the design of empowerment practices that genuinely enhance employees' experience of work.

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