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# The Mediating Role of Psychological Empowerment in the Relationship between Empowering Leadership, and Engagement and Innovative Work Behaviour

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**Abstract**

The main purpose of this study is to examine the influence of empowering leadership on employee innovative work behaviour and work engagement, which is mediated by psychological empowerment. The data were collected from 1,232 employees and 232 supervisors of 18 banks in Ethiopia. Reliability is assessed using Cronbach alpha; to asses validity we employed a structural equation modelling procedure using EQS 6.2. To test the hypothesis, multiple hierarchical regressions and PROCESS-macro model 4 were used. The findings suggest that: there is a positive relationship between empowering leadership and innovative work behaviour. Nevertheless, empowering leadership does not affect work engagement unless mediated by psychological empowerment. Meanwhile, empowering leadership significantly affects psychological empowerment. There is a positive influence of psychological empowerment on innovative work behaviour and work engagement, and psychological empowerment mediates the indirect relationships between empowering leadership and the outcome variables, innovative work behaviour and work engagement. This study provides theoretical enrichment from the aspect of empowering leadership, and practically recommends that leaders can increase employee innovativeness and engagement by creating a work environment which ensures that employees feel empowered psychologically.

**Keywords:** Empowering Leadership, Psychological Empowerment, Innovative Work Behaviour, Work Engagement

## Introduction

In the competitive business environment, innovation becomes an important and essential success factor for the organisation, since they are facing a dynamic environment characterised by rapid technological, social, and institutional changes, short product life cycles, services, and business processes (Nadler & Tushman, 1999). In recent times, there has been growing competition and development in the Ethiopian financial sector, both in innovation and operation. As a result, the financial industry is paying attention to their employees, to ensure their engagement and innovative behaviours, which drive organisational innovations (Carmeli, Meitar & Weisberg, 2006).

The employee's ability to innovate and their engagement at work are influenced by several factors, which can be classified into three levels of analysis: the individual, the group, and the organisational level (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2008; Parzefall, Seeck & Lippmann, 2008). The role of the leader in the workplace is found to be important for employee innovation and engagement in organisations (Chen & Hou, 2016; Jyoti & Dev, 2015; Masood & Afsar, 2017). Many scholars have indicated that certain leadership styles can either foster or hinder innovative work behaviour and engagement, and they suggested that it is most important to identify which leadership styles drive these behaviours (e.g. Abdolmaleki et al., 2013; Agbim, 2013; Schermuly, Meyer & Dammer, 2013).

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There is a new trend in leadership research, focusing more on the positive leadership role in organisations. In this sense, empowering leadership is very important in managing and enabling subordinates. Empowering leadership positively affects the work outcomes in organisations, such as innovative work behaviour and engagement. Empowering leadership embodies the notion of change-oriented leadership, characterised by innovativeness, upward influence, and inspiring followers rather than monitoring follower behaviour (Arnold et al., 2000; Clark, Hartline & Jones, 2009; Spreitzer, DeJanasz & Quinn, 1999), which influences innovative work behaviour (Spreitzer, 1996) and engagement (Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Deci, Olafsen & Ryan, 2017). To ensure work engagement and innovativeness, there are some psychological conditions, such as meaningfulness, safety, and availability (Khan, 1990), which should exist for employees to display positive behaviours. This means that employees who experience psychological empowerment feel that their contributions are meaningful and they possess the ability to shape their work environment (Gregory, Albritton & Osmonbekov, 2010; Klerk & Stander, 2014) and behave innovatively. However, previous research on empowerment appears to have mainly examined linear and additive effects of psychological empowerment on work outcomes (e.g. Spreitzer, Kizilos & Nason, 1997; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). It is therefore vital to assess the direct effect of empowering leadership on work engagement and innovative work behaviour, and the indirect effect through psychological empowerment. In doing so, this study intends to shed light on the role of psychological empowerment by integrating theoretical and empirical research to examine the separate and combined effects of empowering leadership and psychological empowerment on employee engagement and innovative work behaviour.

## Theory and Hypotheses

### Empowering Leadership and Innovative Work Behaviour

Empowering leadership is characterised by positive behaviours that lead to many positive outcomes (Avey, Avolio & Luthans, 2011; Sweetman, Luthans, Avey & Luthans, 2011). This leadership style has assumed special importance in organisational behaviour, because it involves a set of leader behaviours aimed at enhancing employees' autonomy and motivation at work, through delegating leaders' responsibilities and authorities, providing participative decision-making, expressing confidence in employees' abilities, and removing constraints to performing (Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

Empowering leadership is directed at enhancing employees' ability to make independent decisions, to enhance the generation and implementation of new ideas by employees in the workplace (Seibert, Wang & Courtright, 2011). In other words, empowered employees will exhibit behaviour that explores new ideas, promotes new ideas, and supports the implementation of such ideas. Krause (2004) confirms that empowering leadership predicts innovative work behaviour. Janssen (2005) also found a positive relationship between empowering leadership and employees' innovative work behaviour. Spreitzer (1995) argued that empowering leadership enhances employees' innovative behaviour through the strengthening of individual capacities and creative process management. Further, many studies found that empowering leadership is likely to promote employee innovative behaviour, both at the individual and the team level (e.g. Ahearne, Mathieu & Rapp, 2005; Chen, Fay & Wang, 2011; Sagnak, 2012; Srivastava, Bartol & Locke, 2006). We expect this relationship to hold in the Ethiopian financial sector as well. Thus, based on previous empirical and theoretical research, we propose the following:

*H1: Empowering leadership is positively related to employees' innovative work behaviour.*

### Empowering Leadership and Work Engagement

The concept of work engagement is significantly viewed as a predictor of different positive outcomes, such as work performance (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Bakker & Bal, 2010), organisational commitment (Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006), and organisational satisfaction (Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2012). On the other hand, knowing its significance, it is of theoretical importance to explore work engagement's antecedents. Leadership has been suggested as one of the factors contributing to employee work engagement (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002). Among this, empowering leadership is identified as a predictor, since it involves a sense of autonomy and

sharing power that can enhance employees' motivation and involvement in their work (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999). Particularly, delegation of authority and participation in decision-making can improve employees' capacity for self-determination and employees' feelings of mastery, which can enhance the employees' motivation for work engagement (Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Deci, Olafsen & Ryan, 2017). Moreover, empowering leadership can provide employees with sufficient resources, which enable followers to engage in their works (Bakker, 2011). Thus, we propose:

*H2: Empowering leadership is positively related to employees' work engagement.*

## Empowering Leadership and Psychological Empowerment

Empowering leadership is identified as an important antecedent of empowerment (Maynard, Gilson & Mathieu, 2012). In other words, leaders' empowering actions and followers' reactions are inseparably tied to the empowerment concept itself. Further, leaders who exhibit empowering behaviours are more likely to facilitate and enhance employee empowerment, through intrinsic motivation (Konczak, Stelly & Trusty, 2000). By creating a participative decision-making environment, empowering leaders also provide subordinates the autonomy to act on their own instead of following instructions, which in turn increases employees' feelings of control and self-determination (Sims & Manz, 1996). This process results in employees feeling more competent and in control, or has an impact on their job environment; employees will experience meaning in their work, promoting a sense of job meaning and impact. In addition, empowering leader behaviours not only boost individual feelings of self-determination, but also enhance both individual (Ahearne et al., 2005) and team self-efficacy (Srivastava et al., 2006), which is the belief in the ability to successfully perform tasks (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, when leaders demonstrate empowering behaviours, subordinates' experience of psychological empowerment will improve, by increasing perceptions of job meaning, personal impact, self-efficacy, and self-determination (Konczak et al., 2000; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). In line with the above-mentioned theorisation, there is empirical evidence that as leaders engage in empowering behaviours, employees respond to this behaviour by feeling more psychologically empowered (e.g. Den Hartog & De Hoogh, 2009; De Klerka & Stander, 2014; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Mendes & Stander, 2011; Raub & Robert, 2010; Tjosvold & Sun, 2006; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Additionally, Spreitzer (1996) argued that individuals who perceive high levels of leader support are likely to report higher levels of psychological empowerment. Menon and Borg (1995) found that leadership behaviours, such as mentoring, consulting, recognising, and inspiring, resulted in greater perceived control and empowerment among subordinates. The literature provides substantial evidence of the positive relationship between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment. Therefore, the following relationship can be proposed.

*H3: Empowering leadership is positively related to employees' perception of psychological empowerment.*

## Psychological Empowerment and Employee Work Engagement

Employee perceptions of psychological empowerment improves positive work outcomes, such as work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Jose & Mampilly, 2015; Macsinga, Sulea, Sârbescu, Fischmann & Dumitru, 2015; Quinones, Van den Broeck & De Witte, 2013; Taghipour & Dezfuli, 2013; Ugwu, Onyishi & Rodriguez Sanchez, 2014). Psychological empowerment is one of the intrinsic motivational elements. May, Gilson and Harter (2004) assert that how employees sense meaningfulness in work is seen as a method to foster employees' motivation and attachment to work, thus resulting in engagement. Moreover, when employees have a sense of progression towards a goal, it highly contributes to employee engagement, as does the individuals' beliefs that their actions are making a difference in their organisations (Stander & Rothmann, 2010). Self-determination reflects autonomy in the initiation and continuation of work behaviours and processes (Spreitzer, 1995). Indeed, prior research asserts that employees who are psychologically empowered are more committed to their work and organisations (Jose & Mampilly, 2015), and engaged in their organisations. Kahn (1990) also found psychological empowerment

to be related to work engagement. In addition, it has been suggested that psychological empowerment helps employees make positive changes in their roles, work units, and organisations (Jose & Mampilly, 2015; Seibert et al., 2011). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis.

*H4: Psychological empowerment is positively related to employees' work engagement.*

## Psychological Empowerment and Innovative Work Behaviour

Psychological empowerment is related to innovative work behaviour, by affecting an employee's meaning, competence, self-determination, and/or impact (Shin, 2015; Spreitzer, 1995; Zhou & Shalley, 2011). Employees' innovative behaviour is likely to be created through their psychological empowerment. The way the employee perceives the congruence between their activity and their values shapes their meanings (Bono & Judge, 2003; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999), and tends to enhance innovative work behaviour.

More specifically, when employees perceive that their work is important, they are focused on their work (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995), and they are more likely to apply extra effort in innovative activities, by seeking to understand a problem from various perspectives and to connect multiple sources of information, which will then result in higher levels of innovative behaviour (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Psychologically empowered employees feel a sense of self-concordance between their values and their work-related tasks, which has been shown to increase the meaningfulness of work, and in turn, increase employee's interest to generate, promote, and implement creative ideas (Dik, Steger, Fitch-Martin & Onder, 2013; Shamir, 1991). Amabile (1988) argues that a high level of self-efficacy is consistent with the competence dimension of psychological empowerment, and likely to lead to more innovative behaviour due to positive expectations of success.

Empowerment can increase subordinate innovative work behaviour by enhancing their self-efficacy (Ahearne et al., 2005; Spreitzer, 1995), because subordinates with a higher level of self-efficacy would think that they are mastering a task in an innovative way (Bandura, 1986). Further, when employees have considerable freedom in the performance of their job and influence in their work outcomes, they tend to seek out new ideas for the introduction of new products and services. Amabile (1988) also found that having a sense of control over one's work actions and having the freedom to decide what to do and how to do one's work would enhance employees' innovativeness. Finally, empowerment improves employees' perceptions of impact, thereby potentially giving an employee a feeling of greater control over the immediate work situation and an enhanced sense that his or her behaviour can make a difference in work. Hence, these beliefs are essential for stimulating idea exploration, generation, championing, and implementation, which are the pillars of innovative work behaviour. Therefore, we propose that:

*H5: Psychological empowerment is positively related to innovative work behaviour.*

## The Mediating Role of Psychological Empowerment

To fully understand how empowering leadership influences innovative work behaviour and work engagement, the study argued that psychological empowerment may be considered as the central characteristic that mediates the relationship between empowering leadership behaviour and innovative work behaviour and engagement. Combining hypotheses 1 to 5 stated earlier, we expect psychological empowerment to serve as a mediator between empowering leadership and the two dependent variables (innovative work behaviour and work engagement).

*H6a: Psychological empowerment is mediating the relationship between empowering leadership and innovative work behaviour.*

*H6b: Psychological empowerment is mediating the relationship between empowering leadership and work engagement.*

The overall proposed model is depicted in Fig. 1.

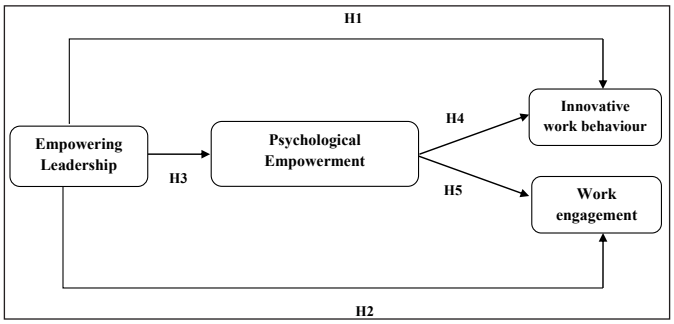


**Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework**

## Research Design and Methodology

The research design is a template highlighting the research methods, to guide data collection (Babin & Zikmund, 2016). There are three categories of research design: exploratory research, descriptive research, and causal research (Babin & Zikmund, 2016). Based on this conceptualisation, the study was designed to use the quantitative approach, where the relationship between different variables was empirically tested. The study also explored the causal relationship between empowering leadership and the outcome variables, innovative work behaviour and work engagement, using correlation and regression model test.

The units of analysis in the study are employees working in the Ethiopian banking sector. Therefore, the sampling frame is drawn from employees working in all private and government banks in Ethiopia. Investigating banks of different ownership types would provide a wider picture of empowerment and innovation within the banking sector in Ethiopia. The study targeted 18 banks employing approximately 66,603; out of this, 56,935 and 9,665 of the employees are permanent and outsourced, respectively (National Bank Annual Reports, 2018/19). For this study, 256 supervisors and 1,355 individuals who are only permanent head-office employees working in more complex and non-routine tasks (e.g. in knowledge-intensive work) and on more complex instances of extra role-behaviour tasks were invited for this study. Previous research claims that empowerment and innovation are more vital in a department or unit that requires continuous demands for innovation orientation and non-routine tasks (Odoardi, Montani, Boudrias & Battistelli, 2015; Birdi, Leach & Magadley, 2016).

Data were collected in two rounds of self-administered structured questionnaire surveys. The study was a quantitative type of research, with a structured questionnaire that contains questions about the dependent and independent variables. Supervisor and employee data were collected electronically (via an online survey system using a link to the Google Form and SurveyMonkey websites (formerly FluidSurveys®) that hosted the survey, and a paper version of the survey. The difference in distribution is a concession to an organisation that did not allow members to use organisational computer systems to access external content. Online participants were requested to return the questionnaire within 15 days, reminders were sent every three days.

First, employees responded to a survey containing the following variables: empowering leadership, psychological empowerment, and work engagement, in addition to the control variables (age, gender, tenure, and education level). Then, to minimise single-source response bias, supervisors were asked to rate the innovative work behaviour of each employee under their supervision. According to Podsakoff et al. (2003), single-source bias can occur when a respondent providing the measures of the predictor and criterion variable is the same person; this inflates the correlation among measures. Then, the two-time data were matched using four indicator criteria of self-generated individual codes (SGIC) clearly implied in the instrument (Audette, Hammond & Rochester, 2020; Palmer, Winter & McMahon, 2020; Vogel, 2018).

### Measures

All measures were assessed using a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) for predictor variables and from 1 (never) to 7 (always) for outcome variables. Empowering leadership was measured using the Zhang and Bartol (2010) four-dimensional scale with 12 items. The four dimensions of this scale are: enhancing the meaningfulness of work (three items), fostering participation in decision-making (three items), expressing confidence in high performance (three items), and providing autonomy from bureaucratic constraints (three items). The alpha values were $\alpha = .929$, .942, .891, and .880, respectively. The overall alpha reliability for empowering leadership is .884. Psychological empowerment was measured using Spreitzer's (1995)

scale. It consisted of 12 statements with four dimensions, i.e., meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact, each represented by three items with alpha value of α = .940, .879, .864, and .888, respectively. The overall alpha reliability for psychological empowerment is .793. Innovative work behaviour was assessed using De Jong and Den Hartog's (2010) multidimensional ten-items scale, with two items related to opportunity exploration, three to idea generation, another two dealing with championing, and three items measuring application behaviour, with alpha values α = .685, .687, .677 and .734, respectively. The overall alpha reliability for innovative work behaviour is .879. Work engagement was measured using the Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova (2006) scale. It consisted of nine statements with three dimensions, i.e., vigour, dedication, and absorption, each represented by three items with alpha values of α = .880, .875, and .928, respectively. The overall alpha reliability for work engagement is .928. Finally, demographic variables such as age, gender, education, and experience of respondents were controlled; previous studies also confirm that these variables potentially influence innovative work behaviour and work engagement (e.g. Afsar, Badir, Saeed & Hafeez, 2017; Scott & Bruce, 1994; Wang, Fang, Qureshi & Janssen, 2015; Shukla, Adhikari & Singh, 2015).

## Analytical Procedure

The value of any research depends on the reliability and validity of the work. Cronbach's alpha is widely used across organisational sciences as a measure of reliability and internal consistency in Likert-based assessment instruments (Bonett & Wright, 2015). Thus, the internal consistency of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's (1951) item homogeneity test, Cronbach's alpha. The following procedure was described by Tabchnick and Fidel (2007) – 15 factors with 43 items were extracted with a factor loading of above .07, which is the acceptable reliability (Sapp & Jensen, 1997). To test validity, CFA was analysed using EQS 6.2 (Bentler & Weeks, 1979, 1980), with maximum likelihood estimation. Then, hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to test hypotheses H1 through H5 to predict the relationships, using SPSS. To test H6(a) and H6(b), the mediation model was estimated using SPSS PROCESS-macro model 4 (Hayes, 2018), applying one significant mediator for the analysis.

## Result and Discussion

### Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Around 1,355 individuals and 256 supervisors participated in the study. Out of the responses received, only the responses of 1,232 individual employees and 232 supervisors were used for the analysis. On average, the respondents had worked in the banking industry for about 6.81 years. Around 66.7% of the respondents were male, with an average age of 31.96. About 51% of the respondents were first-degree holders and 48% had already completed their second degree. Pearson correlations were performed to test the relationship among the variables. There were positive and medium significant bivariate correlations between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment ($r = .353$, $p < .01$), and innovative work behaviour ($r = .394$, $p < .01$). However, the relationship with work engagement was found to be not significant ($r = .048$, $p > .05$). Descriptive statistics, reflecting the mean, standard deviation, internal consistency, and correlation are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation, Internal Consistency, and Correlation**

| | *M* | *SD* | *EL* | *PE* | *IWB* | *Engag-ement* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 31.96 | 5.79 | - | - | - | |
| Education | 2.49 | .512 | - | - | - | |
| Tenure | 6.75 | 4.69 | - | - | - | |
| EL | 5.26 | 1.146 | (.884) | | | |
| PE | 5.58 | .851 | .353** | (.908) | | |
| IWB | 5.47 | .688 | .394** | .828** | (.879) | |
| Engagement | 5.8 | .985 | .048 | .166** | .136** | (.928) |

EL = Empowering Leadership, PE = Psychological Empowerment, IWB = Innovative Work Behaviour

***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05.

### Measurement Model Analysis

The results of CFA analysis indicated that the hypothesised four-factor model suggested a good fit: $\chi 2 = 224.563$; df = 84; CFI = 0.958; RMS = .56. Furthermore, as can be seen from Table 2, all the variables in the hypothesised model exhibited a better fit to the data, thereby providing

evidence of the distinctiveness of the study's variables. They provided evidence that further examination of the structural model was justified. The result of CFA is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Fit Indices for Structural Models**

| *Models* | | $\chi^2$ | *Df* | *CFI* | *SRMR* | *RMSEA* | *AIC* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Individual Level | | | | | | | |
| Model 1 | EL (4 factors) | 302.4*** | 48 | 0.98 | 0.04 | 0.07 | 206.4 |
| Model 2 | PE (4 factors) | 612.0*** | 48 | 0.95 | 0.07 | 0.099 | 516.0 |
| Model 3 | IWB (4 factors) | 543.9 | 31 | 0.95 | 0.03 | 0.12 | 481.9 |
| Model 4 | Engagement (3 factors) | 0.00 | −1 | 0.99 | 0.00 | 0.0 | 2 |
| Model 5 | Full model (15 factors) | 224.6 | 84 | 0.97 | .034 | .06 | 56.6 |

## Regression Analysis

To explore the relationship among variables, different regression models were conducted using multiple regressions; the control variables of age, experience, gender, and education were entered in Step 1 of the model. Empowering leadership was added to the model in Step 2, and innovative work behaviour and work engagement were added as dependent variables.

## Empowering Leadership as a Predictor for Innovative Work Behaviour, Work Engagement, Psychological Empowerment

Hypothesis 1 predicted a positive relationship between empowering leadership and innovative work behaviour. As shown in Table 3 (Model 2), empowering leadership is positively related to innovative work behaviour (b = .236, s.e. = .018, p < .001), which supports H1. Hypothesis 2 predicted a positive relationship between empowering leadership and work engagement. As shown in Table 3 (Model 4), empowering leadership is not significantly related to work engagement (b = .040, s.e. = .042, p > .05), which does not support H2. Hypothesis 3 predicted a positive relationship between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment. As shown in Table 3 (Model 6), empowering leadership is positively related to psychological empowerment (b = .259, s.e. = .022, p < .001), which supports H3.

**Table 3: Empowering Leadership as a Predictor for Innovative Work Behaviour, Work Engagement, and Psychological Empowerment**

| | *IWB* | | *Engagement* | | *PE* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Model 1* | *Model 2* | *Model 3* | *Model 4* | *Model 5* | *Model 6* |
| Gender | .145** (.050) | .121** (.046) | −.018 (.105) | −.023 (.105) | .146* (.061) | 0.120* (.057) |
| Age | −.004 (.006) | −.001 (.005) | −.002 (.012) | .000 (.012) | −2.358 (.007) | .003 (.006) |
| Education | −.046 (.045) | −.009 (.042) | −.002 (.098) | −.020 (.098) | −.149 (.055) | −.108* (.052) |
| Experience | −.002 (.007) | .000 (.006) | .009 (.014) | .009 (.014) | .001 (.0078 | .003 (.007) |
| Empowering Leadership | | .236*** (.018) | | .040 (.042) | | .259*** (.022) |
| R-square | .011 | 0.156 | .001 | 0.004 | 0.012 | 0.132 |
| Change in R-square | .018 | 0.145 | .001 | 0.002 | 0.012 | 0.120 |
| F-value | 2.853 | 38.014 | .153 | .311 | 3.180 | 31.00 |
| Change in F | 2.853 | 176.366 | .153 | .944 | 3.180 | 141.54 |

$N_{individual\text{-}level}$ = 1232; Standard errors in parenthesis ***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05.

## Psychological Empowerment as a Predictor of Innovative Work Behaviour and Work Engagement

Hypothesis 4 predicted a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and innovative work behaviour. As shown in Table 4 (Model 2), psychological empowerment is positively related to innovative work behaviour (b = .689, s.e. = .014, p < .001), which supports H4. Hypothesis 5 predicted a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and work engagement. As shown in Table 4 (Model 4), empowering leadership is positively related to work engagement (b = .169, s.e = .055, p < .001), which supports H5.

**Table 4: Relationship between Psychological Empowerment and Outcome Variables**

| | *Innovative Work Behaviour* | | *Engagement* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Model 1* | *Model 2* | *Model 3* | *Model 4* |
| Gender | .139** (.050) | .041 (.028) | −.026 (.104) | − .057 (.104) |
| Age | −.004 (.006) | −.004 (.003) | −.00 (.012) | −.001 (.012) |
| Education | −.047 (.045) | .056 (.025) | −.025 (.098) | −.020 (.097) |
| Experience | −.002 (.007) | −.003 (.004) | .009 (.014) | .006 (.014) |
| Psychological Empowerment | | .689*** (.014) | | 169** (.055) |
| R-square | 0.011 | 0.697 | 0.001 | 0.23 |
| Change in R-square | 0.011 | 0.686 | 0.001 | 0.021 |
| F-value | 2.784 | 472.511 | .160 | 2.014 |
| Change in F | 2.784 | 2326.201 | .160 | 9.419 |

$N_{individual\text{-}level}$ = 1232; Standard errors in parenthesis ***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05.

## The Indirect Effect of Empowering Leadership through Psychological Empowerment on Innovative Work Behaviour and Work Engagement

The indirect effects of empowering leadership on innovative work behaviour (H6a) and work engagement (H6b) through psychological empowerment was examined using over 5,000 bootstrap samples. Estimates were taken at a 95% confidence interval, and was bias-corrected and accelerated (CI). Hypothesis H6a predicted that psychological empowerment is mediating the relationship between empowering leadership and innovative work behaviour. As shown in Table 5 (Model 2), psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and innovative work behaviour (effect = .1707; 95%, SE = .0178, CI [.1356, .2064]), which supports H6a. Hypothesis H6b predicted that psychological empowerment is mediating the relationship between empowering leadership and work engagement. As shown in Table 5 (Model 4), psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and work engagement (effect = .1707; 95%, SE = .0178, CI [.1356, .2064]), which supports H6b.

**Table 5: The Indirect Effect of Empowering Leadership through Psychological Empowerment on Innovative Work Behaviour and Work Engagement**

| | *Innovative Work Behaviour* | | *Engagement* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Model 1* | *Model 2* | *Model 3* | *Model 4* |
| Gender | .1198* (.0572) | .0414 (.0275) | .1594 (.0866) | −.0513 (.1047) |
| Age | .0034 (.0064) | −.0035 (.0031) | .0014 (.0099) | .0004* (.0119) |
| Education | −.1079 (.0516) | .0632 (.0248)** | −.0221 (.0811) | −.0180 (.0976) |
| Experience | .0032 (.0074) | −.0025 (.0032) | .0114 (.01119) | .0067 (.0144) |
| Empowering Leadership | .2594*** (.0218) | .0653 (.0112)*** | .2196*** (.0343) | .0033 (.0043) |
| Psychological Empowerment | | .6573 (.0150) | | .1681*** (.0581) |

| | *Innovative Work Behaviour* | | *Engagement* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Model 1* | *Model 2* | *Model 3* | *Model 4* |
| R-square | .1322 | .7069 | .0980 | .0227 |
| F-value | 31.20 | 411.14 | 9.344 | 1.665 |
| | Effect | SE | Lower CI | Upper CI |
| Direct effect | .0653 | .0112 | .0433 | .0872 |
| EL -> PE -> IWB | .1705 | .0178 | .1356 | .2064 |
| Direct effect | .0033 | .00432 | −.0816 | .0881 |
| EL -> PE -> Engagement | .0369 | .0183 | .0080 | .0785 |

$N_{individual\text{-}level}$ = 1232; Standard errors in parenthesis ***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05.

## Conclusion and Future Direction

Employee work engagement and innovative work behaviour have paramount importance in the banking industry to ensure competitiveness. The main objective of this study was to examine the mediating role of psychological empowerment between empowering leadership and two outcome variables (i.e. innovative work behaviour and work engagement), considering a sample of employees from the financial sector in Ethiopia.

Empirical support was found for the direct effect of empowering leadership on innovative work behaviour. Likewise, many studies have examined the influence of empowering leadership on positive outcomes, such as innovative work behaviour (Alkhodary, 2016; Jada, Mukhopadhyay & Titiyal, 2019), affective commitment (Hassan et al., 2013), and employee performance (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2011, 2013b).

Contrary to previous studies, like Merry and Syarief, (2017); Tuckey, Bakker and Dollard, (2012); and Zheng and Tian (2019), the present study's findings show that empowering leadership has no effect on work engagement. One possible explanation could be that empowering leadership may have an indirect effect on work engagement through other mediating variables. Indeed, this study showed that there was an indirect effect of empowering leadership on work engagement, through psychological empowerment.

Empowering leadership was found to be significantly related to psychological empowerment and this result is supported by other studies (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015; Bharadwaja & Tripathi, 2020; Mendes & Stander, 2010; Raub & Robert, 2010). The results implied that when leaders empower their employees, the latter will feel more competent and in control, and they will experience meaning in their work, their awareness of their competence to do their work, the perception of their impact over what happens in their workplace, and their ability to decide how their work is done (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997; Spreitzer, 1995).

The results also supported our argument that employees need to feel empowered to behave innovatively and engage in their work environment. These results are consistent with previous studies, which highlighted the importance of psychological empowerment for innovative behaviour (e.g. Rayan, Sebaie & Ahmed, 2018; Stander & Rothmann, 2010; Taghipour & Dezfuli, 2013) and work engagement (Jose & Mampilly, 2014, Sharma & Singh, 2018). The discussion of social exchange theory argues that when employees are intrinsically motivated, they are more likely to reciprocate the organisation with positive outcomes, such as work engagement and displaying innovative work behaviour. Such results reflect the ability of psychological empowerment as a predictor to interpret work engagement and innovative work behaviour.

This study also found that empowering leadership can encourage employees' innovative behaviour and work engagement, by promoting employee psychological empowerment. The result indicates that leaders need to work on activities to improve employees' sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and competence, thereby inspiring employees' intrinsic motivation at work, which can influence their work situation (Spreitzer, 1995), such as innovative behaviour. More importantly, contrary to the direct effect, the results confirmed that psychological empowerment had an indirect effect on the relationship between empowering leadership practice and work

engagement. In other words, the results showed that employees who have an empowering leader will feel more competent and in control (Ahmad & Gao, 2018), as they are provided the autonomy to encourage self-regulation and enhance their self-confidence to perform well at work (Meng & Sun, 2019). These results are consistent with some previous studies (e.g. Albrecht & Andreetta, 2011; Raub & Robert, 2012; De Klerk & Stander, 2014). This implies that the greater the leader's empowerment behaviour, the more the employee feels empowered psychologically, which in turn leads the employee to feel more engaged in their work and behave innovatively. From a practical standpoint, we can state that leaders can enhance employees' innovative work behaviour and work engagement by empowering them. In addition, leaders could enhance employees' innovative work behaviour and engagement by ensuring that the latter feel psychologically empowered. On the other hand, just empowering employees may not be sufficient, and leaders must provide employees with support and access to organisational resources.

In general, the present work has shown significant findings and ways on how empowering leaders can enhance employees' innovative work behaviour and work engagement through the psychological empowerment approach. However, this study is subject to certain limitations as well. Firstly, the study integrates only empowerment leadership and psychological empowerment as predicting variables which directly and indirectly influence employees' innovative work behaviour and work engagement. Therefore, future research might include different leadership types or approaches that might be applied to directly and indirectly predict the outcome variables. Moreover, future studies could explore other organisational outcomes as well. Furthermore, we suggest that future studies consider which leadership type or empowering approaches has a higher influence on employee-related outcomes. Although this study included a relatively large sample size from all 18 banks, the banks were similar in many aspects. Therefore, future studies might collect data across various industries to see the variance. This will illustrate how the inclusion of such organisations and others would affect empowerment; and innovative work behaviour is a fruitful research agenda. Since team work and innovativeness are more critical in today's business, future studies may use different sources that will allow multi-level analysis.

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