

# **Psychological Empowerment: It's Mediating Effect on the Relationship between Organizational Identification and Work Engagement**

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*The purpose of this study is to examine the mediating effects of psychological empowerment perceptions of employees on the relationship between organizational identification and work engagement. Data were obtained from a sample of 120 employees working in different sectors. Baron and Kenny Test is conducted to test the mediating effects of sub-dimensions of psychological empowerment, namely, meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. According to the results, sub-dimensions of psychological empowerment don't have mediating roles on the relationship between organizational identification and work engagement, but the two sub-dimensions of psychological empowerment, "self-competence" and "impact", revealed some remarkable outcomes which should be tested in the future, with regard to their mediator roles. The results of the study are discussed.*

**Field of Research:** Management - Organizational Behavior

## **1. Introduction**

Today, increased competition in work life enforces employees to take risk and initiative, which brings about empowerment requirements (Bordin et al., 2007). Employees have to cope with change, complexity and ambiguity (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990). Besides they are expected to work with enthusiasm and go beyond themselves. Organizations try to find out effective tools to help employees to perform better under these conditions. Organizational identification, which involves a psychological attachment to the organization (Mael and Ashford, 1995) is one of the important factors that can help the employees go beyond themselves in their jobs. This psychological attachment makes it easier for employees see the opportunities that are offered by the organization. It is considered that this awareness can increase the psychological empowerment perception which positively affects employees' intrinsic motivation (Spretizer, 1995, Amabile, 1996). Engagement on the other hand, is a positive situation in which "...people are attentive, connected, integrated and focused in their role performance" (Kahn, 1992, p.322). In this context, the relations between organizational identification, psychological empowerment and work engagement should be examined, in order to enhance work conditions. In the next part, relevant literature about the study variables is reviewed. Third part comprises methodology and the model of the study. In fourth part, the results of the study are conveyed and in fifth part, these results are discussed and conclusion is drawn.

## **2. Literature Review**

Identification is accepted by researchers as a wide concept, which explains an individual's relationship between himself and his social environment (Tajfel, 1978).

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When an individual identifies himself with a group, he defines himself based on his identification with that group (Hogg and Grieve, 1999). To the extent that this identification is intense and the feeling of identification with the group is important for the individual, that person is motivated to behave in accordance with the goal of the group (Lipponen, Bardi and Haapamäki, 2008).

Organizational identification is a psychological bond between the individual and the organization, and it covers how individual defines himself emotionally and cognitively via this connection (Edwards and Peccei, 2007). With this identification, employees feel themselves as they belong to the organization, and this feeling of belongingness results in many positive outcomes related to the work (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Increase in motivation, intention to stay in the organization, working more than the requirements of the job definition (Reade, 2001), decrease in intention to leave the job (Abrams, Ando and Hinkle, 1998), and increase in job satisfaction (Van Knippenberg and Van Schie, 2000) can be given as some examples of positive outcomes of the organizational identification.

Work engagement is defined as employee's whole devotion to work, both physically and psychologically (Kahn, 1990). Voluntary effort performed by members of the organization (Frank et al., 2004) can be described as members' emotional and mental loyalty to their organization (Richman, 2006; Shaw, 2005). Work engagement has three sub-dimensions termed as vigor, dedication and absorption (Shaufeli et al., 2002). Vigor represents endurance, not giving up, and high energy level; dedication represents devotion to work, regarding the job meaningful and important, enthusiasm to work; and absorption represents the employee's working by dedicating his whole focus to the job. Harter et al. (2002) showed in their research that work engagement is positively correlated with job satisfaction and efficiency and negatively correlated with intention to leave the job.

Empowerment concept can be examined within two different frameworks: Structural and psychological (Smith, 2008). From the structural empowerment point of view, individual's work behaviors are shaped by organizational structures (Sarmiento et al., 2004). In psychological empowerment, on the other hand, it is emphasized, that individuals' psychological bases, such as self-determination, should be considered (Spreitzer, 1995). Conger and Kanungo (1988) defines psychological empowerment as a process by which individual's self-determination beliefs are reinforced or their weakness beliefs are enervated. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) developed a cognitive model for psychological empowerment. By using this model, Spreitzer (1995) developed a scale which assesses psychological empowerment within four sub dimensions –meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Meaning dimension includes individual's level of regard about the task; competence dimension includes individual's level of feeling self-sufficiency about completing the task; self-determination dimension includes individual's level of seeing himself as the source of work outcomes, and impact dimension includes individual's level of belief about his influence on organizational outcomes (Spreitzer, 1997).

Employees appreciate when the organization provides them with the environment in which they feel meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact, and this opportunity results in increased belongingness to the organization (Kraimer, Seibert, and Liden, 1999). Organizational identification is regarded as the desired connection between the individual and the organization (Dutton et al., 1994; Ashforth and Mael,

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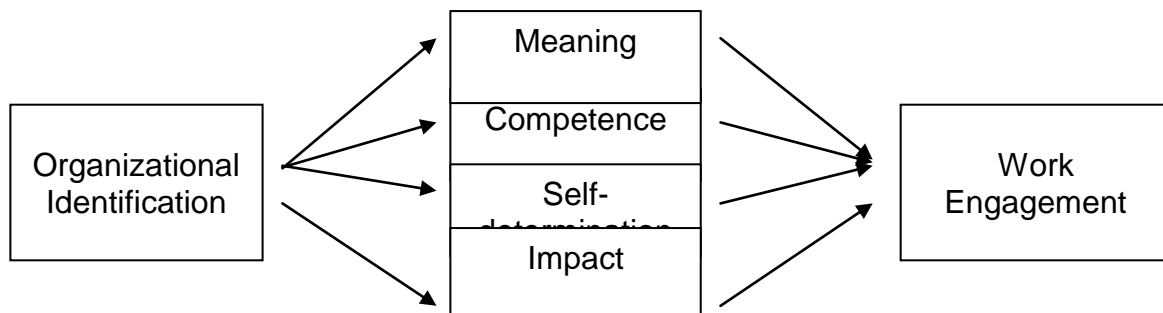
1989) and it creates positive outcomes in terms of working with a higher energy, dedication to work, and concentrating on the work. Organizational identification ensures that employees perceive organization's aims and goals as if their own aims and goals (Mael, Ashfort, 1992) and this feeling of "being one" encourages employees to use their abilities to do the tasks better. Furthermore, psychological empowerment perceptions of employees also positively influences employees' motivation and increase their participation in organization (Joffe and Glynn, 2002).

Organizational identification leads employees to think and act from the organization's perspective (Tuzun and Caglar, 2008) so that they can feel more confident to interfere in decision-making mechanisms. It is considered that this confidence for intervention can help the employees to have the perception of psychological empowerment, which in turn enhances employees' task initiation and persistence (Conger and Kanungo, 1988), which helps employees to engage in their works.

### 3. Methodology

The aim of the present study is to examine the mediating effects of sub-dimensions of psychological empowerment -meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact- on the relationship between organizational identification and work engagement. In this context, the model for the study (Figure 1) and hypotheses are developed as follows:

**Figure 1: Hypothesized model for the study**



**H1a:** Organizational identification has a positive effect on "meaning"

**H1b:** Organizational identification has a positive effect on "competence"

**H1c:** Organizational identification has a positive effect on "self-determination"

**H1d:** Organizational identification has a positive effect on "impact"

**H2a:** "Meaning" has a positive effect on work engagement.

**H2b:** "Competence" has a positive effect on work engagement.

**H2c:** "Self-determination" has a positive effect on work engagement.

**H2d:** "Impact" has a positive effect on work engagement

**H3a:** "Meaning" has a mediating effect on the relationship between organizational identification and work engagement.

**H3b:** "Competence" has a mediating effect on the relationship between organizational identification and work engagement.

**H3c:** "Self-determination" has a mediating effect on the relationship between organizational identification and work engagement.

**H3d:** "Impact" has a mediating effect on the relationship between organizational identification and work engagement.

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In the study snowball sampling, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used. The reason for using snowball sampling is to access people who are rich sources of information related to the problem. Questionnaire is provided to the participants via online. Out of 120 participants (46 females, 74 males), 31.7% are between 18 and 29 years old; 38.3% are between 30 and 39 years old; 25% are between 40 and 49 years old; 4.2% are between 50 and 59 years old and 0.8% are 60 or above 60 years old. 18.3% have been working in their organization for less than a year; 35.8% have been working for 1 to 3 years; 24.2% have been working for 4 to 6 year; 10% have been working for 7 to 9 years and 11.7% have been working for more 10 years. Among participants, 55.2% have been working in food sector; 26.8% have been working in finance sector; 11% have been working in marketing sector, 5.7% have been working in service industry, and 1.3% have been working in other industries. To measure organizational identification, organizational identification scale developed by Mael and Ashfort (1992) was used. The scale which was applied in a Turkish sample by Tüzün (2006), has been mostly used in this field, and it has 6 items with a 0.87 reliability coefficient. Work engagement variable was measured by using Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002). The scale consists of 17 items. It was adapted to Turkish by Turgut (2011) and its internal consistency coefficient was reported as .89. The scale has three subscales, and 6 items measure vigor dimension, 5 items measure dedication dimension, and 6 items measure absorption dimension. Internal consistency coefficients were .85, .87, and .83 for vigor, dedication and absorption dimensions, respectively (Seppala et al., 2009). Psychological empowerment was measured by using one of the most popular scales in the field, Psychological Empowerment Instrument, developed by Spreitzer (1995). The scale consists of four dimensions – meaning, competence, self-determination and impact- with a total of 12 questions (Cronbach Alpha = 0.72).

### 4. Findings

Firstly, correlation analyses were conducted. According to the results, there is a positive and significant relationship between organizational identification and work engagement ( $r = .572, p < .01$ ). Organizational identification has significant positive relationships with meaning ( $r = .349, p < .01$ ), competence ( $r = .284, p < .01$ ), self-determination ( $r = .426, p < .01$ ) and impact ( $r = .348, p < .01$ ). The result showed that there are also significant positive relations between work engagement and meaning ( $r = .350, p < .01$ ), competence ( $r = .453, p < .01$ ), self-determination ( $r = .615, p < .01$ ), impact ( $r = .573, p < .01$ ).

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics and inter- correlations among study variables.

**Table1: Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among study variables (n=120)**

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Org. Identification	24.37	4.46	1					
2. Work Engagement	67.16	10.50	.572**	1				
3. Meaning	13.29	1.73	.349**	.350**	1			
4. Competence	11.44	2.73	.284**	.453**	.322**	1		
5. Self-determination	12.77	2.05	.426**	.615**	.556**	.430**	1	
6. Impact	11.58	2.66	.348**	.573**	.415**	.541**	.472**	1

\*\*p<.01

According to Baron and Kenny (1986), in order to prove a mediation effect between dependent and independent variables, the independent variable must influence the

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mediator significantly, the independent variable must significantly influence the dependent variable and the mediator must significantly influence the dependent variable. After all these conditions are fulfilled, if the effect of the independent variable decreases when the mediator accedes to the equation, that means, there is a partial mediation. If the independent variable becomes insignificant, there is a full mediating effect. Table 2 provides Baron and Kenny Test, for examining the mediating effect of “meaning” on the relationship between organizational identification and work engagement.

**Table 2: Results of Baron and Kenny Test for the Mediating Effect of “Meaning” on the Relationship between Organizational Identification and Work Engagement (n=120)**

Steps	Variables	$\beta$	F	t	$\Delta R^2$
1	Organizational identification predicting “meaning”	.349	16.330	4.041**	.114
2	Organizational identification predicting work engagement	<b>.572</b>	57.241	7.566**	.321
3	“Meaning” predicting work engagement	<b>.350</b>	16.506	4.063**	.115
4	Organizational identification and “meaning” predicting work engagement	<b>.512 ; .172</b>	31.863	6.446** ; 2.167*	.342

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01

The results showed that organizational identification has a positive effect on “meaning” ( $\beta=.349$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and “meaning” has a positive effect on work engagement ( $\beta=.350$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Thus H1a and H2a were supported. The effect of organizational identification on work engagement ( $\beta=.572$ ,  $p<.01$ ) decreased when “meaning” was entered to the analysis ( $\beta=.512$ ,  $p<.01$ ). But there is not enough indication showing the mediating effect of meaning, as the beta value for meaning ( $\beta=.172$ ,  $p<.05$ ) has also decreased in the last step. Therefore H3a was not supported.

Table 3 provides Baron and Kenny Test, for examining the mediating effect of “competence” on the relationship between organizational identification and work engagement.

**Table 3: Results of Baron and Kenny Test for the Mediating Effect of “Competence” on the Relationship between Organizational Identification and Work Engagement (n=120)**

Steps	Variables	$\beta$	F	t	$\Delta R^2$
1	Organizational identification predicting “competence”	.284	10.318	3.212**	.073
2	Organizational identification predicting work engagement	<b>.572</b>	57.241	7.566**	.321
3	“Competence” predicting work engagement	<b>.453</b>	30.439	5.517**	.198
4	Organizational identification and “competence” predicting work engagement	<b>.482 ; .316</b>	42.117	6.555** ; 4.301**	.409

\*\*p<.01

The results showed that organizational identification has a positive effect on “competence” ( $\beta=.284$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and “competence” has a positive effect on work

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engagement ( $\beta=.453$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Thus H1b and H2b were supported. The effect of organizational identification on work engagement ( $\beta=.572$ ,  $p<.01$ ) decreased when “competence” was entered to the analysis ( $\beta=.482$ ,  $p<.01$ ). But there is not enough indication showing the mediating effect of competence, as the beta value for competence ( $\beta=.316$ ,  $p<.01$ ) has also decreased in the last step. Therefore H3b was not supported.

Table 4 provides Baron and Kenny Test, for examining the mediating effect of “self-determination” on the relationship between organizational identification and work engagement.

**Table 4: Results of Baron and Kenny Test for the Mediating Effect of “Self-determination” on the Relationship between Organizational Identification and Work Engagement (n=120)**

Steps	Variables	$\beta$	F	t	$\Delta R^2$
1	Organizational identification predicting “self-determination”	.426	26.103	5.109**	.174
2	Organizational identification predicting work engagement	<b>.572</b>	57.241	7.566**	.321
3	“Self-determination” predicting work engagement	<b>.615</b>	71.754	8.471**	.373
4	Organizational identification and “self-determination” predicting work engagement	<b>.378 ; .454</b>	57.422	5.213** ; 6.254**	.487

\*\* $p<.01$

The results showed that organizational identification has a positive effect on “self-determination” ( $\beta=.426$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and “self-determination” has a positive effect on work engagement ( $\beta=.615$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Thus H1c and H2c were supported. The effect of organizational identification on work engagement ( $\beta=.572$ ,  $p<.01$ ) decreased when “self-determination” was entered to the analysis ( $\beta=.378$ ,  $p<.01$ ). But there is not enough indication showing the mediating effect of self-determination, as the beta value for self-determination ( $\beta=.454$ ,  $p<.01$ ) has also decreased in the last step. Therefore H3c was not supported. But in the last step, as the beta value of self-determination is higher than beta value of organizational identification further research may be needed for testing the mediating role of self-determination.

Table 5 provides Baron and Kenny Test, for examining the mediating effect of “impact” on the relationship between organizational identification and work engagement.

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**Table 5: Results of Baron and Kenny Test for the Mediating Effect of “Impact” on the Relationship between Organizational Identification and Work Engagement (n=120)**

Steps	Variables	$\beta$	F	t	$\Delta R^2$
1	Organizational identification predicting “impact”	.348	16.290	4.036**	.114
2	Organizational identification predicting work engagement	<b>.572</b>	57.241	7.566**	.321
3	“Impact” predicting work engagement	<b>.573</b>	57.727	7.598**	.323
4	Organizational identification and “impact” predicting work engagement	<b>.423 ; .426</b>	55.293	5.985** ; 6.021**	.477

\*\*p<.01

The results showed that organizational identification has a positive effect on “impact” ( $\beta=.348$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and “impact” has a positive effect on work engagement ( $\beta=.573$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Thus H1d and H2d were supported. The effect of organizational identification on work engagement ( $\beta=.572$ ,  $p<.01$ ) decreased when “impact” was entered to the analysis ( $\beta=.423$ ,  $p<.01$ ) But there is not enough indication showing the mediating effect of impact, as the beta value for impact ( $\beta=.426$ ,  $p<.01$ ) has also decreased in the last step. Therefore H3d was not supported. But in the last step, as the beta value of impact is higher than beta value of organizational identification further research may be needed for testing the mediating role of impact.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Psychological empowerment perception is one of the important factors of organizational life, as it contributes to positive organizational outcomes. Empowered employees are motivated in their jobs, which leads to an extra effort to achieve work-related goals (Kanter, 1979). Cho, Laschinger and Wong (2006) showed in their study that empowerment is a predictor of higher levels of engagement. Organizational identification on the other hand, also explains work engagement, which means higher levels of organizational identification elicit higher levels of work engagement (Otken and Erben, 2010).

The aim of this study was to examine the mediating roles of the sub-dimensions of psychological empowerment, namely, meaning, competence, self-determination and impact, on the relationship between organizational identification and work engagement. According to the results, “meaning”, “competence”, “self-determination” and “impact” do not mediate the relationship between organizational identification and work engagement. In Baron and Kenny Test, the beta values of independent variable, namely organizational identification, decreased when the sub-dimensions of psychological empowerment enter into the analysis in the last step. Especially self-determination and impact, although they don’t have mediating roles, they still have more effect than organizational identification in the last step. It can be considered that these variables could have the potential of a partial mediating role on the relation in question and maybe there are some other moderating factors, which influence the relationship. Therefore, it should be useful to make further examinations.

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“Meaning” is the weakest predictor of work engagement among the sub dimensions of psychological empowerment. Employees find their jobs meaningful if they feel their role is valuable and they are receiving a return on investment of applying themselves to their work roles (Simpson, 2009). The valuableness varies from person to person. As valuableness is too difficult to identify, it is not possible to determine its effect accurately. On the other hand, engagement comprises “... *individual’s involvement and satisfaction as well as enthusiasm for work*” (Harter et al., 2002, p.269). It is considered that the enthusiasm for work can predominate the feeling of receiving a return on investment of efforts, so that it becomes difficult to evaluate the effects of meaning of the job for the employees.

According to the results, “self-determination” is the strongest predictor of work engagement. Considering the effects of psychological empowerment on work engagement, “self-determination” seems to be the most effective factor. According to Ryan et al. (2008) if people select their goals through self-determination these goals will be well internalized. It seems clear that employees can feel more enthusiasm for work if they have internalized the goals in their work life.

There are some limitations of the study. The sample consists of employees working in different sectors and companies. Similar research can be conducted in a specific sector or company. Another limitation is that the age, gender and tenure were not taken into consideration. In future studies, age, gender and tenure can be examined in terms of their effects on the relations between organizational identification, psychological empowerment and work engagement. The study can be repeated with a different sample, in order to check the results for the mediating roles of sub-dimensions on the relationship in question, especially the roles of self-determination and impact.

The results of this study highlight the importance of psychological empowerment perceptions of employees within the frame of positive outcomes in work life. There is still need for examining the effects of psychological empowerment on different variables, in order to benefit from its contribution to the work outcomes.

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