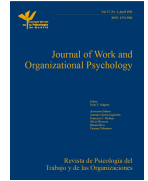




Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology

<https://journals.copmadrid.org/jwop>



Career Don't Stop Believing: Career Empowerment as a Mediator between Hope and Organizational Outcomes

Daphna Shwartz-Asher^a, Mirit Grabarski^b, Aharon Tziner^{a, c}, and Or Shkoler^d

^aTel-Hai College, Israel; ^bLakehead University, Canada; ^cPeres Academic Center & Netanya Academic College, Israel; ^dHEC, Montreal, Canada

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 2 May 2022

Accepted 25 November 2022

Available online 17 March 2023

Keywords:

Career empowerment

Hope

OCB

Attitudinal outcomes

Palabras clave:

Empoderamiento de la carrera profesional

Esperanza

Comportamiento de ciudadanía organizacional

Resultados actitudinales

ABSTRACT

The growing trend towards individual career management requires understanding the driving forces of career changes. In the current study we explore how personal resources, namely hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and social support are associated with the motivational construct of career empowerment, which in turn predicts employees' behavioral (OCB, performance appraisal) and attitudinal (job engagement, life satisfaction) outcomes. We conducted a quantitative study in which 251 full- and part-time employees completed paper-and-pencil surveys measuring internal and external resources, and career empowerment. Our results indicate that the research variables are significantly and positively correlated with one another. Mediation analyses with competing models indicate that career empowerment is a partial mediator between personal resources and various outcomes. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

No dejes de creer en la carrera profesional: empoderamiento de carrera como mediador entre la esperanza y los resultados organizacionales

RESUMEN

La creciente tendencia hacia la gestión de la carrera profesional exige entender las fuerzas motrices de los cambios en dicha carrera. El estudio explora de qué modo se asocian los recursos personales, es decir, la esperanza, el optimismo, la autoeficacia y el apoyo social, con el constructo motivacional de empoderamiento de la carrera profesional, que a su vez predice los resultados comportamentales (conducta de ciudadanía ocupacional, valoración del desempeño) y actitudinales (compromiso laboral, satisfacción con la vida) de los empleados. Llevamos a cabo un estudio cuantitativo en el que 251 empleados a tiempo completo cumplieron cuestionarios de papel y lápiz que medían los recursos internos y externos, así como el empoderamiento profesional. Los resultados indican que las variables de la investigación correlacionan mutuamente de un modo positivo y significativo. Los análisis de mediación con otros modelos alternativos señalan que el empoderamiento profesional es un mediador parcial entre los recursos personales y diversos resultados. Se comentan las implicaciones teóricas y prácticas.

Recent changes in global economy created significant employment crises worldwide. Global unemployment increased by 33 million in 2020, with the unemployment rate rising by 1.1 percentage points to 6.5 percent (International Labour Organization, [ILO, 2021]). Populations pushed to the labor market margins were primarily those characterized as disadvantaged from a demographic perspective. These groups included women (among whom mothers were prominent), people with disabilities, and minorities. Categories of disadvantaged populations within the professional workplace generally included younger individuals, lacking employment experience, and professionals in leisure fields such as tourism and the performing arts. Even 'surviving' populations, who did not lose their jobs in the labor market

during this period, were exposed through the media to collapsing businesses, and thus experienced uncertainty.

This situation may be interpreted as a career shock, a disruptive and extraordinary event (Akkermans et al., 2020). Individuals that experience career shocks are not able to fully control the situation, yet they may be able to effectively deal with them through deliberate thought. This conceptualization is consistent with the common definition of careers as "the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time" (Arthur et al., 1989, p. 8). This definition implies that during a lifetime a person is likely to hold more than one work role, so that changes are almost inevitable, and while they may be initiated by the individual or come from the environment, the main idea is that careers unfold as an interaction between the person

Cite this article as: Shwartz-Asher, D., Grabarski, M., Tziner, A., & Shkoler, O. (2023). Career don't stop believing: Career empowerment as a mediator between hope and organizational outcomes. *Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 39(1), 13-22. <https://doi.org/10.5093/jwop2023a1>

Correspondence: atziner@netanya.ac.il (A. Tziner).

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and the environment (e.g., parents and peers, social and cultural forces, and the physical surroundings) (Holland, 1995).

In the early 1990s the career literature focused on individuals as initiating career moves. This view is manifested in two prominent career theories, namely the protean (Hall, 1996) perspective, that highlights changes that are intended to align one's career with their values to achieve psychological career success, and the boundaryless (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) perspective, that describes how people cross organizational boundaries. Both perspectives highlight individuals' role in self-managing their careers, and have been empirically linked with different career-related behaviours and outcomes (Briscoe et al., 2012). The more recent sustainable career perspective goes back to focus on the interaction between individuals and the immediate and broader contexts, and includes an agency component, thus noting the importance of individuals taking charge of their career within the given situation (De Vos et al., 2020). Thus, in managing careers, including situations of career shocks, individuals may not control the environment; however, taking charge of their actions and being proactive can be critical to maintaining a sustainable career.

In the current paper we focus on career empowerment, a cognitive motivational construct that represents individual perceptions of agentic control over one's career (Grabarski & Shin, 2020). Career empowerment is similar to the idea of psychological empowerment in its conceptualization as a cognition that embodies motivation. It is important to distinguish between existing resources, that may be internal and/or external, and acknowledging the existence of these resources, which is what motivates people for action. Career empowerment as a cognitive construct represents awareness of resources rather than the resources themselves: people may have resources but, if they are not aware of them, they will not be motivated to be proactive regarding their career. On the other hand, being conscious regarding existing resources is expected to motivate and actively shape career-related decision making and actions.

Career empowerment is conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct that consists of seven dimensions: competence – an individual's belief in their capability to perform career-related activities with skill and/or mastery; impact – the degree to which an individual can influence external outcomes, such as situations or people, through their own career; meaning – the fit between one's career and one's beliefs, values and purpose; self-determination – autonomy, or making one's own decisions; focus – the clarity of a person's vision of what they want their career to be; growth – seeking personal challenge and accomplishment, learning and a variety of experiences; and relationships – a meaningful connection to another human being that includes being supportive of one's career development. These dimensions serve as 'bases of power' – individuals may be aware of some or all the resources that are available to them across different domains. Such awareness can be increased through job design, but as it is also applicable to people who are not currently employed, career counselling and/or vocational training may be particularly helpful to help them reintegrate into the labor market and, for those who wish to make changes, to be motivated towards doing so.

While career empowerment has some conceptual similarities to existing constructs, such as career adaptability (Savickas, 1997), employability (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008), and protean career orientation (Baruch, 2014), it is different from each one of them as it is focused on cognitions rather than on actual resources, and is defined as a malleable rather than a stable trait. It has demonstrated sufficient construct validity, including discriminant validity, compared to the abovementioned and other relevant constructs, and predictive validity above and beyond them (Grabarski & Shin, 2020).

Among the previously demonstrated antecedents of career empowerment are core self-evaluations, proactive personality, perceived employment opportunities, and perceived financial security (Grabarski et al., 2021). As career empowerment is about

cognitive acknowledgement of resources, its antecedents are expected to be internal and external resources. In the current study, we seek to expand the nomological network of career empowerment in terms of identifying such resources. Then, we test a model that explores the potential role of career empowerment as a mediator in the relationship between the resources and career/work outcomes.

Specifically, we are interested to test whether hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and social support predict career empowerment. Hope, optimism, and self-efficacy are sometimes linked together, along with resilience, as a higher-order construct of psychological capital (Luthans et al., 2007). However, as resilience is conceptualized differently in regard to careers (Lyons et al., 2015), we opted to not include it, or psychological capital, in the current study and focus on the other individual components separately.

Hope is defined as "the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals, and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways" (Snyder, 2002, p. 249). Thus, its two components are agency, the perceived capacity to initiate action, and pathways, the ability to develop plans for goal achievement. It is expected that people with high hope are more motivated to achieve goals, and have more strategies to do so, compared to people with low hope (Snyder, 2002). Therefore, similar to career empowerment, hope is an agentic construct; however, career empowerment operates in a specific narrow domain of careers, and does not include pathways as part of the construct. Previous studies demonstrated that people who had a higher level of hope had higher job performance, demonstrated better problem-solving skills, and reported better well-being (Peterson & Byron, 2008; Reichard et al., 2013). We propose that hope is an antecedent of career empowerment: people who have a high level of internal resources such as hope are expected to construe themselves as having control over their lives and, thus, over their careers, possessing the capabilities to achieve career goals.

In addition, we propose that optimism and self-efficacy are potential antecedents of career empowerment. Optimism is conceptualized as a trait and defined as a generalized expectancy that good as opposed to bad things will happen (Scheier & Carver, 1985). While, like hope, optimism is goal-focused and future-oriented, it is not specific regarding an individual's control of the process, i.e., people with high optimism also take into account external forces (Rand, 2018). Optimism has been linked with engagement coping, such as problem-focused coping and cognitive restructuring (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010), and therefore can help individuals see career changes in a positive light, identifying what could be controlled, and dealing with changes more effectively.

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief about one's ability to perform in specific situations (Bandura, 1997), keeping in mind that self-efficacy is a belief about competence rather than a competence (Lemons, 2010). Following social-cognitive theory, self-efficacy leads to higher goals and strengthens the link between goals and goal achievement (Bandura, 2006). Recent literature has introduced entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) because of its significant outcomes. Newman et al. (2019) reviewed the literature on ESE and focused on understanding ESE short- and long-term changes and the development of the concept during childhood and adolescence, as well as self-efficacy outcomes at individual and collective levels. Shiao et al. (2020), who investigated self-efficacy theory and specified the relationship between self-efficacy and continuance intentions, found that financial self-efficacy, technological self-efficacy, and confirmation positively affected perceived usefulness, which is related to satisfaction. Grabarski et al. (2021) reported that self-efficacy could predict career satisfaction and job satisfaction, among other constructs. Self-efficacy has been previously found to be associated with career empowerment as part of core self-evaluations, but not separately.

In addition, social support plays an important role in career development. Throughout the life span, people are influenced

by other people – parents, peers, leaders, mentors, friends, and colleagues of all sorts. These significant others may shape an individual's perceptions of acceptable career paths (Super, 1990), provide mentoring and coaching (Kram, 1985), allow access to resources that are beneficial for one's career (Arthur et al., 1995; Seibert et al., 2001), and enable human flourishing (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). Career empowerment acknowledges the importance of social support and, thus, includes a relational dimension that embodies acknowledgment of social support as a resource. However, the role of social support as an antecedent of career empowerment has not been empirically tested yet; therefore, we do so in the current study.

In regard to outcomes of career empowerment, Grabarski et al. (2021) found that it predicts career engagement (defined by Hirschi et al., 2014 p. 577, as “the degree to which somebody is proactively developing his or her career as expressed by diverse career behaviors”), subjective career success (career satisfaction and job satisfaction), objective career success (salary), productivity (employability, thriving at work), and health (stress). In addition to the previously explored career-related outcomes, career empowerment has the potential to predict variables that are relevant for organizations. Earlier research demonstrated that career empowerment is positively associated with affective commitment and negatively associated with turnover intentions (Grabarski & Shin, 2020). Here, we propose that career empowerment can predict job performance, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and job engagement, as well as life satisfaction, which can greatly benefit organizations and not only individuals.

It has been suggested that the two forms of employee contracts – full-time or part-time – have different ‘psychology of work’ (Peters et al., 1981). There was evidence to suggest differential predictability of turnover across full-time and part-time employment status groups. After controlling for demographics, it was found that there were mean differences between the groups; however, no evidence was found for differences in how the various groups ‘process’ organizational experience (Jackofsky & Peters, 1987). Furthermore, part-time employees were found to be less satisfied with work, benefits, and the job in general (Miller & Terborg, 1979).

In sum, the relationships between the variables in the proposed study are portrayed in Figure 1.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 251 employees, 73% female and 27% male, between the ages of 18 and 66 years ($M = 33.36$, $SD = 12.45$). Most of them were single (57.1%), 36.5% were married, 5.6% were divorced, and only 0.8% were widowed. Their number of children (under the age of 18) ranged between 0 and 7 ($M = 1.09$, $SD =$

1.43). In terms of religiosity, 54.8% were either secular or atheists, 29.8% were traditional, and 15.5% were religious. By education, 18.3% possessed tertiary/professional/post-secondary education, 63.9% held or were students of a BA degree, and 17.9% held or were students of a MA/PhD degree. Regarding their work contract, 46.4% worked part-time, and 53.6% worked full-time.

Measures

The measures were initially written in English and then translated into Hebrew, utilizing the back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1980). Table 1 displays the internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficients), means, and standard deviations of the measures, in addition to independent-samples *t*-tests to assess the differences between part-time and full-time employees. The table portrays some significant differences between the contract types: full-time workers have higher hope, optimism, self-efficacy, job engagement, life satisfaction, and performance appraisal than part-timers. Interestingly, no differences between the two employee groups were found in relation to the mediator (career empowerment), as well as social support and OCB.

Trait Hope Scale

Hope was gauged with the Trait Hope Scale (‘The Future Scale’; Snyder et al., 1991) consisting of 12 Likert-scale items between 1 (*definitely false*) and 6 (*definitely true*) (e.g., “I meet the goals that I set for myself”), with 4 filler items (i.e., 3, 5, 7, and 11) (e.g., “I feel tired most of the time”). Only the other 8 items were used in the final imputation of the composite variable of hope. Reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient) in the original article ranged from $\alpha = .74$ to $\alpha = .84$.

Optimism Scale

Optimism was gauged with the Life Orientation Test (LOT; Scheier & Carver, 1985) consisting of 12 Likert-scale items between 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 6 (*strongly agree*) (e.g., “In uncertain times, I usually expect the best”), with 4 filler items (i.e., 2, 6, 7, and 10) (e.g., “I enjoy my friends a lot”). Items 3, 8, 9, and 12 are reverse-coded. Reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient) in the original article was $\alpha = .76$, and the test-retest reliability coefficient is $r = .79$.

Self-efficacy Scale

Self-efficacy was gauged with the Role Breadth Self-Efficacy scale (RBSE; Parker, 1998) consisting of 10 Likert-scale items between 1 (*definitely unconfident*) and 6 (*definitely confident*)

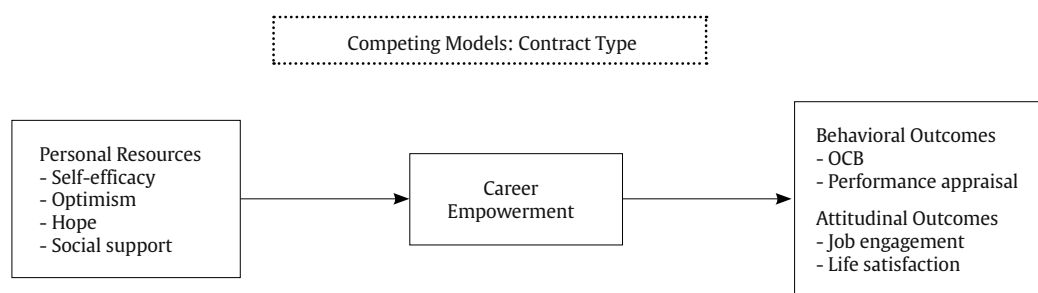


Figure 1. Research Model.

Note. OCB = organizational citizenship behaviors; contract type: 0 = part-time employees ($n = 117$), 1 = full-time employees ($n = 135$).

(e.g., “How confident would you feel presenting information to a group of colleagues”). Reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient) in the original article was $\alpha = .96$.

Perceived Social Support Scale

Perceived social support was gauged with the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet et al., 1988) consisting of 12 Likert-scale items between 1 (*definitely false*) and 6 (*definitely true*) (e.g., “There is a special person who is around when I am in need”). Reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient) in the original article was $\alpha = .88$, and the test-retest reliability coefficient is $r = .85$.

Career Empowerment Scale

Career empowerment was gauged with a scale developed by Grabarski and Shin (2020) consisting of 21 Likert-scale items between 1 (*definitely false*) and 6 (*definitely true*) (e.g., “In my career I grow as a professional”). Reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient) in the original article was $\alpha = .97$.

The career empowerment scale by Grabarski & Shin (2020) was developed in a multi-stage study, drawing on data from 6 samples ($N = 1,209$). The measure development process followed Hinkin's (1995, 1998) guidelines, taking the following steps: item generation, questionnaire administration, initial item reduction, confirmatory factor analysis, tests of internal consistency and construct validity, and replication. The measure demonstrated sufficient convergent, discriminant, and incremental criterion-related validity above and beyond leading constructs such as career motivation, career adaptability, and employability.

Job Engagement

Job engagement was gauged with the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli et al., 2002) consisting of 17 Likert-scale items between 1 (*never*) and 6 (*every day*) (e.g., “I am immersed in my work”). Reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient) in the original article ranged between $\alpha = .68$ and $\alpha = .91$.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior Checklist

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCBs) were gauged with the Organizational Citizenship Behavior Checklist, consisting of 20 Likert-scale items (OCB-C-20; see Spector et al., 2010), between 1 (*never*) and 6 (*every day*) (e.g., “Helped co-worker learn new skills or shared job knowledge”). In Spector et al.'s (2010) research, “the total 20-item measure yielded a mean coefficient alpha of .83 for employees and of .91 for supervisors” (p. 783).

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction was measured by the Life Satisfaction Questionnaire-11 (LISAT11) (Eek et al., 2021; Fugl-Meyer et al., 1991; Fugl-Meyer et al., 2002). LISAT-11 includes one global item for ‘life as a whole’ and 10 domain-specific items for ‘vocational situation’, ‘financial situation’, ‘leisure’, ‘contact with friends’, ‘sexual life’, ‘activities of daily living’, ‘family life’, ‘partnership/relationship’, ‘physical health’, and ‘psychological health’. Items are rated on an ordinal scale ranging from 1 (*very dissatisfying*) to 6 (*very satisfying*). The mean score for the 11 items was computed (mean total LISAT score) for the composite variable. The reliability (Cronbach's alpha) in the study is $\alpha = .92$.

Job Performance

Performance appraisal was gauged with a single self-report Likert-scale item between 1 (*very poor*) and 6 (*very good*) (e.g., “What is the performance appraisal score you received in the past year from your direct manager, and which was reported to the Human Resources Department?”).

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, Reliability Coefficients and *t*-tests for Research Variables Comparing Part- and Full-time Workers

Variable	Part-time ($n = 117$)			Full-time ($n = 135$)			<i>t</i> -test
	α	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Hope	.68	4.26	0.58	.74	4.60	0.58	4.59***
Optimism	.73	4.26	0.63	.76	4.54	0.63	3.57***
Self-efficacy	.92	4.43	0.89	.92	4.80	0.91	3.22***
Perceived social support	.92	5.02	0.87	.93	5.02	0.89	0.02
Career empowerment	.96	4.67	0.82	.96	4.88	0.89	1.97
Job engagement	.95	4.33	0.92	.95	4.64	0.95	2.64***
OCB	.95	4.65	1.30	.94	4.51	1.16	0.94
Life satisfaction	.92	4.73	0.89	.93	4.87	0.89	1.23***
Performance appraisal ¹	-	5.40	0.73	-	5.61	0.68	2.41*

Note. OCB = organizational citizenship behaviors; ¹performance appraisal was gauged with a single item, and therefore has no reliability coefficient.

Procedure

The current study refers to testing the model that was described above, examining the role of career empowerment as a potential mediator between personal resources and work outcomes. We conducted a quantitative study in which participants completed paper-and-pencil surveys measuring internal and external resources and career empowerment, as well as job performance, OCB, job engagement, and life satisfaction.

Participants were recruited through a student network, meaning an internal college mailing list. The potential predictors and moderators (internal and external resources) as well as demographic variables were collected, as were career empowerment and the predicted outcome variables. Because all the study variables are subjective, the data was collected using reliable self-report measures. In addition, basic demographic information concerning the participants (gender, age, and tenure) were obtained as potential control variables. The study allows testing a potentially useful construct that can help individuals and organizations maintain productivity and health, especially during times of crisis.

The questionnaire was sent to a mailing list of app. 400. 251 valid questionnaires were received (62.75% response rate).

Results

Common-Method Bias (CMB)

Harman's one-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003) was used to assess the degree to which inter-correlations among the variables might be an artefact of common method variance. The single factor that emerged from the analysis accounted for only 27.78% of the explained variance. (Kindly refer to Table 2 for model fit indices.) Furthermore, we gauged CMB via the common latent factor (CLF) approach as well. The resulting analyses explained variances of 24.61%. While these results do not completely rule out the possibility of bias from common-method variance (CMV), according to Podsakoff et al. (2003) less than 50% of the explained variance accounted for by the first emerging factor indicates that CMB is an unlikely explanation of our findings, in conjunction with the poor model fit for each analysis. Additionally, to ensure CMV did not confound our results, we proceeded with multiple imputations for

Table 2. Fit Indices for Common-Method Bias Analyses

Model	Group	χ^2	χ^2/df	SRMR	CFI	NFI	TLI	GFI	RMSEA (90% CI)
Single-factor	Part-time	1,891.34 ¹	3.37	.12	.79	.71	.76	.84	.14 (.08, .19) ²
	Full-time	1,711.60 ³	3.14	.12	.81	.72	.74	.88	.12 (.07, .15) ⁴
CLF	Part-time	1,655.97 ⁵	3.06	.11	.84	.80	.76	.79	.10 (.05, .16) ⁶
	Full-time	1,578.19 ⁷	2.94	.10	.83	.84	.80	.85	.10 (.07, .12) ⁸

Note. Single-factor = Harman's one-factor test; CLF = common latent factor.

¹ $p < .001$, ² p -close $< .001$, ³ $p < .001$, ⁴ p -close $< .001$, ⁵ $p < .001$, ⁶ p -close $< .001$, ⁷ $p = .003$, ⁸ p -close = .009.

Table 3. Zero-order Pearson Correlation Matrix for Part-timers ($n = 117$, below the diagonal) and Full-timers ($n = 135$, above the diagonal)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Gender	–	.06	.08	-.12	.08	.08	.10 ¹	-.01	.19 ¹	.07	.08	.00	.13	-.01
2. Religiosity	.15	–	-.02	-.15 ¹	.19 ¹	.04	.14	.02	.11	.15 ¹	.08	.06	.17 ¹	-.05
3. Education	.15	.07	–	.42 ^{***}	.18 ¹	-.08	.06	-.06	.02	-.07	.05	.10	-.04	-.04
4. Age	.00	-.03	.27 ^{**}	–	.15 ¹	.00	.10	.09	.05	-.02	.08	.04	-.04	.02
5. No. of children	-.02	.33 ^{***}	.10	.09	–	-.05	.19 ¹	-.02	.09	.01	.17 ¹	.09	.10	-.01
6. Hope	.07	-.11	-.05	.12	.18 ¹	–	.63 ^{***}	.63 ^{***}	.28 ^{***}	.56 ^{***}	.40 ^{***}	.23 ^{**}	.50 ^{***}	.16 ¹
7. Optimism	-.04	-.07	-.13	.15	.23 ^{**}	.67 ^{***}	–	.36 ^{***}	.33 ^{***}	.45 ^{***}	.41 ^{***}	.12	.50 ^{***}	.13
8. Self-efficacy	.04	-.17 ¹	-.13	.11	.10	.61 ^{***}	.42 ^{***}	–	.28 ^{***}	.62 ^{***}	.53 ^{***}	.36 ^{***}	.51 ^{***}	.16 ¹
9. Perceived social support	.28 ^{**}	-.11	-.03	.04	.01	.24 ^{**}	.29 ^{***}	.19 ¹	–	.41 ^{***}	.35 ^{***}	.11	.61 ^{***}	.22 ^{**}
10. Career empowerment	.20 ¹	-.02	-.12	.00	.05	.59 ^{***}	.41 ^{***}	.59 ^{***}	.31 ^{***}	–	.74 ^{***}	.29 ^{***}	.82 ^{***}	.18 ¹
11. Job engagement	.12	.06	.01	.21 ¹	.02	.53 ^{***}	.36 ^{***}	.53 ^{***}	.13	.74 ^{***}	–	.30 ^{***}	.67 ^{***}	.10
12. OCB	.11	-.06	-.10	-.14	-.22 ^{**}	.21 ¹	.13	.29 ^{***}	.04	.34 ^{***}	.37 ^{***}	–	.24 ^{**}	.15 ¹
13. Life satisfaction	.19 ¹	.05	-.20 ¹	-.04	.05	.50 ^{***}	.50 ^{***}	.36 ^{***}	.46 ^{***}	.61 ^{***}	.41 ^{***}	.29 ^{***}	–	.28 ^{***}
14. Performance appraisal	.08	-.10	-.04	.13	-.10	.20 ¹	.20 ¹	.22 ^{**}	.10	.13	.03	.02	.22 ^{**}	–

Note. Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female; religiosity: 1 = secular/atheist, 2 = traditional, 3 = religious; contract type: 0 = part-time, 1 = full-time; education: 1 = tertiary/professional/post-secondary, 2 = hold or are students of a BA degree, 3 = hold or are students of a MA/PhD degree; OCB = organizational citizenship behaviors.

¹ $p < .05$, ^{**} $p < .01$, ^{***} $p < .001$.

the variables, based on the CLF method, which resulted in CMB-adjusted composites (e.g., Affum-Osei et al., 2019; Boyd & Nowell, 2017) or CMV-corrected composites (e.g., Lindell & Whitney, 2001; Podsakoff et al., 2003; Richardson et al., 2009; Shkoler et al., 2020). We utilized AMOS (v. 23) for these analyses (including multiple imputations).

Zero-Order Correlations

A zero-order Pearson correlation matrix (Table 3) was calculated to assess the intercorrelations amongst the different research variables – for each employee group (i.e., part-time vs. full-time).

Table 3 indicates that research variables are significantly and positively correlated with one another (from hope to performance appraisal), apart from very few instances. An example correlation: career empowerment positively associated with OCB, so that an increase in career empowerment associated with an increase in engagement of OCBs ($r = .31, p = .000$). In addition, the correlational profiles of full- and part-time employees are quite similar, meaning

that the strength and direction of the coefficients, between the two groups, are rather close and disparate.

Mediation Analyses with Competing Models

To test the research model (Figure 1), a SEM [structural equation modeling] analysis with multiple-group analysis was employed using the IBM AMOS (v. 23) software package, with 95% CI bias-corrected bootstrapping (5,000 resamples). The fit of the model was above adequate, but not absolute (see Byrne, 2010): $\chi^2(df) = 85.20(40), p = .029, \chi^2/df = 2.13, SRMR = .09, GFI = .92, CFI = .91, NFI = .90, TLI = .93, RMSEA (90\% CI) = .09 (.04, .15), p$ -close = .000. Table 4 displays the results of the path analysis, while ‘contract type’ is a generic moderator (part-time vs. full-time employee groups). Figure 2 portrays the results in Table 4 on a path diagram. Table 5 depicts the indirect effects analysis for the mediation effects.

As can be seen in Table 4, there are some differences in the depicted associations (for part- and full-time employees), either in strength or in statistical significance. Notably, the relationship between hope

Table 4. SEM Path Results with Standardized Regression Coefficients, and Standard Errors

Path			Part-time		Full-time	
			β (SE)	Sig.	β (SE)	Sig.
Hope	→	Career empowerment	.36 (.15)	.000	.15 (.15)	.128
Optimism	→	Career empowerment	-.03 (.12)	.740	.14 (.12)	.082
Self-efficacy	→	Career empowerment	.37 (.08)	.000	.44 (.08)	.000
Social support	→	Career empowerment	.17 (.07)	.017	.22 (.06)	.001
Career empowerment	→	Job engagement	.73 (.07)	.000	.72 (.06)	.000
Career empowerment	→	OCB	.33 (.14)	.000	.28 (.11)	.000
Career empowerment	→	Life satisfaction	.60 (.08)	.000	.80 (.05)	.000
Career empowerment	→	Performance appraisal	.13 (.08)	.162	.17 (.07)	.042

Note. OCB = organizational citizenship behaviors; SE = standard error.

^{*} $p < .05$, ^{**} $p < .01$, ^{***} $p < .001$.

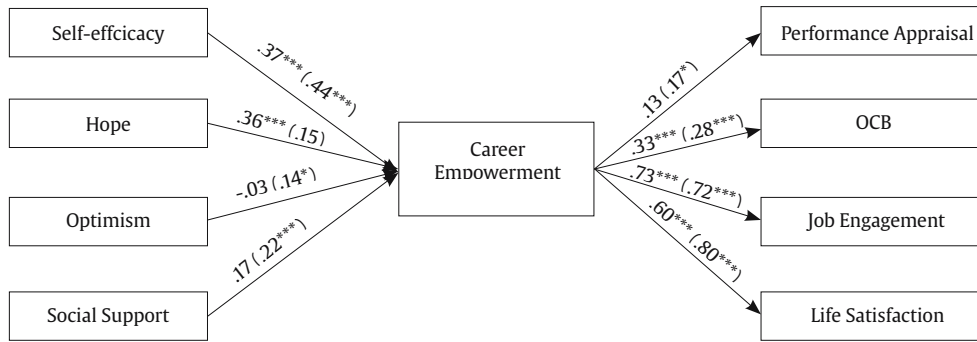


Figure 2. Path Diagram for Mediation in Part-time ($n = 117$) and Full-time ($n = 135$) Employees.

Note. Statistics are standardized regression coefficients (beta); statistics in parenthesis are for the full-time workers group; OCB = organizational citizenship behaviors. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

and career empowerment is quite different between the two groups. While for part-timers this path is positive and significant ($\beta = .36, p = .000$), for full-timers it is nonsignificant ($\beta = .15, p = .128$).

Table 5 indicates that career empowerment is a mediator between personal resources and various outcomes. Additionally, it seems that hope is more important/relevant for part-time employees, while optimism is more so for full-timers. Social support and self-efficacy were equivalent (for the most part) between the groups. Specifically, the mediational path of Hope@Career Empowerment@outcome (apart from performance appraisal) is significant for part-timers, but non-significant for full-timers. On the other hand, the mediational path Optimism@Career Empowerment@outcome is significant for full-timers, but non-significant for part-timers. In addition, the mediation to performance appraisal was never significant for part-timers, and mostly significant for full-timers.

Discussion

Career empowerment is conceptualized as a cognitive motivational construct that predicts proactive career self-management behaviors and career outcomes (Grabarski & Shin, 2020). In addition, career empowerment was previously found to be associated with variables of interest to organizations, such as affective commitment and turnover

(Grabarski & Shin, 2020). In the current study, we aimed to expand the nomological network of career empowerment and to test its relevance to organizations. We applied hope theory (Snyder, 2002) to explore additional psychological antecedents of career empowerment and to investigate the potential role of career empowerment as a mediator between psychological resources, namely hope, optimism and self-efficacy, and organizational outcomes. We tested these proposed relationships, and our findings enhanced our understanding of the potential of career empowerment to contribute to the study of people in organizations.

In terms of the antecedents, we predicted that hope, optimism, and self-efficacy would be positive predictors of career empowerment. In addition, we included social support as a potential antecedent, since career empowerment has a relational component to it. Our findings largely support these predictions: self-efficacy and social support were both positively associated with career empowerment. These findings provide further support to the notion of career empowerment as a cognitive construct that is linked to internal psychological resources, but also has a social aspect to it, in line with the original conceptualization (Grabarski & Shin, 2020). Hope was also found to predict career empowerment, albeit only for part-time employees, who perhaps experience more unfavorable conditions compared to full-time employees, so that hope is more salient for them. However, optimism was not found to be a significant predictor

Table 5. Mediation (indirect) Effects Analyses

Paths	Part-time ($n = 117$)			Full-time ($n = 135$)		
	LL	UL	Sig.	LL	UL	Sig.
Hope → CE → Performance Appraisal	-.01	.14	.076	-.01	.09	.098
Hope → CE → Life Satisfaction	.08	.37	.002	-.04	.29	.138
Hope → CE → OCB	.04	.23	.001	-.01	.12	.101
Hope → CE → Job Engagement	.09	.43	.002	-.03	.26	.134
Optimism → CE → Performance Appraisal	-.04	.02	.481	.05	.17	.041
Optimism → CE → Life Satisfaction	-.11	.08	.707	.04	.26	.040
Optimism → CE → OCB	-.07	.04	.673	.01	.11	.037
Optimism → CE → Job Engagement	-.14	.09	.717	.02	.24	.039
Self-Efficacy → CE → Performance Appraisal	-.01	.13	.100	.01	.17	.010
Self-Efficacy → CE → Life Satisfaction	.12	.34	.000	.18	.53	.000
Self-Efficacy → CE → OCB	.04	.23	.000	.05	.24	.000
Self-Efficacy → CE → Job Engagement	.15	.40	.000	.15	.49	.000
Social Support → CE → Performance Appraisal	-.01	.07	.094	.01	.09	.011
Social Support → CE → Life Satisfaction	.03	.19	.008	.05	.32	.008
Social Support → CE → OCB	.02	.12	.005	.02	.12	.005
Social Support → CE → Job Engagement	.03	.23	.009	.04	.26	.008

Note. Analyses used bootstrapping (95% bias-corrected, 5,000 resamples); LL = lower limit of the CI; UL = upper limit of the CI; CE = career empowerment; OCB = organizational citizenship behaviors; bolded text indicates significant indirect effect.

of career empowerment. One possible explanation is that career empowerment is proposed to be a cognitive state, which is malleable and dynamic in response to changes in its antecedents, such as self-efficacy that is also a dynamic construct. Conversely, optimism is considered to be a more stable trait, and therefore has less direct impact on the fluctuating cognitions that are the source of career empowerment. Moreover, because optimism typically includes both active and passive manifestations (Rand, 2018), it may not be a significant predictor of the agentic career empowerment.

The findings regarding the predicted organizational consequences of career empowerment are particularly interesting. First, career empowerment predicts job engagement for full-time and part-time employees, which is one of the main variables of interest for organizations. This is an encouraging finding; however, it is important to remember that extremely high job engagement may lead to undesirable consequences such as burnout (Tziner et al., 2019). In addition, career empowerment was found to positively predict OCB, and employee life satisfaction for both full-time and part-time employees, and performance for full-time employees. These findings demonstrate the relevance of career empowerment, which is mostly associated with individual career factors, to organizations.

Mediation analyses also demonstrated the role of career empowerment as an explanatory mechanism between individual resources (hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and social support) and outcomes (performance appraisals, job engagement, OCB, and life satisfaction). The findings portray a complex picture that suggests that hope theory may be applied differently to full-time and part-time employees. Career empowerment mediated the relationships between hope and all the outcomes except for performance appraisal for part-time employees. For full-time employees, career empowerment was not a significant mediator in the relationship between hope and any of the outcomes. The trend was reversed for optimism – career empowerment mediated the relationships between optimism and all four outcomes, but only for full-time employees; for part-time employees none of the mediated relationships were significant. This can be linked back to the conceptual difference between hope and optimism, and their relevance to employees under different contracts. The findings regarding self-efficacy and social support, which are theoretically linked more strongly to the dimensions of career empowerment, are similar. For full-time employees, career empowerment mediated the relationships between the antecedents and all four outcomes, and for part-time employees it mediated all the relationships except for performance appraisal. In other words, for part-time employees, career empowerment did not mediate the relationship between any of the individual resources with performance appraisal, but it did mediate some of the relationships for full-time employees.

These findings highlight the need to understand different employment contracts and their impact on career- and work-related factors. There might be different reasons for people to engage in part-time employment, and these reasons could be agentic (personal choice) or forced (inability to find full-time employment). As a result, organizations' ability to understand the factors that are applicable to the sort of employment they provide may be critical for organizational functioning.

Theoretical Implications

The current study tested the potential of the newly constructed concept of career empowerment to explaining and predicting variables that are of interest to organizations. Career empowerment was previously linked to motivational theories such as the self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2017), and career theories such as the Kaleidoscope Careers Model (KCM; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007). While the conceptualization of career empowerment includes

the dimensions of competence and relationships, its psychological antecedents were not tested before. Hope theory (Snyder, 2002) provided a theoretical framework that allowed theorizing of additional antecedents of career empowerment, as well as its relationships with organizational outcomes. The findings of the current study support hope theory and its relevance in the context of agentic employee behaviors and outcomes.

In addition to supporting the application of hope theory (Snyder, 2002) to career empowerment, the findings also contribute to a more refined understanding of the theory. Specifically, hope and optimism are usually seen as similar although not identical, and are often studied together (Luthans et al., 2010; Snyder, 2002). However, our findings sharpen the distinction between the two: the more agentic notion of hope suggests a higher level of individual control over outcomes, which is what makes it applicable to career empowerment, while optimism, which allows influence of external forces, was not a significant predictor of career empowerment. Moreover, the two concepts had different relationships with different types of employment contracts: while hope was more relevant to part-time employees, optimism was more relevant for full-time employees. It is possible that part-time employees are required to be more agentic if they are seeking to find full-time employment, so that higher cognitions of control are more important to them to achieve their goals, whereas optimism is sufficient for people in full-time employment who are not looking to change their work conditions. As such, our findings support the theoretical distinction between hope and optimism within hope theory (Snyder, 2002).

Practical Implications

Our findings situate career empowerment, which was developed with both employed and unemployed study participants, in organizational settings. Career empowerment was found to predict job engagement, OCB, life satisfaction, and, to some extent, job performance. Therefore, organizations may enjoy the benefits of career empowerment that can be harnessed for desirable outcomes. While career empowerment as an agentic career-related construct may be seen at first as positively associated with potential turnover, our findings suggest the opposite: career empowerment is a positive predictor of job engagement and OCB, both of which are important for organizations. Moreover, life satisfaction is an important marker of employee wellness, which is also a factor of interest for organizations. The more limited relationship of career empowerment with performance could be explained by various factors, such as contextual variables (type of contract), measurement issues, and the generally limited ability of any single attitudinal factor to predict performance. In fact, cognitive ability is a key predictor of performance, while job satisfaction, a key attitudinal variable, has a positive weak relationship with it. In terms of practical recommendations, because career empowerment is dynamic and malleable, managers can invest in its development. For example, they can strengthen employees' self-efficacy through providing consistent constructive feedback, and provide social support that feeds into the relationships dimension. As a result, employees are expected to invest more effort in work, engage in OCB more often and, to an extent, improve their performance.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The main limitation of the current study was its cross-sectional design. While in order to minimize common method bias it is recommended to separate between measurement of different variables in terms of time and methods or sources, logistic considerations limited our ability to do so. However, testing for common method bias mitigated these concerns. Another limitation

was sample size. While the study was not under-powered, we propose to pursue further investigations seeking to examine the replicability of present findings. Finally, the data was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, although in a more favorable phase and not in a situation of lockdown. For a more complete understanding of the findings, the study needs to be replicated after the pandemic, which has affected people's employment situation (work contract), but also affects their current level of hope, as an individual resource, may be affected by contextual factors.

Future studies of career empowerment may focus on expanding its role as a mediator in organizational processes. Other potential antecedents within the organization may be, for example, HR practices such as training and performance evaluations, leadership style, and team-level variables such as team cohesion. It is particularly interesting to test the career empowerment of leaders themselves compared to employees, and see whether leaders' career empowerment can trickle down to employees. Finally, longitudinal studies of career empowerment development over time would be beneficial to a better understanding of the construct. To sum up, the findings of this study provide additional evidence for the value of career empowerment not only to individuals, but also to organizations.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of this article declare no conflict of interest.

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