

## IMPACT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND INTENTION TO LEAVE

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**Abstract**—*In the dynamic world, human capital is a critical factor for organizational success. The retention of skilled employees is vital not only for sustaining competitive edge but also for nurturing a prosperous organizational culture. This study focuses on understanding the factors that influence an employee's decision to stay with or leave an organization by examining effects of psychological empowerment on employee engagement and intention to leave. Data were collected from 5006 employees at a university in Thailand. The data were analyzed using SPSS and Amos and reveals that psychological empowerment positively related to employee engagement, and then employee engagement negatively related to intention to leave. In addition, psychological empowerment directly affect intention to leave. These results suggest that nonmonetary rewards can be very a powerful tool to motivate and retain employees. Organizations and managers can apply empowerment to strategically retain and cultivate engaged workforce.*

**Index Terms**— *employee engagement, intention to leave, psychological empowerment, SEM.*

### INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic working environment, the retention and engagement of skilled employees play a crucial role in organizational success. Retaining talent in organizations is crucial for long-term success and growth. When skilled and experienced employees leave, it can result in a loss of valuable knowledge, disrupt team dynamics, and incur significant costs associated with hiring and training new staff. However, recent trends are more challenging with the phenomenon of "quiet quitting". Meaning that it is not enough to retain employees, organizations must go beyond simply retaining employees and focus on keeping them engaged and motivated in order to reduce turnover. Therefore, organizations need to understand the factors that influence an employee's decision to stay or leave and what makes them engaged. Psychological empowerment has emerged as a significant factor in enhancing employee retention and engagement. It goes beyond traditional forms of empowerment, such as giving

employees decision-making authority, and focuses on providing them with a sense of control, competence, and meaningfulness in their work.

By examining the relationship between psychological empowerment, employee engagement and intention to leave, this study seeks to understand how empowering work environments can influence an employee engagement and their intention to leave. The contribution of this study lies in shedding light on the intricate relationship between psychological empowerment, employee engagement, and the intention to leave. This study aims to add valuable contribution to the literature in the field of employee retention and engagement by emphasizing the critical role of psychological empowerment that creating a positive work environment where employees feel valued, respected, and supported can be powerful to boost morale. In addition, it aims to provide insights into the mediating role of employee

engagement in the relationship between psychological empowerment and intention to leave. This will ultimately provide organizations with actionable strategies for creating a supportive and empowering work environment that enhances both employee engagement and retention

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

### Psychological empowerment and employee engagement

Psychological empowerment refers to the belief and perception that individuals have control over their work and that their efforts make a meaningful impact on organizational outcomes [1]-[3]. Spreitzer identifies four key dimensions that constitute psychological empowerment: Meaning (alignment between one's work role and personal beliefs, values, and behaviors), Competence (the individual's belief in their ability to perform work tasks effectively), Self-determination (feeling that they have a choice in shaping their work and can exercise a degree of control over their actions and decisions), and Impact (the degree to which an employee can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work [3]. Through psychological empowerment, employees are able to find significance in their work, feel competent and confident in their abilities, have a sense of autonomy and control over their work, and perceive that their work has a meaningful impact on organizational outcomes. Employees who feel psychologically empowered are more likely to experience a sense of ownership over their work, leading to positive outcomes. Previous research has shown that psychological empowerment is positively related to various work-related outcomes, such as job satisfaction [4], [5], and organizational commitment [6]-[8]. Psychological empowerment has also been found to be positively related to employees' innovation performance. For example, Zhang & Bartol explored the relationship between empowering leadership and employee creativity, with a focus on the influence of psychological empowerment, intrinsic motivation, and creative process engagement; they found

that psychological empowerment fosters employee creativity [9]. Additionally, Pieterse and colleagues investigated the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership and innovative behavior, highlighting the moderating role of psychological empowerment and found that psychological empowerment is a moderator in the relationship between leadership and innovative behavior [10]. In addition, psychological empowerment has been shown to have an impact on performance. For example, it is found that empowerment had a synergistic interaction with individual-level psychological empowerment, significantly impacting individuals' job performance [11].

Since psychological empowerment is a collection of four motivational agents; meaning, competency, self-determination, and impact, it is a pivotal factor in enhancing employee motivation and engagement within an organization. Empowered employees, who perceive they have a meaningful impact on their work environment, are often more motivated and driven to positive outcomes. For example, a study found that empowerment mediated relationships between and job characteristics and intrinsic motivation among technical and telemarketing workers [12]. Employees who perceive they have control over their work and sense that their efforts are impactful exhibit not just compliance, but deep involvement, energy, and enthusiasm towards their job [13], [14]. Employee engagement is one manifestation of an employee's motivation, reflecting how the internal drive to succeed is expressed through their dedication and enthusiasm for their work. Kahn defined employee engagement as "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances" [15]. Four elements of psychological empowerment, namely meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact, contribute to the physical, cognitive, and emotional aspects of an employee; they build a sense of purpose, affirm one's capabilities, provide autonomy, and foster a feeling of making a difference. When employees experience these elements, they are more likely to be actively engaged in their work, displaying enthusiasm and commitment, proactive, and pervasive involvement in their tasks and organizational goals. it leads to:

### **H1: Psychological empowerment is positively related to employee engagement**

#### **Employee engagement and intension to leave**

Employee engagement represents the level of an employee's emotional and cognitive commitment to their organization, which is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in their work. A highly engaged workforce is often seen as the lifeblood of a successful organization, contributing to higher productivity and better customer satisfaction. Saks studied the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement and found that it affects organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Job satisfaction pertains to the level of contentment employees feel towards their job, encompassing aspects such as work conditions,

relationships with colleagues and supervisors, recognition, and the work itself [16]. A satisfied employee tends to have a favorable attitude towards the job and is less likely to seek alternative employment. Likewise, employees who are committed to their organization typically endorse its goals and values, feel a sense of loyalty, and desire to maintain membership within the organization [17]. Therefore, engaged employees who have emotional investment in an organization are less likely to leave organizations. It leads to:

**H2: Employee engagement is negatively related to intension to leave.**

**Employee engagement as the mediator**

Drawing upon Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the human need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness [18], psychological empowerment can be seen as a catalyst for fulfilling these needs within an organizational context. Empowerment provides employees with a sense of control over their work, an understanding of the significance of their tasks, belief in their ability to perform competently, and the perception that they can influence outcomes. These empowerment dimensions foster an intrinsic motivation towards work, which directly relates to employee engagement. With employees feeling more autonomous and capable, they are likely to become more emotionally and cognitively attached to their job and less likely to look for alternative employment opportunities. This leads to:

H3: Employee engagement mediates relationships between psychological empowerment and intension to leave.

**Psychological empowerment and intension to leave**

When employees feel psychological empowered, they experience a sense of ownership and control over their work tasks and outcomes; they also perceive their work as meaningful and valuable and feel competent in their abilities, and believe they can make a significant impact within the organization [19]. These empowerment dimensions fulfill employees' psychological needs, resulting in higher intrinsic motivation. Past Research has shown that intrinsic motivation is significantly related to decreased turnover intention. For instance, studies have highlighted the importance of intrinsic motivation in decreasing turnover intention among public sector employees [20], [21]. Furthermore, intrinsic motivation has been found to positively influence individuals' intention to stay in the education sector [22]. Akosile and Ekemendemonstrated a negative link between staff intrinsic motivation and intention to leave [23]. This suggests that individuals who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to remain in their current positions. which is a key driver for wanting to continue in their current role, thus reducing the intention to leave. This leads to:

#### **H4: Psychological empowerment negatively relates to intention to leave.**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

This research adopts a cross-sectional research design and employs quantitative analysis to explore the impact of psychological empowerment on the intention to leave. It considers both the direct effect of psychological empowerment on intention to leave and the mediating effects of employee engagement in this relationship.

#### **Questionnaire Development**

Questionnaires used in this study were in two languages, Thai and English. All items are presented in both Thai and English because data were collected in a university that employed Thai and international staffs. The original version of all measures is in English. They were translated into Thai using a translation-back-translation procedure [24]. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the variables, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

#### **Sampling and Measures**

The participants in the study were staffs working for a university in Thailand. They work in diverse positions and departments in the university. Data was collected through a bilingual questionnaire, which was administered using both online and offline survey method; an e-form has been designed by using Qualtrics. A total of 5027 responses were received and 5006 were usable after screening for missing values. To measure psychological empowerment, the study used 12 items from Spreitzer's Psychological Empowerment Scale, which consists of four dimensions: meaning, competence, impact and self-determination. Sample items include "The work I do is meaningful to me ", "I am confident about my ability to do my job", "I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job", and "I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department ". Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) scores for four factors are 0.91, 0.80, 0.78, and 0.88 respectively.

To measure employee engagement, forty items were adapted from [25]. They included 9 factors, namely, organization alignment, supervisor's support and recognition, growth and development, autonomy and opinion, creative and challenging job, job significance, performance evaluation and recognition, welfare, and, colleague and teamwork. Example of items include "my supervisor appreciates my good performance", "I am always assigned to do tasks that give me chances to acquire new knowledge and skills", and " My job provides me opportunities to do challenging and interesting work". Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) scores are 0.86, 0.94, 0.86, 0.88, 0.86, 0.84, 0.91, 0.91 and 0.90 respectively.

Intention to leave was measured with the three-item scale used by [26]. Examples of items are "I frequently think of quitting my job," and "I am planning to search for a new job during the next 12 months". Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) is 0.78.

### **Data analysis method**

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied using AMOS software for data analysis. The SEM is a multivariate analysis tool that assesses the study of confirmatory factor analysis and path model with latent constructs simultaneously [27]. The analysis consists of two steps. Firstly, a measurement was performed on the model to test validity of the study constructs by using both goodness-of-fit index and test the factor loading for CF. Secondly, the structural model, the study hypotheses of models were tested with 5% significance level. The R-squared is one of the commonly used to measure performance. R-squared value of 0.75 is substantial, while 0.5 refers to moderate, and 0.25 refers to weak impact [27]. However, the Chi-square/DF was not considered here due to the issue of large sample size [28]. The alternative fit indices which are less affected by sample size were suggested instead (Kline, 2016).

### **RESULTS MATH**

The data were analyzed by using SPSS (29th version) and Amos (29th version). Harman's one-factor test was used to determine the presence of CMB [29]. in the research. The findings show that a single component can explain 38.87% of the total variance, which is less than the standard limit of 50%, indicating that CMB is not an issue in this study.

#### **Confirmatory factor analysis**

To establish whether the measurement model fits the data, both first-order and second d-order confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using AMOS. The results of the first-order CFA indicate that the measurement model of employee engagement fits the data well, with all 40 items for measuring employee engagement loaded significantly onto their respective factors, which included organization alignment, supervisor's support and recognition, growth and development, autonomy and opinion, creative and challenging job, job significance, performance evaluation and recognition, welfare, and colleague and teamwork. The second-order CFA was conducted. Fit indices fell within an acceptable range (Incremental Fit Index [IFI] = 0.94, Comparative Fit Index [CFI] = 0.94, Tucker-Lewis Index [TLI] = 0.93, Goodness-of-Fit Index [GFI] = 0.90 and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation [RMSEA] = 0.05) for the second-order CFA model of employee engagement. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis also indicate that the measurement model for psychological empowerment also fits the data well, with all 12 items loaded significantly onto their respective 4 factors, including meaning, competence, impact, and self-determination (Incremental Fit Index [IFI] = 0.97, Comparative Fit Index [CFI] = 0.97, Tucker-Lewis Index [TLI] = 0.95, Goodness-of-Fit Index [GFI] = 0.95 and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation [RMSEA] = 0.07).

**Correlation analysis**

To examine the relationships between psychological empowerment, employee engagement, and intention to leave, correlation analysis was conducted. Results show that all three variables correlate with each other sufficiently and they can be reviewed to gain a better understanding of their interrelationships. Table I shows correlation coefficients for the variables in the study

**Table I: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Coefficients of Variables**

	2	3
1.Psychological empowerment		
2.Employee engagement	0.79	
3.Intension to leave	0.63	-0.67

**Hypothesis testing**

To test hypotheses, we have conducted a structural equation modelling that allows for a comprehensive assessment of model fit (Incremental Fit Index [IFI] = 0.92, Comparative Fit Index [CFI] = 0.92, Tucker-Lewis Index [TLI] = 0.91, Goodness-of-Fit Index [GFI] = 0.86 and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation [RMSEA] = 0.05). According to the results as shown in Table II, psychological empowerment has a positive and significant impact on employee engagement (p-value <0.001). This study also reveals that the variation of employee engagement was moderately explained by psychological empowerment (R-squared =0.622). Additionally, employee engagement has a negative and significant effect on intention to leave. Therefore, H1, and H2 are supported. Results of the study also reveal that psychological empowerment has a negative impact affects intention to leave, providing support for H4. The variance of intention to leave seems to be weakly explained employee engagement and psychological empowerment (R-squared = 0.477).

**Table II: Hypotheses testing**

Hypotheses	Estimate	SE	CR	p-value	R-squared	Conclusion
H 1 PE ⇒ EE	0.672	0.02	32.85	<0.001	0.622	Significant
H 2 EE ⇒ ITL	-0.768	0.048	15.87	<0.001	0.477	Significant
H 4 PE ⇒ ITL	-0.378	0.038	10.07	<0.001		Significant

To assess the mediating effect of employee engagement, coefficient of indirect effect and p-value were calculated by using the bootstrapping procedure. According to the results as shown in Table III, there is a significant indirect effect of psychological empowerment on intention to leave through employee engagement (p-value <0.001), supporting H3. Moreover, the direct effect of psychological empowerment on intention to leave is presence of the mediators was also found (H4). The total effect size of psychological empowerment and employee engagement on intention to leave is -0.894. Therefore, employee engagement partially mediated the relationship between psychological empowerment and intention to leave.

**Table III: Mediation Analysis**

	irect Effect	Indirect Effect	p-value	Conclusion
PE ⇒ EE (p-value<0.001)	-0.378	-0.516	<0.001	Partial Mediation

**DISCUSSION**

The results presented in this study offer meaningful insights into the dynamics of psychological empowerment, employee engagement, and their relationship with the intention to leave. By employing structural equation modelling via AMOS, the hypotheses were rigorously tested, providing a nuanced understanding of how these constructs interact within an organizational context. The positive and significant impact of psychological empowerment on employee engagement, as supported by our data, aligns with prior research that posits empowered employees as more invested, proactive, and committed to their jobs [30], [31]. The implications of this are profound, suggesting that initiatives to enhance employees' autonomy, mastery, and significance within their roles can directly foster higher levels of engagement. Moreover, the finding that employee engagement negatively influences intention to leave fills a crucial gap in the turnover literature. It reaffirms the protective role that engagement plays in retaining talent, implying that engaged employees are less likely to pursue opportunities outside their current workplace. This can be attributed to the fulfilling work environment that engaged employees experience, which diminishes their desire to exit the organization.

The direct effect of psychological empowerment on intention to leave further corroborates the significance of giving employees a sense of meaningful work and autonomy. When employees perceive that they have impacts on this work, their perspective on their workplace transforms, often leading to increased positive outcomes and reduced turnover intentions.

This study extends the body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence from a non-western context, specifically within the academic sector of Thailand. Previous studies often focused on corporate settings and might not have fully captured the unique dynamics present in academia.

By bridging this gap, the current research contributes a valuable comparative perspective to the current discourse on empowerment and engagement.

### **THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

Theoretically, this study substantiates and augments prevailing theories related to psychological empowerment and employee engagement by providing empirical evidence of their interrelationship and their combined effect on an employee's intention to leave. By doing so, it affirms the robustness of these frameworks, such as Spreitzer's model of psychological empowerment, which posits that increased feelings of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact among employees enhance their intrinsic motivation. Likewise, the study reinforces Kahn's engagement theory, which suggests that engaged employees display heightened levels of emotional, cognitive, and physical involvement in their roles. Furthermore, this research enriches these theoretical constructs by illustrating their predictive power regarding turnover intentions, a relationship that has been less explored in extant literature. By empirically validating the direct and mediating role that psychological empowerment and employee engagement play in an individual's thought process and decision-making regarding job turnover, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of these constructs.

From a practical standpoint, the results advocate for management strategies that prioritize job crafting and work environments. Amidst the backdrop of economic volatility and uncertainty, it becomes increasingly imperative for organizations to diversify their motivational strategies beyond mere monetary incentives. Overreliance on financial rewards may prove unsustainable, particularly in an erratic economic climate. Instead, organizations could achieve greater benefits by crafting work roles that inherently provide employees with a sense of purpose and the perception that their contributions are impactful. This approach aligns with the mediating function of employee engagement within the workplace. Empirical evidence suggests that the act of empowering employees – granting them autonomy, resources, and opportunities to develop their skills – is insufficient on its own to substantively reduce turnover intentions. It is the translation of this psychological empowerment into tangible, experienced engagement with their work that truly matters. Engagement encapsulates an emotional and psychological investment in one's tasks, creating an environment where employees feel genuinely connected to the outcomes of their efforts. Therefore, fostering an organizational culture where empowerment is not an end, but a pathway to meaningful engagement, could serve as a more robust mechanism for retaining talent. In such environments, employees are not just capable but are also actively enthusiastic and committed to their roles, driving down the inclination to seek opportunities elsewhere. By prioritizing work design that embeds importance and impact within job functions, organizations can nurture a workforce that is not just present, but passionately involved and less likely to depart." This refined statement emphasizes the critical role of engaged employees in

today's workforce and encourages organizations to focus on non-monetary motivational approaches that integrate both empowerment and engagement for effective retention strategies.

## LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study makes a significant contribution to the existing literature on psychological empowerment, engagement, and turnover intentions. However, it is important to note certain limitations that suggest avenues for future research. One such limitation is data came only from employee self-report. Future research could incorporate a broader range of data sources such as manager evaluation and organizational record. Future research could Investigate additional variables or moderating factors that could influence the central relationships of the study, such as job demand levels, personality traits, or economic cycles.

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