
Psychological Empowerment, Quality of Work Life, and Employee Performance: Dual Mediation of Commitment and Satisfaction in Indonesia's Manufacturing Sector

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Abstract

Although empowerment and quality of work life have been widely examined in global HRM literature, empirical studies that simultaneously test their dual mediation effects through organizational commitment and job satisfaction remain scarce, particularly in Indonesia's labor-intensive manufacturing sector. This study addresses this gap by investigating how psychological empowerment and quality of work life shape employee performance through these two mediators in Central Java. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory, the research explores how employees in a collectivist and hierarchical work culture reciprocate organizational support with affective attachment and evaluative judgments that drive performance outcomes. Using data from 211 manufacturing employees and analyzed through partial least squares structural equation modeling, the findings reveal that psychological empowerment significantly enhances both organizational commitment and job satisfaction, with commitment emerging as the most influential predictor of performance. Job satisfaction positively mediates the link between empowerment and performance, but unexpectedly exerts a negative mediation between quality of work life and performance. Theoretically, this study advances Social Exchange Theory by clarifying the differentiated roles of affective and evaluative mechanisms in collectivist industrial contexts. Practically, the results provide actionable guidance for HR managers in manufacturing firms to prioritize empowerment initiatives and commitment-building strategies—such as autonomy in decision-making, recognition systems, and trust-based cultures—to sustain employee loyalty, stability, and productivity in highly competitive labor-intensive environments.

Keywords

Psychological empowerment; quality of work life; organizational commitment; job satisfaction; employee performance; collectivist context

INTRODUCTION

The manufacturing sector plays a pivotal role in emerging economies, with workforce productivity serving as a cornerstone of competitiveness and growth. In Indonesia, Central Java Province is a major industrial hub and the second-largest contributor to the national processing industry's GDP (BPS, 2023). Yet, labor-intensive firms in the region continue to face structural challenges, including low wages, limited participation in decision-making, and poor working conditions that hinder motivation and long-term productivity. These dynamics resonate with prior HRM research highlighting that firms in developing countries often rely on cost-minimization strategies rather than commitment-enhancing practices, thereby constraining sustainable competitiveness (Cooke et al., 2020; Guest, 2017; Jiang & Messersmith, 2018).

In response to these challenges, scholars increasingly emphasize the importance of psychological and qualitative approaches that strengthen employee well-being, motivation, and

engagement (Guest, 2017; Van Laar et al., 2017). Psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995)

and quality of work life (Sirgy et al., 2001) have emerged as key drivers of performance across sectors (Seibert et al., 2011; Van Laar et al., 2017). However, despite global recognition of these constructs, little is known about their integrated effects in labor-intensive, collectivist settings such as Indonesia, where hierarchical structures and cultural norms shape the reciprocity between organizational practices and employee behavior.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) offers a compelling framework for scrutinizing these dynamics. SET posits that employees reciprocate when organizations provide resources and support through greater loyalty, commitment, and performance (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). While past research has examined the role of organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997) or job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2001) as mediators, few studies simultaneously incorporate both constructs in a dual-mediation model, particularly in collectivist contexts. This omission leaves a significant theoretical gap: a limited understanding of how affective attachment (commitment) and evaluative judgments (satisfaction) jointly shape performance in emerging industrial economies (Zhao et al., 2019; Liao et al., 2020).

Recent research in Human Resource Management (HRM) has consistently established psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995) and quality of work life (Sirgy et al., 2001) as significant predictors of employee performance in both service and manufacturing contexts (Seibert et al., 2011; Van Laar et al., 2017). While these studies confirm a direct relationship between these factors and performance, they offer limited insight into the underlying psychological mechanisms. Although studies have begun to explore the mediating roles of organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997) and job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2001), the integration of both as dual mediators in a single model—linking empowerment, work quality, and performance—remains scarce. Crucially, most of this study was conducted in individualistic, developed countries. Consequently, the validity of these findings remains untested mainly in more collectivist cultures with hierarchical work structures, such as Indonesia (Hofstede, 2011; Liao et al., 2020).

From a theoretical perspective, while Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) provides a foundation for understanding reciprocal employee-organization relationships, its application in a dual-mediation model is incomplete. Most studies only test a single mediation pathway or focus on a single affective construct (e.g., only job satisfaction or only organizational commitment). This approach fails to capture the complexity of the simultaneous social exchange processes within an employee (Zhao et al., 2019), creating a significant theoretical gap: a lack of understanding of how various forms of organizational social investment are translated into multiple cognitive and emotional responses that ultimately drive performance behavior.

Methodologically, empirical studies in Indonesia's manufacturing sector remain limited, often relying on qualitative approaches or descriptive surveys without employing advanced techniques such as structural equation modeling (Cooke et al., 2020). This study addresses theoretical and empirical gaps by testing a dual mediation model of organizational commitment and job satisfaction in the relationships between empowerment, quality of work life, and performance among manufacturing employees in Central Java.

The objectives of this study are threefold: (1) to examine how empowerment and work quality influence employee performance through organizational commitment and job satisfaction, (2) to test the relative importance of these two mediators in explaining performance outcomes, and (3) to contribute empirical evidence from a labor-intensive, collectivist setting to enrich global HRM literature. By doing so, this study advances Social Exchange Theory while offering practical insights for HR managers on how to design empowerment and commitment-based strategies to enhance workforce effectiveness in competitive manufacturing environments.

This study structures the article as follows: the next section presents a comprehensive literature review and develops hypotheses grounded in Social Exchange Theory, followed by a detailed methodology outlining the study design, target population, sampling strategy, measurement instruments, and data analysis techniques—including structural equation modeling. This study then reports the results of statistical analyses and hypothesis testing,

interprets the findings within a theoretical and practical context, highlighting managerial implications and acknowledging limitations, and concludes with actionable recommendations for future research to extend and contextualize the current findings.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Psychological Empowerment, Organizational Commitment, and Employee Performance

Psychological empowerment reflects employees' perceptions of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact in their work (Spreitzer, 1995). Prior research consistently shows that empowerment enhances employees' intrinsic motivation and fosters proactive behavior, ultimately contributing to higher performance (Seibert et al., 2011). Empowered employees are more likely to internalize the organization's values and commit to maximizing their contributions—not out of obligation, but from intrinsic desire. This commitment, in turn, becomes a key driver of enhanced performance, as committed employees tend to be more persistent, proactive, and loyal in their roles (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). From a Social Exchange Theory perspective, empowerment is an organizational investment that signals trust and recognition, prompting employees to reciprocate through stronger affective bonds and loyalty (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Organizational commitment, particularly affective commitment, captures employees' emotional attachment and identification with their organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Meta-analyses confirm its strong positive link with performance, persistence, and reduced turnover (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 2022). In collectivist cultures, commitment may be even more salient, as employees value group belonging and loyalty (Hofstede, 2011). Thus, empowerment is expected to strengthen commitment, which drives higher performance.

H1: Organizational commitment mediates the effect of psychological empowerment on employee performance.

Quality of Work Life, Organizational Commitment, and Employee Performance

Quality of work life (QWL) encompasses safe working conditions, fair compensation, supportive relationships, and work-life balance (Sirgy et al., 2001). High-quality work environments signal organizational care, which employees reciprocate through affective commitment (Guest, 2017; Van Laar et al., 2017). In manufacturing contexts where monotonous and demanding tasks are prevalent, QWL can reduce stress and foster long-term attachment (Cooke et al., 2020).

Although QWL has been linked to performance in Western contexts, empirical studies in developing economies remain scarce. In collectivist cultures, QWL may strengthen commitment by aligning organizational care with cultural values of loyalty and harmony (Liao et al., 2020). Commitment then translates into sustained contributions to performance. When an organization provides a high quality of work life, encompassing job security, supportive interpersonal relationships, and work-life balance (Sirgy et al., 2001), employees perceive it as a form of organizational respect and care, prompting reciprocal affective commitment.

H2: Organizational commitment mediates the effect of quality of work life on employee performance.

Psychological Empowerment, Job Satisfaction, and Employee Performance

Job satisfaction reflects employees' evaluative judgments of their work experiences (Judge et al., 2001). Psychological empowerment enhances satisfaction by granting autonomy, recognition, and competence, which aligns employees' expectations with organizational practices (Seibert et al., 2011). Satisfied employees are more motivated, cooperative, and emotionally stable, which leads to improved performance (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000).

However, empirical evidence on the mediating role of satisfaction between empowerment and performance in labor-intensive manufacturing remains limited, particularly in Southeast Asia. Testing this pathway in Indonesia provides insight into whether empowerment translates into performance primarily through satisfaction or other mechanisms such as commitment.

H3: Job satisfaction mediates the effect of psychological empowerment on employee performance.

Quality of Work Life, Job Satisfaction, and Employee Performance

High-quality work life reduces stress, enhances well-being, and fosters positive attitudes toward work (Van Laar et al., 2017). From the SET perspective, employees who perceive fair and humane working conditions will likely feel satisfied and reciprocate with higher effort and performance (Blau, 1964). Nevertheless, the relationship may not be straightforward: satisfaction may improve comfort but not necessarily stimulate higher productivity if not coupled with strong commitment (Judge et al., 2001).

In Indonesia's manufacturing sector, where collectivist values shape work behavior, examining whether QWL influences performance through satisfaction is critical to understanding how organizations can balance well-being and productivity.

H4: Job satisfaction mediates the effect of quality of work life on employee performance.

METHODS

Research Instrument

The questionnaire was developed by adapting previously validated scales to measure the four latent constructs, ensuring content validity and theoretical consistency with established organizational behavior research. All items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Using multi-item scales based on existing literature enhances construct reliability and facilitates cross-study comparability. The research instrument and its Cronbach's Alpha coefficients are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
The research instrument and its Cronbach's Alpha coefficients

Research Context and Sampling

The study was conducted in the manufacturing sector of Kendal City, Central Java Province, Indonesia—a prominent industrial hub characterized by structured operational systems and an increasing emphasis on innovation-driven practices. The target population consisted of full-time employees working in operational or administrative roles under direct supervision. A non-probability convenience sampling method was employed, as it offers practical advantages in organizational research where access to a representative population may be constrained and logistical challenges limit the feasibility of random selection. This approach is particularly

suitable for exploratory and applied studies in workplace contexts, enabling timely data collection from participants who are both accessible and relevant to the research objectives.

Data was collected through an online survey distributed via targeted email invitations to employees of manufacturing firms between December 15, 2024, and January 5, 2025. Of the 287 questionnaires administered, 211 valid responses were received, resulting in a response rate of 74%, which is considered acceptable for organizational research using survey methods (Baruch & Holtom, 2008).

Data Analysis

Data analysis employed the two-stage approach commonly recommended in PLS-SEM studies (Hair et al., 2019; Henseler et al., 2015). The measurement model was first evaluated for reliability and validity. Internal consistency was confirmed as all constructs exceeded the 0.70 threshold for Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Convergent validity was supported by factor loadings greater than 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above 0.50, while discriminant validity was established using the Fornell–Larcker criterion.

In the second stage, the structural model was assessed by estimating path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values through bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples (Hair et al., 2017). Mediation effects were tested via specific indirect effect estimates, and the model's explanatory and predictive power was evaluated using R^2 , f^2 , and Q^2 statistics (Shmueli et al., 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographics Analysis

The demographic analysis shows that the sample was dominated by male employees (92%), with only 8% female participation. Most respondents were above 40 and held at least a bachelor's degree (52%). Tenure distribution revealed that long-serving employees formed the largest group, with 42% reporting more than 10 years of service. This demographic composition suggests that the workforce is relatively stable and experienced, reflecting the long-term attachment characteristic of labor-intensive industries in Central Java.

Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model in Figure 1 demonstrates that all constructs are reliably represented by their indicators. Psychological empowerment is measured by ten items (PE1–PE10) with factor loadings ranging from 0.699 to 0.759, indicating acceptable convergent validity. Similarly, quality of work life is reflected by seven items (QWL1–QWL7) with strong factor loadings between 0.770 and 0.886. Organizational commitment (OC1–OC6), job satisfaction (JS1–JS4), and performance (P1–P7) also exhibit satisfactory reliability, with loadings above the 0.60 threshold and significance levels at $p < 0.001$. These results confirm that the observed variables are valid indicators of their respective latent constructs.

Variance inflation factor (VIF) values were below 3.3, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern and reduced standard method bias likelihood (Kock, 2015).

Model Fit and Predictive Power

The coefficient of determination (R^2) values indicate varying levels of explanatory power across the constructs. Job satisfaction recorded an R^2 of 0.46, which is categorized as weak, suggesting that less than half of its variance is explained by the predictors in the model. Performance showed a moderate explanatory level with an R^2 of 0.634, meaning that more than 60% of its variance can be accounted for by job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In contrast, organizational commitment achieved a substantial R^2 value of 0.89, indicating that the vast majority of its variance is explained by psychological empowerment and quality of work life.

These results highlight the robustness of the model in capturing the determinants of organizational commitment, while providing moderate support for explaining employee performance. These findings confirm that the research model has a high power to explain, especially in the dimension of organizational commitment, which is in line with previous research that empowerment and quality of work life are important determinants for the formation of employee commitment (Kim et al., 2022).

The f^2 effect size analysis provides further insight into the relative importance of each predictor in the model. Psychological empowerment significantly affected job satisfaction ($f^2 = 0.710$) and organizational commitment ($f^2 = 2.718$), indicating its dominant role in shaping these outcomes. On the other hand, the quality of work life showed only a small effect on job satisfaction ($f^2 = 0.102$) but a moderate effect on organizational commitment ($f^2 = 0.256$), suggesting that it contributes more to employees' sense of commitment than to their immediate job satisfaction. Regarding performance, organizational commitment exerted a significant effect ($f^2 = 0.728$), confirming its central role as a key driver of employee outcomes, while job satisfaction showed a moderate effect ($f^2 = 0.173$). These results align with guidelines by Hair et al. (2019), who suggest interpreting f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 as small, medium, and large, respectively. Thus, the findings underscore the critical importance of psychological empowerment and organizational commitment as pivotal mechanisms for enhancing performance.

Hypothesis Testing

The structural model presented in Figure 1 provides further evidence supporting the hypothesized relationships. Psychological empowerment exerts a significant and strong effect on organizational commitment ($\beta = 144.143$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that employees who feel empowered are more likely to develop stronger affective attachment to their organization. Quality of work life significantly enhances job satisfaction ($\beta = 5.240$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that improvements in working conditions, work-life balance, and fairness in the workplace positively shape employees' evaluative judgments about their jobs.

Furthermore, organizational commitment is positively associated with employee performance ($\beta = 15.198$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that employees who identify with and remain committed to their organization are motivated to perform better. Job satisfaction also contributes significantly to performance ($\beta = 6.320$, $p < 0.001$), underscoring its role as a crucial motivational driver. Together, these findings highlight the mediating roles of commitment and satisfaction, whereby psychological empowerment and quality of work life indirectly influence performance through these attitudinal mechanisms.

From a theoretical perspective, the results in Figure 1 support Social Exchange Theory by showing that organizational investments in empowerment and quality of work life foster positive employee attitudes, which are reciprocated with higher performance. In the context of Indonesia's labor-intensive manufacturing sector, these findings underscore the importance of psychological and contextual factors in shaping employee outcomes. Practically, organizations are advised to strengthen empowerment practices and improve the quality of employees' work lives to enhance commitment, satisfaction, and ultimately, performance.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the mediating roles of organizational commitment and job satisfaction in the relationship between psychological empowerment and quality of work life and employee performance in the labor-intensive manufacturing sector of Central Java Province, Indonesia. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), the research aimed to establish direct linkages among these constructs and uncover the psychological mechanisms that explain how employees reciprocate organizational investments. The empirical findings demonstrate that psychological empowerment significantly enhances organizational commitment and job satisfaction, subsequently driving higher levels of employee performance.

Organizational commitment emerged as the most potent mediator, whereas job satisfaction provided a weaker but meaningful pathway, except for its negative mediation of the quality of work–life–performance link.

These findings contribute to theory by reaffirming the centrality of Social Exchange Theory in explaining employee attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, the findings highlight organizational commitment as a pivotal mechanism through which empowerment and supportive work environments translate into sustainable performance outcomes. At the same time, the

Figure 1.
Structural Model

unexpected negative mediation of quality of work life via job satisfaction suggests a more nuanced understanding of the satisfaction–performance relationship, indicating that comfort and well-being alone may not guarantee productivity without a strong sense of commitment. In Indonesia's labor-intensive manufacturing sector, these insights underscore the importance of empowerment and commitment-focused HR practices for enhancing workforce effectiveness. Thus, the study provides both theoretical advancement and practical guidance for organizations seeking to strengthen employee performance in competitive industrial environments.

From a managerial perspective, these findings highlight the importance of prioritizing psychological empowerment and organizational commitment as strategic levers for enhancing employee performance. Managers should implement policies that foster empowerment by granting greater autonomy in decision-making, recognizing individual contributions, and providing opportunities for skill development, as these practices strengthen employees' sense of meaning, competence, and self-determination (Spreitzer, 2008). Given the strong mediating role of organizational commitment, organizations are encouraged to cultivate a culture of trust, fairness, and shared values to reinforce employees' long-term attachment to the firm (Meyer & Allen, 1997). While the quality of work life contributes positively to commitment, excessive emphasis on comfort without aligning it with performance goals may reduce productivity. Therefore, HR practices should integrate work-life balance initiatives with performance-oriented incentives to ensure employee well-being translates into organizational effectiveness. Ultimately, by embedding empowerment and commitment into their human resource strategies, manufacturing firms can achieve sustained improvements in both employee outcomes and overall competitiveness (Kim et al., 2022).

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