

Ochoa Pacheco, Paola; Coello-Montecel, David; Tello, Michelle

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Article

Psychological Empowerment and Job Performance: Examining Serial Mediation Effects of Self-Efficacy and Affective Commitment

Paola Ochoa Pacheco , David Coello-Montecel  and Michelle Tello 

ESPAE Graduate School of Management, Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral (ESPOL), Campus Las Peñas, Guayaquil 090306, Ecuador

* Correspondence: pjochoa@espol.edu.ec (P.O.P.); dacoello@espol.edu.ec (D.C.-M.)

Abstract: A substantial body of literature has analyzed the influence of psychological empowerment on individual and organizational outcomes. However, there is still a need to examine how empowered employees achieve higher performance. To fill this gap in the literature, this study analyzed the mediating role of self-efficacy and affective commitment in the relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance. Data were collected from 357 employees. The hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling and bootstrapping procedures. The results validated the structural relationships between psychological empowerment, self-efficacy, affective commitment, and task-based job performance. In addition, the serial mediation effect of self-efficacy and affective commitment was also confirmed. These results highlight the relevance of psychological variables, such as psychological empowerment and affective commitment, for individuals and organizations. The study supports that feeling empowered and emotionally committed is essential in building a long-term relationship between the employee and the organization.

Keywords: psychological empowerment; job performance; self-efficacy; affective commitment; serial mediation analysis



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1. Introduction

Psychological empowerment has been considered a predictor of different behaviors in organizational settings, such as innovation behavior (Schermuly et al. 2013; Javed et al. 2019); organizational citizenship behavior (Chiang and Hsieh 2012; Joo and Jo 2017); positive outcomes, such as job performance (Chamberlin et al. 2018; Seibert et al. 2011; Ochoa Pacheco and Coello-Montecel 2023); and positive attitudes, such as job satisfaction (Mathew and Nair 2022) and commitment (Seibert et al. 2011). Although a growing body of literature has analyzed the influence of psychological empowerment on individual and organizational variables, the generalization of its positive effects across situations, industries, cultures, and occupations has not been addressed thoroughly (Li et al. 2015). Moreover, understanding when and how empowerment translates into positive organizational outcomes is still under study (Yin et al. 2019; Lee et al. 2018).

This gap in the literature has motivated scholars to identify mediating mechanisms and moderating factors that impact the relationship between psychological empowerment and different organizational outcomes. In general, the literature on psychological empowerment has grown during the last years (e.g., Juyumaya 2022; Chiang and Hsieh 2012; Mahmoud et al. 2022; Ölçer and Florescu 2015; Ahmed and Malik 2019). For instance, a recent study by Kumar et al. (2022) found that employee empowerment improves extra-role behaviors, such as taking charge, under conditions of high organizational support. Even with this growing evidence of the different organizational constructs that could influence the effect of psychological empowerment on organizational outcomes, scholars

still underline the need for more research to identify potential mechanisms through which empowered employees achieve goals at work (Coun et al. 2022).

The existing literature has determined that feeling empowered is a key antecedent of employees' positive outcomes (e.g., Huang 2017). In particular, the relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance has been addressed by several studies (e.g., Chamberlin et al. 2018; Choi 2020). Furthermore, scholars are increasingly interested in analyzing the impact of different psychological variables, such as work engagement (Juyumaya 2022), organizational citizenship behavior (Chiang and Hsieh 2012), intrapreneurial behavior (Mahmoud et al. 2022), job satisfaction (Ölçer and Florescu 2015), and psychological well-being (Ahmed and Malik 2019), that play a mediating role in this relationship. These findings suggest that psychological empowerment not only exerts a direct effect on task-based job performance, but that there are also indirect effects that need to be evaluated.

There is evidence related to the influence of psychological empowerment on improving employees' perceptions of self-efficacy (e.g., Ruiz-Fernández et al. 2022; Azizifar et al. 2020) and their affective bond to the organization (e.g., Jha 2011; Islam et al. 2014). While the literature on self-efficacy and affective commitment has shown that these two constructs are associated (Ashfaq et al. 2021; Almutairi 2020), to the best of our knowledge, evidence related to the serial effect of self-efficacy and affective commitment is scarce.

To fill this gap in the literature, this article aims to analyze the mediating role of self-efficacy and affective commitment in the relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance. These relationships were examined based on the theoretical framework proposed in the job demands-resources (JD-R) model (Bakker and Demerouti 2013, 2017) and the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll 1989). The JD-R model specifies how job demands and resources interact, and predicts organizational outcomes. On the one hand, according to this model, job demands refer to those physical, psychological, organizational, or social characteristics of work that require effort and imply psychological costs from employees (Demerouti et al. 2001). On the other hand, job resources are all work characteristics that allow employees to reduce job demands and associated psychological costs and achieve goals at work (Bakker 2011; Bakker and Demerouti 2007). Under this framework, the resulting outcomes could be positive or negative depending on the balance between job demands and resources. The COR theory states that individuals are motivated to invest their current resources to acquire new resources (Hobfoll 1989), which can lead to a resource gain spiral (Llorens et al. 2007). Within this framework, a resource can be conceived as anything perceived by the individual to help attain his or her goals (Halbesleben et al. 2014). Following both frameworks, psychological empowerment is a personal resource (Ugwu et al. 2014) that allows employees to enjoy meaningful work experiences (Jena et al. 2019), perform tasks autonomously (Monje Amor et al. 2021; Iqbal et al. 2020), and trust in their capabilities to achieve goals at work (Spreitzer 1995). These psychological resources could enhance employees' perceptions of self-efficacy, motivating them to develop positive attitudes, such as emotional attachments to the organization, and leading to higher performance and other positive outcomes.

This study contributes to the current literature by deepening the understanding of the mechanisms through which psychological empowerment enhances task-based job performance. Recent studies have attempted to support the connections between psychological empowerment and organizational outcomes (Emery et al. 2019; Gong et al. 2020; Iqbal et al. 2020; Khattak et al. 2022; Sarwar et al. 2022; Sun et al. 2022; Yao et al. 2022).

This study is innovative for several reasons. First, to the best of our knowledge, no previous study has examined the serial effect of self-efficacy and affective commitment in understanding how psychological empowerment translates into better performance. Second, the study of self-efficacy and affective commitment is relevant within the disruptive reality of the work environment (MacKenzie et al. 2022), interacting with multiple factors that impact the effective connection of the worker to the organization. While self-efficacy reinforces the cognitive sphere, affective commitment strengthens the emotional sphere

of individuals at work. Third, this study, which includes self-efficacy, contributes to the reinforcement of the characteristics, attitudes, and positive capacities, some of which are part of employees' psychological capital (Luthans and Youssef 2007; Luthans et al. 2007), and generates a containment barrier against the increase in organizational malaise due to the demands of the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment and the consequences of the pandemic (Luthans and Broad 2022).

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the theoretical framework and existing literature that supports the hypotheses development. Section 3 describes the materials and methods and how the data were collected and analyzed. The results of the study are presented in Section 4. A discussion of the findings is presented in Section 5. Limitations and strengths are shown in Section 6. Sections 7 and 8 highlight the implications for practice and provide concluding remarks.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Psychological Empowerment and Task-Based Job Performance

The concept of empowerment has been widely studied in social sciences, psychology, and management (Conger and Kanungo 1988). Among the different typologies surrounding this variable, the most classic is the distinction between the structural and psychological perspectives pointed out by Laschinger et al. (2007). This study will focus on psychological empowerment. According to Spreitzer (1995), psychological empowerment can be defined as an intrinsic motivation that reflects the orientation of individuals toward their job role and the way they fit job requirements. In addition, Spreitzer (1995) conceptualized psychological empowerment as a multidimensional construct comprising four dimensions (meaning, self-determination, impact, and competency). The *meaning* dimension reflects the alignment between the individual's work role and their values and standards. The *self-determination* dimension refers to the power to initiate and regulate actions. The *impact* dimension involves the individual's belief that they can influence organizational activities and work outcomes. Finally, the *competency* dimension includes the belief in one's ability to perform duties at work, which can be seen as one's sense of self-efficacy. In the existing literature, psychological empowerment has been associated with several organizational variables, such as work engagement (Gong et al. 2020; Meng and Sun 2019; Monje Amor et al. 2021), quality of service (Jaiswal and Dhar 2016), organizational citizenship behavior (Ma et al. 2021), safety behavior (Ochoa Pacheco et al. 2022), proactive behaviors such as taking charge (Kumar et al. 2022), innovative behavior (Singh and Sarkar 2019), job-crafting (Khan et al. 2022; Kooij et al. 2022), and proactivity (Coun et al. 2022), among others.

Job performance is a commonly revised outcome in the organizational literature and includes workers' behaviors that contribute to accomplishing organizational goals (Campbell and Wiernik 2015). Several scholars have identified different dimensions of job performance throughout time (Ramos-Villagrasa et al. 2019). However, the most common conceptualization is the distinction between task-based and contextual performance, as proposed by Borman and Motowidlo (1997). This article will focus on task-based job performance, which includes employees' actions and behaviors to meet job requirements and transform organizational resources into services or goods (Sonnentag et al. 2008), and involves the level of proficiency with which an individual executes tasks at work (Borman and Motowidlo 1993).

An extensive body of literature addresses the relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance (Seibert et al. 2011; Chamberlin et al. 2018; Choi 2020; Frazier and Jacezko 2021; Wang et al. 2022; Yao et al. 2020; Ochoa Pacheco and Coello-Montecel 2023). The existing literature has shown that psychological empowerment enhances employees' task-based job performance in different ways. For example, psychological empowerment increases employees' perceptions of the value of their job, promoting their sense of self-efficacy and allowing them to achieve better performance (Li et al. 2015). Highly empowered employees tend to be more persistent and resourceful, leading them to

achieve goals with autonomy (Guerrero et al. 2018; Manzoor et al. 2019; Çetin and Aşkun 2018). In addition, recent meta-analyses (e.g., Chamberlin et al. 2018) confirmed the positive influence of psychological empowerment on task-based job performance because it fosters employees' beliefs of competence at work. Based on the abovementioned discussion, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Psychological empowerment has a positive impact on task-based job performance.*

2.2. Psychological Empowerment and Affective Commitment

Organizational commitment is among the most discussed work attitudes (Allen and Meyer 1990, 1996) in the existing literature. It can be defined as an employee's degree of involvement with the organization (Meyer et al. 1993). According to Allen and Meyer (1990), organizational commitment comprises three dimensions: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. This article will focus on affective commitment since it is related to organizational actions and behaviors (Meyer et al. 2002). Affective commitment can be defined as employees' emotional attachment, identification with, and involvement in their organization (Meyer and Allen 1991).

Several studies have examined how employees' psychological empowerment fosters their commitment (e.g., Joo and Shim 2010; Ibrahim 2020; Qing et al. 2020). Seibert et al. (2011) argued that psychological empowerment is one of the factors that can improve employees' positive attitudes, such as affective commitment. Some studies have analyzed the relationship between psychological empowerment and affective commitment (Jha 2011; Islam et al. 2014). For example, the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment enhances affective commitment because it reflects the fit between an individual's work role and their own values. At the same time, the feeling of competence and impact allows employees to express their values and interests (Seibert et al. 2011). It is also plausible that employees reciprocate with commitment when their organization provides them with meaningful tasks and opportunities to carry out their activities (Kundu and Kumar 2017). In addition, empowered employees tend to perceive their job as impactful and valuable, which makes them feel happier and more satisfied, contributing to a higher sense of commitment (Qing et al. 2020). In general, the existing literature (e.g., Al Otaibi et al. 2022; Murray and Holmes 2021) suggests that employees with higher levels of psychological empowerment are more committed to their work and organizations. Given this discussion, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *Psychological empowerment has a positive impact on affective commitment.*

2.3. Affective Commitment and Task-Based Job Performance

Job performance is one of the primary outcomes of organizational commitment since highly committed employees will generally exert greater effort in their jobs (Steers 1977). The relationship between affective commitment and task-based job performance has been examined in previous research (e.g., Sharma and Dhar 2016; Yao et al. 2020; Sungu et al. 2020; Shao et al. 2022). In particular, a literature review by Mercurio (2015) indicated that affective commitment had stronger correlations with organizational outcomes, such as turnover intention or job performance, than the other two organizational commitment dimensions (normative and continuance). Employees who are affectively committed to their organizations are motivated to reciprocate with favorable organizational behaviors, such as higher job performance (Wang et al. 2020). Sungu et al. (2020) showed a significant positive association between normative and affective commitment and job performance, while continuance commitment showed a non-significant association with job performance. Finally, other studies (e.g., Sharma and Dhar 2016; Yao et al. 2020; Shao et al. 2022) have reported a positive association between affective commitment and task-based job performance. In consequence, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *Affective commitment has a positive impact on task-based job performance.*

2.4. Psychological Empowerment and Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is “people’s judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (Bandura 1986, p. 391). Hence, it can be defined as the perception of one’s capability to use skills to accomplish goals (Heslin et al. 2017; Downes et al. 2021). Self-efficacy is a dynamic construct that can change over time (Parker 1998; Carter et al. 2018). Despite the scarce literature that analyzes the influence of psychological empowerment on self-efficacy, some recent studies reported a positive relationship between these two variables (Ruiz-Fernández et al. 2022; Azizifar et al. 2020). In particular, Ruiz-Fernández et al.’s study found a strong correlation between self-efficacy and the competence dimension of psychological empowerment. Their study suggested that highly empowered employees tend to perceive themselves as more competent in performing tasks at work. Consequently, the following was formulated:

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *Psychological empowerment has a positive impact on self-efficacy.*

2.5. Self-Efficacy and Task-Based Job Performance

The predictive role of self-efficacy on performance has been well-documented in previous research (Bandura and Locke 2003; Carter et al. 2018; De Clercq et al. 2018; Latham and Locke 1991; Miraglia et al. 2017; Stajkovic and Luthans 1998). In particular, Judge et al. (2007) conducted a meta-analytic study that showed that self-efficacy predicts task-based job performance but not overall job performance. Individuals with a higher sense of self-efficacy are more persistent when facing obstacles (Bandura and Adams 1977). In summary, the existing literature has suggested that performance depends on what employees try to do and how confident they are in doing it (Bandura and Locke 2003). In this regard, Tims et al. (2014) pointed out that employees who perceive themselves as capable and competent will put greater effort into accomplishing tasks and exhibit more persistence. Based on the abovementioned literature, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 5 (H5). *Self-efficacy has a positive impact on task-based job performance.*

2.6. Self-Efficacy and Affective Commitment

Self-efficacy is a motivational construct that improves behaviors, such as goal commitment or persistence, and emotional states, such as affect commitment (Gist and Mitchell 1992). According to Bandura (1986), employees’ perceptions of self-efficacy helps them to stay committed to their organizations since a higher feeling of confidence in their abilities helps them to be committed to their goals or tasks (Ardabili 2020). Previous research (e.g., Ashfaq et al. 2021; Almutairi 2020; Erum et al. 2020; Yogalakshmi and Suganthi 2020) has documented the positive relationship between self-efficacy and affective commitment. Meyer et al.’s (2002) meta-analysis concluded that self-efficacy is a personal characteristic that enhances affective commitment. Some authors have found that self-efficacy does not directly impact affective commitment; their relationship can be mediated by other variables, such as work engagement (Orgambidez et al. 2019). Albrecht and Marty’s (2020) study used the job demands-resources model (Bakker and Demerouti 2013, 2017) to explore the link between self-efficacy, affective commitment, personality, and turnover intention. They concluded that employees’ resources improve self-efficacy, which enhances affective commitment. Based on this discussion, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 6 (H6). *Self-efficacy has a positive impact on affective commitment.*

2.7. The Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy

Previous research has identified several mediating variables in the relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance, such as work en-

agement (Juyumaya 2022), organizational citizenship behavior (Chiang and Hsieh 2012), intrapreneurial behavior (Mahmoud et al. 2022), job satisfaction (Ölçer and Florescu 2015), and psychological well-being (Ahmed and Malik 2019), among others. However, the literature evaluating the mediating role of self-efficacy in this relationship is still scarce (e.g., Idrus et al. 2015; Kim and Beehr 2017). Self-efficacy has been introduced as a mediating variable in the relationship between different organizational variables, such as between work engagement and affective commitment (Albrecht and Marty 2020), emotional intelligence and task-based job performance (Udayar et al. 2020), stress and burnout (Yu et al. 2015), psychological empowerment and proactive behavior (Huang 2017), among others.

According to Li et al. (2015), the mechanisms through which psychological empowerment improves performance are still unclear. Consequently, because those empowered employees perceive themselves as capable and autonomous in performing at work, self-efficacy could mediate the relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance. Previous research that has evaluated the mediating role of self-efficacy (Kim and Beehr 2017; Huang 2017) has supported the idea that it can be conceived as a catalyst for the effect of motivational constructs, such as psychological empowerment, to improve task-based job performance. For instance, the study by Kim and Beehr (2017) determined that leaders can improve employees' self-efficacy by promoting participation and involvement in different organizational decisions and activities, leading to better performance. Their results supported the mediating effect of self-efficacy in the relationship between empowering leadership and in-role performance. Furthermore, Huang (2017) tested the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between psychological empowerment and proactive behavior and concluded that empowered employees tend to show more proactive behavior by enhancing their feeling of self-efficacy. Hence, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 7 (H7). *Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance.*

2.8. The Mediating Role of Affective Commitment

Previous studies have determined that affective commitment could improve task-based job performance (e.g., Sharma and Dhar 2016; Yao et al. 2020; Sungu et al. 2020; Shao et al. 2022); however, the level of exhibited performance driven by affective commitment might depend on how employees interpret the value of their work (Wang et al. 2020). Since psychological empowerment is one of the factors that could increase affective commitment (Seibert et al. 2011), it can be expected that empowered employees are more emotionally attached to their organizations, which can enhance their performance at work. In this regard, Kaur and Mittal (2020) explained that if employees perceive their work as significant and meaningful, they will exhibit more effort toward their work as long as the organization implements policies that enhance their affective commitment.

Some evidence related to the above discussion was also found in Kundu and Kumar's (2017) study, which reported that affective commitment partially mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and firm performance. Srivastava and Dhar (2016) found that organizational commitment partially mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and extra-role performance. Similar findings were reported in a recent study by Yao et al. (2022). They found an indirect effect of psychological empowerment on job performance through affective commitment.

The abovementioned studies suggest a potential mediating role of affective commitment in the relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance. Consequently, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 8 (H8). *Affective commitment mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance.*

2.9. The Serial Mediating Effect of Self-Efficacy and Affective Commitment

The literature that assesses the mechanisms through which psychological empowerment enhances organizational outcomes has grown during the last years (Gong et al. 2020; Khattak et al. 2022; Sun et al. 2022). According to Miraglia et al. (2017), employees with higher levels of self-efficacy will try to establish more adequate conditions for effective performance; this could be accomplished by promoting positive work attitudes, such as affective commitment. Previous meta-analytic studies (e.g., Judge and Bono 2001) have reported how self-efficacy supports positive attitudes. It has been established that individuals who exhibit stronger self-efficacy beliefs have more optimistic perspectives that foster their commitment (Bargsted et al. 2019).

A theoretical framework that helps to establish the mediating role of self-efficacy and affective commitment in the relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance is included in the study by Albrecht and Marty (2020). They stated that self-efficacy could be considered a personal resource with direct and indirect effects on motivational- and performance-related outcomes. Moreover, according to the COR theory (Hobfoll 1989; Hobfoll et al. 2018), psychological empowerment can be conceived as a valuable resource that reflects other important psychological resources, such as competence and self-determination (Halbesleben et al. 2014), which can help employees improve their sense of self-efficacy, resulting in higher performance at work. Based on these frameworks, it can be argued that empowered individuals tend to perceive themselves as more capable (Heslin et al. 2017; Heslin 1999; Huang 2017), which subsequently promotes their feelings of commitment (Ardabili 2020; Ashfaq et al. 2021); this is ultimately reflected in higher effort on job tasks or different types of positive behaviors (Na-Nan et al. 2021; Miraglia et al. 2017). Consequently, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 9 (H9). *Self-efficacy and affective commitment serially mediate the relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance.*

Based on the previous discussion of the existing literature, the hypothesized relationships are presented in Figure 1.

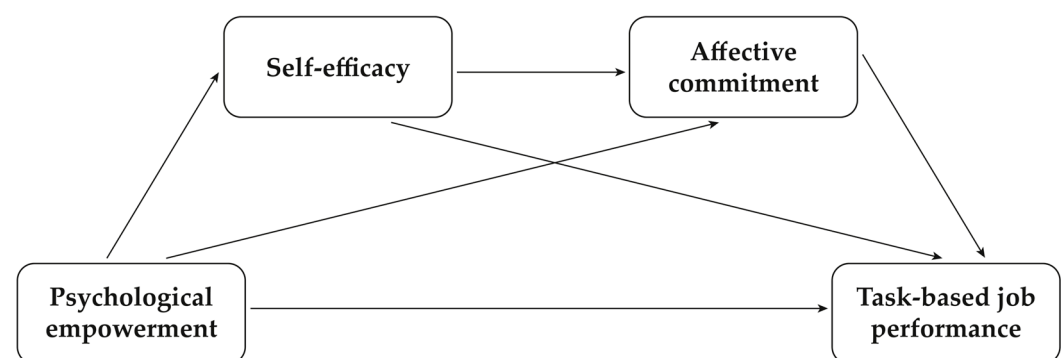


Figure 1. Research model.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Data Collection Procedure

The study design was cross-sectional, and a convenience sampling method was used. Data were collected from January to May 2018. The research team visited the companies and conducted several face-to-face sessions for data collection. The participants of the study were employees at a representative Ecuadorian telecommunications company. Participation was voluntary. All participants were informed about the objectives and scope of the study. All participants agreed to participate in the study with an informed consent form. They were also asked to return the questionnaires to the researchers on-site to ensure confidentiality. Data were collected using printed copies of the survey. A total of 560 surveys were

delivered. The response rate of the study was 80%. A total of 450 surveys were collected, and 87 were removed due to several missing answers. Hence, a total of 363 surveys were collected. However, after an exploratory dataset analysis, six observations were identified as multivariate outliers based on Mahalanobis distance statistics. These observations were removed from the dataset. The final sample for data analysis consisted of 357 observations.

3.2. Participants

The average age of the sample was 36.35 years ($SD = 5.25$). Of the 357 participants, 47.3% were male, while 52.7% were female. Regarding marital status, most participants were married (63.9%), while 36.1% reported being single. Most respondents had a bachelor's degree (68.3%), 14.3% had a master's degree, and 17.4% had not finished higher education. Concerning the field of specialization, participants were mainly related to science and engineering (42.3%) and business and administration (44.8%), while a minority were related to other professions or occupations (12.9%). Finally, 79.6% of the employees worked in core business areas (marketing, IT, and customer care), while 20.4% were in support areas (audit, finance, and administration).

3.3. Measures

Psychological empowerment: The Spanish version (Albar et al. 2012) of the 12-item scale developed by Spreitzer (1995) was used to measure psychological empowerment. This scale comprises four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Items were rated using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Some examples of items are: "The work I do is very important to me" (meaning); "I am confident about my ability to do my job" (competence); "I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job" (self-determination); and "I have significant influence over what happens in my department" (impact). The reliability of the overall scale in this study was acceptable ($\omega = 0.873$, 95% CI [0.774–0.994]). The reliability estimates for each of the dimensions are reported in Section 4.

Task-based job performance: This variable was measured using a 6-item scale based on Monteiro de Castro et al. (2016) and Santos et al. (2018). The authors of this study followed a back-translation process to translate the selected items into Spanish. Participants' supervisors completed this instrument, and the data were later matched with the employees' self-reported scores of psychological empowerment, affective commitment, and self-efficacy. Items were rated using a 10-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 10 (always). Some sample statements are: "How often do you perform the tasks within what has been established?" and "How often do you recognize that you are responsible for the results of your work?" The reliability of the overall scale in this study was satisfactory ($\omega = 0.958$, 95% CI [0.933–0.973]).

Affective commitment: The Spanish version (Arciniega and González 2006) of the 6-item scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) was used to measure affective commitment. Items were rated with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Examples of the items are "I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own" and "I feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization." The reliability of the overall scale in this study was appropriate ($\omega = 0.939$, 95% CI [0.906–0.961]).

Self-efficacy: This variable was measured using the Spanish version (Salanova et al. 2000) of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach and Jackson 1981) for general use. Items were rated with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always). Examples of the items are "I can effectively solve problems that arise in my work" and "I contribute effectively to my organization." The reliability of the overall scale in this study was acceptable ($\omega = 0.848$, 95% CI [0.769–0.898]).

3.4. Data Analysis Procedures

A preliminary screening of the dataset was conducted before testing the proposed hypotheses. This analysis allowed the identification of potential issues (e.g., the presence

of multivariate outliers and the distributional characteristics of the observed data). The Mahalanobis-squared distance (D^2 ; Mahalanobis 1936) was used to determine the presence of multivariate outliers. The normality of the dataset was evaluated by inspecting the skewness and kurtosis and through the Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test. These analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26.

After the preliminary analysis of the dataset's characteristics, the validity and reliability of the measures were evaluated. The construct validity was assessed using a series of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) specifications. These models were estimated using the maximum likelihood estimator. The model goodness-of-fit was evaluated using the following indices: the comparative fit index (CFI), the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), the normed fit index (NFI), the Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR).

The convergent validity was assessed considering two criteria. Firstly, the factor loadings were examined, and those items with values above 0.50 were retained to guarantee appropriate convergent validity levels (Bagozzi and Yi 1988; Hair et al. 2019). Secondly, the average variance extracted (AVE) was also evaluated, considering a cut-off threshold value of 0.50 (Hair et al. 2019).

The discriminant validity of the measures was tested using the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Fornell and Larcker 1981) and a modified version of the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations (Henseler 2021; Roemer et al. 2021). The Fornell–Larcker criterion indicates that the square root of the AVE value of each latent variable should be higher than its correlation with other variables included in the model. The modified HTMT ratio (also known as HTMT2) relaxes the tau-equivalent measurement models assumption proposed in its original version (Henseler et al. 2015), which ensures unbiased and more consistent estimations in the presence of congeneric models. Values below 0.85 were considered an indicator of discriminant validity.

The reliability of the measures was assessed using the McDonald's omega (ω) coefficient (McDonald 1999) instead of Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient (Cronbach 1951). Although scholars commonly use both coefficients to evaluate the internal consistency of latent factors, it is worth noting that Cronbach's alpha tends to underestimate reliability when there is a considerable variation in factor loadings and correlated errors (Bacon et al. 1995; Dunn et al. 2014; Hair et al. 2019; Hayes and Coutts 2020).

The hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling (SEM). Psychological empowerment and task-based job performance were considered as predictor and outcome variables, respectively, while self-efficacy and affective commitment were introduced as mediators. The hypotheses related to the mediating role of self-efficacy and affective commitment were tested using a bootstrapping process based on 5000 bias-corrected samples and a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval (CI) (Hayes and Scharkow 2013). This procedure allowed us to obtain robust estimations not affected by the lack of multivariate normality (Byrne 2001; Hair et al. 2019). All models were estimated using IBM AMOS version 24.0.

4. Results

4.1. Item Analysis

The preliminary screening of the dataset allowed the identification of surveys with multivariate outliers and the distributional characteristics of the data considered for statistical analyses. Observing the univariate skewness and kurtosis suggested that the data deviated from a normal distribution. In addition, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test indicated that the data distribution significantly differed from the normal distribution. The characteristics of the items that comprised each of the measures included in this study are reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Item descriptive statistics.

Variables	Item	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	K-S
PE—Meaning	emp01	6.61	0.87	−3.78	18.86	0.41 ***
	emp02	6.53	0.88	−2.90	11.53	0.38 ***
	emp03	6.54	0.93	−3.23	13.85	0.39 ***
PE—Competence	emp04	6.73	0.68	−4.41	28.50	0.45 ***
	emp05	6.74	0.67	−4.60	31.21	0.46 ***
	emp06	6.70	0.71	−4.08	24.74	0.44 ***
PE—Impact	emp07	6.62	0.87	−3.78	18.67	0.42 ***
	emp08	6.30	1.02	−2.10	5.92	0.30 ***
	emp09	6.09	1.15	−1.85	4.31	0.27 ***
PE—Self-determination	emp10	6.12	1.19	−2.03	5.03	0.25 ***
	emp11	6.28	1.04	−1.88	4.51	0.31 ***
	emp12	6.04	1.17	−1.79	4.32	0.25 ***
Task-based job performance	per01	7.20	1.46	0.68	−0.23	0.31 ***
	per02	6.93	1.48	0.59	−0.01	0.27 ***
	per03	7.29	1.57	0.21	0.73	0.33 ***
	per04	7.17	1.50	0.36	0.23	0.31 ***
Affective commitment	comt01	5.95	1.11	−1.65	4.47	0.24 ***
	comt02	5.82	1.41	−1.47	2.14	0.24 ***
	comt03	5.98	1.34	−1.69	3.12	0.25 ***
	comt04	6.03	1.28	−1.75	3.65	0.26 ***
	comt05	6.14	1.19	−1.87	4.45	0.29 ***
	comt06	5.85	1.31	−1.53	2.77	0.23 ***
Self-efficacy	sef01	5.52	0.60	−0.84	−0.28	0.36 ***
	sef02	5.61	0.59	−1.41	1.83	0.41 ***
	sef03	5.67	0.55	−1.42	1.08	0.44 ***
	sef04	5.64	0.65	−1.87	3.27	0.43 ***
	sef05	5.38	0.73	−1.09	1.15	0.31 ***
	sef06	5.60	0.64	−2.05	7.54	0.40 ***

Notes: $N = 357$. PE = Psychological empowerment; SD = Standard deviation; K-S = Kolmogorov–Smirnov test of normality. Significance levels (two-tailed): *** $p < 0.001$.

4.2. Descriptive Analysis

Table 2 shows the mean, standard deviation, and intercorrelation coefficients for psychological empowerment and its dimensions (meaning, competence, impact, self-determination), self-efficacy, affective commitment, and task-based job performance. Factor scores were computed using non-refined methods (DiStefano et al. 2009). Each indicator that comprises the dimension was multiplied by its corresponding factor loading, then the resulting scores were summed and divided by the sum of the factor loadings. This computation yielded weighted mean factor scores where higher scores represent higher levels of psychological empowerment, self-efficacy, affective commitment, and task-based job performance.

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelation coefficients between variables.

Variables	Mean (SD)	Correlations					
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Psychological empowerment	6.50 (0.68)						
Meaning	6.56 (0.83)						
Competence	6.72 (0.66)	0.734 ***					
Impact	6.37 (0.87)	0.743 ***	0.673 ***				
Self-determination	6.15 (1.02)	0.270 ***	0.153 **	0.383 ***			
Self-efficacy	5.57 (0.46)	0.316 ***	0.289 ***	0.339 ***	0.362 ***		
Affective commitment	5.97 (1.12)	0.539 ***	0.344 ***	0.465 ***	0.304 ***	0.311 ***	
Task-based job performance	7.15 (1.42)	0.179 ***	0.178 ***	0.223 ***	0.180 ***	0.261 ***	0.222 ***

Notes: SD = Standard deviation. Correlations are reported below the diagonal. Significance levels (two-tailed): ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

In general, participants reported high levels of psychological empowerment ($M = 6.50$, $SD = 0.68$), being higher than those observed in the competence ($M = 6.72$, $SD = 0.66$) and meaning ($M = 6.56$, $SD = 0.83$) dimensions. Higher self-efficacy scores were also reported ($M = 5.57$, $SD = 0.46$), while affective commitment ($M = 5.97$, $SD = 1.12$) and task-based job performance ($M = 7.15$, $SD = 1.42$) showed medium scores, measured on a 7-point and 10-point Likert scale, respectively. All correlations between the variables were statistically significant.

4.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Reliability

The dimensionality of the measures included in the study was validated using confirmatory methods. The measurement model included one second-order factor representing psychological empowerment and its dimensions and three first-order factors representing self-efficacy, affective commitment, and task-based job performance. According to the results, this specification showed an acceptable fit to the data (CFI = 0.927; GFI = 0.860; NFI = 0.893; TLI = 0.918; RMSEA = 0.073 [90% CI: 0.068–0.078]; SRMR = 0.073). Table 3 shows item factor loadings, reliability, and AVE values for each latent factor. All factor loadings were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), and their size exceeded the recommended cut-off value of 0.50 (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994), ensuring adequate internal consistency levels. Except for self-efficacy, all AVE values exceeded the adequate cut-off value of 0.50. The AVE value for self-efficacy was acceptable because of its reliability level (Fornell and Larcker 1981). These results confirmed the convergent validity of the measures included in the model. Regarding reliability, McDonald's omega (ω) coefficient estimates were satisfactory for all variables.

Table 3. Measurement model results.

Item	Statement	Loadings	Reliability	AVE
Psychological empowerment			0.873 (0.774–0.944)	0.656 (0.507–0.819)
<i>Meaning</i>		0.932	0.924 (0.830–0.970)	0.802 (0.626–0.915)
emp01	The work I do is very important to me.	0.823		
emp02	My job activities are personally meaningful to me.	0.937		
emp03	The work I do is meaningful to me.	0.923		
<i>Competence</i>		0.813	0.956 (0.903–0.981)	0.880 (0.758–0.946)
emp04	I am confident about my ability to do my job.	0.950		
emp05	I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities.	0.981		
emp06	I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.	0.880		
<i>Impact</i>		0.989	0.793 (0.652–0.875)	0.566 (0.395–0.703)
emp07	My impact on what happens in my department is large.	0.894		
emp08	I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department.	0.713		
emp09	I have a significant influence over what happens in my department	0.626		
<i>Self-determination</i>		0.343	0.877 (0.784–0.934)	0.704 (0.548–0.826)
emp10	I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job.	0.826		
emp11	I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work.	0.829		
emp12	I have considerable opportunities for independence and freedom in how I do my job.	0.862		
Self-efficacy			0.848 (0.769–0.898)	0.484 (0.361–0.595)
sef01	I deal very effectively with the problems that arise at work.	0.649		
sef02	I contribute effectively to my organization.	0.801		
sef03	In my opinion, I am good at my job.	0.777		
sef04	Achieving goals at work stimulates me.	0.598		
sef05	I have achieved many valuable things in my job.	0.678		
sef06	I am sure that I am effective in finishing things in my job.	0.649		

Table 3. Cont.

Item	Statement	Loadings	Reliability	AVE
Affective commitment			0.939 (0.906–0.961)	0.721 (0.619–0.804)
comt01	I feel ‘part of the family’ at my organization.	0.748		
comt02	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.	0.796		
comt03	I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it.	0.838		
comt04	I feel ‘emotionally attached’ to this organization.	0.944		
comt05	This organization has a great personal meaning to me.	0.897		
comt06	I really feel as if this organization’s problems are my own.	0.859		
Task-based job performance			0.958 (0.933–0.973)	0.849 (0.778–0.900)
	<i>How often do you . . .</i>			
per01	finish the assigned tasks within the time that has been established?	0.938		
per02	take the initiative to solve problems not stated by you?	0.899		
per03	recognize that you are responsible for the results of your work?	0.940		
per04	receive special tasks to perform?	0.909		

Notes: Reliability estimates were based on McDonald Omega (ω) composite reliability coefficient. AVE = Average variance extracted. The 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals are reported in parentheses based on 5000 bootstrap samples. The following items were dropped from the confirmatory factor analyses since they presented a factor loading that did not meet the cut-off suggested by Hair et al. (2019): per05 and per06. All factor loadings reported in this table were statistically significant at a $p < 0.001$ level.

Discriminant validity was also validated. Following the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Fornell and Larcker 1981), all the square roots of the AVE values were larger than the intercorrelation coefficients reported in Table 2. In addition, all the HTMT ratio values for all the pairs of latent factors were below the suggested cut-off value of 0.85 (Henseler 2021; Roemer et al. 2021). The HTMT ratio of correlations estimates are reported in Table 4.

Table 4. Discriminant validity analysis results.

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Psychological empowerment	-			
2. Self-efficacy	0.489 (0.301–0.609)	-		
3. Affective commitment	0.599 (0.471–0.688)	0.344 (0.140–0.471)	-	
4. Job performance	0.275 (0.108–0.392)	0.285 (0.107–0.395)	0.229 (0.066–0.339)	-

Notes: The heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) correlations ratio estimates to assess discriminant validity are reported under the diagonal. Values > 0.85 suggest discriminant validity concerns. The 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals are reported in brackets computed using 5000 bootstrapping samples.

4.4. Test of Hypotheses

The proposed hypotheses were evaluated by estimating a structural model. The initial structural model showed good fit indices (CFI = 0.927; GFI = 0.838; TLI = 0.918; NFI = 0.901; RMSEA = 0.073, 90% CI (0.068–0.078); SRMR = 0.073). All paths were statistically significant except for the path from psychological empowerment to task-based job performance ($\beta = 0.087$, 95% CI = -0.042 – 0.251 , $p = 0.181$). After removing the path, the goodness-of-fit indices in the final model were also acceptable (CFI = 0.927; GFI = 0.837; TLI = 0.918; NFI = 0.901; RMSEA = 0.073, 90% CI (0.068–0.078); SRMR = 0.074). The estimates for all structural paths are shown in Table 5. All paths in the modified model were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). According to the results, psychological empowerment had a positive impact on affective commitment ($p < 0.001$) and self-efficacy ($p < 0.001$), validating H2 and H4. Moreover, the impact of affective commitment on task-based job performance was also positive and statistically significant ($p = 0.025$), supporting H3. Finally, self-efficacy had a positive effect on task-based job performance ($p < 0.001$) and affective commitment ($p = 0.043$), confirming H5 and H6.

Table 5. Results of the hypotheses testing.

Direct/Indirect Effects	β	SE	95% BC CI		p-Value
			LL	UL	
<i>Direct effects:</i>					
Psychological empowerment → Affective commitment	0.519	0.091	0.316	0.671	0.001
Affective commitment → Job performance	0.143	0.064	0.016	0.265	0.025
Psychological empowerment → Self-efficacy	0.377	0.070	0.254	0.529	0.000
Self-efficacy → Job performance	0.239	0.061	0.114	0.355	0.000
Self-efficacy → Affective commitment	0.124	0.066	0.003	0.265	0.043
<i>Indirect effects:</i>					
Psychological empowerment → Affective commitment → Job performance	0.074	0.040	0.010	0.165	0.020
Psychological empowerment → Self-efficacy → Job performance	0.090	0.032	0.038	0.165	0.000
Psychological empowerment → Self-efficacy → Affective commitment → Job performance	0.007	0.004	0.001	0.020	0.020
Total indirect effect	0.171	0.039	0.098	0.248	0.000

Notes: β = unstandardized structural path coefficients; SE = Bias-corrected standard error; 95% BC CI = Bias-corrected confidence interval based on 5000 bootstrap samples; LL = Lower limit; UL = Upper limit.

Regarding the mediating role of self-efficacy and affective commitment, the indirect effect of psychological empowerment on task-based job performance through self-efficacy was significant ($\beta = 0.090$, $SE = 0.032$, 95% CI = 0.038–0.165, $p < 0.001$), supporting H7. In addition, the study found a significant indirect effect of psychological empowerment on task-based job performance through affective commitment ($\beta = 0.074$, $SE = 0.040$, 95% CI = 0.010–0.165, $p = 0.020$), validating H8. Finally, the study tested the indirect effect of psychological empowerment on task-based job performance via both self-efficacy and affective commitment ($\beta = 0.007$, $SE = 0.004$, 95% CI = 0.001–0.020, $p = 0.020$). Therefore, H9 was also confirmed. The total indirect effect of psychological empowerment on task-based job performance was 0.171 ($SE = 0.039$, 95% CI = 0.098–0.248, $p < 0.001$). To summarize, the results from the study showed that there was an indirect relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance. This association was mediated by self-efficacy and affective commitment. The results of the serial mediation analyses are presented in Table 6 and Figure 2.

Table 6. Presentation of the null hypotheses accepted and rejected following SEM standardized regression coefficients.

Hypotheses	Status
H1: Psychological empowerment has a positive impact on task-based job performance.	Not supported
H2: Psychological empowerment has a positive impact on affective commitment.	Supported
H3: Affective commitment has a positive impact on task-based job performance.	Supported
H4: Psychological empowerment has a positive impact on self-efficacy.	Supported
H5: Self-efficacy has a positive impact on task-based job performance.	Supported
H6: Self-efficacy has a positive impact on affective commitment.	Supported
H7: Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance.	Supported
H8: Affective commitment mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance.	Supported
H9: Self-efficacy and affective commitment serially mediate the relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance.	Supported

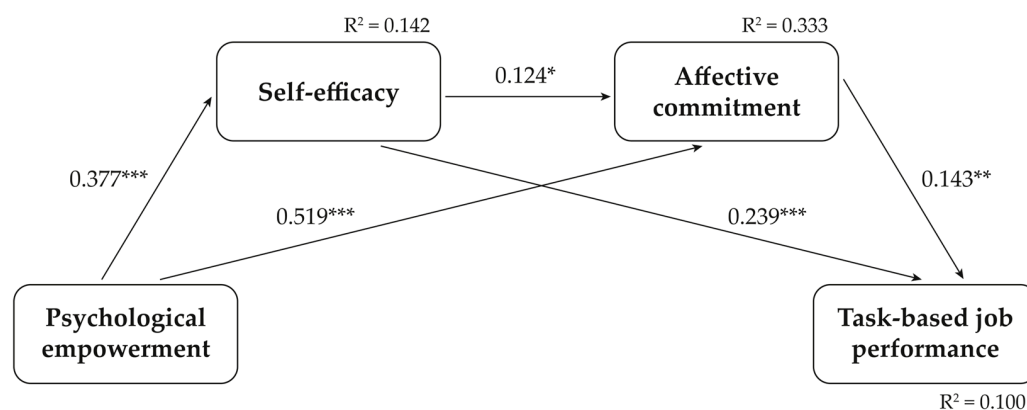


Figure 2. Standardized structural path coefficients. Notes: All endogenous variables are associated with errors, which are not shown in this figure for simplicity. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

5. Discussion

This article examined the mediating role of self-efficacy and affective commitment in the relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance. Two main findings can be derived from the results. Firstly, the validation of structural relationships between psychological empowerment, self-efficacy, affective commitment, and task-based job performance, as previously addressed in the existing literature. Secondly, the confirmation of the serial mediation of self-efficacy and affective commitment in the relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance. A brief discussion of these findings is presented below.

The results of this article reinforce previous findings related to how psychological empowerment can promote psychological resources, such as self-efficacy, and positive attitudes, such as affective commitment. The positive relationship between psychological empowerment and affective commitment reported in this article is consistent with previous studies (Joo and Shim 2010; Ibrahim 2020; Qing et al. 2020). This result suggests that employees who perceive their work as valuable, meaningful, and impactful tend to experience positive emotions (Qing et al. 2020) which are closely related to affective commitment (Meyer et al. 2002; Fisher 2010). In addition, in line with the study by Seibert et al. (2011), the alienation between the job role and an individual's values, comprised in the meaning dimension, is an important source of commitment.

Regarding the positive influence of psychological empowerment on self-efficacy, the results of this study are consistent with previous research by Ruiz-Fernández et al. (2022) and Azizifar et al. (2020). This finding can be explained because the self-determination dimension reflects, at some level, the autonomy and confidence in employees' capabilities promoted by managers, which enhance employees' sense of self-efficacy (Ma et al. 2022). According to the results, employees who reported having enough autonomy in determining how they do their job showed higher levels of competence and a higher perception of their capability to reflect that competence, i.e., a higher sense of self-efficacy.

Concerning the mediation analysis, the results supported that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance. The confirmation of the mediating effect of self-efficacy reflects the idea that as employees perceive themselves as more empowered, they are more confident about their capability to face and solve tasks at work. Employees' feelings of competence and self-determination, as given in the dimensions of psychological empowerment, improve their perception of self-efficacy (Chamberlin et al. 2018), which finally impacts their task performance positively. This finding was consistent with the study conducted by Kim and Beehr (2017), who found a full mediation of self-efficacy. They argued that empowerment is more a distal predictor, and its effects on job performance only occur when more proximal factors, such as self-efficacy, are considered. Similar results were reported by Huang (2017).

Moreover, the results supported that affective commitment mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance. This finding suggests that psychological empowerment fosters employees' feelings of attachment to their work (Salanova et al. 2000; Bargsted et al. 2019), which enhances their performance. Kim and Beehr (2017) reported similar results on the mediating role of affective commitment. They concluded that affective commitment translates empowerment's effects, such as autonomy in making decisions or opportunities to impact the organization, to organizational outcomes. Consequently, it can be argued that highly psychologically empowered telecommunications employees will exhibit high performance if they are affectively committed to their organization.

The serial mediation of self-efficacy and affective commitment was also confirmed, showing that empowered individuals are more likely to develop a higher sense of self-efficacy, enhancing their commitment, which results in a higher task-based job performance. This finding provides evidence of the mechanisms through which psychologically empowered individuals can achieve higher performance. Contrary to previous studies (Chamberlin et al. 2018; Choi 2020; Frazier and Jacezko 2021; Kundu and Kumar 2017; Wang et al. 2022; Yao et al. 2020), the direct effect of psychological empowerment on task-based job performance was not significant. This study also provides evidence of the positive relationship between self-efficacy and affective commitment, which has been reported in previous studies (Ashfaq et al. 2021; Almutairi 2020; Albrecht and Marty 2020; Ardabili 2020).

6. Limitations and Strengths

Despite the empirical contribution to understanding how psychological empowerment influences job performance, this study has some limitations and strengths. Three main limitations are presented. First, given that the results were obtained using cross-sectional data and a convenience sampling method, the relationships analyzed in this article cannot be generalized. Second, this study used self-reported psychological empowerment, self-efficacy, and affective commitment measures. To address this limitation, task-based job performance was measured using supervisor-based reports. Lastly, the data used in this study were collected before the COVID-19 pandemic, and may ignore the rapid changes in the configuration of the work experience (Alam 2020; Holland and Brewster 2021; Malhotra 2021). Hence, future research could extend the evidence provided in this study in a post-pandemic context.

Despite these limitations, this study has some strengths that should be highlighted. First, this article extended the existing literature by analyzing the relationship between psychological empowerment, self-efficacy, affective commitment, and task-based job performance. Second, the study highlights the importance of improving individual factors, such as self-efficacy and affective commitment, to improve psychological empowerment's effect on task-based job performance. Third, this study used an extensive multi-professional sample; and fourth, the scales used to collect the data underwent psychometric validation. In summary, this article emphasizes the importance of personal resources and the emotional components of employees' experience to achieve higher performance at work.

7. Implications for Practice

The study's results provide some practical implications at the organizational and individual levels. At the organizational level, the results can be the starting point for policies, plans, and programs to strengthen self-efficacy, commitment, and involvement at work. Research on commitment would make it possible to offer a broad vision of commitment, which goes beyond a partial result or a category, such as commitment profiles in the future, which provide more information about the employee (Oh 2019). Better knowledge, management, and interpretation of self-efficacy and commitment would also benefit the business partner units of the companies, allowing them to generate new indicators on a set of positive attitudes and proactivity toward work. At an individual level, with this

type of study, better metrics on the employee experience can be generated based on data and human resources analytics; this could contribute to the building of a good diagnosis of working experience and the design of new training and development plans. The need for innovative programs is increasing with the global challenges of teleworking and digitization. Many factors can intervene in increasing job performance; however, as this work highlights, feeling empowered and emotionally committed is essential in building a long-term relationship between the employee and the organization.

8. Conclusions

This article extends the literature on psychological empowerment and its effect on employees' performance. Based on the JD-R model and the COR theory, this study explored the mechanisms through which psychological empowerment translates into higher job performance by using a serial mediation model. This study is novel for three main reasons. First, to the best of our knowledge, the serial effect of self-efficacy and affective commitment in the relationship between psychological empowerment and task-based job performance has not been evaluated in previous research. Second, analyzing the role of self-efficacy and affective commitment as mechanisms to improve positive outcomes is relevant in the current work environment (MacKenzie et al. 2022). Finally, this article reinforces the importance of self-efficacy when facing the demands of the VUCA environment and the consequences of the pandemic on the configuration of the work experience (Luthans and Broad 2022). Thus, this study is a step toward understanding the positive influence of psychological empowerment on job performance by enhancing personal resources, such as self-efficacy, and promoting the affective attachment of employees to their organizations.

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