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Article

The Influence of Empowerment on the Motivation of Portuguese Employees—A Study Based on a Structural Equation Model

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Abstract: Over the last few years, in a continuous and growing way, the motivation of employees has been studied and it is currently agreed that it is an important work factor that significantly influences productivity and individual performance in an organisational context. As an influential factor for this motivation, we can find psychological empowerment in the sense that it gives employees freedom and confidence. This study aimed to understand the role of psychological empowerment in employee motivation. Empowerment can be translated, in a business context, into the training and valorisation of collaborators with a sense of their commitment to better the individual and, consequently, global performance of the organisation. In this research, empowerment was considered a motivational factor in achieving organisational objectives. The methodology used was of a quantitative nature based on a questionnaire survey that aimed to analyse psychological empowerment and the motivation of 620 individuals working in Portuguese organisations in the industry and services sectors. The results obtained, which were based on a structural equation model, show that psychological empowerment at work positively influenced employee motivation, with the meaning and self-determination dimensions contributing the most to motivation. The results obtained in the study have the potential to benefit both employees and organisations, contributing to a more productive and healthy working environment.

Keywords: empowerment; motivation; meaning; self determination



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1. Introduction

We found a wide variety of studies on empowerment framed by psychological factors and the development of self-evaluation and personal self-worth. Traditionally, empowerment is also associated with the growing importance of women's role in society (de Sousa and Melo 2009).

In recent decades, empowerment has emerged as a new approach to managing organisations from the perspective that the leader must delegate power and decentralise decision making. Empowerment will bring change, teamwork and employee accountability. By knowing the organisation's strategy, employees will be more involved in the organisation's operational and strategic processes and will feel more committed to achieving the desired results (Rowlands 1997; Wilkinson 1998). In recent years, employee empowerment has taken on greater importance in various types of organisations, as management practices that promote empowerment encourage employees to generate positive changes in their role, which can promote effectiveness and better organisational performance (Matsuo 2019).

Nowadays, with intense competition in various markets, organisations need qualified employees who are motivated and committed to the organisation so that they can sustain superior performance and be an important success factor (Vu 2020).

Motivation is also playing an increasingly important role in various markets, as it can be a management tool in organisations and a competitive differentiator in companies (Oliveira et al. 2018). Motivated employees are more productive, perform better and contribute to the success of the organisation (Carreira et al. 2020).

In this article, we consider empowerment and motivation and show how empowering employees can be related to their motivation.

Although there is no consensus on a single definition of the concept of empowerment, the authors are unanimous on its importance for organisations since it promotes the effectiveness, productivity, satisfaction and motivation of employees (Vu 2020); increases their confidence, commitment and productivity (Nwachukwu 2016); promotes their satisfaction with their work and organisation (Kumar and Kumar 2017); and increases their intrinsic motivation and organisational commitment (Andika and Darmanto 2020).

Therefore, understanding how employee empowerment can influence their motivation is fundamental if organisations are to survive and thrive by taking advantage of their employees' potential so that learning, performance and competitiveness are sustainable. This study sought to contribute to enriching research and deepening the literature on this subject by presenting a new model.

Previous research on the subject only verified that empowerment influences employee motivation in general, but did not analyse which dimensions contribute most to this influence. This study aimed to fill this gap in the literature by showing which dimension of empowerment most influences employee motivation in order to better understand its theoretical and practical implications. Following the empirical theory, in particular, the contribution of Spreitzer (1995), the aim of this investigation was to test the influence of empowerment in employee motivation by assuming four dimensions of empowerment: meaning of work, competence at work, self-determination at work and personal impact at work.

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 discusses the arguments that lead to the formulation of hypotheses; Sections 3 and 4 present the methods and results, respectively; Section 5 provides a discussion of the results; and Section 6 discusses the main conclusions and considers the limitations of the research and suggestions for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Empowering Employees

The concept of empowerment has been defined in the literature in different ways. Many authors (Kanjakanan et al. 2023; Meyerson and Dewettinck 2012; Randolph 1995; Vu 2020) stated that empowerment means giving employees freedom over certain task-related activities, which develops trust, motivation and participation in decision making while allowing for a "transfer of power" from the leader to the employee.

While some authors (Jacqueline 2014; Saif and Saleh 2013) considered that empowerment gives employees the authority to make decisions and deal with daily activities, leading them to be motivated, committed and satisfied in their work, others (Arnold et al. 2000; Kanjanakan et al. 2023; Ma et al. 2021; Spreitzer 1995) argued that the concept of empowerment goes beyond discretionary power and labour autonomy.

Empowerment recognises the power that people already possess in their wealth of valuable knowledge and internal motivation (Randolph 1995) and can be viewed from a structural or psychological perspective (Ma et al. 2021), which reflects an individual's feelings of self-control and self-efficacy and focusses on the relationship between leaders and employees (Arnold et al. 2000).

Spreitzer (1995) considers that empowerment is a multifaceted concept and its essence cannot be captured by just one dimension. This concept is defined more broadly as an increase in intrinsic motivation to carry out tasks and is manifested in four dimensions that

reflect the individual's orientation towards their role at work: (1) meaning of work (the value of a goal or work proposal, which is judged in relation to an individual's ideals or standards, competence, self-determination and impact), (2) competence (an individual's belief in their ability to carry out activities skilfully), (3) self-determination (an individual's sense of having a choice when initiating regulatory actions, reflecting autonomy in initiating and continuing the work and the process) and (4) impact (the degree to which an individual can influence strategic, administrative or operational outcomes at work) (Spreitzer and Doneson 2005).

On the other hand, Wooddell (2009) considered that there are four perspectives to empowerment: (1) common attitude (success in meeting targets, customer orientation and clarity of goals), (2) organisational support (authority in decision-making, taking responsibility for team effectiveness, risk-taking), (3) knowledge and learning (encouragement for change, confidence, communication with customers), and (4) fundamental recognition (awareness and knowledge of the reward system).

Although both theories are accepted and have many points in common, Spreitzer's (1995) theory is the most discussed.

2.2. Motivating Employees

Employee motivation has been studied over time, and there is a consensus that it is an important work factor that significantly influences employee productivity and performance at both the organisational and individual levels (Frey et al. 2013; Nadreeva et al. 2016).

Although everyone agrees on the importance of motivation at work, there is no agreed definition of the concept, as it is complex and difficult to realise (Chiavenato 2005).

Motivation can be considered the force that drives professionals to carry out their duties, leading them to perform their work correctly with pleasure and fulfilment (Oliveira et al. 2018).

Jufrizen and Sitorus (2021) considered that motivation is the driving force that makes a member of the organisation willing to do an activity that is their responsibility and fulfil their obligations.

In general, we can consider that motivation only develops once you have a goal to fulfil because it is this goal that gives the impetus and mobilises a person's energies and guides the intention to achieve something (Gagné et al. 2015). In other words, motivation can be considered an impulse that exists within a person to do or not do an action in order to achieve certain objectives of the organisation in which they work (Andreas 2022).

According to Ferreira et al. (2006), motivation is a function of the relationship between the intensity of work behaviour, objectives and working conditions. The authors (Ferreira et al. 2006) built an instrument to assess motivation at work (Multi-Moti Scale), which is based on the theory of motivation with the organisation of work by Hackman and Oldham (1980), the theory of learnt needs by McClelland (1975), the theory of goal setting by Locke and Latham (1990), and the theory of organisational involvement processes by Allen and Meyer (1996).

According to Hackman and Oldham (1980), the psychological states associated with the acquisition of knowledge, increased responsibilities and knowledge of results are decisive in how they affect motivation in the workplace, with five important characteristics to consider: the variety of functions, the identity and meaning of tasks, autonomy and feedback. Thus, Ferreira et al. (2006) considered "motivation with work organisation" as one of the variables in the construct.

According to McClelland (1975), there are three basic needs that motivate people to perform: the need for fulfilment, the need for power and the need for affiliation. Regarding how people's behaviour is affected by these needs or motives, Ferreira et al. (2006) considered "achievement and power motivation" as another variable for the construct.

A goal-setting theory by Locke and Latham (1990) shows that setting goals systematically increases motivation and performance and has a major impact on the perception of progress (people can quantify what they are doing), self-efficacy and self-evaluation.

According to the authors [Locke and Latham \(1990\)](#), setting goals seems to be the best way to motivate employees and improve their performance levels. Thus, [Ferreira et al. \(2006\)](#) considered performance motivation to be another variable in the motivation construct.

After analysing the theory of organisational processes by [Allen and Meyer \(1996\)](#), we realise that involvement is a determining factor in productivity and seems to be associated with motivation at work. Thus, [Ferreira et al. \(2006\)](#) considered “involvement” to be an important variable in the motivation construct.

We considered this Multi-Moti scale ([Ferreira et al. 2006](#)) to be quite complete and well-founded, with it being a good instrument for assessing motivation at work.

2.3. The Role of Employee Empowerment in Motivating Employees

According to [Vu \(2020\)](#), employee empowerment is an important success factor for companies, as it promotes employee participation in decision-making and the generation and implementation of good ideas, as well as serving as a guideline that promotes employee effectiveness, productivity, satisfaction and motivation. Also, [Meng and Han \(2014\)](#) considered that empowerment provides employees with the control, authority and discretion they need to work autonomously and confidently, increasing their levels of motivation and performance.

[Kanjanakan et al. \(2023\)](#) stated that empowerment helps to improve the performance of an individual and an organisation, leading to high levels of motivation among all employees.

Empowerment increases employee confidence, commitment and productivity ([Nwachukwu 2016](#)). By accepting more responsibility, employees feel motivated to increase their skills and capabilities, leading to greater commitment to the organisation ([Afram et al. 2022](#); [Vu 2020](#)).

Committed and loyal employees can more easily achieve organisational goals, are more productive, have greater responsibility and job satisfaction, and are satisfied and highly motivated people ([Sahoo et al. 2010](#)). These empowered employees can make better decisions, which intensifies the organisation’s excellence ([Tripathi et al. 2021](#)).

[Kumar and Kumar \(2017\)](#) considered that empowering employees is a motivational strategy that promotes their satisfaction with their work and organisation. Also, [Maynard et al. \(2014\)](#) considered that empowerment can play a significant role in maximising employees’ potential by promoting employees’ intrinsic motivation ([Zhang and Bartol 2010](#)).

Since empowerment is a motivational concept of self-efficacy, it is considered that if employees adopt new roles they will have additional opportunities to achieve their potential and motivation for various issues and tasks, which can influence their psychological empowerment and, in turn, their motivation and organisational commitment ([Joo and Shim 2010](#)).

The study by [Andika and Darmanto \(2020\)](#) showed the significant effect that empowering employees has on their intrinsic motivation and organisational commitment. According to these authors, organisations should improve employees’ skills through empowerment and intrinsic motivation, as these have very positive implications for their performance and organisational commitment.

Other studies aimed at the nursing field ([Gabra et al. 2019](#); [Saleh et al. 2022](#)) showed that nurses’ motivation to work is enhanced by their feeling of empowerment, with a strong positive relationship between these two variables.

The study by [Carreira et al. \(2020\)](#) showed that employee motivation can be improved through empowerment and task-enrichment practices.

Empowering employees brings advantages to organisations by encouraging them to have entrepreneurial attitudes and make decisions for themselves, and by provoking a sense of autonomy and control over their destinies, they foster their motivation and sense of independence, which translates into greater commitment and extra effort in the performance of their work ([Ramesh and Kumar 2014](#)).

As we can see, there are several authors who have addressed the role of employee empowerment in their motivation, which led us to deepen this relationship.

2.4. Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

Considering the relationship between employee empowerment and employee motivation studied by several authors (Andika and Darmanto 2020; Carreira et al. 2020; Joo and Shim 2010; Maynard et al. 2014; Ramesh and Kumar 2014; Sahoo et al. 2010; Vu 2020; Zhang and Bartol 2010), empowerment can be a powerful tool for motivating employees, making them more engaged, confident, and committed to their activities and goals. Thus, it is to be expected that the four dimensions of the empowerment construct considered by Spreitzer (1995) will positively influence employee motivation (Figure 1). This multidimensional approach is valuable for understanding motivation in the workplace in more depth, helping to better understand the factors that influence motivation, but it also provides valuable insights for creating more effective management strategies and practices.

For this study, we considered the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. *The meaning of work has a positive effect on employee motivation.*

Hypothesis 2. *Competence at work has a positive effect on employee motivation.*

Hypothesis 3. *Self-determination at work has a positive effect on employee motivation.*

Hypothesis 4. *Personal impact at work has a positive effect on employee motivation.*

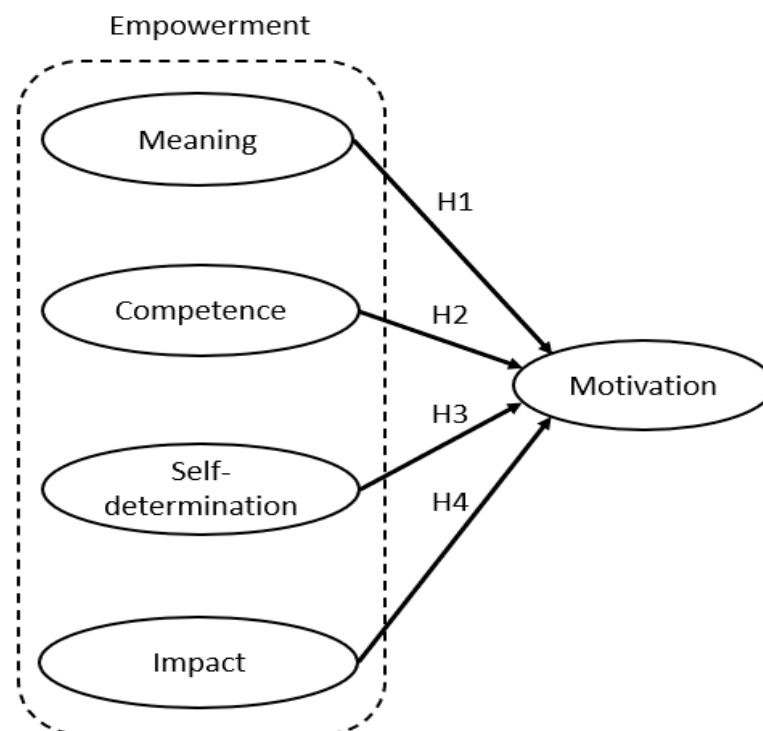


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

3. Methodology

3.1. Population and Sample

The target population for this study was employees from Portuguese organisations in the industry and services sectors. All the companies contacted were equally likely to take part in the study, as emails were sent to all companies in the industry and services sectors that were in operation at the time of the study (emails were obtained from the regional

industry and services associations). However, only the employees of the companies whose managers agreed to take part in the study and who sent the questionnaire link to their employees took part in the study. Thus, the data collection methodology adopted was non-probabilistic and based on the convenience sampling method. The selection criterion ensured that the participants were chosen because of characteristics that were aligned with the research objectives.

The sample consisted of 620 employees from Portuguese organisations in the industry and services sector, aged between 18 and 68, with an average age of 38 ($SD = 11.29$). Table 1 shows that the majority of employees were female ($n = 332$; 53.5%). With regard to educational qualifications, 12.7% ($n = 79$) had primary education, 12.6% ($n = 78$) had vocational education, 42.6% ($n = 264$) had secondary education and 32.1% ($n = 199$) had higher education. With regard to the length of service in the organisation, 39.0% ($n = 242$) had worked in the organisation for less than 5 years, 29.7% ($n = 184$) had worked in the organisation for between 5 and 15 years, and 31.3% ($n = 194$) had worked in the organisation for more than 15 years.

Table 1. Sample characterisation.

		<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Female	332	53.5
	Male	288	46.5
Educational qualifications	Primary education	79	12.7
	Vocational education	78	12.6
	Secondary education	264	42.6
	Higher education	199	32.1
Length of service in the organisation	Under 5 years	242	39.0
	From 5 to 15 years	184	29.7
	Over 15 years	194	31.3

3.2. Instruments

The instrument used for the data collection was a questionnaire survey that consisted of three parts. The first part analysed employees' levels of psychological empowerment and the second part analysed employees' levels of motivation. The third and final part was made up of socio-demographic data (gender, age, educational qualifications) and professional data (length of service in the organisation).

To operationalise empowerment, the 12 items (Table 1) of the psychological empowerment at work scale developed and validated by Spreitzer (1995) were used. This scale is made up of the following dimensions: meaning of work (items E1, E2 and E3), competence at work (items E4, E5 and E6), self-determination at work (items E7, E8 and E9) and personal impact at work (items E10, E11 and E12).

To operationalise motivation, we used the 28 items (Table 2) from the Multi-Moti scale, which was developed for the Portuguese population by Ferreira et al. (2006). The structure of this scale is tetrafactorial. Its dimensions assess motivation in terms of work organisation (items M1, M5, M9, M13, M17, M21 and M25), performance motivation (items M2, M6, M10, M14, M18, M22 and M26), achievement and power motivation (items M3, M7, M11, M15, M19, M23 and M27), and, finally, aspects of motivation related to organisational involvement (items M4, M8, M12, M16, M20, M24 and M28). Note that the statements corresponding to items M8, M20 and M28 are worded in the negative.

Both the empowerment and motivation scales used scores from a Likert agreement scale with 5 response options (1—*totally disagree* to 5—*totally agree*).

Table 2. Estimating the parameters of the measurement model—empowerment.

Factor/Items	M (SD)	Loadings
Meaning ($\alpha = 0.899$, CR = 0.900, AVE = 0.750)	3.95 (0.75)	
E1. The work I do is very important to me.	3.99 (0.83)	0.850
E2. My tasks are personally meaningful to me.	3.90 (0.85)	0.870
E3. The work I do is meaningful to me.	3.96 (0.79)	0.878
Competence ($\alpha = 0.867$, CR = 0.870, AVE = 0.691)	4.16 (0.69)	
E4. I'm confident about my ability to do my job.	4.16 (0.76)	0.873
E5. I am confident in my ability to fulfil my duties.	4.17 (0.79)	0.867
E6. I develop my skills to fulfil my job.	4.15 (0.79)	0.748
Self-determination ($\alpha = 0.896$, CR = 0.899, AVE = 0.749)	3.72 (0.87)	
E7. I have a lot of autonomy in defining how I should carry out my work.	3.84 (1.04)	0.613
E8. I can decide for myself how to carry out my work.	3.68 (1.01)	0.849
E9. I have enough independence and freedom in how I do my job.	3.63 (1.01)	0.868
Impact ($\alpha = 0.894$, CR = 0.899, AVE = 0.749)	3.50 (0.97)	
E10. The impact of what I do on my department is great.	3.72 (0.99)	0.764
E11. I have a lot of control over what happens in my department.	3.35 (1.11)	0.892
E12. I have a lot of influence over what happens in my department.	3.43 (1.10)	0.932

Note: All loadings were significant at $p < 0.001$. CR—composite reliability, AVE—average variance extracted. Source: own elaboration.

3.3. Data Collection and Ethical Procedures

When the questionnaire was initially constructed, the motivation scale was already in Portuguese in the work by [Ferreira et al. \(2006\)](#), but [Spreitzer's \(1995\)](#) psychological empowerment scale was translated from English into Portuguese by two bilingual translation professionals and then the two translations were compared to ensure that the translation was understandable. Although both the motivation and empowerment scales were already used in the literature, a pre-test was then carried out with a questionnaire consisting of both scales. The pre-test was carried out with the collaboration of 14 employees (7 from industry and 7 from the service sector) in order to assess the clarity of the questions. After the pre-test, minor adjustments were made to the questionnaire to make its questions more understandable.

The questionnaire was then drawn up on the Google Forms digital platform and then administered to employees in the industry and services sectors between February and May 2019. The choice of this tool has the advantage of ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the data, as well as speeding up the data collection process. To start the data collection process, it was necessary to find out the email addresses of different Portuguese companies in the industry and services sectors; therefore, the regional industry and services associations were contacted to obtain these email addresses. The heads of the organisations were then sent an email asking for permission to carry out the study. The heads of the organisations who agreed to take part in the study sent all their employees an email with the objectives of the study, the guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality, and the link to access the questionnaire, thus complying with all the ethical principles in force, and the participants responded voluntarily.

3.4. Analytical Procedures

The data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 28 and AMOS version 21. According to [Kline \(2015\)](#), initially, the existence of missing cases and outliers was analysed and the sensitivity of the items was studied using the asymmetry ($|Sk| \leq 3$) and flatness ($|Ku| \leq 7$) coefficients.

Descriptive measures were used to characterise the sample. The structural equations approach was used to validate the conceptual model being analysed. This approach was chosen due to its ability to test the causal relationships between constructs with several measurement items ([Marôco 2014](#)), which in this particular case, was between the dimensions of empowerment and motivation. The measurement model was analysed first

and then the structural model. The maximum likelihood estimation method was used to analyse the structural equation model.

4. Results

4.1. Measurement Model

With regard to the measurement model, the confirmatory factor analysis revealed that the model fitted to a sample of 620 individuals working in Portuguese companies showed good quality fit indices ($\chi^2 = 1319.746$, $df = 567$, $\chi^2/df = 2.328$, GFI = 0.898, CFI = 0.935, RMSEA = 0.046, PCLOSE = 0.969). This good quality was justified because the ratio of the chi-squared statistic to the degrees of freedom (χ^2/df) was less than 3 (Kline 2015), the GFI (goodness-of-fit index) was at the threshold of a good fit and the CFI (comparative fit index) had a value above 0.90, which indicates a good fit (Marôco 2014). The RMSEA (root-mean-square error of approximation) value is considered very good for values below 0.05 and the PCLOSE (comparative fit index) must be greater than or equal to 0.05 (Arbuckle 2014), which was also verified.

Table 2 shows that all the standardised loadings of the psychological empowerment scale have values greater than 0.5 (the minimum value was 0.613 and was obtained for item E7) and were also significant ($p < 0.001$), thus showing that each item produced important information for psychological empowerment.

The scale's factors had Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values above 0.7 (ranging from 0.867 to 0.900), which indicates that the scale consistently and reproducibly measured the factors of interest in the sample under study (Hair et al. 2017). The AVE values for the four factors of the scale were also greater than or equal to 0.5 (minimum value 0.691 for the competence factor), which is an indicator of adequate convergent validity (Hair et al. 2017).

It should be noted that items 20, 22, 26 and 28 of the motivation scale were removed from the model because their loadings were less than 0.5; this fact was also found in the work of Ferreira et al. (2006) when they applied exploratory factor analysis. Table 3 shows that all the standardised loadings of the motivation scale were significant ($p < 0.001$) and had values greater than 0.5 (the minimum value was 0.556 and was obtained for item M3), thus showing that each item produced important information for the motivation construct.

Table 3. Estimating the parameters of the measurement model—motivation.

Factor/Items	M (SD)	Loadings
Work organisation ($\alpha = 0.877$, CR = 0.878, AVE = 0.508)	3.63 (0.66)	
M1. This organisation has satisfactory working conditions.	3.84 (0.84)	0.751
M5. I feel fulfilled in my role in the organisation.	3.74 (0.80)	0.735
M9. I feel satisfied with my pay.	3.42 (0.81)	0.632
M13. The feedback I receive at work contributes as a motivational factor.	3.81 (0.87)	0.718
M17. All the organisation's employees take part in decision-making processes.	3.39 (0.95)	0.689
M21. I feel that I work in an environment of co-operation between colleagues.	3.63 (0.84)	0.698
M25. The organisation enables the development of professional goals.	3.61 (0.89)	0.756
Performance ($\alpha = 0.853$, CR = 0.854, AVE = 0.541)	3.70 (0.69)	
M2. I find that periodic evaluations motivate me.	3.53 (0.84)	0.670
M6. I would like to be assessed on my performance on a regular basis.	3.73 (0.88)	0.802
M10. When performing tasks, it's important to show some emotion.	3.75 (0.79)	0.684
M14. I like to be assessed on the performance of tasks.	3.77 (0.81)	0.802
M18. I usually develop strategies to achieve my goals.	3.88 (0.76)	0.707
Realisation and power ($\alpha = 0.890$, CR = 0.874, AVE = 0.500)	3.88 (0.68)	
M3. Having career prospects is important for my motivation at work.	4.07 (0.89)	0.556
M7. I would like to fulfil roles with greater responsibility.	3.73 (0.83)	0.702
M11. I feel capable of managing a working group.	3.84 (0.84)	0.729
M15. I feel the need to grow more and more in my role.	4.00 (0.84)	0.779
M19. If there were prizes awarded to the best employees, I would perceive them as a professional motivating factor.	3.96 (0.88)	0.708

Table 3. Cont.

Factor/Items	M (SD)	Loadings
M23. One of my goals is to reach the highest position in the organisation.	3.55 (0.98)	0.724
M27. I feel motivated when my work is praised by my superior.	4.07 (0.83)	0.732
Involvement ($\alpha = 0.841$, CR = 0.841, AVE = 0.515)	3.85 (0.69)	
M4. I usually consider myself a highly motivated person.	3.97 (0.83)	0.725
M8. I find my work monotonous.	2.50 (1.09)	0.714
M12. I feel emotionally involved with the organisation.	3.80 (0.82)	0.726
M16. My knowledge is decisive in the way I work.	4.02 (0.87)	0.676
M24. I identify with my job.	3.84 (0.88)	0.745

Note: All loadings were significant at $p < 0.001$. CR—composite reliability, AVE—average variance extracted. Source: own elaboration.

Table 3 also shows that the scale's factors had Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values above 0.7 (ranging from 0.841 to 0.890). It could therefore be concluded that this indicates that the motivation scale consistently and reproducibly measured the factors of interest in the sample under study (Hair et al. 2017). The AVE values for the four factors of the scale were also greater than or equal to 0.5 (minimum value 0.5 in the realisation and power factor), which is an indicator of adequate convergent validity (Hair et al. 2017).

For all the factors, the square root of the AVE parameter (in bold on the diagonal of the matrix in Table 4) was always higher than the inter-construct correlations, and thus, there is evidence of convergent and discriminant validity. It should also be noted that the correlations between the various constructs were statistically positive and significant ($p < 0.001$). The highest correlations occurred between the meaning dimension and the organisational involvement ($r = 0.545$) and work organisation ($r = 0.495$) motivation dimensions and could be classified as strong (Pallant 2016).

Table 4. Correlation matrix between the constructs.

	M	C	S-D	I	WO	MP	AP	OI
M	0.866							
C	0.393	0.831						
S-D	0.457	0.253	0.785					
I	0.321	0.256	0.424	0.866				
WO	0.495	0.212	0.474	0.326	0.712			
MP	0.420	0.304	0.268	0.187	0.264	0.735		
AP	0.304	0.329	0.262	0.309	0.198	0.357	0.707	
OI	0.545	0.314	0.378	0.350	0.404	0.405	0.321	0.718

Note: All correlations were significant at $p < 0.001$. M—meaning, C—competence, S-D—self-determination, I—impact, WO—work organisation, MP—motivational performance, AP—achievement and power, OI—organisational involvement. Source: own elaboration.

4.2. Structural Model

The fit indices of the structural model were considered to be of good quality ($\chi^2 = 1382.726$, $df = 581$, $\chi^2/df = 2.380$, GFI = 0.892, CFI = 0.931, RMSEA = 0.047, PCLOSE = 0.923), as the ratio of the chi-squared statistic to the degrees of freedom (χ^2/df) was less than 3 (Kline 2015), the GFI (goodness-of-fit index) was very close to the threshold of a good fit and the CFI (comparative fit index) had a value above 0.90, which indicates a good fit (Marôco 2014). The RMSEA (root-mean-square error of approximation) value is considered very good for values below 0.05 and the PCLOSE (comparative fit index) must be greater than or equal to 0.05 (Arbuckle 2014); this is also found for the model.

The four dimensions of psychological empowerment explained 76% of the variability in motivation. In Table 5, the empirical results of the hypothesis tests that defined the causal relationships between the variables show that the meaning of work positively and significantly influenced motivation ($\beta = 0.552$, $p < 0.001$), which empirically supported hypothesis 1. With regard to hypothesis 2, this was empirically supported, i.e., competence

at work positively and significantly influenced motivation ($\beta = 0.160, p < 0.001$). With regard to hypothesis 3, i.e., self-determination at work positively influences motivation, there was also sufficient statistical evidence to state that this was empirically supported ($\beta = 0.238, p < 0.001$). Finally, hypothesis 4 was also empirically supported, and thus, it can be said that personal impact at work positively influenced motivation ($\beta = 0.195, p < 0.001$).

In summary, all the dimensions of empowerment had a positive influence on motivation at work, with the dimensions of meaning at work and self-determination contributing the most to motivation.

Table 5. Results of the structural model analysis.

	Hypothesised Path	β	Z	Results
H1	Meaning \rightarrow motivation	0.552	8.71 ***	Supported
H2	Competence \rightarrow motivation	0.160	3.41 ***	Supported
H3	Self-determination \rightarrow motivation	0.238	4.46 ***	Supported
H4	Impact \rightarrow motivation	0.195	4.08 ***	Supported

*** $p < 0.001$. Source: own elaboration.

5. Discussion

The study carried out intended to test whether there is any empirical relationship between employee empowerment and employee motivation in Portuguese employees according to Spreitzer (1995), for whom there are four dimensions that influence the psychological empowerment of employees: meaning of work, competence at work, self-determination at work and personal impact at work.

The results show that employee motivation was positively influenced by empowerment and that the meaning of work, competence, self-determination and personal impact contribute positively to motivation; as advocated by Spreitzer (1995), these four dimensions influenced the psychological empowerment of employees. Specifically, this study revealed that the motivation of Portuguese employees was especially influenced by the following areas: meaning dimension, organisational involvement and work organisation.

The critical contribution of the proposed study was that it highlighted the dimensions of empowerment that most contributed to employee motivation, meaning and self-determination. In this sense, and following the work of Spreitzer (1995) and Spreitzer and Doneson (2005), employees whose value in terms of a work objective or work proposal was more evident were the employees who were more committed to the organisation and felt more motivated to pursue the organisation's objectives. On the other hand, employees with greater self-determination, in the sense that they feel more autonomy in defining and pursuing their work, were stronger in terms of empowerment and more motivated, corroborating the conclusions reached by Hackman and Oldham (1980) and by Ferreira et al. (2006).

The results obtained also corroborate the perspective of Andika and Darmanto (2020), Vu (2020), Kumar and Kumar (2017), and Zhang and Bartol (2010), who showed that empowerment contributes positively to employee motivation. The results also verify the perspective of Andika and Darmanto (2020) and Kanjanakan et al. (2023), who advocated that organisations and individuals with greater empowerment perform better through greater motivation.

6. Conclusions, Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

The proposed study was applied to Portuguese employees in industry and services and aimed to understand the role of psychological empowerment in employee motivation. With regard to the scientific contributions of this study, this investigation revealed that psychological empowerment at work positively influenced employee motivation, which meant that higher levels of empowerment were associated with higher levels of motivation. In particular, the results showed sufficient statistical evidence to affirm that the meaning, competence, self-determination and impact dimensions positively influenced motivation,

with the meaning and self-determination dimensions contributing the most to employee motivation.

In terms of practical implications, this study provides leaders with decision-making tools for managing people in their organisations. In order to have employees who are motivated and committed to the organisation, leaders must provide the conditions for them to feel that the importance of their work and their skills are valued and promote their self-determination and personal impact. This research shows that servant leadership must be committed to strengthening employees' psychological empowerment, ensuring that they feel integrated into the organisation's culture and increasing their organisational performance.

One limitation of this research was that it was a cross-sectional study, which revealed the behaviour of the population at a specific moment in time. For this reason, in future investigations, it would be interesting to complete this study with a longitudinal analysis of respondents in various states in order to show changes in behaviour over time. On the other hand, it would be useful to use additional methods to gauge the perspective of leaders.

Qualitative methodologies should also be integrated, in addition to quantitative ones in order to obtain additional, more in-depth contributions to the object of study.

Given that the actions of leaders are decisive for the implementation of strategies that affect the human resources of organisations, it would be interesting to integrate the actions of leaders that enhance the empowerment of employees, increasing the dimensions under analysis, specifically the meaning of work, competence, self-determination and personal impact, with special emphasis on the first two.

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