

*Full Length Research Paper*

# The influences of psychological empowerment on work attitude and behavior in Chinese organizations

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**This paper aims to investigate the relationships between psychological empowerment, job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) in Chinese organizations. 500 employees from four small firms took part in the investigation. 350 valid questionnaires were collected with a response rate of 70%. The hypotheses were tested by a series of linear regression analyses. We found that psychological empowerment has a significant influence on both employees' job satisfaction and OCB. The predictive effect of psychological empowerment on OCB is mediated by job satisfaction. Future research should investigate whether the relationship between psychological empowerment and work attitude is affected by other factors, such as the tension between employees and supervisors, and whether job satisfaction mediate the relationship between psychological empowerment and work attitudes (for example, organizational commitment and professional commitment).**

**Key words:** Psychological empowerment, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, supervisor support.

## INTRODUCTION

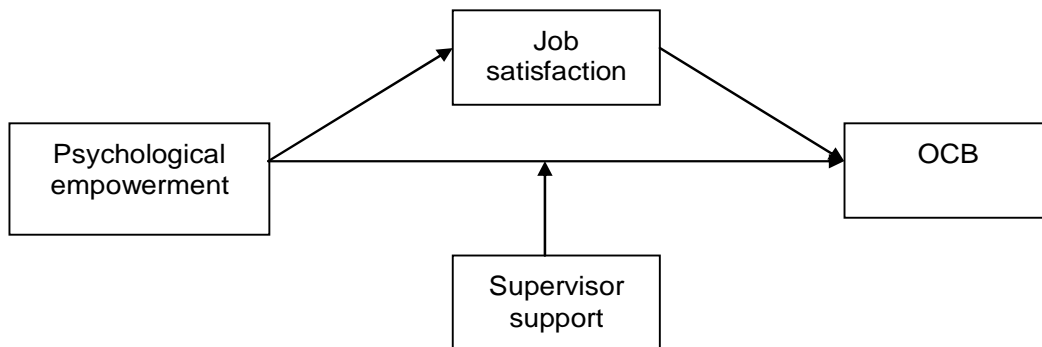
The important role of empowerment in organizational development has attracted widespread attention from researchers since the 1980s (Cooney, 2004; Lashley, 1999). It has been well documented in the literature that empowered individuals possess more resilience, creativity, and initiative in their work; are more committed to and more satisfied with their jobs; exhibit organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) more frequently; and have better mental health than individuals lacking empowerment (Bogler and Somech, 2004; Chiang and Hsieh, 2012; Dewettinck and van Ameijde, 2011; Kuo et al., 2008; Li et al., 2008; Pan, 2001; Rinehart and Short, 1994; Seibert et al., 2011; Wu and Short, 1996). Despite abundant studies on the phenomenon of psychological empowerment in literature, few of these studies have examined the effects of psychological empowerment on its outcomes in Chinese

organizational context (Fock et al., 2011; Lee and Wei, 2011; Sun et al., 2011). We have good reasons to conduct research on psychological empowerment with a sample of Chinese employees. First, China's less developed economy may lead to Chinese employees paying more attention to salary as opposed to perceived empowerment (Li et al., 2006). For example, Kong and Zhao (2011) and Yang and Ma (2007) reported that dissatisfaction with salary plays a leading role in job turnover among Chinese employees. Although the economy in China has been growing fast and already ranks the second largest economy in the world, its per capita GDP is still on a lower level due to its large population and employees in Chinese organizations are paid a relative lower salary (Yang and Ma, 2007). Therefore, the relationship between psychological empowerment and work outcomes might be different from those obtained from Western organizational context.

The second reason to conduct this study is that the dimensions of OCB of Chinese employees are different from those of Western employees (Farh et al., 1997), implying that the results about the association between

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**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework of the four variables.

psychological empowerment and OCB obtained from Western samples may not be applied to Chinese organizations. In their research, Farh et al. (1997) have found that OCB among Chinese employees includes a set of five dimensions; corporation-identity, individual initiative, resource-protection, altruism, and interpersonal harmony, that is completely different from the set obtained from Western samples. The third reason to conduct this study is that the mechanics of psychological empowerment's effects on OCB requires further study. Although the straight link between empowerment and OCB has been well-documented, few studies have investigated the mediators between them and the moderators that may strengthen or weaken this association. A possible mediator between psychological empowerment and OCB is job satisfaction (Najafi et al., 2011). With regard to the possible moderators between empowerment and OCB, a particular type of such moderators might be embedded in the relationship between employees and their supervisors, since superiors are the most salient agents of the organization who principally determine the job products of the subordinate employees (Frone, 2000; Janssen, 2004).

According to social exchange theory, employees perceiving superior support exhibit OCB to maintain balance between the employee and the supervisor or organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986; McFarlane and Wayne, 1993; Moorman et al., 1998; Organ, 1990; Wayne et al., 1997). Janssen (2004) found that an empowered employee actively taking initiatives in their work roles and context might be obstructed by superiors who resist those initiatives. Frone (2000) suggested that conflict with superiors is a salient job stressor that can damage an employees' attitude towards the organization. This implies that when employees perceive low levels of support from their supervisors, they will be unlikely to exhibit OCB towards the organizations even they are psychologically empowered. Therefore we hypothesize that the relationship between employees and their supervisors might moderate the positive effects of psychological empowerment on OCB. Based on the

aforesaid considerations, we conduct the present study to examine the relationship between psychological empowerment and OCB in Chinese organizations. Furthermore, the possible mediating effect of job satisfaction and the moderating role of supervisor support on the relationship between psychological empowerment and OCB will be examined (conceptual framework of the four variables) (Figure 1). This will help us understand the mechanism by which psychological empowerment influence OCB and provide guidance for management practice.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUNDS

### Psychological empowerment

Psychological empowerment was first proposed by Conger and Kanungo (1988), who regard empowerment as identical to the motivational concept of self-efficacy. Building on their work, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) argued that psychological empowerment is a multifaceted construct that cannot be captured by a single concept. They defined psychological empowerment more broadly as an increased intrinsic task motivation that reflects an individual's orientation to his or her work role and that is manifested in a set of four cognitions: meaning, competence (which is synonymous with Conger and Kanungo's self-efficacy), self-determination, and impact.

Using the Thomas and Velthouse (1990) study as a theoretical foundation, Spreitzer (1995) developed a scale, widely used in the literature, to assess the four components of empowerment: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Specifically, meaning refers to the values of a work goal or purpose judged in relation to an individual's own ideals or standards (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990).

Meaning involves a fit between the requirements of a work role and beliefs, values, and behaviors. Competence, or self-efficacy, refers to an individual's belief in his or her capability to perform activities with skill

(Gist and Mitchell, 1992). Competence is analogous to agency beliefs, personal mastery, or effort-performance expectancy (Bandura, 1989). Self-determination refers to an individual's sense of agency in initiating and regulating actions (Deci et al., 1989). Self-determination reflects autonomy in the initiation and continuation of work behaviors and processes; examples include making decisions about work methods, pace, and effort (Spector, 1989). Impact is the degree to which an individual can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work (Ashforth, 1989).

### **Psychological empowerment, job satisfaction, and OCB**

Job satisfaction was defined as one's overall sense of gratification with one's job even though not every wish was fully realized within that capacity (Balzer et al., 1997). Hackman and Oldham (1980) proposed that an employee's working experience, such as meaning found in work, work-related responsibilities, and superiors' recognition of his or her accomplishments, would impact his or her job satisfaction.

The positive association between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction has also been reported in empirical work (Chiang and Hsieh, 2012; Dewettinck and Amejide, 2008, 2011; Gregory et al., 2010; Seibert et al., 2011). For instance, Dewettinck and van Amejide (2011) found that psychological empowerment partially mediated the relationship between perceived empowering leadership behavior and employee job satisfaction and affective commitment.

O'Brien (2011) reported that empowerment was inversely related to burnout in registered staff nurses. In a meta-analytic review, it was indicated that psychological empowerment was positively associated with job satisfaction and negatively related to employee strain and turnover intentions (Seibert et al., 2011). The theoretical argument behind this relation might be that psychological empowerment can bring about personal work-related fulfillment (Thomas and Tymon, 1994).

In the present study, we hypothesized that psychological empowerment is correlated with job satisfaction. Organizational citizenship behavior was first used by Organ to describe behavior that is "discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization" (Organ and Konovsky, 1989). OCB have been reported to have a significant impact on the success of an organization. OCB receives attention because organizations cannot anticipate the whole range of behaviors needed for the achievement of organizational goals through formal job descriptions alone (Van Yperen and Berg, 1999). OCB provide the organization with additional resources and eliminate the need for expensive formal mechanisms otherwise

crucial to successful restructuring process. Recognizing the factors that cause individuals to engage in OCB has occupied a substantial amount of research attention in both organizational behavior and social psychology (Brief and Motowidlo, 1986; Chiang and Hsieh, 2012; Gholifar et al., 2011; McNeely and Meglino, 1994). Psychological empowerment has been suggested to facilitate the exhibition of employees' OCB due to the following observation: when employees feel that their work aligns with their own values, beliefs, and behavior (which can be captured by psychological empowerment's meaning dimension), they will be satisfied with their jobs. As a result, these employees become more involved in and more conscientious about their work and thus exhibit more positive working behaviors, such as OCB.

Competence is analogous to the concept of self-efficacy developed by Bandura (1989). According to him, self-efficacy is based on two dimensions that he labeled "outcome expectancy" and "efficacy expectancy" (Bandura, 1989). "Outcome expectancy" implies that an individual estimates that a given behavior will result in certain outcomes. "Efficacy expectancy" refers to behaviors towards the expected outcomes. Therefore, it is reasonable for an individual with higher levels of self-efficacy to show more organizational behaviors. Employees with high expectations of themselves tend to perform effectively and successfully at work and will carry out extra functions beyond the formal ones. Additionally, status reflects the influence an individual can have on the organization he or she works for. Individuals who perceive they have the professional respect and admiration of their colleagues, in addition to acknowledgement of their expertise and knowledge, will be more inclined to contribute to their organizations. Their contributions can be exhibited in the increased practice of OCB.

In a recent study, Chiang and Hsieh (2012) found that psychological empowerment positively affected OCB among hotel employees. In the present study, we hypothesized that psychological empowerment is positively related to OCB.

In addition to the positive relationship between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction and OCB, researchers have suggested that job satisfaction might mediate the positive influence of psychological empowerment on OCB (Bogler and Somech, 2004). Employees who are satisfied with their jobs would be more likely to identify with their organization and more likely to exhibit behaviors which are not directly recognized but beneficial to the organization.

Researchers have found that job satisfaction is a positive predictor of OCB (Payne and Webber, 2006; Williams and Anderson, 1991). For example, Najafi et al. (2011) found that psychological empowerment directly and positively influenced job satisfaction and, job satisfaction positively influences organizational commitment and OCB. This suggested that psychological

empowerment may promote employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment and these will in turn improve OCB. In the present study, we hypothesized that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and OCB.

### Superior supports, psychological empowerment, and OCB

In literature, it has been reported that the positive effect of psychological empowerment on work outcomes might be moderated by some variables. For example, shared felt accountability moderated the association between psychological empowerment climate and performance in quick service restaurants managers (Wallace et al., 2011).

The collectivistic orientation was found to play a moderator role between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction (Fock et al., 2011). Research has implied that the positive relationship between psychological empowerment and OCB might be moderated by superior support (Eisenberger et al., 1986; McFarlane and Wayne, 1993; Moorman et al., 1998; Organ, 1990; Wayne et al., 1997).

Superior support has been considered to be an important factor in affecting employees' work outcomes (Likert, 1967). Superior support can improve employees' performance through ensuring that employees understand their goals and by helping and encouraging employees who have difficulty in attaining goals rather than resorting to punishment. Thus, superior support was regarded as a positive, constructive, and helpful attitude toward employees (Locke et al., 1984).

Previous studies have confirmed the positive relationship between superior support and employee performances. For instance, Taylor and Bowers (1972) have found that superior support was significantly correlated to employees' productivity. Superior support can motivate employees by exercising control on employees' rewards and is responsible for structuring work activities (Steers and Lyman, 1991). Hence, supportive supervision has a positive effect on both the motivation and resultant performance of subordinates and thus may enhance the relationship between psychological empowerment and OCB.

In addition, supervisor support is an important type of supervisor-subordinate *guanxi* in China. *Guanxi* refers to the quality of a relationship that dictates the appropriate behavior and treatment of two parties toward each other (Chen and Tjosvold, 2006). *Guanxi* is an indigenous Chinese construct that depicts an informal tie between two or more individuals or groups involving shared social experiences, exchange of favors, and trust (Bian, 1997; Cheung and Wu, 2011; Hwang, 1987; Luo, 1997). It has been argued that supervisor-subordinate *guanxi* in the Chinese context are wider in scope and in scale (Cheung and Wu, 2011). In this context, the *guanxi* subordinate

would be more likely to be motivated to reciprocate the supervisor's support by demonstrating more OCB (Cheung and Wu, 2011).

Randall et al. (1999) and Smith et al. (1983) suggested that support of a leader is salient to promoting the exhibitions of OCB. Relevant studies have suggested that superior support may be a moderator of the association between psychological empowerment and OCB. For example, researchers have found that there is a moderating effect of superior support on the relationship between self-efficacy and work performance (Latham and Saari, 1979; Likert, 1967; Locke et al., 1984).

In a recent study, it has been found that supervisor-subordinate *guanxi* moderates the relationship between participant management, an element of structural empowerment, and OCB (Cheung and Wu, 2011). Thus, we hypothesized that supportive supervisory can strengthen the positive effects of psychological empowerment on OCB for employees in China, where personal connections and relationships are given more attention.

## METHODS

### Procedure and respondents

The participants were employees from four small private enterprises in the northern part of China. Participation was voluntary for all respondents. 500 questionnaires were distributed, and 349 were completed, giving a response rate of 70%. The respondents were asked to report the extent to which they agree with the descriptions of items. Of those completed respondents, 219 were male (63%) and 130 were female (47%). The age range of participants was 20 to 47 years. All of the participants were employed full time.

### Measures

Of the three instruments used in this study, two were initially constructed in English (except *Organizational Citizenship Behavior Scale* by Farh (1997), which was in Chinese) and were therefore translated into Chinese. The validation of the Chinese version of psychological empowerment scale has been confirmed by Li et al. (2006), reporting that Spretizer's psychological empowerment scale has a sound psychometrics index in Chinese samples. All items in our survey were measured using a five-point scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

### Psychological empowerment

The 12-item psychological empowerment scale developed by Spretizer (1995) consists of four subscales: Meaning, competence, impact, and self-determination, each of which has three items ( $\alpha=0.92, 0.90, 0.84,$  and  $0.81,$  respectively). The items include statements such as, "The work I do is very important to me."

### Superior support

Items were adapted from the supportive leadership subscale of psychological climate scale developed by Hart et al. (2000). The

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics for psychological empowerment, job satisfaction, supervisor support, and OCB (n=349).

Measure	M	SD	1	2	3	4
Psychological empowerment	42.24	7.95	-	0.267***	0.483***	0.427***
Supervisor support	15.60	3.80	0.267***	-	0.545***	0.190***
Job satisfaction	19.09	4.90	0.483***	0.545***	-	0.347***
OCB	79.35	12.23	0.427***	0.190***	0.347***	-

\*\*\*,  $p < .001$ ; \*\*,  $p < .005$ ; \*,  $p < .01$ .

**Table 2.** Regression results for the direct effect of psychological empowerment on job satisfaction.

Predictors	R	R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	t	p
Meaning	0.52	0.27	0.38	7.7	0.000
Self-determination			0.13	2.5	0.011
Competence			0.03	0.65	0.516
Impact			0.171	3.36	0.001

items include statements such as, "There is good communication between employees and the administration in this company". The Cronbach's coefficient alpha is 0.84.

#### Chinese organizational citizenship behavior

The 25-item OCB scale was developed by Farh et al. (1997) and is composed of five dimensions including identification with the company, altruism toward colleagues, conscientiousness, interpersonal harmony, and protecting organizational resources. The items include statements such as, "Willing to coordinate and communicate with colleagues". The Cronbach's coefficients of the five dimensions ranged from 0.623 to 0.836, and the Cronbach's coefficient of the total scale was 0.757 in Chinese samples (Chen, 2006).

#### Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction was captured with one item: "To what extent are you satisfied with your job"?

## RESULTS

Table 1 showed the means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations for all scaled variables. All measured variables were significantly and positively correlated to each other ( $p < .001$ ). Since the level of psychological empowerment, supervisor support, job satisfaction, and OCB were self-reported by respondents, our results might be affected by common methods errors. Therefore, The Harman technique was performed to test for common method bias. If a significant amount of common method bias exists in data, then a factor analysis (unrotated solution) of all the variables in the

model is expected to give rise to a single factor accounting for most of the variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The factor analysis yielded three factors, accounting for 65.66% of the variance, indicating that no common method bias existed.

#### Direct effects of psychological empowerment and job satisfaction

The test results of direct effects of the psychological empowerment and job satisfaction are presented in Table 2. With regard to the direct effects of psychological empowerment, the regression analysis found psychological empowerment to significantly predict job satisfaction ( $R^2=0.27$ ,  $F(4, 343)=32.40$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), accounting for 27.4% of the variance. The significant predictors were meaning ( $\beta=0.38$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), self-determination ( $\beta=0.13$ ,  $p=0.01$ ), and impact ( $\beta=0.17$ ,  $p=0.001$ ). Participants scoring higher on meaning, self-determination, and impact reported higher level of job satisfaction.

#### Direct effects of psychological empowerment on OCB

With the four dimensions of psychological empowerment as the independent variables, and OCB as the dependent variable, a standard multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether psychological empowerment predicted OCB. The results are presented in Table 3. A significant model emerged ( $R^2=0.33$ ,  $F(4, 343)=42.00$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The significant predictors were meaning and competence ( $\beta=0.15$ ,  $p < 0.05$  and  $\beta=.48$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , respectively).

#### Mediating effect of job satisfaction

To understand mediating effect of job satisfaction on the association between psychological empowerment and OCB, we conducted hierarchical regression analysis. In the first equation, OCB was regressed on psychological

**Table 3.** Multiple regression analysis for variables predicting OCB.

Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	β	t	p
Meaning	0.57	0.33	0.15	3.133	0.002
Self-determination			0.09	1.910	0.057
Competence			0.48	9.975	0.000
Impact			-0.06	-1.173	0.242

**Table 4.** Hierarchical regression analyses for testing the mediating effect of job satisfaction on the relationship between psychological empowerment and OCB.

Step	Standardized regression equation	Regression coefficient test
1	y=0.427x	SE=0.049, t=8.800***
2	u=0.483x	SE=0.047, t=10.287***
3	y=0.184u+0.338x	SE=0.055, t=3.362* SE=0.055, t=6.191***

\*\*\*,  $p < .001$ ; \*\*,  $p < .005$ ; \*,  $p < .01$ .

empowerment. The results showed that psychological empowerment accounted for 18.2% of the variance in OCB. The beta weights of psychological empowerment was statistically significant ( $\beta=0.43, p < 0.001$ ).

In the second equation, job satisfaction was regressed on psychological empowerment which accounted for 23.4% of the variance. The beta weight of psychological empowerment was statistically significant ( $\beta=0.48, p < 0.001$ ). In the third equation, when job satisfaction was involved into the model of the relationship between psychological empowerment and OCB, the beta weights of psychological empowerment decreased from 0.43 to 0.34 ( $p < 0.001$ ), and the beta weights of job satisfaction is 0.18 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This indicated that job satisfaction mediated the relationship between psychological empowerment and OCB only partially (Table 4).

### Moderating effects of superior support

To further understand the association between psychological empowerment and OCB, we conducted hierarchical regression analysis. In the first step, OCB was predicted by the main effects of psychological empowerment and supervisor support. In the second step, the interaction term was entered. Following Aiken and West (1991), psychological empowerment and supervisor support were centered (that is, by subtracting the mean from each score) and the interaction term was based on these centered scores.

Table 5 shows the regression results. After step 2, only psychological empowerment remained a significant predictor of OCB ( $\beta=0.40, p < 0.001$ ), and the interaction was excluded from the model. The results showed that the interaction between psychological empowerment and

supervisor support was not significant and supervisor support was not a moderator on the relationship between psychological empowerment and OCB.

### DISCUSSION

The current study examined whether employees' job satisfaction mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and OCB and whether superior support moderates the association between job satisfaction and OCB on a sample of Chinese employees. A series of multiple regression analyses were performed, with psychological empowerment as the dependent variable, the job satisfaction as the mediator, and OCB as the independent variable.

In the present study, psychological empowerment was found to be related to job satisfaction, which has supported our first hypothesis and is consistent with previous studies (Carless, 2004; Dewettinck and Amejide, 2008; Fock et al., 2011; Najafi et al., 2011; Seibert et al., 2011; Spreitzer et al., 1997). Specifically, meaning ( $\beta=0.382, p < 0.001$ ), self-determination ( $\beta=0.13, p < 0.05$ ), and impact ( $\beta=0.171, p < 0.001$ ) can predict job satisfaction significantly, which indicates that employees who find the work they perform to be consistent with their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are more likely to be satisfied with their work, and individuals who have a sense of agency in initiating and regulating actions and believe that they are able to impact strategies, administrative, or operating outcome at work are more likely to be happy with their job. In their study, Wang and Lee (2009) have found that meaning can predict job satisfaction and this positive effect can be reinforced when individuals have high levels of choice and

**Table 5.** Hierarchical regression analyses for testing the moderating effect of superior support on the relationship between psychological empowerment and OCB.

Step	Variable	OCB		
		$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	t
1	Gender and age	0.01	-0.09	-1.9
2	Psychological empowerment	0.19	0.40	8.03**
	Supervisor support		0.08	1.57
3	Psychological empowerment * supervisor support		-	-1.62

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < .005$ ; \*  $p < .01$ .

competence.

Spreitzer et al. (1997) found a positive relationship between the four dimensions of psychological empowerment and job satisfaction, where the correlation was strongest for the dimension meaningfulness. This correlation may be attributed to the notion that the degree to which an employee finds his or her work personally meaningful is a predication of job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1966) and when one's work fulfills or allows the fulfillment of one's desired work values, which can be captured by the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment, he or she will be satisfied with the work (Dunette, 1976; Locke, 1976).

The positive association between work meaning and work satisfaction has also been implied in literature about transformational leadership, which proposed that transformational leaders can create a sense of meaning for employees through the use of a strong vision, and by energizing and aligning employees to the task at hand. Ultimately, this sense of meaning results in increased motivation and satisfaction (Bass, 1985; Bennis and Nanus, 1985). Our finding has supported Locke's (1976) notion of personal value fulfillment, which holds that work satisfaction results from the perception that one's work fulfills or allows the fulfillment of one's desired work values.

In the current study, impact was also found to be related to job satisfaction, a finding that is in agreement with Thomas and Tymon's (1994) study. It might be that an employee's perception that he or she can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work will provide intrinsic motivation, which in turn leads to work satisfaction (Dewettinck and van Ameijde, 2011; Thomas and Tymon, 1994). This finding has also strengthened Ashforth's (1989) theory on the impact dimension, which states that employees should be satisfied with their jobs when they feel that they have been directly involved in outcomes that affect the organization.

Also we found a positive relationship between self-determination and job satisfaction, which can be explained by the fact that self-determination is a key

component of intrinsic motivation which, in turn, is a critical determinant of satisfaction (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Employees who have more autonomy on the job tend to experience more intrinsic rewards from work (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990) and are less likely to feel alienated (Seligman, 1975) or withdrawn (Abramson et al., 1978).

Our study found that psychological empowerment can predict OCB, which supports our hypothesis and is consistent with previous research (Bogler and Somech, 2004; Chiang and Hsieh, 2012; Dennis and Shaffer, 2005; Najafi et al., 2011). In literature, Chiang and Hsieh (2012) reported a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and OCB. Najafi et al. (2011) found that psychological empowerment can positively and indirectly influence OCB.

In the present study, participants reporting higher scores on meaning and competence tend to show more OCB. A possible explanation for the linkage between meaning and OCB is that meaningfulness involves the individual's intrinsic caring about a task he or she values and that is consistent with his or her own ideals or standards.

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) have suggested that meaningfulness represents an investment of psychic energy and that individuals with lower levels of meaningfulness tend to be apathetic and detached. Therefore, individuals with higher levels of meaningfulness may identify more with their group and engage in more extra-role behaviors. The positive association between competence and OCB can be explained by the self-efficacy concept developed by Bandura (1977). According to him, self-efficacy is based on two dimensions: outcome expectancy and efficacy expectancy. Outcome expectancy suggests that individuals judge that an assumed behavior will result in certain outcomes. Efficacy expectations may be defined as behaviors toward the expected outcomes. Employees who have high expectations of themselves to perform effectively and successfully will exhibit extra behaviors beyond the formal ones (Bogler and Somech, 2004). It is unlikely that those who lack self-confidence will go beyond minimum role requirements.

The present study found that job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and OCB, a finding that supports our hypothesis and agrees with previous research (Najafi et al., 2011; Payne and Webber, 2006; Williams and Anderson, 1991). For example, Najafi et al. (2011) study suggested that if there exists mechanisms for psychological empowerment, employees' job satisfaction will be promoted, which in turn will facilitate the exhibitions of OCB.

A possible explanation for this relationship is that when employees have higher levels of satisfaction with their jobs, they could be more likely to identify with their organization and exhibit behaviors which are not directly recognized but beneficial to the organization as a social exchange (Eisenberger et al., 1986; McFarlane and Wayne, 1993; Moorman et al., 1998; Organ, 1990; Wayne et al., 1997).

Out of our expectation, we did not find that superior support moderates the positive association between psychological empowerment and OCB. A possible explanation for this finding is that supervisor support might be a factor influencing psychological empowerment, which further leads to their work outcomes. In a study by Carless (2004), supervisor support was treated as a dimension of organizational climate and it was found that supervisor support has a positive effect on psychological empowerment.

## IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The present study has investigated the relationship between psychological empowerment and work attitude and behavior, and we found that psychological empowerment has positive effects on OCB and this positive association is partially mediated by job satisfaction. From a practical point of view, this study has multiple implications for facilitating employees' OCB and job satisfaction. Psychological empowerment plays an important role in improving employees' job satisfaction and in the exhibition of OCB, and the association between psychological empowerment and OCB is mediated by job satisfaction.

Although prior research has shown that due to the high power distance culture in China, some management practices which can facilitate employees' psychological empowerment (for example, participative management) were less adopted by the Chinese managers. However, our study has shown that psychological empowerment can improve employee's job satisfaction and can facilitate exhibition of OCB. This suggests that human resource managers should take measures to develop employees' sense of empowerment, such as cultivating a healthy organizational climate.

There are several important limitations of this study that need to be acknowledged. First because all measures used are self-reports, social desirability may have a bias

on our results. Nevertheless, to check for the potential problem of common method bias, we used Harman's one-factor test, the results of which showed that there is a very low possibility of common method variance.

Second, the design was cross-sectional, thus the casual direction, which can be answered by a longitudinal research design, cannot be determined with present study design. Third, the sampled enterprises in this study were all small in size and located in a less developed area of China, and thus may differ in some aspects from large companies in developed areas. Fourth, the job satisfaction in the present study was measured using a single item, which has limited its reliability and validity to some extent.

Future research should investigate whether the relationship between psychological empowerment and work attitude is affected by other factors. For instance, Janssen (2004) found that the tension between employees and supervisors would negatively influence the relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment. Bogler and Somech (2004) proposed that job satisfaction might mediate the relationship between psychological empowerment and work attitudes (for example, organizational commitment and professional commitment). Therefore, researchers can investigate these possible relationships, which will help us better understand the mechanism whereby psychological empowerment impacts outcome variables.

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