

Enhancing proactive workplace behavior through psychological empowerment

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Theme 16: Finding meaning in work by engaging in proactive sustainable behaviors: the role of HRM

Enhancing proactive workplace behavior through psychological empowerment: the role of HR practices and leadership

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to contribute to the literature on workplace design and leadership by extending insights from the psychological empowerment literature to explain employees' proactive workplace behavior. More specifically, we investigate how HR practices (professional autonomy, time-spatial flexibility and access to ICT to knowledge sharing) and empowering leadership motivate employees to engage in proactive workplace behavior, by explicating the mediating role of psychological empowerment (by meaning, impact, self-determination and competence) in these relationships. Most studies directly link either empowering HR practices or leadership to workplace proactivity. Our study simultaneously investigates the effectiveness of empowering HR practices and leadership in workplace proactivity. We employ PLS Structural Equation Modeling to analyze survey data of 427 knowledge workers in a large financial organization, known for its innovative work design. The results suggest that employees' psychological empowerment mediates the relationships between the HR practices professional autonomy, ICT access, and empowering leadership, respectively, and workplace proactivity. Although time-spatial flexibility is often presented as an empowering HR practices, we found no motivational potential regarding workplace proactivity. Focusing on psychological empowerment helped us to disentangle the motivating elements of new workplace designs and showed that both professional autonomy and ICT access for knowledge sharing as empowering HR practices, and empowering leadership can foster employees' workplace proactivity through psychological empowerment. Moreover we found empirical evidence for psychological empowerment as a crucial mechanism in the empowerment process.

Keywords: flexible work arrangements, psychological empowerment, empowerment leadership, proactive workplace behavior, workplace redesign.

Paper type – empirical paper