

# How Differences in Demographic Variables Related with Psychological Empowerment?

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# How Differences in Demographic Variables Related with Psychological Empowerment?

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## Abstract

Organizational change induces anxiety, emphasizing the need for psychological empowerment. This study explores the link between employee demographics and psychological empowerment during transitions. While prior research suggests a positive association between demographic variables and worker empowerment, results are contradictory. Data from 156 respondents in Jakarta-based NGOs reveal significant gender differences in psychological empowerment, with males scoring higher than females. However, no significant correlations exist with other demographics (education, position, tenure, and employment status). These findings offer valuable insights for change agents managing organizational transitions, emphasizing the nuanced impact of demographic factors on psychological empowerment.

Keywords: demographic variables, psychological empowerment, organizational change

## 17 INTRODUCTION

In today's complex and unpredictable business environment (VUCA), organizations need to constantly improve and adapt to stay competitive. Organizational changes are a key part of this, but not all of them succeed. However, not all planned organizational changes were successful. Previous research showed that plenty of planned organizational changes, including in NGOs, have failed (Packard, 2012), often due to people-related issues (Mangundjaya, 2019). During organizational changes, individuals often feel uncertain about the future and lack trust in management and communication.

Psychological empowerment is crucial in fostering a positive commitment to change. Studies show that it acts as a mediator between change leadership and commitment to change (Mangundjaya, 2019). By enhancing employees' psychological empowerment, leaders can boost their commitment to change, a vital element for successful implementation of organizational change.

Employee characteristics like tenure, rank in the organization, and education serve as indicators of their knowledge, skills, as well as contribution to the organization. Research suggests that these characteristics are linked to empowerment (Seibert et al., 2011) and career success (Wayne et al., 1999), impacting worker empowerment positively. Understanding the correlation between demographic factors and psychological empowerment is practical for organizations. It can inform decisions related to job assignments, training, and actions necessary for successful organizational change.

Prominent findings suggest a connection between demographic variables and increased worker empowerment, although the existing body of research shows some contradictory results. Spreitzer (1996) identified significant links between education level and Psychological Empowerment (PE). In a study involving healthcare workers, Koberg et al. (1999) observed higher empowerment among individuals with longer organizational tenure and higher ranks, but found no significant association with education. Notably, Prabha et al. (2021) discovered that faculty members above average age demonstrated greater psychological empowerment, motivation, and satisfaction. Additionally, those with above-average experience displayed higher levels of PE and satisfaction. With this current empirical studies condition, it is not surprising Llorente-Alonso et al. (2023) call for more research on gender, age, education, and rank effects on empowerment. Building on this, our study aims to further analyze demographic factors' impact on psychological empowerment.

## THEORY AND PROPOSITIONS

### Psychological empowerment

Psychological Empowerment (PE) is a type of inner drive defined as the "psychological states necessary for an individual to feel control over their work" (Spreitzer, 2008). It involves four job-related thoughts: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Spreitzer, 1995, 2008). High psychological empowerment leads to strong self-confidence and self-efficacy, especially when combined with a sense of impact on the environment, fostering robust change self-efficacy. This leads to increased engagement when employees find their job meaningful, have autonomy, feel competent, and believe their work influences the organization. PE correlates positively with job performance, workplace harmony, and supportive behaviors during change (Choi, 2011). Psychologically empowered employees aim to empower their organization, even during change (Ukpe, 2018). Change management literature supports the idea that employees' perceptions of change practices influence their responses, shaped by internal states and feelings about capabilities, success, and control (Holt et al., 2007; Visagie & Steyn, 2011).

### **Gender and psychological empowerment**

Alimo-Metcalfe (1995) and Riger (1993) proposed that existing empowerment concepts might lean towards a masculine interpretation, emphasizing traits like competence, mastery, and control, rather than a feminine perspective that values communion, connectedness, and cooperation. The idea of power in empowerment might be perceived differently based on gender, with men often associating power with control over their environment more than women (Lips, 1985). These theories suggest that dimensions like self-determination and impact (control at work) in Spreitzer's (1995) concept might contribute more significantly to the sense of empowerment for men than for women. The structure of the PE concept could be argued to align better with masculine rather than feminine notions of empowerment based on its components. Based on this arguments, the hypothesis is as follows:

***Hypothesis 1:** There is a difference in psychological empowerment between male and female employees*

### **Educational level, on psychological empowerment**

Education is crucial for individuals to approach problems effectively and adapt to changing circumstances. According to Ya'acob et al. (2011), education is a vital input for human progress and survival, enabling people to make informed decisions. Higher education levels are linked to more accurate perceptions, increased feelings of competence, and a greater sense of self-determination. In essence, education enhances a person's ability to navigate life successfully by fostering critical thinking and decision-making skills, contributing to personal growth and adaptability. Based on these findings, the hypothesis is as follows:

***Hypothesis 2:** Educational level has significant and positive correlation with psychological empowerment*

### **Age and psychological empowerment**

As people age, it is assumed that they become more aware of their abilities, decision-making skills (self-determination), and their impact on the environment, leading to increased psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 2007). Age brings about greater competence and confidence, enabling individuals to make independent decisions and influence their surroundings. This aligns with the concept of psychological empowerment. Mangundjaya's (2019) study on 534 employees in financial state-owned organizations further supports a positive correlation between age and psychological empowerment, indicating that as individuals grow older, their sense of psychological empowerment tends to strengthen. Based on these premises, the following hypothesis has been developed as follows:

***Hypothesis 3:** Age has significant and positive correlation with psychological empowerment.*

### **Tenure and psychological empowerment**

Tenure refers to the number of years individuals have spent working for a specific organization, indicating their experience and duration of employment. Yeatts and Hyten (1998) describe tenure as a direct link between the employer and employee, influencing employee performance. Employees with longer tenure are often considered satisfied and tend to stay, while those leaving may be dissatisfied, seeking better opportunities. Job tenure, as discussed by Butler et al. (2014), refers to the time spent in a particular job. During these years, individuals likely develop knowledge and skills through hands-on learning and experience (Schmidt et al., 1986). However, research on the relationship between tenure and psychological empowerment, as noted by Ng and Feldman (2013), remains limited. However, based on the above argument, the hypothesis was developed as follows.

***Hypothesis 4:** The length of services has significant and positive correlation with psychological empowerment.*

### **Position level and psychological empowerment**

Leaders in an organization play a vital role in motivating and inspiring employees, enhancing their capabilities (Turek & Turek, 2013; Hammond et al., 2011). Spreitzer (2008) notes that psychological empowerment seeks to give individuals power and control, making them feel capable in their tasks. When employees experience psychological empowerment, they gain confidence to think creatively, take initiative, and work independently. This increased capacity and motivation lead to innovation as employees feel more inspired and generate new ideas. In essence, leaders contribute significantly to fostering a work environment that encourages creativity and proactive behavior. Based on these discussions, the following hypothesis as follows:

***Hypothesis 5:** Position level has significant and positive correlation with psychological empowerment.*

### **Status of Employment and psychological empowerment**

In organizations, employees are often categorized as permanent or contractual staff, and this employment status can impact various aspects such as facilities, salaries, and opportunities for personal and career development. Contractual workers may feel less confident compared to permanent staff, leading to stronger job insecurity feelings (Klein Hesselink and Van Vuuren, 1999; Parker et al., 2002). Studies

16 suggest that job insecurity has a more negative impact on well-being for permanent employees, affecting job satisfaction and organizational commitment. This contrasts with contractual workers, who, expecting job changes, may experience fewer negative consequences. De Witte et al. (2005, 2006, 2007) proposed that the type of employment contract and job insecurity interact, influencing life satisfaction, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Meta-analyses by Sverke et al. (2002) and Cheng and Chan (2008) indicate that job insecurity is associated with negative attitudes, potentially impacting psychological empowerment among contract workers.

*Hypothesis 6: Employee's status has significant and positive correlation with psychological empowerment.*

## METHODOLOGY

### Design and participants

This study employed a standard research method, utilizing a quantitative and deductive approach through a survey technique. Data collection involved the use of a questionnaire as the primary instrument. Respondents provided scores on a six-point Likert scale, where a score of 1 denoted "Strongly Disagree," and a score of 6 indicated "Strongly Agree." This scale enabled a methodical assessment of participant responses, facilitating systematic and numerical data analysis. Participants were selected through convenience sampling from three NGOs in the Jabodetabek area, Indonesia. Criteria for inclusion were individuals currently employed within the organization.

1  
TABLE 1  
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF RESPONDENTS

Characteristics of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	46	40.7
Female	67	59.3
<b>Age</b>		
18 - 24-year-old	34	30.1
24 - 44-year-old	61	54.0
45 - 56-year-old	18	15.9
<b>Education</b>		
Senior high school	13	11.5
Diploma	10	8.8
Bachelor's degree	63	60.2
Master's degree	22	19.5
<b>Length of Service</b>		
2 - 10 years	105	92.9
>10 years	8	7.1
<b>Position</b>		
Non-staff	10	8.8
Staff	43	46.9
Section head/supervisor	18	15.9
Division head/group head	14	12.4
Department head	18	15.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 1 shows the demographics of our participants. Most of them are female (59.3%), aged between 25 and 40 (61%), and hold a bachelor's degree (60.2%). The majority have staff positions (46.9%) and have been working for 2-10 years (92.9%). About 43.4% are on contract employment, while 56.6% hold permanent positions.

### Instruments and data collection

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire in Google Forms, utilizing the Psychological Empowerment Scale by Spreitzer (1995), as endorsed by Mangundjaya (2019), along with a demographic survey. To ensure accuracy, comprehensiveness, and validity, a trial version was developed. The internal consistency of both the research and the instrument, assessed during the pilot study using Cronbach's coefficient alpha ( $\alpha$ ), demonstrated values exceeding 0.7 for all constructs in the 45-person pilot study (Ayarkwa, 2022), indicating consistency and dependability. Given the diverse respondents, reliability and validity testing were re-evaluated. Composite reliability (CR) and Dijkstra-Henseler's rho ( $\rho$ ) were calculated for each construct to assess individual reliability. In the psychological empowerment measurement instrument, test results and field data collection produced excellent outcomes, with corrected item-total correlation values ranging from 0.45 to 0.81, indicating validity. The questionnaire exhibited excellent reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha value exceeding 0.7-0.8 (specifically 0.92 during the instrument test and 0.94 during data collection). The results of the instrument test confirmed the validity and reliability of all three measurement instruments selected by the researcher, indicating no need for revision or elimination of any items as indicated at Table 2.

**TABLE 2**  
**RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT**

Dimension	Corrected Item Total Correlation		Cronbach Alpha	
	Try Out	Data Collection	Try Out	Data Collection
Competencies	0.45-0.73	0.59-0.73	0.90	0.91
Meaning	0.47-0.77	0.50-0.66	0.77	0.84
Self-Determination	0.58-0.79	0.70-0.78	0.86	0.88
Impact	0.48-0.78	0.74-0.81	0.81	0.93
Total	0.45-0.79	0.50-0.81	0.93	0.94

**RESULTS**

Table 4 indicates that only gender exhibits significant differences in psychological empowerment scores, with males scoring higher than females. This suggests that, concerning psychological empowerment components such as feelings of competence, meaning, self-determination, and impact, males tend to have higher scores. However, no significant differences were observed for other demographic variables.

**TABLE 3**  
**MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION**

Variable	Mean	SD
Psychological empowerment	4.92	0.63

**TABLE 4**  
**DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

Characteristics of respondents	Psychological empowerment (Total)			
	Mean	SD	Sig	N
<b>Gender</b>			0.004*	
Male	5.10	0.54		65
Female	4.79	0.72		91
<b>Age</b>			0.067	
< 23	4.87	0.62		21
>23 – 42	4.85	0.71		107
>42 – 58	5.20	0.48		25
>58	4.90	0.21		3
<b>Education</b>			0.882	
Sr. High School	4.85	0.62		18
Diploma	4.82	0.90		15
Bachelor's Degree	4.93	0.53		94
Master's Degree	4.97	0.95		29
<b>Length of Services</b>			0.082	
>2 - 5	4.90	0.60		111
>5 - 10	4.73	0.91		30
>10	5.31	0.50		15
<b>Position</b>			0.295	
Non-Staff	5.04	0.67		12
Staff	4.94	0.70		74
Section Head. Supervisor. Officer	4.90	0.60		27
Division Head	5.07	0.40		19
Manager/Dept. Head	4.66	0.81		24
<b>Employment status</b>			0.139	
Permanent employees	4.98	0.68		95
Contract workers	4.82	0.64		61

\*\* I.o.s p<0.01

**TABLE 5**  
**DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT DIMENSION**

Characteristics of respondents	Competence			Meaning			Determination			Impact		
	Mean	SD	Sig.	Mean	SD	Sig.	Mean	SD	Sig.	Mean	SD	Sig.
<b>Gender</b>			0.000**			0.064			0.090			0.014*
Male	5.24	0.54		5.2	0.61		4.94	0.78		4.96	0.70	
Female	4.76	0.91		5.07	0.64		4.71	0.85		4.60	0.98	
<b>Age</b>			0.212			0.169			0.111			0.071
<23	4.90	0.76		4.98	0.73		4.87	0.69		4.75	0.69	
>23 – 42	4.89	0.89		5.13	0.63		4.71	0.88		4.66	0.95	
> 42 – 58	5.27	0.42		5.39	0.54		5.15	0.67		5.18	0.65	
>58	5.16	0.28		5.08	0.14		5.08	0.14		4.58	0.94	
<b>Education</b>			0.735			0.130			0.252			0.814
Sr. High School	5.02	0.73		5.09	0.71		4.70	0.81		4.59	0.61	
Diploma	5.06	0.74		5.13	0.84		4.43	1.35		4.65	1.23	
Bachelor's Degree	4.97	0.67		5.09	0.56		4.88	0.62		4.78	0.76	
Master's Degree	4.82	1.24		5.40	0.65		4.84	1.05		4.81	1.21	
<b>Length of Services</b>			0.456			0.035*			0.043*			0.024*
>2-5 years	4.96	0.75		5.1	0.63		4.81	0.76		4.74	0.80	
>5-10 years	4.85	1.13		5.15	0.60		4.59	1.06		4.51	1.18	
>10 years	5.18	0.39		5.55	0.55		5.25	0.70		5.28	0.7	
<b>Position</b>			0.052			0.489			0.469			0.673
Non-Staff	5.27	0.74		5.23	0.58		4.85	1.09		4.83	1.05	
Staff	5.02	0.83		5.22	0.62		4.78	0.83		4.76	0.91	
Section Head.	4.92	0.53		5.03	0.64		4.91	0.73		4.72	0.87	
Supervisor.												
Division Head	5.13	0.48		5.19	0.44		5.02	0.44		4.96	0.65	
Manager/Dept. Head	4.54	1.11		5	0.80		4.58	1.01		4.55	0.96	
<b>Employment status</b>			0.293			0.208			0.581			0.036*
Permanent employees	5.01	0.83		5.20	0.68		4.84	0.89		4.87	0.85	
Contract employees	4.87	0.78		5.07	0.54		4.76	0.72		4.56	0.92	

\*\* 1.0.s p<0.01

To gain a detailed understanding of the dimensions of psychological empowerment, Table 5 presents the results for the four dimensions. The table reveals that gender significantly differs in competence, with males scoring higher than females. Other demographic factors did not show significant differences in competence, leading to the conclusion that males tend to have a higher sense of competence than females. Additionally, the results indicate significant differences in meaning based on the length of service, with employees working for more than 10 years achieving the highest score. However, no correlation was found between the length of service and meaning. The tables also demonstrate that gender significantly differs in impact, with males scoring higher than females. This finding aligns with the previous observation in competence, where males had higher scores. Moreover, concerning the length of service, there are significant differences in determination, with the highest score among those who have worked for more than 10 years, while for impact, individuals working between 5-10 years had the highest score.

**TABLE 7**  
**INTERCORRELATION ANALYSIS (N=156)**

Dimensions	Mean	SD	PE	Gender	Age	Ed	LoS	Pst	Es
Psychological empowerment (PE)	4.92	0.67	1						
Gender	-	-	0.004*	1					
Age	-	-	0.033	0.451	1				
Education (Ed)	-	-	0.235	0.359	0.000**	1			
Length of Services (LoS)	-	-	0.082	0.324	0.000**	0.000*	1		
Position (Pst)	-	-	0.006	0.501	0.000**	0.000*	0.000*	1	
Employment status (Es)	-	-	0.069	0.072	0.287	0.323	0.087	0.011	1

\*\*Significant at  $p < 0.00$

\*Significant  $p < 0.05$

Based on the results of the intercorrelation analysis, it can be concluded that only gender is correlated with psychological empowerment. When this data is combined with the t-test analysis, it reveals significant differences between genders, with males having higher scores than females.

#### Discussion

The process of organizational change demands individuals to exhibit confidence, competence, and a sense of impact on both the environment and the organization. This facilitates their ability to navigate challenging situations with comfort. In essence, individuals who have cultivated psychological empowerment, encompassing a feeling of competence, a sense of meaningful work, self-determination, and impact, encounter fewer difficulties in embracing planned organizational changes. This aligns with previous findings supporting psychological empowerment as a predictor of affective commitment to change (Mangundjaya, 2019).

The analysis of the study underscores that empowered employees, those with a heightened sense of control over their surroundings, actively engage in the change process, reinforcing their commitment to change. Drawing on various studies, it is evident that psychological empowerment leads to increased involvement and competence, fostering meaning in work. These empowered individuals perceive greater control, maintaining strong intrinsic motivation even during change process. Employees who feel in control of their surroundings actively participate, believing in the impact of their work, and are self-determined, thereby elevating their Affective Commitment to Change (Morin et al., 2016).

However, the study did not find support for several hypotheses, except for gender, indicating no significant relationships between age, educational level, tenure, position, employment status, and psychological empowerment. It concludes that age, education, tenure, position, and employee types do not significantly influence psychological empowerment. Notably, gender differences were observed in competence and impact, with males scoring higher than females, suggesting a higher sense of competence among males.

Further examination reveals that, in general, length of service showed no significant differences and no significant correlation with psychological empowerment. However, within the dimensions of psychological empowerment, meaningful findings emerged. Employees with more than 10 years of service demonstrated higher scores in meaning, reflecting a developed fit between job needs and individual beliefs. No correlation was found between length of service and meaning. In terms of determination, individuals with over 10 years of service scored the highest, showcasing a sense of autonomy developed over time. Impact scores indicated that those with 5-10 years of service felt they could make a significant impact on the organization.

The study challenges Spreitzer's (1995, 2007) assertion that demographic factors influence psychological empowerment. It highlights inconsistent findings on the correlation between demographic factors and organizational commitment, emphasizing that factors such as age, tenure, and education may or may not predict organizational commitment.

Despite its contributions, the study acknowledges limitations, including its focus on NGOs, limiting generalization to other organizational types. The predominance of female respondents suggests a need for further investigation. The study recognizes the potential impact of education level and staff positions on psychological empowerment, emphasizing the importance of considering internal factors within individuals that may influence their sense of psychological empowerment.

## Conclusion

The results underscore the importance of fostering psychological empowerment among employees to enhance their affective commitment to change during organizational transitions. Interventions like training, workshops, coaching, mentoring, and counseling are crucial for cultivating psychological empowerment. This study emphasizes the need to assist employees in developing a robust sense of psychological empowerment, recognizing its pivotal role in achieving positive outcomes during organizational change.

Implications for the study reveal that, contrary to common belief, demographic variables, except for gender, showed no correlation with psychological empowerment. Organizations and managers should recognize that, aside from gender, all other demographic factors demonstrated no significant differences in psychological empowerment. This challenge prevailing notions and suggests that efforts to promote psychological empowerment should focus on factors beyond demographics.

Moreover, to truly empower employees, social-structural empowerment is essential. Merely altering rules or providing training may not be sufficient. Empowering leadership should create an environment where employees' voices are heard, allowing them to participate in discussions about the organization's meaning, goals, and relevant decision-making processes. The study's insights benefit organizations and change leaders by emphasizing the need to equip employees with knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes to navigate successful change processes. Recognizing the significance of building psychological empowerment aids in anticipating and preparing for the consequences of organizational change initiatives, ensuring a smoother transition.

Additionally, psychological empowerment's active orientation toward work, as noted by Spreitzer (2007), aligns with positive attributes during change processes, including resilience, flexibility, resourcefulness, proactive behavior, and independence. Employees with heightened psychological empowerment are likely to remain committed to their organization during change, feeling capable of navigating and mastering the challenges that arise.

5

## Conflict of interest statement

The authors declared that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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