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Empowerment, Mindset and Life Satisfaction in the Workplace

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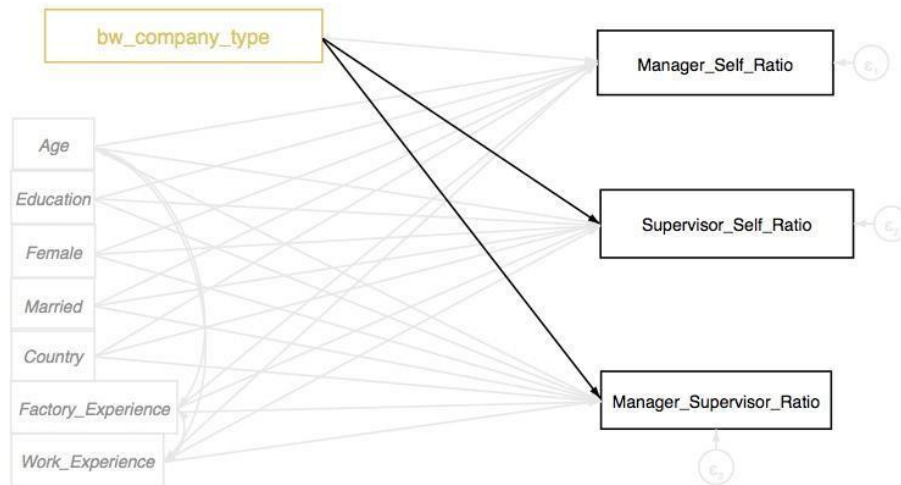
Key Findings

- This brief analyzes empowerment outcomes like worker power perception, agency, representation, and career advancement.
- The first model examines the relationship between membership in a Better Work factory and worker's perceived power differentials between their managers, their supervisors, and themselves. Our analysis finds that those with Better Work training perceived their supervisors as less powerful relative to both themselves and their manager than those without Better Work training.
- The second model examines the relationship between Better Work factory membership, open communication in the workplace, empowerment, and life satisfaction. Our analysis showed that workers in Better Work factories feel that their managers are more open to hearing their ideas and complaints and that it is easier to get important information from supervisors and HR.
- Workers in Better Work factories experience more open communication in the workplace, which may result in them being more confident in their jobs and more comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions in the workplace.
- Although Better Work training does not have a direct effect on job or life satisfaction, workers who are confident in their jobs and able to express themselves are also more likely to believe their work is worthwhile and are ultimately more satisfied with their lives.

Empowerment and Mindset

Along with promoting better working conditions, Better Work training aims to influence long-term outcomes of female workers in the garment sector by impacting workers' mindsets to feel more empowered. Training aims to influence both the firm-level empowerment climate and individual empowerment outcomes. Psychological empowerment factors can act as mediators between firm-level empowerment climate and individual outcomes such as job satisfaction and productivity (Seibert, Silver, and Randolph 2004). Accordingly, the models featured in this section will evaluate the relationship between Better Work training and indicators related to both an improved empowerment climate and individual worker empowerment. Empowerment outcomes of interest include worker power perception, agency, representation, and career advancement.

Perceived Power in the Workplace



Variables of Interest:

bw_company_type: Is the worker a member of a Better Work factory?

Manager_Self_Ratio: A measure of the power differential between the manager and the worker, calculated by $Manager_Ladder / Self_Ladder$ where *Manager_Ladder* is how the worker ranks the manager on a scale of 1 to 10, and *Self_Ladder* is how the worker ranks themselves on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most powerful and 1 being the least powerful.

Supervisor_Self_Ratio: A measure of the power differential between the supervisor and the worker, calculated by $Supervisor_Ladder / Self_Ladder$ where *Supervisor_Ladder* is how the worker ranks the supervisor on a scale of 1 to 10, and *Self_Ladder* is how the worker ranks themselves on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most powerful and 1 being the least powerful.

Manager_Supervisor_Ratio: A measure of the power differential between the manager and the supervisor, calculated by $Manager_Ladder / Supervisor_Ladder$ where *Manager_Ladder* is how the worker ranks the manager on a scale of 1 to 10, and *Supervisor_Ladder* is how the worker ranks the supervisor on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most powerful and 1 being the least powerful.

The model above examines the relationship between membership in a Better Work factory and a worker's perceived power differentials between their managers, their supervisors, and themselves. We want to analyze whether Better Work training changes how workers perceive relative power in the workplace between themselves and their superiors.

Our analysis found a significant negative relationship between *bw_company_type* and *Supervisor_Self_Ratio*, meaning that those with Better Work training perceived their supervisors as less powerful relative to themselves than those without Better Work training. In addition, we found a strong significant positive relationship between *bw_company_type* and *Manager_Supervisor_Ratio*, showing that those with Better Work training viewed their managers as more powerful relative to their supervisors than those without Better Work training. We found no significant effect of *bw_company_type* on *Manager_Self_Ratio*, meaning that workers in both Better Work and non-Better Work factories viewed their managers as equally powerful relative to themselves.

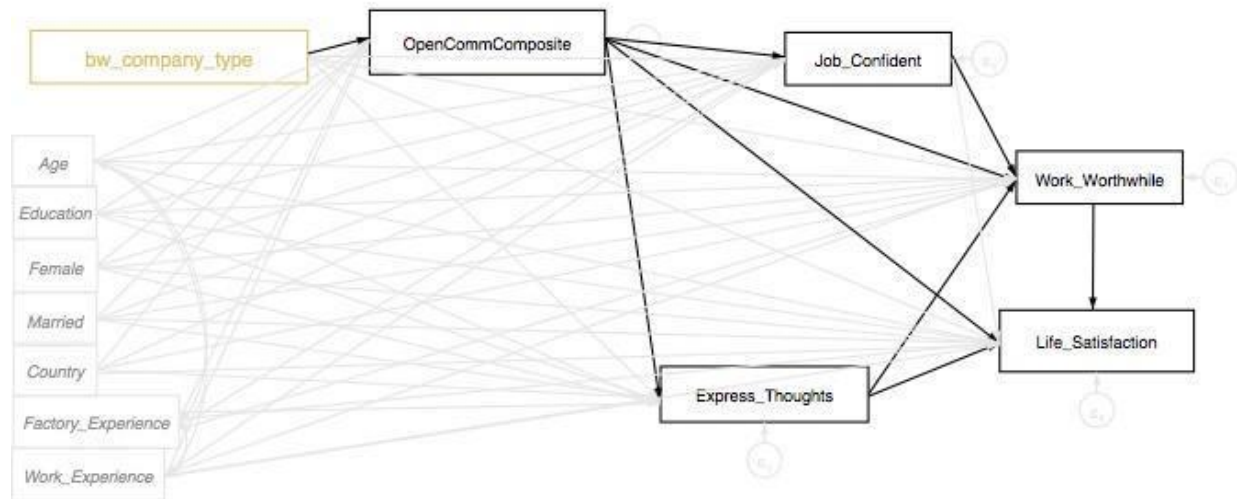
A possible reason that those in Better Work factories see their supervisors as less powerful relative to themselves may be because Better Work training makes supervisors more accessible to workers. They may be able to get more important information related to their jobs from their supervisors and feel more comfortable approaching them for help. This may make supervisors seem less intimidating and decrease fear between workers and supervisors. In addition, Better Work training may make workers view themselves as more powerful by empowering them and making them feel more agency in the workplace.

Workers in Better Work factories may see their managers as more powerful relative to their supervisors because managers have become more efficient at their jobs. Better Work training tends to increase manager efficiency in the workplace, and this may make managers seem more powerful. In addition, workers may view supervisors as less powerful because of increased accessibility and comfort, which could also increase this positive effect.

All significant relationships are highlighted below. The relationship between *bw_company_type* and *Supervisor_Self_Ratio* has a p-value less than .05, and the relationship between *bw_company_type* and *Manager_Supervisor_Ratio* has a p-value less than .01.

	1	2	3
VARIABLES	Manager_Self_Ratio	Supervisor_Self_Ratio	Manager_Supervisor_Ratio
<i>bw_company_type</i>	0.00753 (0.0581)	-0.0665** (0.0326)	0.0600*** (0.0203)
Age	-0.0142*** (0.00551)	-0.00522* (0.00309)	-0.00374* (0.00192)
Country	-0.525*** (0.0601)	0.301*** (0.0338)	-0.449*** (0.0210)
Factory_Experience	-0.000418 (0.00798)	-0.00440 (0.00448)	0.00217 (0.00278)
Education	-0.157*** (0.0319)	-0.0144 (0.0179)	-0.0863*** (0.0111)
Female	0.0119 (0.0750)	0.0638 (0.0421)	-0.0417 (0.0262)
Married	0.0215 (0.0757)	-0.0827* (0.0425)	0.0721*** (0.0264)
Work_Experience	-0.00761 (0.00754)	-2.32e-05 (0.00423)	-0.00357 (0.00263)
Constant	5.051*** (0.232)	1.969*** (0.130)	2.592*** (0.0808)
Observations	6,521	6,521	6,521
Standard errors in parentheses			
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1			

Open Communication in the Workplace, Empowerment, and Life Satisfaction



Variables of interest:

bw_company_type: Is the worker a member of a Better Work factory?

OpenCommComposite: A measure of the level of open communication in the workplace, consisting of how open management is to hearing about worker ideas and complaints and how easy it is to get information related to work from supervisors and HR.

Job_Confident: I am confident in my ability to do my job. (agreescale)

Express_Thoughts: I can express my thoughts and opinions at work. (agreescale)

Work_Worthwhile: The work I do on this job is worthwhile. (agreescale)

Life_Satisfaction: I am satisfied with my life. (satisfyscale)

The model above examines the relationship between Better Work factory membership, open communication in the workplace, empowerment, and life satisfaction. In this model, *bw_company_type* serves as the treatment variable, *OpenCommComposite*, *Job_Confident*, and *Express_Thoughts* serve as the mediating variables, *Work_Worthwhile* is the short-term outcome variable, and *Life_Satisfaction* is the long-term outcome variable.

Empowerment refers to a management practice in which decision-making authority is “pushed” from higher levels of an organization to lower levels by increasing the availability of resources and information to the lower levels (Solansky, 2014). In this model, *OpenCommComposite* represents the increasing availability of resources and information, by virtue of workers being able to openly communicate with and extract important information from their superiors. The resulting empowerment that a worker may feel is represented by *Job_Confident* and *Express_Thoughts*, due to the fact that a worker may feel more comfortable and confident making decisions and expressing themselves in the workplace when they feel as if they have adequate resources and information.

Our analysis found a strong significant positive relationship between *bw_company_type* and *OpenCommComposite*, indicating that workers in Better Work factories feel that their managers are more open to hearing their ideas and complaints and feel it is easier to get important information from supervisors and HR. We also found relationships between

OpenCommComposite and *Job_Confident*, as well as between *OpenCommComposite* and *Express_Thoughts*. Those who experience more open communication in the workplace feel more confident in their ability to do their jobs and better able to express their thoughts and opinions in the workplace. A strong significant positive relationship between *Job_Confident* and *Work_Worthwhile* as well as between *Express_Thoughts* and *Work_Worthwhile* shows that those who are confident in their jobs and in their ability to express themselves are more likely to believe their work is worthwhile. Finally, a strong significant positive relationship between *Work_Worthwhile* and *Life_Satisfaction* shows that those who believe their work is worthwhile are more likely to be satisfied with their lives. These relationships work together to build the following system:

bw_company_type → *OpenCommComposite* → *Job_Confident/Express_Thoughts* → *Work_Worthwhile* → *Life_Satisfaction*

Workers in Better Work factories experience more open communication in the workplace, which may result in them being more confident in their jobs and more comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions in the workplace. Workers who are confident in their jobs and able to express themselves are also more likely to believe their work is worthwhile, and are ultimately more satisfied with their lives. Although Better Work training does not have a direct effect on job or life satisfaction, in future interventions, it may be possible to implement more open communication in the workplace to further encourage worker empowerment, which may ultimately lead to these positive future outcomes.

There are also direct relationships between *OpenCommComposite* and *Work_Worthwhile*, *OpenCommComposite* and *Life_Satisfaction*, and *Express_Thoughts* and *Life_Satisfaction*. Those who experience open communication in the workplace are more likely to believe their work is worthwhile and to be more satisfied with their lives. Similarly, those who can express their thoughts and opinions at work are more likely to be satisfied with their lives. These direct connections work to further the system highlighted above. All significant relationships are highlighted in the table below. All coefficients have a p-value less than .01.

	1	2	3	4	5
VARIABLES	OpenCommComposite	Job_Confident	Express_Thoughts	Work_Worthwhile	Life_Satisfaction
bw_company_type	0.0896*** (0.0181)	0.00169 (0.0133)	-0.0212 (0.0181)	0.0224 (0.0147)	0.0319 (0.0224)
OpenCommComposite		0.145*** (0.00995)	0.384*** (0.0134)	0.0963*** (0.0120)	0.228*** (0.0183)
Job_Confident				0.304*** (0.0146)	0.0123 (0.0230)
Express_Thoughts				0.183*** (0.0111)	0.145*** (0.0173)
Work_Worthwhile					0.0962*** (0.0201)
Age	-0.00416** (0.00171)	-0.00112 (0.00126)	0.000108 (0.00170)	0.00169 (0.00140)	0.00369* (0.00212)
Country	0.523*** (0.0186)	0.00455 (0.0147)	0.234*** (0.0198)	-0.0455*** (0.0165)	0.134*** (0.0251)
Factory_Experience	-0.00148 (0.00252)	0.00208 (0.00184)	0.00140 (0.00251)	0.00517** (0.00203)	-0.000823 (0.00311)
Education	-0.0376*** (0.00992)	0.0114 (0.00732)	0.0208** (0.00989)	-0.00844 (0.00808)	-0.0329*** (0.0123)
Female	-0.0718*** (0.0236)	-0.0208 (0.0173)	-0.0264 (0.0235)	-0.00422 (0.0191)	0.0871*** (0.0290)
Married	0.0379 (0.0235)	0.00733 (0.0173)	0.0758*** (0.0234)	0.00376 (0.0191)	0.0603** (0.0291)
Work_Experience	0.00604** (0.00236)	0.00534*** (0.00174)	0.00282 (0.00235)	-0.00272 (0.00193)	-0.000354 (0.00294)
Constant	3.043*** (0.0720)	3.460*** (0.0608)	1.752*** (0.0825)	1.642*** (0.0843)	1.744*** (0.132)
Observations	6,521	6,521	6,521	6,521	6,521
Standard errors in parentheses					
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1					

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