

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

The Leadership Quarterly

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/leaqua

Empowering leadership and managers' career perceptions: Examining effects at both the individual and the team level

Torsten Biemann^{a,*}, Eric Kearney^{b,1}, Kathrin Marggraf^{c,2}

^a Department of Management, University of Mannheim, 68161 Mannheim, Germany

^b Department of Business Administration, University of Potsdam, 14482 Potsdam, Germany

^c HR Strategy & Organizational Effectiveness, Henkel AG & Co. KGaA, Henkelstraße 67, 40589 Düsseldorf, Germany

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 11 November 2013

Received in revised form 11 January 2015

Accepted 12 March 2015

Available online xxxx

Handling editor: Shelley Dionne

Keywords:

Empowering leadership

Career self-efficacy

Career satisfaction

Multilevel analysis

ABSTRACT

In a multilevel model of leadership behavior, we investigated whether and how empowering leadership affects individuals' career perceptions. We developed a conceptual model that links empowering leadership at the individual level and at the group level (mean as well as dispersion) to individuals' career self-efficacy and career satisfaction. To test our model, we used questionnaire data from a multilevel data set of 2493 employees in leadership positions nested in 704 teams from a large German corporation. Hierarchical linear regression analyses showed that empowering leadership at the individual level was positively related to career self-efficacy, which in turn mediated the relationship between empowering leadership and career satisfaction. Empowering leadership at the group level was positively related to career self-efficacy when it was conceptualized as leadership differentiation (i.e., the standard deviation of empowering leadership ratings), but not when it was conceptualized as leadership climate (i.e., mean empowering leadership ratings). Career self-efficacy in turn mediated the relationship between empowering leadership differentiation and career satisfaction. Finally, we found a negative relationship between empowering leadership differentiation and career satisfaction.

© 2015 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Introduction

There is an ongoing trend for organizations to become leaner and more cost-efficient. As a consequence of establishing flatter hierarchies, employees' responsibilities at lower hierarchical levels expand (Argyris, 1998; Forrester, 2000). Moreover, it is increasingly the respective individuals themselves, rather than their organizations, who are responsible for their careers (Sullivan, 1999). Long-term career planning by organizations has become more difficult and has partly been replaced by employees' own career management, as described in boundaryless (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) or protean career concepts (Hall & Moss, 1998). Empowered employees with individual career plans may create problems for organizations insofar as employees' career planning must not necessarily include a continuous career in the current organization. But especially because of an increasing reliance on complex knowledge work and rapid technological advancements, the retention of managers and other high-quality employees is vital for the success of today's organizations (Grant, 1996; Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberly, 2008). Promising development opportunities and career perspectives for employees have been shown to decrease turnover (Kraimer, Seibert, Wayne, Liden, & Bravo, 2011) and thus offer organizations the means to enhance career satisfaction and retain valued employees. Leadership plays an important role

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +49 621 181 1502.

E-mail addresses: biemann@bwl.uni-mannheim.de (T. Biemann), kearney@uni-potsdam.de (E. Kearney), marggraf.kathrin@gmail.com (K. Marggraf).

¹ Tel.: +49 331 977 3593.

² Tel.: +49 171 9591057.