

Factor Affecting Psychological Empowerment in the Public Sector: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT: The public sector is often associated with complex bureaucratic standards and procedures. This research presents a systematic literature review of psychological empowerment (PE) in the public sector to enhance employee performance, well-being, and a conducive work environment. To the best of our knowledge, no prior systematic literature review has focused exclusively on the factors influencing PE in the public sector. Following PRISMA guidelines, data were collected from articles indexed in Scopus, Taylor & Francis, Sage Journals, and ScienceDirect between 2019 and 2024. The initial search of this article generated 2.643 articles, yet only 37 fulfilled the criteria. The findings indicate that PE was affected by leadership, organizational, work, and personal factors. The reviewed also underscores the roles of mediating and moderating variables related to PE. Understanding PE is increasingly critical in light of ongoing governance reforms, rising demands for public service accountability, and the need for innovation in bureaucratic system.

Keywords: Psychological Empowerment; Public Sector, Contributing Factor; Systematic Literature Review

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INTRODUCTION

The public sector is often associated with complex bureaucratic standards and procedures, which are considered less effective (Nisar, 2018; Pandey & Kingsley, 2000; Willem & Buelens, 2007) and create a negative perception among the public. Efforts like New Public Management (NPM), developed during the 1980s, were made to make public services simpler and more effective (Indahsari & Raharja, 2020). It used modern human resource management, where employees are expected to be a proactive, business-oriented, and creative (Diefenbach, 2009). However, the transformation remains unsuccessful (Skrinou & Gkorezis, 2020), especially for countries with a large bureaucracy like Indonesia (Turner et al., 2022). Therefore, it is essential to identify the factors that can enhance public services, including psychological empowerment (PE) (García-Juan et al., 2019a; Skrinou & Gkorezis, 2020).

Studies on PE have gained significant attention in both private and public sector, highlighting its relevance in contexts, such as public service motivation (Pham et al., 2024; Rafique et al., 2023; Wongpreedee & Sudhipongpracha, 2024), bureaucratic control (Campos & Cavazotte, 2023), leadership behavior (Ardabili, 2020; Jong & Faerman, 2021; Skrinou & Gkorezis, 2020), and organizational support (Campos & Cavazotte, 2023; Metin, 2023). Studies show that PE minimizes high procedural constraints (Jong & Faerman, 2021), promotes quicker decision-making decisions, and increases productivity than those stuck in the organization's hierarchy (Dogar et al., 2023). In addition, empowering employees with more autonomy and initiative provides flexibility and resources for public sector employees to respond to customer needs more quickly and effectively, ultimately leading to higher-quality services (Skrinou & Gkorezis, 2020).

Furthermore, PE has been shown to have a strong motivational effect in organizational psychology (Llorente-Alonso et al., 2024). Empowered employees are more likely to focus on achieving the organization's success (Dogar et al., 2023). PE is linked to various positive outcomes, such as innovative behavior (Mohammed & Al-Abrow, 2024; Nguyen Viet et al., 2023; Pham et al., 2024; Qu et al., 2024), organizational citizenship behavior (Abdulrab et al., 2018; Afram et al., 2022; AlHammedi & Abu Elanain, 2024; Singh & Singh, 2019), and work engagement (Al Otaibi et al., 2023; Shabir & Muazzam, 2024) while reducing turnover intention (Ding, 2023; Metin, 2023) and job stress (Jácome & Chi6n, 2022).

Despite the recognized benefits of PE, there is limited clarity on the factors influencing it in the public sector. Although systematic literature review and meta-analysis (e.g., Llorente-Alonso et al., 2024) have explored its antecedents and consequences broadly, the factors influencing PE in the public sector remain unclear. Identifying the predictors of PE is crucial to enhancing public satisfaction and improving the quality of public services (Skrinou & Gkorezis, 2020). In the context of NPM, public sector reform emphasizes the importance of PE in achieving performance that matches or even surpasses the private sector. Therefore, the public sector provides an ideal context for studying the factors influencing PE (Sardana et al., 2024). To the best of our knowledge, there has not been a systematic review exploring the factors that affect PE in the public sector. This study aims to fill this gap by identifying the factors influencing PE in the public sector to improve service quality. It also seeks to provide insights for future organizational research in the public sector.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Psychological Empowerment

Empowerment was initially conceptualized by Conger & Kanungo (1988) as a relational construct, referring to the process by which leaders or managers delegate authority and share power with their subordinates. Within this framework, empowerment is viewed from the perspective of those in positions of authority, without capturing the subjective experience of employees themselves—an aspect that has been criticized as a conceptual limitation. This critique paved the way for a psychological approach to empowerment, which reconceptualized it as a motivational construct centered on employees' internal perceptions and experiences in the workplace.

Conger & Kanungo (1988) argued that in psychological terms, power and control are rooted in an individual's internal motivations and expectations. Power, in this view, reflects a personal drive to influence one's environment and navigate social or situational demands effectively. It is closely aligned with the concept of self-efficacy, as introduced by Bandura, and reflects an intrinsic need for self-determination. Managerial strategies that strengthen employees' belief in their ability to influence outcomes foster a sense of empowerment, whereas those that undermine it contribute to feelings of helplessness. From this perspective, empowerment is not merely a matter of delegating authority; it is a motivational process aimed at enhancing employees' self-efficacy by identifying and removing conditions that lead to powerlessness.

Thomas & Velthouse (1990), advanced the concept of psychological empowerment by framing it around intrinsic motivation. They argued that empowerment could not be fully explained by self-efficacy alone. Instead, they proposed that empowerment arises from an individual's direct, positive experience with a task itself—rather than from external rewards or contextual factors. At the heart of their model is the idea of *task assessment*, a cognitive evaluation process that drives intrinsic motivation. This assessment consists of four key dimensions: sense of impact, competence, meaningfulness, and self-determination. Crucially, these evaluations are shaped by an individual's subjective interpretation of reality, meaning that task assessments—and thus empowerment—may vary based on individual differences in perception.

Spreitzer (1995), extended the conceptualization of empowerment with a focus on the workplace. Spreitzer (1995) defines PE as a motivational construct where individuals feel actively engaged and capable of shaping their work roles, reflected in four key aspects: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact.

Meaning refers to the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own ideals or standards. Meaning reflects the alignment between an individual's values and beliefs with their work, thus making the job feel important and purposeful (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). It represents the congruence between the requirements of a work role and the individual's beliefs, values, and behaviors (Spreitzer, 1995). This sense of meaningfulness also involves the alignment between one's position at work and their personal values, beliefs, and behaviors.

Competence, or self-efficacy, refers to an individual's belief in their capability to perform work activities with the necessary skills (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Self-determination is the sense of having autonomy in initiating and regulating actions. It reflects the freedom to start and continue work behaviors and processes, such as making decisions about work methods, work pace, and the effort exerted (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Impact refers to the degree to which an individual can influence organizational outcomes, such as strategic, administrative, or operational work systems (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

In the context of local government, the four dimensions of psychological empowerment play a critical role in human resource management and in enabling public employees to navigate the demands of the New Public Management (NPM) environment. Public servants are often driven by intrinsic rewards associated with serving the public good, and optimal performance is linked to their sense of control over how they carry out their responsibilities. Moreover, today's decentralized public service landscape requires employees to operate with a greater sense of autonomy, moving away from traditional centralized decision-making structures (García-Juan et al., 2019a).

The bureaucratic reforms that have been implemented thus far have yet to bring about a meaningful shift away from the traditional model of public administration (Turner et al., 2022). In light of these limitations, empowering employees has been recognized as a strategic response, offering them the autonomy and resources needed to respond promptly and effectively to public demands. This, in turn, enhances the delivery of high-quality public services (Bowen & Lawler, 1992). PE helps employees feel a sense of ownership and awareness of their work role, motivating them to provide optimal services and improve performance in the public sector (García-Juan et al., 2019b). Identifying the predictors of PE is crucial to enhancing public satisfaction and improving the quality of public services (Skrinou & Gkorezis, 2020).

RESEARCH METHOD

Data Sources and Search

This study employed a systematic literature review method. It is a structured, transparent, comprehensive, and reproducible approach to find, assess, and integrate data sets generated from previous research (Okoli, 2015). It followed The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines.

The research began with the literature search conducted on 15 October 2024. The search focused on relevant articles published in journals indexed by Scopus, Taylor & Francis, Sage Journal, and Science Direct between 2019 and 2024. The search involved keywords and similar terms related to the public sector, such as “psychological empowerment” AND “factor” AND (“public sector” OR “civil servant” OR “government employee” OR “public service”). The period 2019-2024 was selected for this systematic literature review to capture the most recent and relevant studies on psychological empowerment in the public sector. This timeframe allows for an analysis of contemporary trends and developments, particularly reflecting changes influenced by recent governance reforms.

Study Selection and Data Extraction

This article was selected by identifying article titles and abstracts and manually reviewing them with a web-based application, Rayyan. First, the titles and abstracts were reviewed by identifying the publication year, the presence of the PE variable in the study, and the research context within the public sector. Many studies did not specify whether the samples (e.g., hospitals or schools) were private or government-owned. This initial search yielded 2,643 articles.

During the article selection, we found that only a few studies addressed PE as the main variable or specifically examined the factors influencing PE. Thus, we selected articles that included PE as one of the variables studied and analyzed each study to identify the factors influencing PE in the public sector. To provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between the factors affecting PE, we also included studies examining PE moderators and mediators. Figure 1 presents the article selection process.

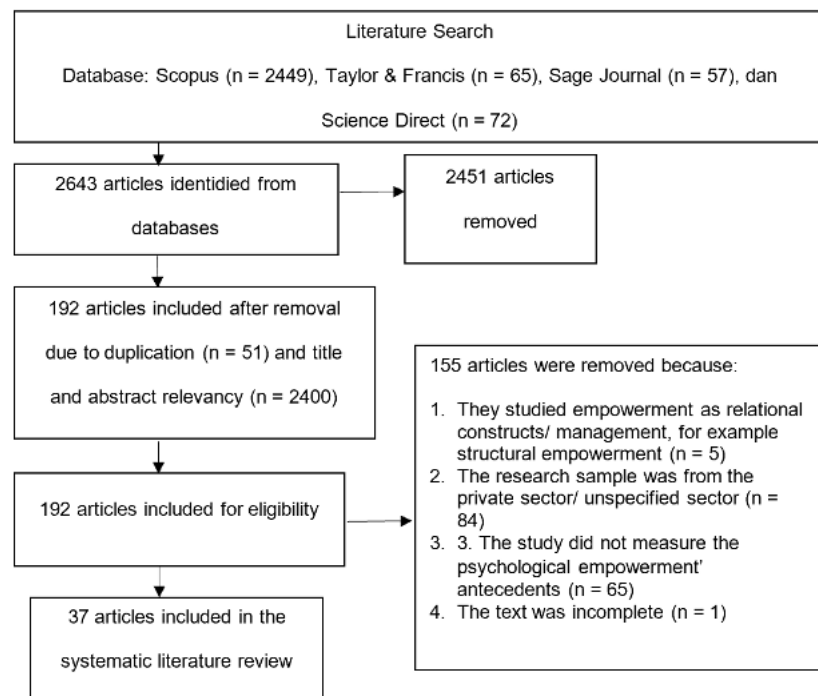


Figure 1. Article Selection Process

Based on the above review, studies that did not meet the criteria were eliminated. Subsequently, a more in-depth examination of the full-text articles was conducted using several inclusion criteria as a reference. Articles were included if they met the following criteria: (1) published in peer-reviewed English-language journals and available in full text, (2) published between 2019 and 2024, (3) measured at least one factor influencing PE in the public sector, even if it only examined one antecedent or predictor rather than the consequences of PE, (4) focused on government or public sector employees, including civil servants, state-owned enterprise employees, government staff, or public service workers, (5) used a scale consistent with Spreitzer's PE scale, and (6) treated empowerment as a motivational construct, not structural empowerment. Based on these criteria, 37 articles were included in the systematic review.

RESULTS

PE has been widely discussed in academic literature through systematic literature reviews (SLR) and meta-analyses. However, studies focusing on the public sector are limited and have mainly explored the consequences of PE rather than the factors influencing it. This research addresses this gap by examining the key factors influencing PE in the public sector. A summary of the reviewed results from this SLR is presented in Appendix 1.

This study provides an overview of the scope of PE research in public organizations, as shown in Table 1. The table indicates that studies on PE over the past five years experienced a decline but rebounded in 2023–2024, with 22 studies conducted during this period. Further, most public organizations studied were government offices (Al Nahyan et al., 2024; Campos & Cavazotte, 2023; Fareed et al., 2023; García-Juan et al., 2019b, 2019a, 2020; Johansson-Berg & Wennblom, 2023; Jong, 2023; Jong & Faerman, 2021; Karani Mehta et al., 2023; Lin et al., 2023; Metin, 2023; Peerzadah, 2024; Pham et al., 2024; Qing et al., 2020; Shabir & Muazzam, 2024; Skrinou & Gkorezis, 2020; Sridadi et al., 2023; Tripathi et al., 2021) and hospitals, with nurses constituting the largest sample group (Al Otaibi et al., 2023; Ardabili, 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2024; Khamis Alharbi, 2024; Matsuo, 2019; Mohammed & Al-Abrow, 2024; Sahraei Beiranvand et al., 2021; Tran Pham, 2024; Uluturk et al., 2024; Yusof et al., 2019). Concerning the research site, the geographic locations of the studies varied, with the majority conducted in Asia (29 studies). Most studies employed quantitative methods, while qualitative and mixed-method approaches were rarely utilized. Additionally, only one study used a scenario-based experimental method (Lin et al., 2023). Meanwhile, the most widely referenced concept of PE was the one proposed by Spreitzer (1995), which is a motivational construct manifested in four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact.

Table 1. Scope of PE Research in the Public Sector

Scope of Research		N
Publication Year	2019-2020	10
	2021-2022	5
	2023-2024	22
Research Participants	Hospital	10
	University	1
	School	2
	Governmental Institution	19
	State-owned Enterprise	3
	Public service	2
Research Location	Asia (Vietnam, Pakistan, China, Thailand, India, Southern Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, Indonesia, Tehran (Iran), Malaysia, Japan)	29
	Europe (Sweden, Greece, Spanyol)	5
	America (United States, Brazil)	3

Leadership Factors Affecting PE

Table 2 indicates that leadership is the most influential factor affecting PE in the public sector. The most commonly studied was leadership style. Leadership styles, such as transformational leadership (Fareed et al., 2023; Ibrahim et al., 2024; Jong, 2023; Jong & Faerman, 2021; Mohammed & Al-Abrow, 2024; Peerzadah, 2024; Pham et al., 2024; Wongpreedee & Sudhipongpracha, 2024), empowering leadership (Al Otaibi et al., 2023; Mohammed & Al-Abrow, 2024; Sridadi et al., 2023; Tran Pham, 2024), and servant leadership (Tripathi et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022; Ying et al., 2020), were found to have a positive correlation with PE. Leaders who encourage employees' personal development, help them recognize their potential, and provide guidance and autonomy can enhance employee empowerment. Additionally, using motivating language to give feedback and inspire employees can improve their motivation and increase PE (Uluturk et al., 2024).

Table 2. Summary of the Relationship between Antecedents and PE

Antecedents	Positive	Negative	Not Significant
Leadership factors			
Transformational leadership	7		
Perceived leader integrity	1		
Transactional leadership	1		
Ethical leadership	3		
Authentic leadership	3		
Empowering leadership	4		
Leader-member exchange	3		
Authoritarian leadership		1	
Servant leadership	3		
Change leadership	1		
Leader fairness	1		
Leader's relationship quality	1		
Motivating language	1		
Organizational factors			
Institutional legitimacy	1		
Perceived organizational support	2		
Organizational error tolerance	1		
Bureaucratic control		1	
The safeness of the psychological climate	1		
Enable perceptions of control system design	1		
Knowledge sharing	1		
Structural empowerment			2
Person organizational fit	1		
Work factors			
Goal specificity	1		
Job stress		1	
Role conflict		1	
Role ambiguity		1	
Personal factors			
Public service motivation	1		
Emotional intelligence	1		
Learning goal orientation (LGO)	2		
Prove-performance goal orientation (PPGO)			1
Avoid-performance goal orientation (APGO)			1
Developmental job experience	1		
Personal growth initiative	1		

Leadership styles that emphasize fairness and honesty, such as ethical leadership, (Qing et al., 2020; Sahraei Beiranvand et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2024), and perceived leader integrity (Shabir & Muazzam, 2024) encourage ethical behavior in employees and enhance PE.

Furthermore, the reviewed articles revealed that open and transparent relationships between leaders and employees, seen in authentic leadership, make employees feel safer and more connected to their work, which increases PE (Sahraei Beiranvand et al., 2021; Uluturk et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2022).

The findings also showed that the relationship between leaders and subordinates positively correlates with PE in the public sector. Evidence showed that leader-member exchange (Ardabili, 2020; Metin, 2023; Skrinou & Gkorezis, 2020), leader fairness, and relationship quality of leader (Khamis Alharbi, 2024) significantly strengthen PE, while authoritarian leadership, which demands total obedience, has decreased it (Wang et al., 2022).

In addition, transactional leadership was evidenced to enhance psychological empowerment (PE) by providing clear, measurable goals and rewards. They also pay attention to employees' needs, desires, and abilities to offer relevant rewards, making employees feel a sense of competence and meaning (Jong & Faerman, 2021). Similarly, change leadership, or how leaders assist subordinates in managing change, also contributes to employee empowerment. Specifically, it relates to how capable and confident employees feel in dealing with organizational changes (Mangundjaya, 2019). In summary, various leadership styles and behaviors significantly impact PE in the public sector.

Organizational Factors

The second factor that influences PE comes from the organization. Specifically, perceived organizational support, manifested through policies on vision and mission, human resource practices, and supportive compensation systems, has enhanced employees' PE significantly (Campos & Cavazotte, 2023; Metin, 2023). On the other hand, research indicates that bureaucratic control in the public sector negatively impacts PE, which can ultimately reduce work engagement. However, when organizational support is present, it can mitigate this effect by strengthening empowerment to enhance work engagement. Therefore, PE is crucial in bridging the relationship between these organizational factors (Campos & Cavazotte, 2023).

In addition, organizations that can create a safe climate significantly enhance PE. Public sector employees who feel that the administrative system helps them better understand their tasks, rather than simply following rigid rules, are more likely to experience greater psychological empowerment. (Johansson-Berg & Wennblom, 2023). Other organizational factors, such as organizational error tolerates (Lin et al., 2023), the person organizational fit (Pham et al., 2024), institutional legitimacy (Qu et al., 2024), and knowledge sharing (Tripathi et al., 2021) have been found to have a positive relationship with PE. However, structural empowerment was found to negatively correlate with PE (García-Juan et al., 2019b, 2019a).

Work Factors

Another factor that affected PE was related to the work. For example, role conflict and role ambiguity were found to negatively impact PE (Skrinou & Gkorezis, 2020). In public sector organizations, especially local governments, unclear boundaries between roles, departments, and legal entities can lead to these issues. Unclear or conflicting roles can cause stress among employees. Job stress is also negatively linked to PE. To ensure clear goals, goal specificity in the public sector is important, and it has a positive effect on PE (Jong & Faerman, 2021).

Personal Factors

The last factors affecting PE were related to personality. One key characteristic is public service motivation (PSM) (Pham et al., 2024; Rafique et al., 2023; Wongpreedee & Sudhipongpracha, 2024), which reflects employees' intrinsic desire to serve the public. This motivation positively impacts PE. Another factor is goal orientation, especially learning goal orientation, which is commonly studied with PE in the public sector. However, performance-approach and achievement goal orientations do not show a strong link to PE. Other personal factors, such as work experience development and personal growth initiatives, also positively influence PE (Matsuo, 2019).

Mediator and Moderator of PE

This review also looked at the mediators and moderators of psychological empowerment (PE), which can either strengthen or weaken the factors influencing PE. Table 3 shows the results of the mediators. Although not many articles specifically discussed the mediators and moderators of PE (see Table 4), Table 3 shows that the most common mediators were related to organizational factors, such as aligning employees' values with the organization's goals and setting specific objectives (Jong & Faerman, 2021; Pham et al., 2024). Furthermore, personal growth initiatives, which involve proactive behavior in identifying and utilizing opportunities for self-development, can mediate the relationship between Learning Goal Orientation (LGO) and PE (Matsuo, 2019)

Table 3. Psychological Empowerment Mediators

Mediator Variables	Positive	Negative	Not Significant
Organizational Factors			
Person Organizational Fit	2		
Goal Specificity	2		
Job Stress		1	
Enabling perceptions of control system design	1		
Leadership Factors			
Leader-Member Exchange	1		
Personal Factors			
Personal growth initiative	1		1

Mediation effects were also revealed to negatively impact PE. For example, job stress may negatively mediate the relationship between psychological contract and PE. When an organization fails to fulfil the contract agreed upon with employees, it can lead to stress, ultimately decreasing their PE (Karani Mehta et al., 2023).

Table 4. Psychological Empowerment Moderators

Moderator Variables	Positive	Negative	Not Significant
Personal Factors			
Public Service Motivation		2	
Learning goal orientation (LGO)	1		
Prove-performance goal orientation (PPGO)			1
Avoid-performance goal orientation (APGO)			1
Organizational Factors			
Interactional Justice	1		
Organizational Citizenship Behavior			1

As in Table 4, moderators typically involve interactions between personal, and organizational factors. These findings suggest that public service motivation (PSM) can negatively moderate the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational error tolerance with PE (Lin et al., 2023; Zheng et al., 2024). In addition, interactional justice was found to moderate the relationship between authentic leadership and PE (Zhang et al., 2022). The relationship between PE and structural empowerment is moderated by learning goal orientation (García-Juan et al., 2020) suggesting the need for further research on how these factors influence PE in the public sector.

Figure 2 presents a conceptual map developed to visually summarize the key findings of this systematic literature review. It highlights the most frequently examined and statistically significant variables that function as antecedents, mediators, and moderators of PE in the public sector. Rather than capturing every variable identified in the literature, the map focuses on those

that consistently appear across studies and show meaningful relationships with PE. The arrows in the diagram represent general causal flows, based on the directionality reported in prior empirical research. However, the map does not reflect exact statistical models or universal pathways. It is intended to serve as a simplified overview that captures the core structure of the literature and provides a foundation for future focused investigations.

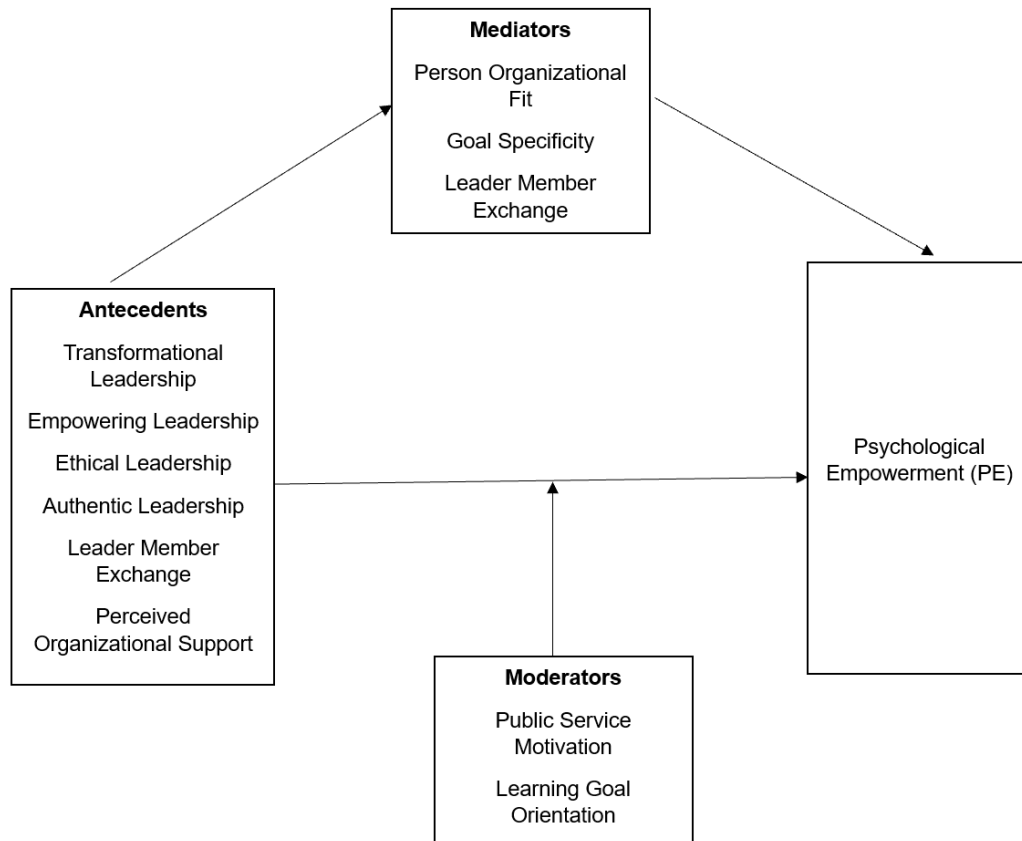


Figure 2. Concept Map Based on PE in the Public Sector

DISCUSSION

Previous research has found that leadership significantly impact employees' PE (Llorente-Alonso et al., 2024; Seibert et al., 2011), and this review adds additional evidence that, leadership is the most important factor influencing employees' PE in the public sector. Leadership style, especially transformational leadership (Fareed et al., 2023; Ibrahim et al., 2024; Jong, 2023; Jong & Faerman, 2021; Mohammed & Al-Abrow, 2024; Peerzadah, 2024; Pham et al., 2024; Wongpreedee & Sudhipongpracha, 2024) have been found to positively affect employees' perceptions of empowerment by supporting personal development, building their self-confidence, and fostering autonomy and freedom in decision-making (Ibrahim et al., 2024; Peerzadah, 2024). Similarly, managerial coaching and motivating language, which focus on supporting and guiding employees in their tasks and development, have been shown to enhance PE, ultimately contributing to innovative behavior and work engagement in the public sector (Al Nahyan et al., 2024; Uluturk et al., 2024). These findings imply that in public organizations, leadership interventions, particularly those rooted in transformational principles, are not only desirable but perhaps essential for sustaining employees' sense of empowerment. Merely introducing structural reforms or decentralizing authority may not be sufficient unless managers are also equipped to motivate, support, and communicate effectively with their teams.

However, not all studies support the idea that transformational leadership always has a positive impact on PE. For instance, a study conducted in Thailand found that transformational leadership did not affect two dimensions of PE—self-determination and impact—due to the presence of bureaucratic control, which restricts employees' actions in the public sector (Wongpreedee & Sudhipongpracha, 2024). In line with this finding, another study found that bureaucratic control in the public sector negatively impacts PE, which can ultimately reduce work engagement (Campos & Cavazotte, 2023). On the other hand, research has indicated that empowering leadership, which promotes flexibility and openness in decision-making, has a more positive effect on PE in less bureaucratic settings (Al Otaibi et al., 2023; Sridadi et al., 2023). These findings highlight the need for public organizations to address hierarchy and centralization within their structures. Further research on bureaucratic control in various public institution, could offer deeper insight, particularly in relation to PE.

Another leadership factor that affects PE is leaders who have integrity (Shabir & Muazzam, 2024). Leaders with integrity can enhance employees' PE in the public sector by providing full control and creating a calm work environment (minimal conflict and pressure), allowing employees to feel more comfortable and confident in carrying out their responsibilities. As a result, employees perceive themselves as having an important role within the organization and view their work as more meaningful. This aligns with ethical leadership and institutional legitimacy, which can promote employee PE in the public sector (Qing et al., 2020; Qu et al., 2024; Sahraei Beiranvand et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2024). These findings highlight that leaders in public sector who provide guidance, motivate employees, and encourage innovation, as well as having integrity and a sense of fairness are important factors to consider in enhancing PE. This suggests that capacity-building programs in public institutions should prioritize leadership development as a strategic lever for fostering empowerment. Especially in rigid bureaucratic systems, managerial coaching and motivational communication may act as catalysts for shifting employee mindsets from compliance to initiative and innovation.

An interesting finding regarding the leadership-empowerment relationship is about gender. Gender has been found to influence the relationship between leadership and PE (Jong, 2023). This study found that leadership and empowerment have a bigger impact on male subordinates than female ones, regardless of the leader's gender. However, the effect of gender similarity diminishes over time, suggesting that leadership behavior, rather than gender, becomes more important for empowerment. The results also point to gender stereotypes against women, suggesting that public organizations should create a more supportive environment for gender equality (Jong, 2023).

Perceived organizational support (POS) is another key factor influencing PE. This aligns with findings from studies conducted in the private sector (Caesens et al., 2020; Meira & Hancer, 2021; Park & Kim, 2022). POS enhances employees' sense of being valued and appreciated, fostering the perception that their work is meaningful and giving them greater control over their tasks (Caesens et al., 2020). It also reduces the negative effects of bureaucratic control in public organizations, ultimately boosting employees' PE (Campos & Cavazotte, 2023). POS is also closely linked to the role of leaders (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), as studies indicate a positive correlation between leader fairness, the quality of leader-employee relationships, and PE (Khamis Alharbi, 2024). The findings emphasize the importance of managing leadership and organizational factors in the public sector to improve employee PE, enhance work outcomes, and attain organizational success. Beyond leadership development, fostering an organizational climate that consistently conveys support and appreciation may be essential to enhancing psychological empowerment in public service contexts.

The public sector is known for its formal and rigid systems that often control employees. A study by Johansson-Berg & Wennblom (2023), explains the importance of a supportive environment (safe climate) in mitigating this effect. A safe and supportive organizational climate make employees feel that systems are helpful rather than obstructive, enhancing their sense of empowerment. In contrast, work-related stressors such as role conflict and role ambiguity can affect employees' PE negatively. In complex public organizations, unclear boundaries and conflicting expectations can create uncertainty and confusion, reducing employee's sense of control and empowerment, which increases job stress (Karani Mehta et al., 2023; Skrinou & Gkorezis, 2020). Studies have shown that job stress negatively impacts the relationship between psychological contract breach and PE, highlighting the importance of clear roles and expectations

for empowering employees. In addition, stressful work factors play an important role in reducing employee PE in the public sector. Empowering employees in the public sector requires the reduction of workplace stressors through clearer structures, communication, and job design.

Another study found that organizational error tolerance is a key factor in organizational support that can influence PE. It highlights that organizations that tolerate mistakes provide employees with greater freedom, encourage initiative and participation in decision-making, and boost employees' confidence, ultimately enhancing their PE (Lin et al., 2023). Moreover, aligning employees' goals and values with those of the organization, referred to as person-organizational fit, is a crucial organizational factor for enhancing employee empowerment in the public sector. This alignment helps employees feel a sense of belonging and emotional connection to the organization, leading them to perceive their contributions as significant to the organization's success (Pham et al., 2024). Thus, in the context of the public sector, organizational support through vision and mission policies and human resources can improve employee PE.

To avoid the negative impact of role ambiguity on PE, employees in the public sector need clear goals or goal specificity. Goal specificity has been found to correlate positively with PE (Jong & Faerman, 2021). These findings highlight that leaders in public sector can give employees more autonomy when clear or specific goals are set. When employees fully understand what is expected of them, the work becomes more meaningful, and thus, it enhances their PE.

Goal orientation also plays a role in PE. Research on goal orientation in the public sector is particularly relevant because public employees have distinct characteristics compared to private sector employees. For instance, public sector employees are often considered to have permanent job status (García-Juan et al., 2019a). Research findings indicate that learning goal orientation (LGO) positively influences PE (García-Juan et al., 2020; Matsuo, 2019). However, prove-performance goal orientation (PPGO) and avoid-performance goal orientation (APGO) were not found to be related to PE (García-Juan et al., 2020).

Employees with a learning goal orientation (LGO) are more likely to engage in self-improvement and actively seek opportunities for development, thereby enhancing their sense of empowerment (García-Juan et al., 2020; Matsuo, 2019). However, employees with high PPGO may see job security as encouraging avoidance of failure and challenges, similar to APGO, which can lower their performance effectiveness (García-Juan et al., 2020). Another finding reveals that the relationship between LGO and PE can be explained through a personal factor: personal growth initiative (Matsuo, 2019). LGO encourages employees to focus on self-improvement, strengthening their sense of control in the workplace.

Another personal factor that can influence PE is Public Service Motivation (PSM). Employees with high PSM are more likely to perceive their work as meaningful (Pham et al., 2024) and engage in activities that benefit the community (Wongpreedee & Sudhipongpracha, 2024). However, research shows that PSM negatively moderates the relationship between ethical leadership, organizational error tolerance, and PE (Lin et al., 2023; Zheng et al., 2024). Employees with high PSM tend to focus on public welfare (Zheng et al., 2024), reducing the influence of leadership and organizational tolerance on their empowerment (Lin et al., 2023).

The intrinsic motivation often found in public employees also influences the relationship between structural empowerment and PE. Structural empowerment refers to the organization's efforts to share information and delegate decision-making power to subordinates. In the public sector, structural empowerment was found to negatively correlate with PE (García-Juan et al., 2019b, 2019a), which differs from the results found in the private sector (Llorente-Alonso et al., 2024). Public employees, motivated by intrinsic factors, may not rely as much on external empowerment mechanisms. Simply granting authority does not automatically lead employees to feel psychologically empowered in public sector. They must have the desire to be empowered, believe that they truly are empowered, feel capable of achieving the desired outcomes, and perceive those outcomes as personally meaningful (Spreitzer, 1995). However, when structural empowerment is combined with LGO, it can enhance PE (García-Juan et al., 2019b). These findings emphasize the need for public organizations to foster a work culture that promotes continuous learning and self-development to enhance PE.

The conceptual diagram (Figure 2) presents only the most important variables involved in the main causal chain, rather than all variables that might be relevant. Given the complexity of

psychological empowerment and its interactions with individual, organizational, and contextual elements, including all possible factors would risk overcomplicating the model and reducing its clarity. Future research is encouraged to investigate specific pathways within this framework, especially those involving contextual variations across public sector environments.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER STUDY

This study identified four main factors influencing PE: leadership, organizational, personal, and work factors. Among these, leadership factors are most commonly researched and often mediate the relationship between PE and work outcomes. In terms of organizational factors, perceived organizational support—support from both the organization and its leaders—is a critical aspect for public organizations to consider about PE. For personal factors, public service motivation and goal orientation are key contributors in the public sector. In terms of work factors, role ambiguity and role conflict are common challenges in the public sector and can impact employees' PE. Therefore, public sector employees should be provided with clear goals and defined roles to support their performance effectiveness.

We recommend future research focus on the factors influencing PE in the public sector, including its mediating and moderating variables, as most studies currently focus on its outcomes. Additionally, research often overlooks the unique traits of public organizations, policies, and services. To address this, future studies should explore more diverse methods, such as qualitative or experimental approaches to test causal relationships in low-autonomy public agencies or longitudinal approaches to observe how PE evolves during reform phases or policy transitions. Qualitative methods may also uncover deeper insights into how PE is experienced in various organizational contexts. Investigating these areas can support the development of more targeted interventions and help both individuals and institutions better understand the role of PE in improving performance and public service quality.

ETHICAL DISCLOSURE

Not Applicable

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Appendix 1. A summary of 37 selected articles

Author (Year) Country	Method and Participants	Research Findings
(Pham et al., 2024) Vietnam	Quantitative Local government institutions	This study found that public service motivation and transformational leadership improved person-organization fit and PE, which increased organizational commitment and innovative work behavior. PE, along with organizational commitment, also enhanced job performance.
(Shabir & Muazzam, 2024) Pakistan	Quantitative Government employees	Perceptions of leaders' integrity positively correlated with PE and employee engagement. PE fully mediated the relationship between perceptions of leaders' integrity and employee engagement.
(Jong & Faerman, 2021) United States	Quantitative Government employees	Goal specification mediated the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership and PE.
(Zheng et al., 2024) China	Quantitative Community social workers	Ethical leadership positively impacted PE by promoting it, which was linked to facilitation, accommodation, and legal style. Public service motivation and organizational citizenship behavior moderated this relationship.
(Zhang et al., 2022) Beijing, China	Quantitative Teachers in public elementary schools	Authentic leadership directly and indirectly influenced teachers' knowledge sharing, with interactional justice enhancing the effect of authentic leadership on PE.
(Qu et al., 2024) China	Quantitative School teachers	Institutional legitimacy was positively associated with innovative behavior, with PE, normative commitment, and their combined mediation playing key roles in this relationship.
(Wongpreedee & Sudhipongpracha, 2024) Thailand	Quantitative Village health social workers	Public service motivation and transformational leadership indirectly influenced the professional discretion of village health volunteers through PE.
(Peerzadah, 2024) India	Quantitative Research & development in the public sector	Transformational leadership and PE both positively influenced creativity, with PE mediating the relationship between the two.

(Mohammed & Al-Abrrow, 2024) Southern Iraq	Quantitative Employees in the hospital healthcare sector	PE mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative behavior and between empowering leadership and innovative behavior.
(Tran Pham, 2024) Vietnam	Quantitative Employees in Community Health Centers (Puskesmas)	Empowering leadership and PE had a significant positive impact on employee well-being. The research findings also emphasized the moderating role of time pressure.
(Ibrahim et al., 2024) Saudi Arabia	Quantitative Hospital nurses	Transformational leadership was positively related to PE and organizational citizenship behaviors, with PE partially mediating the relationship between the two.
(Al Nahyan et al., 2024) Saudi Arabia	Quantitative Frontline employees in public service organizations	Managerial coaching influenced IWB, with PE as a mediator and task independence as a moderator.
(Uluturk et al., 2024) Turkiye	Quantitative Hospital nurses	The research findings showed that authentic leadership positively affected work engagement, both directly and indirectly, through motivating language and PE.
(Karani Mehta et al., 2023) India	Quantitative Public sector bank	Psychological contract violations caused work stress, reducing PE. However, higher PE led to better innovative behavior and well-being. Work stress and PE mediated the relationship between the contract and outcomes, with learned helplessness moderating this effect.
(Al Otaibi et al., 2023) Saudi Arabia	Quantitative Hospital nurses	The study found that empowering leadership relates to work engagement through PE, with no direct relationship between empowering leadership and work engagement.
(Sridadi et al., 2023) Indonesia	Quantitative Indonesian Police	This study found that empowering leadership enhances organizational citizenship behavior, with PE and job satisfaction mediating this effect.
(Jong, 2023) United States	Quantitative Government employees	Transformational leadership had a stronger impact on the PE of male subordinates, regardless of the supervisor's gender. However, this effect weakened when male employees worked in units with more female employees.
(Metin, 2023) Turkiye	Quantitative Public institutions, informatics unit	Turnover intention in her study was influenced not only by POS but also by LMX mediated by POS. PE partially mediated the relationship between LMX and turnover intention.
(Lin et al., 2023) China	<i>Scenario-based experiment</i> <i>Public sector employees</i>	Organizational error tolerance enhanced PE, which promoted change-oriented organizational citizenship behavior. PSM moderated this relationship, with the effect being significant only when PSM levels were low, not high.
(Rafique et al., 2023) Pakistan	Quantitative University lecturers and professors	Attraction to policymaking (APM), compassion (COM), and self-sacrifice (SS) significantly influenced employees' PE and innovative behavior (IB). However, commitment to the public interest (CPI) did not significantly impact PE or IB. Furthermore, PE partially mediated the relationship between public service motivation dimensions and innovative behavior.
(Campos & Cavazotte, 2023) Brazil	Quantitative Civil servants in audit courts	There was a negative mediation of PE in the relationship between bureaucratic control and work engagement, as well as a partial and positive mediation between organizational support and work engagement.
(Johansson-Berg & Wennblom, 2023) Sweden	Quantitative Government employees	A safe climate was positively related to enabling perceptions and PE. Enabling perceptions were positively related to PE and negatively related to red tape.
(Fareed et al., 2023) Pakistan	Quantitative Various public sector agencies	PE and transformational leadership (TL) had an impact on project success (PS). PE partially mediated the relationship between TL and PS.

(Wang et al., 2022) China	Quantitative State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN)	Servant leadership promoted OCB and task performance, while authoritarian leadership reduced OCB. PE and OCB mediated the relationship with task performance.
(Tripathi et al., 2021) India	Quantitative Public Sector	Servant leadership positively influenced work role performance, with knowledge sharing and PE partially mediating this relationship. Knowledge sharing also positively impacted PE.
(Sahraei Beiranvand et al., 2021) Tehran	Quantitative Nurses in hospitals	Authentic leadership accounts for 74.5% of the variance in PE, while ethical leadership explains 87.7% of the variance in PE.
(Qing et al., 2020) China	Quantitative Government employees	Ethical leadership was positively related to job satisfaction and affective commitment. PE fully mediated the relationship between ethical leadership and affective commitment, and partially mediated the relationship with job satisfaction.
(Skrinou & Gkorezis, 2020) Greece	Quantitative Administrative employees in local government	Leader-member exchange, role conflict, and role ambiguity are positively associated with PE.
(Ardabili, 2020) Iran	Quantitative Hospital nurses	LMX mediated emotional intelligence and job satisfaction by transforming its negative effects into positive ones. PE did not significantly moderate the relationship between emotional intelligence, leader-member exchange, and job outcomes.
(García-Juan et al., 2020)	Quantitative Government employees	Only learning goal orientation affected PE. There was a positive relationship between PE and job satisfaction and affective commitment and a negative relationship with job anxiety levels.
(Ying et al., 2020) Pakistan	Quantitative State-owned enterprises	PE and autonomous motivation for the environment (AME) directly and sequentially mediated the effect of servant leadership on employee voluntary green behavior (EVGB). Servant leadership was a predictor of PE, AME, and EVGB.
(Yusof et al., 2019) Malaysia	Quantitative Nurses in hospitals	The study found PE as a mediator between leader-member exchange and organizational citizenship behavior.
(Matsuo, 2019) Japan	Quantitative Nurses in hospitals	Learning goal orientation increased PE directly and indirectly through personal growth initiative. Developmental job experience positively related to PE but had no significant impact on personal growth initiative.
(García-Juan et al., 2019a)	Quantitative Government employees	There was no relationship between structural empowerment and PE. Learning goal orientation strongly moderates this relationship, and its interaction with structural empowerment influences the level of PE.
(García-Juan et al., 2019b) Spain	Quantitative Government employees	Structural empowerment was positively related to organizational performance. This relationship was not mediated by PE.
(Mangundjaya, 2019) Indonesia	Quantitative State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN)	PE and organizational trust acted as mediators for the relationship between change leadership and affective commitment to change.
(Khamis Alharbi, 2024) Saudi Arabia	Quantitative Employees in hospitals	PE was found to mediate the relationship between the relationship quality of the leader and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), as well as between leader fairness and OCB.