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The Role of Learning and Performance Orientation Practices in Predicting the Employees' Psychological Empowerment of an Industrial Organization

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The goal of this study was to determine the role of learning and performance orientation practices in predicting psychological empowerment. Participants included 287 employees from an industrial organization who were chosen by stratified random sampling method. They filled out the related self-reported scales including the learning and performance orientation practices Scale (Brett, & VandeWalle, 1999), and the psychological empowerment scale (Spreitz, 1995). The results showed that there are positive relationships between learning orientation practices and meaning (.62), competence (.43), self-determination (.79) and impact (.33). The relationships between performance orientation practices and subscales of psychological empowerment were negative (meaning, -.45; competence, -.38; self-determination, -.56; and impact, -.28). In addition, the results of multiple regression analysis showed that 41% of the variance of meaning, 23% of the variance of competence, 67% of the variance of self-determination, and 11% of the variance of impact were explained by learning and performance orientation practices.

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***Keywords*:** learning orientation practices, performance orientation practices, psychological empowerment

This study examined the relationship of learning and performance orientation practices with psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment is a form of intrinsic motivation that examines individual perceptions of empowerment (Dewettinck & Van Ameijde, 2011). It involves the process through which people develop self-efficacy and take a proactive role over issues that are pertinent to them (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Zimmerman, 1995). The works of Thomas and Velthouse (1990), Spreitzer (1995), and others (Menon, 2001) have identified several dimensions that contribute to an overall perception of being empowered: Meaning (goal internalization), Competence (Self-efficacy), Self-Determination and Impact (Sense of control). Meaning refers to the intrinsic caring about the task and how performing an activity fits with the individual's value system. Thus, a meaningless task conflicts with values and produces disinterest and disengagement (Spreitzer, 1997). Competence refers to self-efficacy and to an individual's perceived capacity to develop and improve his/her skills and meet new challenges. Choice or Self-determination represents individuals' perceptions that have discretion on which approach to follow when performing a task. This dimension relates to values that are included in participative management and in other forms of consulted interventions. Impact reflects individuals' perceptions that their strategies can actually make a difference in and have an impact in the work place. Impact is also referred to as the feeling of advancement and making progress (Randolph and Kemery,

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2011) and is the opposite of learned helplessness (Raub and Robert, 2010).

There is a need to develop our knowledge of Psychological empowerment by expanding the set of practices that affect the construct and describing the mechanisms through which these practices are empowering (Gomez and Rosen, 2001). The propose of this study is that goal orientation theory can assist in identifying such practices which may have an impact on Psychological empowerment. According to goal orientation theory, certain activities (for example, managerial practices) bring situational cues that frame employees' meta-goals towards their work–related tasks in terms of learning goals and performance goals. These goals contribute to enhance or diminish employees' sense of Psychological empowerment.

Goal orientation depicts the underlying goals that individuals seek in achievement situations (Butler, 1993; VandeWalle and Cummings, 1997). When encountering challenging tasks, employees react differently in their approach to these tasks by adopting a certain goal orientation, which forms a schema for future interpretation of events and outcomes (Button, Mathieu, and Zajac, 1996). The bulk of goal orientation research has identified two types of goals. These goals have been called performance and learning (Dweck, 1986). The former construct is generally characterized by the tendency to demonstrate competence and worth, and it is often considered maladaptive (Pintrich, 2000; Garcia, Restubog, Toledano, Tolentino, and Rafferty,2012), especially when the a priori perceived ability is not high (Bell and Kozlowski, 2002). On the other hand, the latter construct generally represents the desire to learn and grow and is generally considered adaptive (Dweck, 1986). Although, the construct of goal orientation can manifest individual

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differences in the salience of motives, there is considerable evidence that learning goal orientation and performance goal orientation can also be affected by situational demands such as managerial practices
(Kanfer, 1990). Indeed, experimental studies have shown that instructions about the nature of a task, or even the naming of the task as either a training or an assessment activity, can elicit the salience of either performance or learning goals in achievement situations (Roberson and Alsua, 2002), which bring different results in cognitions and performance ((Baek-Kyoo, Sunyoung, and Jeong, 2013).

This study proposes that learning or a performance goal orientation as implied by organization may have an impact on Psychological empowerment. This occurs under the assumption that situation cues given by practices elicit a goal orientation within the individual that overrides his or her own dispositions (Ames and Archer, 1988), and endorses Kanter's (1977) assertion that the impact of practices in the organizational behavior of individuals is far greater than their own dispositions. Consequently, managerial practices that affect the salience of learning goals will be called Learning orientation practices, and practices that elicit the salience of performance goals (Dweck, 1986) will be called Performance orientation practices. It is argued that the effect of Learning orientation practices and Performance orientation practices are manifest in Psychological empowerment as having either a positive or a negative effect on employees' sense of Meaning, Competence, Self-determination, or Impact.

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Hypotheses

Hypothesis1. There is a positive relationship between learning orientation practices and meaning.

Hypothesis 2. There is a negative relationship between performance orientation practices and meaning.

Hypothesis 3. There is a positive relationship between learning orientation practices and competence.

Hypothesis 4. There is a negative relationship between performance orientation practices and competence.

Hypothesis 5. There is a positive relationship between learning orientation practices and self-determination.

Hypothesis 6. There is a negative relationship between performance orientation practices and self-determination.

Hypothesis 7. There is a positive relationship between learning orientation practices and impact.

Hypothesis 8. There is a negative relationship between performance orientation practices and impact.

Method

Participants

The research population consists of individuals employed in an industrial organization. Participants were 287 employees that were selected via stratified random sampling method. Based on the employee's agreement to participate, the questionnaires were administered to all who choose to participate. Of the total participants, 85% were male and 15% were female. The Participants range of age was from 26 to 52. Of the 287 participants, 15% were single, and 85% were married. In regards to having children, 80% of the participants reported having children. 59% of the participants reported having a high school

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graduate, and 41% of the participants reported having a graduate degree. Respondents had between 5 to 32 years of experience.

Instruments

Psychological empowerment. The scale used to measure psychological empowerment was originally published and validated by Spreitz (1995). The 12-item empowerment scale comprises four dimensions: meaning, competence, impact and self-determination. Each subscale has three items and the response was scaled on a 7-point Likert scale with 1 representing strong disagree and 7 strongly agree. Example items include "the work I do is meaningful to me"(meaning); "I am confident about my ability to do my job"(competence); "I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department" (impact), and "I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job" (self-determination). Reliability for each dimension has been found to be acceptable by Spreitz (1995). (meaning, α= .91; competence, α= .80; impact, α=0.81; self-determination, α= .76). In this research, all internal subscales yielded an internal reliability alpha greater than .70 (meaning=.81, competence= .87, impact= .79, self-determination= .80). In the current research the overall fit of the models to the data with the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), the Bentler-Bonett (1980) normed-fit index (NFI), comparative fit index (CFI) and non-normed fit index (NNFI) were assessed. For the CFA model, the goodness-of-fit (GFI) index was .91, the normed-fit index (NFI) was .96, the comparative fit index (CFI) was .97 and the non-normed fit index (NNFI) was .94. Also, this model has a RMSEA of .04; indicating a good fit.

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Learning orientation practices and performance orientation practices scale. The scale used to measure learning orientation practices and performance orientation practices originally published and validated by Brett, & VandeWalle (1999). Fourteen items, eight learning and six performance items were designed to assess learning orientation practices and performance orientation practices. The response to items were a 7-point Likert with 1 representing strong disagree and 7 strongly agree. In this research all internal subscales yielded an internal reliability alpha greater than .70. (Learning orientation practices, α= .85; Performance orientation practices, α= .78). In current research the overall fit of the models to the data with the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), the Bentler-Bonett (1980) normed-fit index (NFI), comparative fit index (CFI) and non-normed fit index (NNFI) were assessed. For the CFA model, the goodness-of-fit (GFI) index was .95, the normed-fit index (NFI) was .93, comparative fit index (CFI) was .98) and non-normed fit index (NNFI) was .98. Also, this model has a RMSEA of .09; indicating a good fit.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of the variables used in the analyses are presented in Table 1.

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Table 1

Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Matrix of Learning Orientation Practices and Performance Orientation Practices with Facets of Psychological Empowerment

	Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Learning orientation practices	44.16	12.21	1	-.53**	.62**	.43**	.79**	.33**
2	Performance Orientation practices	22.21	9.33	-.53**	1	-.45**	-.38**	-.56**	-.28**
3	Meaning	16.25	4.87	.62**	-.45**	1	.34**	.62**	.20**
4	Competence	18.88	3.99	.43**	-.38**	.34**	1	.49**	.19**
5	Self- Determination	19.21	4.52	.79**	-.56**	.62**	.49**	1	.29**
6	Impact	16.99	3.88	.33**	-.28**	.20**	.19**	.29**	1

**P<.01

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Hypothesis 1 anticipated that there is a positive relationship between learning orientation practices and meaning.

Hypothesis 1 was tested. It can be seen in Table 1 that there is a significant positive correlation between learning orientation practices and meaning ($r = .62$, $p < .01$. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypothesis 2 stated that there is a negative relationship between performance orientation practices and meaning.

Hypothesis two was tested by the correlation coefficient. As expected, performance orientation practices was negatively correlated with meaning ($r = -.45$, $p < .01$). Therefore, hypothesis 2 was supported.

The findings of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis (Table 2) indicated that the combination of learning orientation practices and performance orientation practices were able to significantly predict meaning ($F = 66.44$, $P < .001$). The R2 indicated that 41% of the variance of meaning was sexplained by this regression model. Table 2 shows that learning orientation practices was the most salient of the variables that entered in the regression equation ($\beta = .53$), and accounted for 39% of the variation of the meaning. Performance orientation practices ($\beta = -.17$) accounted for an additional 2% of the variation in meaning.

According to hypothesis 3, learning orientation practices was expected to be correlated with competence. As shown in Table1, learning orientation practices has a positive and significant relation with competence ($r = .79$, $p < .01$). Therefore, hypothesis 3 was supported..

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Table 2
The Prediction of Employees' Meaning, by Learning Orientation Practices and Performance Orientation Practices

Variables	R	R^2	B	β	t	P
Constant			2.45		7.65	.001
Learning orientation practices	.62	.39	.84	.53	8.22	.001
Performance orientation practices	.64	.41	-.15	-.17	-2.67	.001

F=66. 44, P<.001

Hypothesis 4: There is a negative relationship between performance orientation practices and competence. Results from Table 1 demonstrate that there is a significant negative relationship between performance orientation practices and competence (r= -.038, p<.01). Therefore, hypothesis 4 was supported.

The findings of hierarchical multiple regression analysis (Table 3) indicated that the combination of learning orientation practices and performance orientation practices was able to significantly predict competence (F=28.60, P<.001). The R2 indicated that 23% of the variance of competence was explained by this regression model. Table 3 shows that learning orientation practices was the variable that had the most important role in the prediction of competence (β=.32), and accounted for 19% of the variation in competence. Performance orientation practices (β=-.23) accounted for an additional 4% of the variation in competence.

Hypothesis 5: there is a positive relationship between learning orientation practices and Self-determination.

As shown in Table 1, the correlation coefficient between learning orientation practices and self-determination is positive and significant (r= .79, p<.01). Therefore, hypothesis 5 is confirmed.

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Table 3
The Prediction of Employees' Competence by Learning Orientation Practices and Performance Orientation Practices

Variables	R	R^2	B	β	t	P
Constant			2.95		7.63	.001
Learning orientation practices	.44	.19	.07	.32	4.29	.001
performance orientation practices	.48	.23	.07	-.23	-3.97	.001

F=28. 60, P<.001

Hypothesis 6: There is a negative relationship between performance orientation practices and self-determination.

This hypothesis was tested by correlating performance orientation practices and self-determination. From Table 1, it can been seen that there is a significant negative correlation between performance orientation practices and self-determination (r= -.56, p<.01) . Therefore, hypothesis 6 was supported.

The findings of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis (Table 4) indicate that the combination of learning orientation practices and performance orientation practices was able to significantly predict self-determination (F=19. 54, P<.001). The R2 indicates that 67% of the variance of self-determination explained by this regression model. Table 4 shows that learning orientation practices was the variable that had the most important role in predicting self-determination (β=.70) and accounted for 64% of the variation in self-determination. Performance orientation practices (β=-.18) accounted for an additional 3% of the variation in self-determination.

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Hypothesis 7: there is positive and significance relationship between learning orientation practices and Impact.

Hypothesis 7 was tested by correlating learning orientation practices and Impact. As expected, learning orientation practices was positively correlated with impact (r=.33, P<.001). Thus, hypothesis 7 was supported.

Table 4

The Prediction of Employees' Self-Determination by Learning Orientation Practices and Performance Orientation Practices

Variables	R	R2	B	β	t	P
Constant			10.55		6.26	.001
Learning orientation practices	.80	.64	.64	.70	14.19	.001
Performance orientation practices	.82	.67	-.16	-.18	-3.60	.001

F=19. 54, P<.001

Hypothesis 8: There is a negative relationship between performance orientation practices and Impact.

As expected, performance orientation practices was negatively correlated with impact (r=-.28, P<.001). Thus, hypothesis 8 was confirmed.

The findings of hierarchical multiple regression analysis (Table 5) indicates that the combination of learning orientation practices and performance orientation practices was able to significantly predict impact (F=13. 62, P<.001). The R2 indicated that 12% of the variance of impact was explained by this regression model.

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Table 5 shows that learning orientation practices was the variable that had the most important role in predicting impact (β=.25), and accounted for 11% of the variation in impact. Performance orientation practices (β=-.14) accounted for an additional 1% of the variation in impact.

Table 5

The Prediction of Employees' Impact by Learning Orientation Practices and Performance Orientation Practices

Variables		R	R^2	B	β	t	P
Constant				2.22		5.60	.001
Learning practices	orientation	.33	.11	.23	.25	3.21	.001
Performance Practices	Orientation	.35	.12	-.12	-.14	2.77	.05

F=13. 62, P<.001

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to enhance our understanding of the effect of learning and Performance Orientation Practices on employee empowerment in a work context.

Based on the results, meaning had a positive relationship with learning orientation practices and a negative relationship with performance orientation practices. Meaning represents goal internalization, that is, an intrinsic motivation about a task, which is the result of how performing an activity fits within the individual's value system. High meaning is related to high meaningfulness, intrinsic motivation, and a sense of purpose and identity. Low Meaning relates to meaninglessness and disengagement (Spreitzer,

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1997; Spreitzer, Kizilos and Nason, 1999; Thomas and Tymon, 1994). Research suggests that situational learning orientation is related to high levels of task related meaning (Tuckey, Brewer and Williamson, 2002). Ames (1992) found that a learning orientation climate was associated to meaningful, novel and interesting tasks. When a learning orientation is made salient, individuals experience increased commitment to their task. They exercise increased engagement (VandeWalle, 2003), an increased motivation to learn (Colquitt and Simmering, 1998), and high intrinsic motivation (Ames and Archer, 1988). A learning orientation also fosters a high level of fit of the task with the individual's value system, as demonstrated by higher evidence of ethical behavior and a lower level of task related cheating behavior (Anderman, Griessinger, and Westerfield, 1998). On the other hand, performance orientation cues are related to lower task related meaning, which include a higher level of disengagement from the task (Fisher and Ford, 1998), decreased intrinsic motivation (Ames and Archer, 1988), and higher justification of cheating behavior (Anderman et al. 1998).

Hypotheses 2 and 3 were tested and supported. Competence involves a sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). This implies that individuals with a high sense of competence perceive that they have the capacity to develop and improve their skills and meet new challenges (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990; Kirkman and Rosen 1997; Spreitzer, 1997). VandeWalle (2003) indicates that when a learning orientation is salient "individuals approach the situation with a higher sense of self-efficacy. (p.65)" Under learning goals, individuals experience increased self-efficacy (Stevens and Gist, 1997; Tedesco, 1999) and this occurs independently of their initial level of perceived ability. For example, Bell and Kozlowski (2002)

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and Potosky and Ramakrishna (2002) found a positive relation between learning goal orientation and self-efficacy, but not for performance goal orientation. This positive relation occurs because a learning orientation emphasizes that high competence can be achieved through training and preparation. As a result, employees focus on skill improvement. They are more prone and receptive to training (Farr, Hoffman, and Rigenbach, 1993), more willing to participate in a training program (VandeWalle, 2003), more likely to benefit from a training program, and more likely to better apply what they learn (VandeWalle, 2001) which translates into an increased sense of competence.

On the other hand, performance orientation cues do not foster, and may even weaken an employee's sense of competence. When employees have low self-efficacy, Performance orientation practices will tend to perpetuate that perception because they cue an entity view of ability as something that you either have or you do not, and thus it cannot be easily changed. Moreover, performance orientation practices may have a depressing effect on competence even when perceived ability is initially high. This occurs because when a performance orientation is salient, any threat to an individual's sense of competence in daily work related challenges can weaken employee confidence (VandeWalle, 2001), thus reducing his/her self-efficacy. Indeed, performance orientation practices can further weaken employee competence because individuals are less likely to strive to develop and improve their skills, less likely to participate in training programs and task development (Elliot and Harackiewitz, 1996), and less likely to benefit from training programs and apply what they learn in them. As a result, research indicates that a high performance goal

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orientation is associated to low self-efficacy (Potosky and Ramakrishna, 2002).

The other finding was that learning and performance orientation practices is associated with self-determination. Research suggests that when a learning orientation is salient, there is increased self-determination (Elliot and Harackiewitz, 1996; VadeWalle, 2001). Learning orientation cues are also associated with increased participation (Ames and Archer, 1988). This occurs because a learning orientation cues individuals that they have more control over their personal attributes, which leaves more of their cognitive resources available for decision-making when are facing a novel task (Dweck, 1986). The incremental view of ability endorsed by a learning orientation enables individuals to act upon decisions as they go along when performing a task; therefore, they can make choices on how to improve the processes of their work context. As a result, these individuals are more willing to sign up for work related programs (VandeWalle, 2003), exercise control over their work environment, and make decisions that give them higher discretion on how to improve their outcomes. This allows employees to be more proactive as they continuously seek for new learning opportunities (Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar, 1994; Brett and VandeWalle, 200`). For example, Sujan, et al (1994) found that when learning orientation was made salient, employees showed a higher tendency toward personal strategy development (they were more proactive) and they were more inclined towards working smart (which was defined as the tendency to develop and use the knowledge that is needed to succeed in the task). These behaviors bring a higher sense of self-determination to employees.

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On the other hand, a performance orientation is associated with lower commitment to the development of personal and task related strategies and to low self-determination. When a performance orientation is made salient, individuals show less use of personal initiative to understand the task at hand, and they are less likely to seek feedback to carry out the task (VandeWalle and Cummings, 1997). Thus, they are not as proactive in seeking learning and improvement opportunities in their task process. As a result, employees encounter a lower sense of self-determination.

The final findings from this study demonstrate that learning and performance orientation practices had relationships with impact.

Impact is the opposite of learned helplessness (Martinko and Gardner, 1982). It is the sense of control over outcomes at work (Ashforth, 1989) which includes perceptions that employee strategies do make a difference and that individuals in the organization have an impact on the outcomes of their work related tasks. High impact is associated with high internal locus of control (Thomas and Tymon, 1994). Dweck (1986) proposes that when a learning orientation is salient, sense of control is enhanced. This occurs because when a learning orientation is salient, sense of control is enhanced. This occurs because a learning orientation emphasizes an internal locus of control, that is, that the effort-outcome relation occurs within the individual and it does not depend on other people or other outside events. Learning orientation practices elicit a perception of control over work outcomes since mastery and results can be achieved through the individual's own effort (Ames and Archer, 1988). Therefore, employees should have the expectation that effort leads to success in changing their work environment. Indeed, a learning orientation

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brings a sense of control that decreases helplessness (Dweck, 1986) and thus increases Impact.

On the other hand, performance orientation practices elicit a lower sense of control because they cue individuals that they have little control over outcomes (Coad, 1999). When a performance orientation is made salient, there are several factors that stand between an individual's effort and the desired outcome. Many of these factors, Dweck (1986) proposes, are out of the individual's control, such as the performance of a reference group, when focusing on normative comparison. Indeed, when a performance orientation is made salient, employees do not believe that an increased effort on their part will make a difference, which leads to a helpless pattern (Nicholls, 1984) that decreases their sense of impact.

A limitation of the current study was that all the data were correlational due to the cross-sectional design of the study. Another limitation of the current study was the reliance on self-report data. Future studies should include some longitudinal components to better measure changes in variables over time, testing causal hypotheses more directly. My findings suggest that it would be beneficial for organization administration to develop programs for increasing learning orientation practices

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