

EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT AS A DRIVER OF CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR AND JOB PERFORMANCE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Purpose: The paper aims to answer the following questions: what are the relationships between employee empowerment, organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), and job performance, and does the age of the employees moderate the relationships between employee empowerment and their citizenship behaviour?

Methodology: These objectives are achieved by presenting the results of a survey conducted among 396 participants, representing different generations of employees. The relationships between analyzed phenomena were examined using path analysis and structural equation modelling (SEM).

Findings: It was found that employee empowerment positively affected OCB, which in turn influenced job performance and that OCB mediated the relationship between employee empowerment and job performance. Additionally, the analysis revealed that age is a significant moderator of the relationship between employee empowerment and OCB.

Research implications/limitations: The results showed that the use of employee empowerment can lead to an increase in OCB, which in turn has a positive effect on job performance. Furthermore, the moderating effect of age on the relationships between employee empowerment and OCB suggests that empowering older employees may prevent a decline in their OCB. However, the results are not representative due to the purposive sampling used and should not be generalised.

Practical implications: The findings suggest that an important task for today's managers who want to promote OCB and job performance is to create a work environment that is age-appropriate and allows employees to feel empowered.

Value: An original contribution of this study is determination of relationships between employee empowerment, OCB, age, and job performance of employees.

Keywords: employee empowerment, OCB, job performance, age-diversity.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

The increased dynamics of the environment leads to a growing interest in concepts of human resource management (HRM) that allow employees and organisations to deal with changes. The nature of work evolves quickly. Ongoing digitalisation in many branches has gradually replaced human labour, resulting in new expectations towards employees. Today, employees are not only expected to passively follow the instructions of their superiors, but also to show their initiative and self-reliance. The increase in organisational performance begins at the individual level, triggered by an act of free will of an employee. Continuous improvement based on the citizenship behaviours of empowered employees becomes an important factor for the success of organisations. Paradoxically, the expansion of information technology has led to the focus of attention on people, which has become an important premise for the search for HRM methods and tools that can improve employee job performance. For organisations, the most important is what employees do, not who they are, i.e., their behaviours, driven by management practices (Omar et al., 2022). Job performance depends not only on individual characteristics of the employee but also on organisational work environment, hence the applied management tools may enable to better use the potential of employees of all ages (Marcus et al., 2024; Mockało, Stachura-Krzyształowicz, 2021). In this context, employee empowerment, which can encourage their citizenship behaviours, increasing their job performance, needs to be analysed.

It should be noticed that to effectively manage employee behaviours, HRM tools and practices applied should be adjusted to the employees to whom they are addressed. However, today it becomes a serious challenge for management since the ageing of the population leads to the growing age diversity of employees in organisations where at the same time some generations of employees meet. Successful management of an age-diverse workforce is only possible if managers recognise the importance that ongoing demographic change brings to an organisation, particularly in terms of the HRM (Wang, Fu, Bai, 2024). There is a growing number of older employees whose needs and expectations of the organisation are different from those of younger employees. Simultaneously, it is often this group of employees that faces numerous constraints due to stereotypes and presumptions about their potential, adaptability, and job performance. In this context, attention should be paid to employee empowerment, which, in the age of digitalisation through the use of new technologies, reconciles improvement of job performance with wellbeing of age-diverse employees (Wolniak, 2023). Consequently, it becomes relevant to understand the age-differentiated impact of empowerment on employee behaviour and job performance what can help to create better workplaces which are adapted to the needs and expectations of different age groups employees (Rizzi et al., 2024).

Although empowerment, OCB, and job performance are popular topics in the literature due to their prominence for contemporary organisations, they are usually discussed separately, and there is a gap of empirical research on the relationships between these phenomena, as well as there is also lack of studies on the effect of age on these relationships. For more than a decade, it has been pointed out that employee empowerment brings many benefits to an organisation (e.g., Coun et al., 2021; Hill, Huq, 2004). It strengthens employee organisational commitment, increases employee motivation and job satisfaction, and stimulates entrepreneurial behaviour (Ng, 2020). Therefore, it can be assumed that it also strengthens their OCB. However, the effects of employee empowerment also depend on the employee, including their demographics (Naghavi et al., 2019). OCB, on the other hand, refers to the extra effort an employee is able to make on his/her own initiative for the organisation and/or its employees (Syah, Safrida, 2024); hence, it is also reasonable to assume that OCB can influence employee performance. Consequently, the paper tries to answer the following questions: What are the relationships between employee empowerment, OCB, and job performance, as well as does the age of the employees moderate the relationships between employee empowerment and citizenship behaviours? This goal will be achieved by presenting the results of a survey conducted among 396 respondents employed in Polish enterprises.

The model of relationships between employee empowerment, organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB), and employee job performance, as well as the moderating effect of age on the relationships between employee empowerment and OCB will be presented. The analysis of data will be carried out with the use of path analysis and structural equation modelling (SEM).

The results will be discussed in the context of changes in the age structure of the workforce. The practical implications of how the findings obtained can facilitate the development of an inclusive organisational work environment that promotes citizenship behaviours and job performance of an age-diverse workforce in a challenging era of digitalisation of work will be presented.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1. Employee empowerment: its notion and outcomes

There are many definitions of employee empowerment that emphasise its different aspects. However, it is mostly considered from two different but related perspectives, i.e., organisational and individual (Kanjanakan, Wang, Kim, 2023; Bratnicki et al., 2007). Generally, from an organisational perspective, it is understood as various managerial actions and practices aimed at increasing the autonomy, responsibility, and participation of employees in the management of the organisation. In turn, an individual perspective is focused on the perception

of these actions by employees. Precursors of this approach, Conger and Kanungo (1988) defined employee empowerment as a process of improving the sense of self-efficacy of employees by identifying the conditions of incapacity and eliminating them using both organisational practices and informal techniques providing self-efficacy information. Their work was continued by Thomas and Velthouse (1990), who proposed the so-called cognitive empowerment model encompassing four dimensions, i.e.:

- choice, concerning the possibility perceived by an employee to decide about the tools and methods of his/her tasks performance;
- competency, which refers to an employee's assessment of his/her ability to perform job tasks properly;
- meaningfulness, which is an employee-perceived value of his/her job aims and tasks in reference to his/her own values and norms;
- impact, which is an employee's assessment of the extent to which his/her actions can influence organisational performance.

This model was empirically validated by Spreitzer (1995), who further developed the individualistic approach. The model emphasises the psychological aspects of employee empowerment, which is considered as an individual's response to the objective characteristics of his/her work environment. It refers to an employee's sense of being empowered in relation to his/her organisational role (Meng, Sun, 2019).

This approach refers to Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and the understanding of people as conscious initiators of purposeful changes. From this perspective, organisational characteristics are only predictors of employee empowerment. Diverse organisational factors may affect employee empowerment, e.g., type of organisational culture and climate, employee participation in management and degree of autonomy, access to information, possibility of developing competencies, leadership style, quality of relationships between leaders and employees, etc. (Mezentseva et al., 2023; Kulikowski, 2017). Numerous empirical studies showed that employee empowerment leads to positive outcomes for both organisations and employees such as increase of employee intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, work effort, creativity, job crafting (see, e.g., Meng, Sun, 2019; Malik, Sarwar, Orr, 2021; Khan, Muktar, 2024).

2.2. Organisational citizenship behaviour and age of employees

Since the 1980s, rapid growth of interest in employee citizenship behaviour (OCB) has been observed in HRM because employee behaviour has started to be considered as an important factor of organisational success. The variety of OCB definitions stems from its complex nature. In the classical definition of Organ (1988, p. 4) OCB is understood as the voluntary behaviour of an individual that is not formally recognised by the organisation's reward system, but contributes to organisational effectiveness.

Numerous dimensions of OCB based on both the type of behaviour or their target are proposed in the literature (Kaur, Singh Kang, 2021). Organ (1988) in his pioneer study first distinguished two dimensions of OCB, i.e., altruism and conscientiousness, as crucial behaviour in the context of the work performed, but later he added three more dimensions, i.e., sporting behaviour, politeness, and civic virtue. Currently, more than thirty examples of OCB dimensions can be found in their different typologies. Among the most popular is Williams and Anderson's (1991) typology based on the target of behaviour. They presented citizenship behaviours as extra-role behaviour as opposed to in-role behaviour, which stem from the employee's responsibilities and his/her organisational role. This model includes two basic dimensions of extra-role behaviour, i.e. (Williams, Anderson, 1991):

- behaviour directed at co-workers (OCBI), which brings immediate benefit to a specific person in the organisation, and this way they indirectly contributes to the organisation (e.g., helping another employee);
- behaviour directed at an organisation (OCBO), which are mainly directed at benefits of the whole organisation (e.g., improvement of organisational performance, adherence to informal organizational principles and rules).

The OCB is conditioned by a number of individual and organisational factors. The OCB is influenced by the employee's work attitude, emotions experienced in work, employee's personality traits, work-related stressors (e.g., conflicts, ambiguity of the organisational role), interpersonal relationships within the organisation, and the quality of relationships with superiors, perception of organisational procedures and justice, etc. (Spector, Che, 2014).

Empirical findings also suggest that employee empowerment stimulates OCB (Paillé, 2010; Chen, Chiu, 2009). In a study in the Indian banking sector, it was also found that it was related to OCB (Kaur, Singh Kang, 2021). In turn, a study of customer service employees in hospitality and tourism firms conducted in the Arabic United Emirates revealed that OCB was influenced by organisational climate, but that this relationship was moderated by employee's organization-based self-esteem (Bani-Melhem et al., 2023) that is related to employee empowerment (Ma et al., 2021). The study also showed that work providing employees with new challenges, autonomy, and impact stimulates their activity and initiative (Steinerowska-Streb, Wronka-Pośpiech, 2022), which simultaneously suggests that employee empowerment may encourage OCB. An empirical study revealed that OCB was dependent on employee self-efficacy (Ullah et al., 2021). In turn, employee empowerment leads to increased self-efficacy of employees (Conger, Kanungo, 1988; Ma et al., 2021). Furthermore, OCB depends on employee work attitudes and their job satisfaction (Maga, Prapunoto, 2022). Since employee empowerment has a positive effect on employee attitudes and job satisfaction (Wong, Perry, 2011), it is reasonable to assume that it also positively affects OCB, hence the following hypothesis was formulated:

H1 Employee empowerment will positively influence OCB.

Many studies have shown that the age of employees can be an important factor that influences their work attitudes and behaviour (see, e.g., Van Vianen et al., 2022). Furthermore, empirical research has found a relationship between employee empowerment and the age of employees (Drazic, Schermuly, Büsch, 2023). Some studies also suggest that intensity of OCB varies between the younger and older groups of employees (e.g., Ajlouni, Kaur, Alomari, 2021) what may result from a longer process of organisational socialisation and different social roles of older employees in organisations (e.g., role of a teacher and a mentor). However, the research results are not conclusive on the impact of age on OCB. Some even indicate that older workers show a stronger tendency towards OCB, while others argue the opposite. Nevertheless, the observed relationships of age with empowerment and OCB suggest the following hypothesis:

H2: Age will moderate the relationship between employee empowerment and the OCB.

2.3. Job performance as the outcome of employee behaviour

Job performance is one of the key issues not only in management of an organisation, but also in economy because, as Campbell and Wiernik (2015, p. 48) point out: ‘Without individual performance there is no team performance, no unit performance, no organisational performance, no economic sector performance, no GDP’. Employee job performance is the primary leverage of an organisation's performance, which is reflected in its long-term financial results. Therefore, it is also the basis for HRM decisions. The fundamental process of performance management takes place at the individual level as a recurring cycle, which encompasses planning individual outcomes, motivating employees to perform them, and evaluating the achievement of the tasks set in a given period. However, despite its significance, there is no one conceptualisation of job performance because its understanding has evolved over time from a simplified perspective focused only on assessment of quantitative aspects of the job performance to a broader approach considering its qualitative and behavioural aspects. The 1980s brought a significant increase in attempts to define and set clear criteria for its measurement. It has started to be defined as ‘things that people actually do, actions they take, that contribute to the organisation's goals’ (López-Cabarcos, Vázquez-Rodríguez, Quiñoá-Piñeiro, 2022, p. 361). Job performance has started to be described as the ‘total expected value to the organisation of discrete behavioural episodes that an individual carries out over a standard period of time’ (Motowidlo, 2003, p. 39).

Today, it is also defined as the in-role behaviour of employees which generates value for the organisation and contributes to its success. The variety of approaches shows the multidimensionality of this phenomenon, which can concern both the behaviour that employees display in carrying out their work tasks and the results of this behaviour (Shields et al., 2016). However, the expected results and the behaviour that contributes to the achievement of the organisational goals are not precisely specified since they depend on the job and the organisation. Consequently, there are many methods and criteria for assessing job performance,

depending on the objectives and characteristics of the work performed, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. However, efficiency criteria, which include the results of work in material and value terms, i.e., the amount of work done, its quality, the time and cost of performing tasks, etc., are often considered crucial. They provide information on the measurable contribution of individual employees to the performance of organisational units and the organisation as a whole. Moreover, at an individual level, a job performance assessment is also used to check an employee's suitability for a job and, consequently, to make rational personnel decisions about his/her future in the organisation.

Because job performance can be considered a function of employee in-role behaviour, which in turn is determined by situational and individual factors, it is justified to suppose that OCB that goes beyond an employee organisational role also affects job performance. This statement leads to the following hypotheses:

H3: The OCB will influence the job performance.

It should be noted that hypotheses H1 and H3 are directed toward a mediating role of the OCB in the relationships between employee empowerment and job performance. Furthermore, this idea is reinforced by a former empirical study, which revealed that OCB is a mediator of the relationship between organisational culture and effectiveness (Hoxha, 2012). Also a social exchange theory points out to a mediating role of OCB, since employees may exhibit OCB in return for the organisation's responsiveness to their needs, and their additional effort will be reflected in the job performance (Ahmadi, Forouzandeh, Kareh, 2010). Based on the foregoing, the following hypothesis has been posed:

H4: The OCB will mediate the relationship between employee empowerment and job performance.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model of the study, which assumes that employee empowerment is related to OCB (H1) and this relationship is moderated by age (H2). In turn, OCB has a positive effect on employee job performance (H3). Therefore, OCB is a mediator in the relationship between employee empowerment and job performance (H4), as also shown in the model (Figure 1).

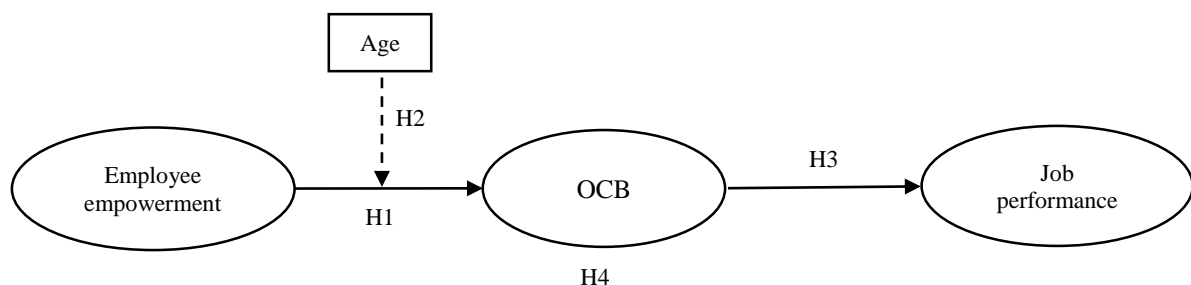


Figure 1. Conceptual model of relationships.

Source: own developed.

3. Method

3.1. Participants and sampling procedure

A survey was conducted in 2023 to test the hypotheses. The purposive sampling method was used. The use of employee empowerment practices in the organisation was the main sampling criterion. It was also assumed that the employees surveyed should belong to different age groups, i.e., Generation X, Y, Z, and Baby Boomers, to check the moderating effect of age. To limit heterogeneity of the sample and simultaneously capture the attitudes and behaviour characteristics for employees in the digital era, participants were professionally active students of courses related to the use of ICT at the University of Economics in Katowice and the Silesian University (e.g., Computer Science and Econometrics, Digital Economy, etc.) and their family members who belonged to the assumed generations of employees.

After cleaning the data, the sample consisted of 396 participants; 57.6% of the sample were female and 42.4% were male. The average age of the respondents was 41.6 years and the average seniority was around 18 years. In terms of educational level, the structure of the sample can be described as follows: 28.8% of the employees had a Master's degree, 19.7% had a Bachelor's degree (and engineering degree), 41.2% of the respondents had a secondary education, and 10.3% of the respondents had a vocational or lower education. 84.1% of the employees held an executive position.

3.2. Measures

Job performance was measured with a four-item scale of individual performance developed by Eisenberger et al. (2001). Cronbach α for this scale was 0.92.

Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) were measured with the Williams and Anderson (1991) two subscales describing behaviour, i.e. directed at specific individuals (OCBI, 7 items), and behaviour directed at an organisation (OCBO, 7 items). Cronbach α for a subscale of OCBI was 0.87 and for OCBO it was 0.69.

Employee empowerment was measured with a 12-item scale developed by Spreitzer (1995) encompassing four subscales of empowerment dimensions, i.e., choice, competency, meaningfulness, and impact; each subscale contains 3 items. Cronbach α for a subscale of choice was 0.93, for competence it was 0.89, for meaningfulness 0.92, and for impact 0.96.

All items of the applied scales were categorized, and the respondents indicated the number on the seven-point Likert scale (from 1 – I strongly disagree to 7 – I strongly agree).

The demographics of the respondents were measured using single items. These included gender (1 - male; 2 - female), age (a number of years), educational level (from: 1 - primary education to 6 - master's degree), seniority (a number of years), and position (1 - executive position, 2 - managerial position).

4. Results

The data were processed using SPSS 29.0. and Amos 24.0. First, descriptive statistics were applied. The results revealed that the respondents generally rated the phenomena highly (Table 1). In the next step, the relationships between employee empowerment, OCB, and job performance were checked with Pearson's correlation analysis (Table 1).

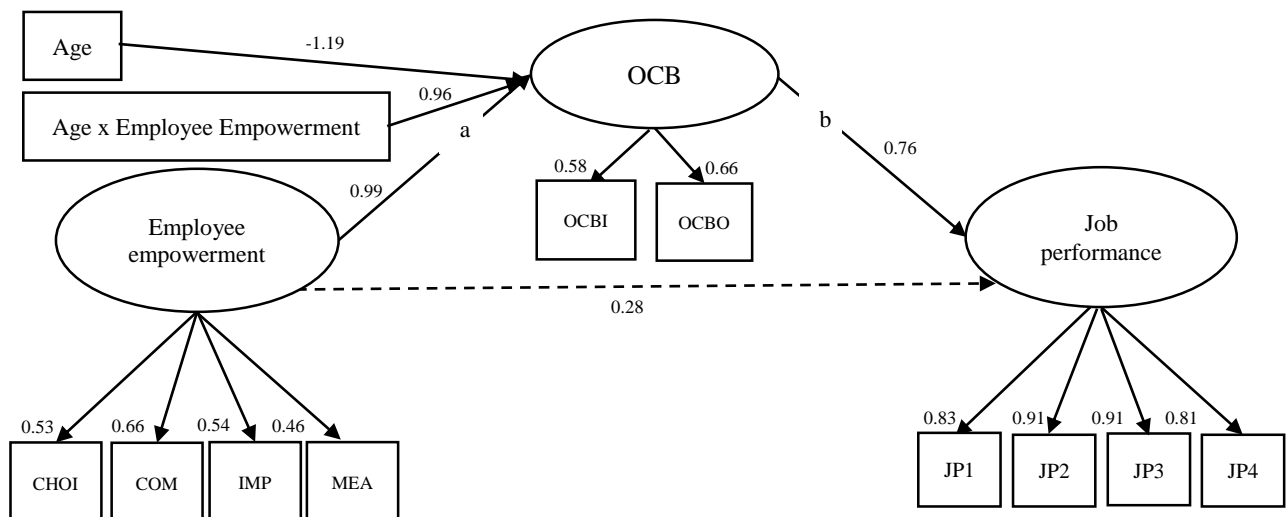
Table 1.
Descriptive statistics and results of Pearson's correlation analysis

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Meaning	4.70	1.51	-								
2. Competence	6.00	0.79	0.283**	-							
3. Choice	5.36	1.33	0.459**	0.415**	-						
4. Impact	4.60	1.67	0.503**	0.309**	0.707**	-					
5. Employee empowerment (overall)	5.17	1.04	0.764**	0.549**	0.848**	0.868**	-				
6. OCBi	5.33	0.96	0.367**	0.303**	0.354**	0.329**	0.436**	-			
7. OCBo	5.42	0.87	0.362**	0.420**	0.213**	0.251**	0.379**	0.402**	-		
8. OCB	5.38	0.76	0.435**	0.428**	0.343**	0.348**	0.488**	0.855**	0.819**	-	
9. Job performance (overall)	6.20	0.73	0.219**	0.531**	0.316**	0.218**	0.368**	0.386**	0.504**	0.528**	-

Note. * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$.

Source: own developed.

Pearson's correlation analysis showed that there were significant positive correlations between the phenomena examined, thus it was justifiable to perform a structural equation modelling (SEM) to test the proposed model and hypotheses (Figure 2).



Note. JP – dimensions of job performance, OCBi, OCBo – dimensions of OCB, CHOI, IMP, MEA – dimensions of employee empowerment; The model presents the standardized regression weights.

Figure 1. The measurement model of relationships examined.

Source: own developed.

After checking the multivariate normal distribution, the maximum likelihood method (ML) was used as a model estimation. In line with standard SEM practice, several fit indexes were applied to assess the quality of the model. The value of Chi^2/df which should be below 3.5, was 3.23 indicating an acceptable model fit. Then, the GFI (Goodness of Fit Index) was 0.94. Because it should be higher than 0.90, it also shows a good fit of the model to the empirical data. The values the comparative fit index (CFI) was 0.97 and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) was 0.96 suggesting its very good fit. Next, the robust root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), which evaluates how well the model fits the data in terms of covariance structure, was 0.07 indicating an acceptable model fit to the data (Xia, Yang, 2019). Therefore, the values of all the indexes used proved the correctness of the model, showing its good fit to the empirical data (Figure 2, Table 2). Because meeting the acceptability of the model does not mean that it is the only one and the best model, hence a model taking into account the direct impact of employee empowerment on job performance (Model 2) and also a model assuming the lack of relationships between the examined variables (Model 0) were also considered. However, a direct path between employee empowerment and job performance was not significant and did not improve the model quality but slightly worsened it, and thus Model 1 was adopted for further consideration.

Table 2.

The goodness of fit of the alternative models of relationships between employee empowerment, age, OCB, and job performance

Models	Chi ²	df	Chi ² /df	GFI	RMSEA	CFI	TLI
Model 1	148.83	46	3.23	0.94	0.07	0.97	0.96
Model 2	146.34	45	3.25	0.94	0.08	0.97	0.96
Model 0	3511.39	66	53.20	0.38	0.36	0	0

Source: own developed.

Moving on to test the formulated hypotheses, the estimated values of the effects included in Model 1 are presented in Table 3, showing also the standardised effects, which enable to compare of effects across different variables, making easier to analyse the relative strength of the effects.

Table 3.

Regression weights of model 1

Relationship			Estimate	S.E.	p-value	Stand. Estimate	Label
Employee empowerment	→	OCB	0.716	0.115	***	0.988	γ_1
Age	→	OCB	-0.666	0.161	***	-1.190	γ_3
Age x Employee empowerment	→	OCB	0.103	0.030	***	0.956	γ_2
OCB	→	Job performance	0.957	0.102	***	0.765	β

Note. *** $p < 0.001$.

Source: own developed.

All p-values reached low values ($p < 0.001$) indicating the statistical significance of the estimated parameters. Analysis showed that hypothesis H1 is fully confirmed because the direct influence of employee empowerment on OCB was positive and strong ($\gamma_1 = 0.99$; $p < 0.001$). Next, it was examined whether age moderates the relationship between employee empowerment and the OCB. The results showed that moderation effect of age on relationship of empowerment and the OCB was positive and significant ($\gamma_2 = 0.96$; $p < 0.001$), what also confirms hypothesis H2. With reference to hypothesis H3, the analysis revealed that the impact of OCB on job performance was strong and positive, confirming this hypothesis ($\beta = 0.76$; $p < 0.001$).

Furthermore, in the proposed model 1, it was assumed that the OCB variable is a mediator of the relationship between employee empowerment and job performance (H4). As indicated by Judge and Colquitt (2004), the mediation relation is confirmed if adding a direct path between the variables examined (i.e. in this case the path between employee empowerment and job performance) will significantly increase the model quality or make an indirect path insignificant. Analysis of this model revealed that the direct impact of employee empowerment on job performance was statistically insignificant ($\gamma_0 = 0.28$; $p = 0.186$) and did not increase the quality of the model. Simultaneously, it was found that an indirect effect of employee empowerment on job performance was statistically significant ($a * b = 0.755$; $p < 0.001$) suggesting full mediation (H4).

5. Discussion

The main contribution of this research is that it has provided empirical evidence for the existence of relationships between employee empowerment, OCB, and job performance. It also revealed a moderating effect of age on the relationship between employee empowerment and OCB, which was lacking in previous studies. The estimated model of the relationships allowed us to test the hypotheses, which was the aim of the study. The analysis confirmed the first hypothesis (H1) that employee empowerment positively influenced OCB and the second hypothesis (H2) that this relationship was moderated by the age of the employees.

Many studies emphasise positive outcomes of employee empowerment, such as employee commitment and work satisfaction, improvement of work quality, increased productivity, etc. (e.g., Modise, 2023). These results are in line with previous findings (see, e.g., Abun et al., 2021; Kasekende et al., 2016), which showed that employee empowerment was positively related to OCB. However, the moderating positive effect of age on this relationship is also supported by the idea expressed in the literature that employee empowerment of the ageing workforce is an important factor to increase initiative, creativity, and job performance of older employees (e.g., Naghavi et al., 2019). This is all the more important as, at the same time,

the results of the study suggest a negative impact of age on OCB. These findings are consistent with previous research suggesting that age negatively affects OCB (e.g., Ng, Feldman, 2008; Pletzer, 2021). This problem can concern particularly experienced, high-skilled employees whose status in the organisations tends to increase with age (Patrickson, Ranzijn, 2005). It is reasonable that such employees can expect more autonomy and impact on decisions in the organisation and that they have a stronger sense of competence and meaning in their work than younger employees.

Furthermore, in this study, it was also found that OCB had a positive impact on job performance that was assumed in the third hypothesis (H3). It is also consistent with other studies that revealed positive relationships between OCB and job performance (Mallick et al., 2014; Gupta et al., 2024). In fact, some even argue that OCB is one of the key predictors of job performance (e.g., Basu et al., 2017), especially today, in the digital age, when organisations expect employees to take the initiative and react quickly to changes in the environment. However, the results presented extended the knowledge derived from previous studies, as it was proved that age was a moderator of the relationships between empowerment and OCB (H2) as well as OCB was a mediator of the relationship between empowerment and job performance, which was assumed in the last hypothesis (H4). Furthermore, employee empowerment was observed to affect job performance indirectly rather than directly, as its direct effect on job performance was not statistically significant. Past research has also indicated its indirect impact, e.g. through increased employee commitment, which in turn resulted in higher job performance (e.g., Modise, 2023; Akhtar et al., 2022). The findings obtained provide a more precise and deeper understanding of the relationships between the phenomena examined, while having important theoretical and practical implications.

6. Implications, limitations, and directions of future research

There are some vital implication that flows from finding that employee empowerment does not directly affect job performance and that the OCB is mediator of the relationship between them. Contemporary management practice shows that in the era of workplace digitalisation, which is accompanied by the growing importance of intangible resources, traditional HRM methods are gradually becoming less effective. Since at the primary level, it is behaviour of employees that determines performance of any organisation, today employers look for high-skilled employees who are willing to put additional effort beyond the scope of their professional duties to contribute to the organisational success. The findings suggest that the use of empowerment can contribute to it.

Simultaneously it should be noted that due to demographical changes and the ageing of the population, the number of older employees increases. Their knowledge and experience are becoming increasingly valuable capital for organisations. However, as some studies suggest, when employees get older, they also tend to be less inclined to OCB (Ajlouni, Kaur, Alomari, 2021). An original contribution of this study is also the confirmation of the moderating effect of age on the relationships between employee empowerment and OCB implying the statement that empowering older employees may prevent a decline in their OCB. It also means that an important task for contemporary managers who want to encourage the OCB is to create a work environment adapted to different age groups, allowing them to feel empowered.

Primarily, it requires a reduction of top-down control and replacing it with self-control. An excessive hierarchical control 'kills' employee initiative, leads to rigid adherence of employees to their specific job description, and promotes their conventional and schematic behaviour. Thus, in an organisation wishing to encourage employees to OCB, empowered employees should be protected from overcontrol to be able to make their own decisions. A strong empowerment culture with clearly defined norms and values can provide an effective mechanism for regulating behaviour to limit external control (Schermuly et al., 2023). However, the extent of this reduction and autonomy should depend on the age of the employees concerned. Older, more experienced employees can expect more self-directed action and a degree of empowerment to undertake OCB.

Moreover, organizations empowering employees should provide them with opportunities to develop their competencies to enable them to participate in the decision-making process and act independently. However, many employers are reluctant to invest in the development of older employees. In the ageing population, their numbers will inevitably increase. Therefore, it becomes imperative for an organisation to maintain its long-term employability. This development is all the more necessary because the digitalisation of work requires new competences from employees, which often poses a major challenge for older workers, in particular. In turn, previous research suggests that young employees from generations Y and Z expect empowerment in the workplace (Rizzi et al., 2024). They want a job that provides them with opportunities for growth, independence, and flexibility that fosters their OCB. Organisations seeking to improve job performance should introduce age-differentiated employee empowerment programmes adjusted to specific needs of employee age groups. As the tendency toward OCB may decrease with the age of employees, their empowerment should be particularly focused on older employees. As the presented study suggests, such employee empowerment programmes may become an important element of managing age diversity and building an inclusive organisation while contributing to improving employee job performance.

It is important to discuss the limitations of this study. First, the results are not representative for the population and cannot be generalised because purposive sampling was used. Therefore, in future research, representative sampling should be applied. Next, it should be noted that only

employees were surveyed, what increases the possibility of common-method biases. Data obtained from employees and their supervisors would allow one to limit this danger and compare the results obtained providing a more reliable and comprehensive picture of the relationships examined (Podsakoff et al., 2012). The study of executive employees and managers could also enable to identify and analyse differences in the perception of the phenomena examined appearing between them as well as comparisons.

Furthermore, this study only shows the relationships examined at a specific point in time. In a future longitudinal study, it would be advisable to examine the long-term results of employee empowerment because it could reveal the dynamics of its impact on OCB and changes in employee job performance as well as a long-term of moderating effect of age. The research presented focusses only on the relationship between empowerment, OCB, employee age, and job performance. Identifying other predictors of OCB, their possible outcomes, and the effect of age on relationships need to become research objectives in the future. Next, it should be investigated whether other demographic characteristics of employees have an impact on the relationship between empowerment and OCB. Furthermore, the study omitted the possible impact of organisational characteristics on the relationships analysed. Therefore, in the next study, it is recommended to recognise probable differences in the pattern of relationships that follow organisational characteristics (e.g., size, industry sector, financial situation, etc.). Such a comparison is all the more important because in organisations in new industries, where most knowledge workers work in the digital transformation era, the degree of empowerment applied may be greater than in traditional industries. The expectations of knowledge workers are also different since they are often looking for development opportunities and new challenges.

In conclusion, due to the increasing importance of human capital for organisational success in the digital economy, particular attention should be paid to organisational practices that can promote employees' citizenship behaviour and improve their work performance (Wolniak, Grebski, 2018). Today automation and computerisation of work make it possible to replace repetitive work with high-quality job assignments that enable employees to feel empowered and express their creativity and initiative through OCB. In face of demographic changes and ageing workforce, the empowerment of mature workers is a particularly important issue in organisations, and it should become a common practice of managing to provide better work in later life stages of employees and enhance their employability.

Acknowledgements

This paper has been prepared on the basis of data from the research ‘Organisational Commitment of Employees’, conducted in cooperation with dr hab. A. Adamus-Matuszyńska, prof. UE at the University of Economics in Katowice. It has been developed within the framework of the project ‘Digital Economy Measurement’.

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