

# The Impact of Shared Values on Psychological Empowerment

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## Abstract

**Purpose :** This research aims to examine and understand the level of psychological empowerment inside Egyptian organizations, namely the automobile industry; look at the impact of shared values on psychological empowerment; and investigate if there is a difference in the level of psychological empowerment held between females and males.

**Design/methodology/approach :** The research study is an empirical research whereby the hypotheses were tested on the automobile distributor companies in Egypt. Questionnaires were used to collect the research data.

**Findings :** The research results revealed a positive relationship between shared values and psychological empowerment. No significant difference was found between females and males with respect to the level of psychological empowerment they possessed.

**Research limitations/implications :** The research questionnaires were distributed among the automobile companies located in Cairo and Giza governorates.

**Originality/value :** Limited empirical research studies have examined the impact of shared values on psychological empowerment. Practitioners and researchers should find value in this unique research study.

**Keywords:** shared values, psychological empowerment

**JEL Classification :** M12

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Values are difficult to investigate with precision because they are abstract ideas, positive or negative, not tied to any specific object or situation, representing a person's beliefs about modes of conduct and ideal terminal modes (Hunt & At-Twajri, 1996; Rokeach, 1968). Hence, people's behavior is a reflection of their values and priorities (Jabnoun, 2001). Values can be described as principles that guide an organization's conduct (JISC, 2009). They should describe the priorities, and guide the behavior and attitudes of the staff working within the organization. Moreover; values "can support a mission statement, guide the day-to-day operation [...] and help [...] develop a sense of direction and purpose among its employees" (Keene & Fairman, 2011; Lawler, 2006). It has been argued that where values are embedded in a company, they can also lead to greater employee loyalty and more adaptability to change. The presence of a clear vision and values providing a framework for everyday behavior (Keene & Fairman, 2011; Davidson, 2005), may lead to an increasing level of psychological empowerment.

On the other hand, Porter and Kramer argued for creating shared value which "involves creating economic value in a way that also creates value for the society by addressing its needs and challenges" (Porter & Kramer, 2011, p. 64; Spitzack & Chapman, 2012). By establishing jointly agreed core values early in the process, the researchers said that they provide opportunities for the staff to understand, engage with and ultimately deliver the project vision; to think ahead about the way they will be behaving and working together in the new environment and to start developing the new culture they will be working within (Keene & Fairman, 2011).

Psychological empowerment is an issue of focal concern as it acts as a significant tool that allows employees to work towards achieving the overall as well as their personal goals. In this respect, most organizations have been trying hard to ensure a level of transparency and dissemination of values to enhance the development of psychologically empowered employees. Accordingly, this research study focuses upon the study of the impact of shared values as one

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of the newly explored topics on psychological empowerment, and as one of the key initiatives for employees' growth potential.

## Literature Review

This section sheds light on previous studies conducted on shared values and psychological empowerment :

❖ **Shared Values:** There is no standard definition of value (Finegan, 2000; Senger, 1971); however, Atchison (2007) argued that there are several themes central to these definitions: first, values are beliefs or convictions and not morally or legally absolute, but serve as a moral compass to help people distinguish between right and wrong. Second, values are enduring if and not prone to change with cultural shifts that people experience overtime. Third, they directly influence behavior and affect our ability to achieve our purposes or goals. Porter and Karmar (2011) defined the concept of shared values as policies and operating practices that enhance the competitiveness of a company while simultaneously advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities in which it operates.

Shared values are vital component of organizational culture (Deal and Kennedy, 1982 ; Ouchi, 1982; O'Reilly and Chatman, 1996; Saele, 2007; Schein, 1990). Shared values are considered as one of the building blocks at a company's disposal to develop productive relationships between workers and employees, enhance productivity and employee satisfaction, and reduce absenteeism and turnover (Atchison, 2007) given that shared values focus on building trusting relationship among organizational members (Adler, 2001 ; De Gus, 1999; Heckscher & Donnellon, 1994 ; Heckscher and Adler, 2006; Heckscher, 2007; Michael, 2009 ; Nohria & Ghoshal, 1997 ; Ouchi, 1980; O'Reilly and Pfeffer, 2000 ; Powell, 1990). Schermerhorn, Hunt, and Osborn (1991) provided another indication of the potential of shared values, terming this as value congruence that occurs when individuals express greater positive feelings on encountering others who exhibit values similar to their own. Further studies by Atchison (2007) studied how congruence between co-workers' values related to critical outcomes within the workplace.

❖ **Psychological Empowerment :** In the recent years, more than 60% of the organizations have tried to adopt some kind of empowerment initiative within the workplace (Spreitzer & Bartunek, 2006; Spreitzer & Stevens, 2008). Psychological empowerment is defined as "individual experiences of intrinsic motivation that is based on cognitions of a person's relation to work roles (Spreitzer, 1995). According to Bowen and Lawler (1995), the rationale of psychological empowerment is that employees will behave in an empowered way that makes them experiencing a sense of personal control in performing their jobs, strategic context of job performance and accountability for performance outcomes. Psychologically empowered employees would perceive themselves capable of shaping their work role and context (Spreitzer, 2007). Besterfield et al. (2003) saw that empowerment is an investment stock of potential and existing employees and different experiences. Through empowerment, organizations can use the potential of employees that may appear in the form of new innovations and creativity; and rehabilitate the second row of employees to replace the first row (Mustafa, 2004).

The traditional approach of employee empowerment looked at the factors of the situation in which people work. Lee and Koh (2001, p.685) suggested two aspects of empowerment: "empowerment" as the "behaviour of a supervisor who empowers his/her subordinates" and the other is the "psychological state of a subordinate" resulting from his/her supervisors' "empowering".

Psychological empowerment is all about the perception of feelings of being empowered in the work role (Spreitzer, 1995, 1996; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). In this respect, the main dimensions and concepts of psychological empowerment that will be focused on and tested in the present research study are illustrated as: "Meaning" and it basically involves that fit between the employee's work roles, one's beliefs, values and behaviours (Hackman & Oldham, 1980) ; "Competence" that refers to the self-efficacy that is specific to one's work, or the belief in one's capabilities to perform work with skills (Gist, 1987; Bandura, 1989) ; "Self-determination" that is basically the choice and the sense of autonomy that regulates one's actions (Deci & Ryan, 1989), and "Impact" that is the degree to which an employee can actually influence strategic, operating, and administrative work outcomes (Ashforth, 1989). Based on this literature, and extensive experience with a set of organizations implementing an empowerment strategy, Blanchard and his colleagues (Blanchard et al., 1995; Randolph, 1995) identified three key managerial practices associated with empowerment: Sharing information, Creating autonomy through boundaries, and Building team accountability.

Ideally, psychologically empowered employees are expected to perform better than less empowered employees (Thomas et al., 1990). According to Liden et al. (2000), empowerment contributes to a sense of employee's commitment towards his/her job and will tend to create a reciprocal feeling of increased sense of identification, attachment, and loyalty. Shauna et al. (2007) found that psychological empowerment results in increased level of job satisfaction, affective commitment, and higher performance.

❖ **The Impact of Shared Values on Psychological Empowerment :** Researchers have approached the notion of empowerment from a variety of theoretical perspectives (Leach et al., 2003; Menon, 2001). One approach conceptualizes empowerment as a set of practices or managerial techniques in which empowering leadership behaviors play a central role (Arnold et al., 2000; Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Manz and Sims, 1987). A second approach focuses on psychological empowerment as a cognitive motivational state reflecting individuals' psychological reactions to empowering techniques and leadership behaviors (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas and Velthouse, 1990).

Many research works have discussed the importance of psychological empowerment as a mediator to achieve follower commitment (Givens, 2011), and quality of patient care (Bonias et al., 2010), or as a tool to enhance the employee competencies levels (Laschinger et al., 2004), and to commit them to their job resulting in higher levels of performance (Harmon et al., 2003). Despite all of these benefits, there are a variety of possible reasons behind the lack of greater empowerment in companies and the relatively low level of success (Yuki & Becker, 2006). Therefore, the researchers perceive and conceptualize the relative importance of psychological empowerment as the focal point for creating a core competence within the human resources as the key organizational asset that directly affects the significance of developing the organizational competitive advantage. This research suggests that shared values can influence the success of psychological empowerment as personal and organizational values can have a profound impact on the behavior of employees (Givens, 2011) because prior research has shown that congruence values between the leader and the follower can develop positive work attitudes (Posner, 1992) as well as lead to employee satisfaction and commitment (Megalino et al., 1989).

## **Purpose and Theoretical Approach**

The present research aims to:

- ❖ Understand the level of psychological empowerment inside the Egyptian organizations - namely the automobile industry ;
- ❖ Look at the impact of shared values on psychological empowerment ; and
- ❖ Investigate if there is a difference in the level of psychological empowerment held between females and males.

Therefore, this research would cover the following questions:

- ❖ What is the impact of shared values on psychological empowerment?
- ❖ Will there be any difference between females and males in the level of psychological empowerment?

### **Research Hypotheses:**

The following hypotheses would be tested in this study:

- ❖ **(H<sub>1</sub>): There is a relationship between shared value and psychological empowerment dimensions.**
- ❖ **(H<sub>2</sub>): There is a difference in the level of psychological empowerment between females and males.**

## **Research Methodology**

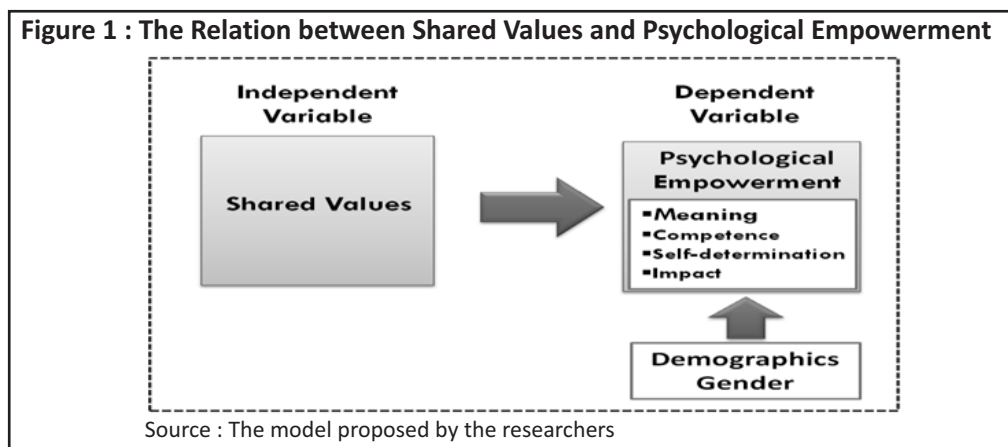
The research study is an empirical research whereby the hypotheses were tested on the automobile distributor companies in Egypt. 300 questionnaires were distributed across 7 organizations (to be filled in by the employees), and a total of 250 valid and complete questionnaires were returned. The questionnaires were distributed through e-mail and through field visits to these companies among a period of six months. The automobile distributor companies in Egypt selected for the research study specialized in the assembly of the car components through the usage of advanced technologies and had an environment of developing innovation potential and had a culture that fosters employees' motivational performance.

This research study was developed over a period of eleven months, starting in February 2012 and ending in December 2012. The questionnaires were distributed through e-mail and through field visits to the automobile assembly companies in Cairo, Egypt among a period of six months. The statistical analysis, completion, and the final revision of the contents were developed over a period of five months.

❖ **Scales and Measurement Tools Used for this Study:** To measure "Shared Values", this study implemented a modified version from Tsai and Ghoshal's (1998) measurement. Likert's five-point rating scale was used in order to instruct the respondents. To measure "Psychological Empowerment", this study used the instrument developed and validated by Spreitzer (1995). The twelve items of Spreitzer's (1995) instrument consist of four subscales: Meaningfulness (3 items), Competence (3 items), Self-determination (3 items), and Impact (3 items). Likert's five-point scale was used in order to rate the responses of the respondents.

## Statistical Model for Measuring the Impact of Shared Values on the Psychological Empowerment Model

The research model proposed by us is presented in the Figure 1. This model was tested statistically through the proposed hypotheses. This model looks at "Shared Values" as the independent variable and its impact on "Psychological Empowerment" dimensions as the dependent variable. We will look at the demographics dimensions - namely, the gender dimension - in relation to psychological empowerment.



## Statistical Results and Analysis

Testing the research hypotheses :

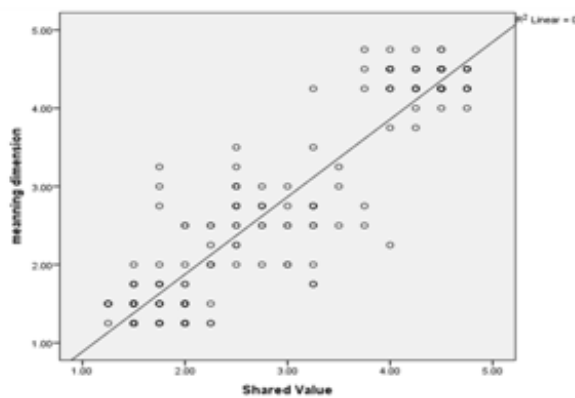
❖ **H<sub>1</sub>: There is a relationship between shared values and psychological empowerment dimensions.**

Linear Pearson correlation coefficient was used to test the exchange relationship between "Shared Values" and "Psychological Empowerment". The results are shown in the Table 1.

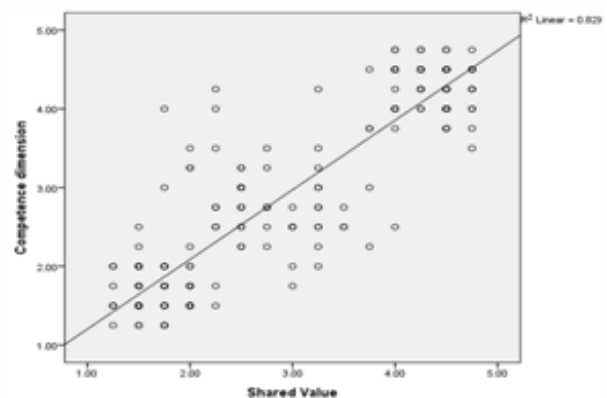
This hypothesis was tested, and the results are elaborated in the following Scatter Diagrams. The scatter diagrams are used to identify the type of mathematical form of the relationship as well as the form and the direction of the

| Table 1: Pearson Correlation between Shared Values and Psychological Empowerment Dimensions |                                      |            |                    |        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|--------------------|--------|
|                                                                                             | Psychological Empowerment Dimensions |            |                    |        |
|                                                                                             | Meaning                              | Competence | Self-determination | Impact |
| Shared Value                                                                                | 0.943                                | 0.911      | 0.925              | 0.897  |
| **Pearson correlation coefficient is significant at (0.01)                                  |                                      |            |                    |        |
| Source: Statistical results of H1                                                           |                                      |            |                    |        |

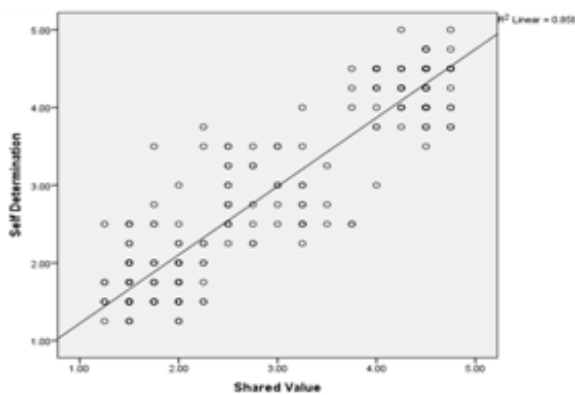
relationship using (R-square), which reflects the determination coefficient. The results are shown in the Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5.



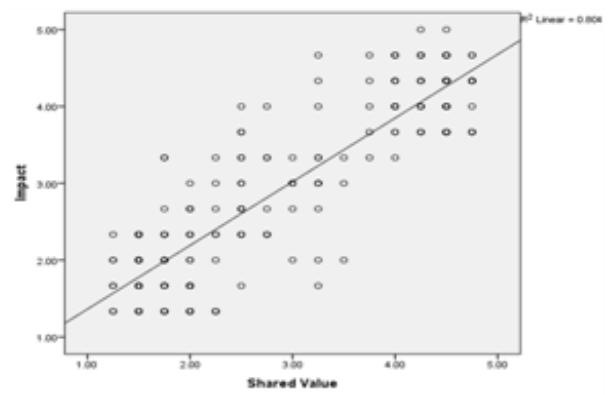
**Figure 2 :**  
The Correlation between "Shared Values" and the first Empowerment dimension - "Meaning"



**Figure 3 :**  
The Correlation between "Shared Values" and the second Empowerment dimension - "Competence"



**Figure 4 :**  
The Correlation between "Shared Values" and the third Empowerment dimension - " Self-determination"



**Figure 5 :**  
The Correlation between "Shared Values" and the fourth Empowerment dimension - "Impact"

Source : Statistical results of  $H_1$

The results as presented in the Figures 2,3,4, and 5 show that the linear form categorized under the simple mathematical relationship is the prevailing mathematical form to explain this relationship. According to the scatter diagrams presented in the Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5, and the simple regression model that explains the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable, results show a positive relationship between "Shared Values" and all the "Psychological Empowerment" dimensions.

The results shown in the Table 2 show that the relationship between "Shared Values" and "Psychological Empowerment" dimensions is positive and significant at 0.01. The relationship is in its strongest form between "Shared Values" and "Meaning" dimension, followed by "Self- determination", "Competence", and "Impact" dimensions, respectively. This is explained by the idea of employees' perception, which tends to trigger an inner empowerment sense that actually changes their views of the tasks in relation to their own values; this all explains why "Shared Values" had the strongest relationship with the "Meaning" dimension. With the adoption of "Shared Values", the employees' evaluation process will directly impact the readiness to perceive common grounds between the



| Table 2 : Simple Regression between the variables - Shared Values and Psychological Empowerment |                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Psychological Empowerment Dimensions (dependent variable)                                       | Estimated Simple Regression Model                                                                                           |
| ❖ Meaning                                                                                       | $Y_1 = -0.105 + 0.990X_t$ $(-1.439) \quad (44.527)**$ $F = 1982.655**, R\text{-square}=88.9\%, \text{Standard Error}=0.439$ |
| ❖ Competence                                                                                    | $Y_2 = 0.320 + 0.844X_t$ $(3.842)** \quad (34.723)**$ $F = 1205.7**, R\text{-square}=82.9\%, \text{Standard Error}=0.503$   |
| ❖ Self-Determination                                                                            | $Y_3 = 0.338 + 0.882X_t$ $(4.505)** \quad (38.444)**$ $F = 1477.91, R\text{-square}=85.6\%, \text{Standard Error}=0.453$    |
| ❖ Impact                                                                                        | $Y_4 = 0.534 + 0.829X_t$ $(6.285)** \quad (31.890)**$ $F = 1016.94, R\text{-square}=80.4\%, \text{Standard Error}=0.513$    |
| Whereby:                                                                                        |                                                                                                                             |
| - $Y_1$ denotes Meaning,                                                                        | - $Y_2$ denotes Competence,                                                                                                 |
| - $Y_3$ denotes Self-Determination,                                                             | - $Y_4$ denotes Impact,                                                                                                     |
| - $X_t$ denotes shared values                                                                   |                                                                                                                             |
| Source: Statistical results of H1                                                               | - ** denotes that F-ratio and T-test are significant at 0.01                                                                |

organizational purposes, and the values that they believe in. Once employees feel empowered with a sense of value identity, they will, in return, have this sense of "Self-determination" dimension - that is simply having the power to make a choice. If employees are experiencing a sense of meaning, it is easy to have the freedom to select. This is all followed by the "Competence" dimension, which is an inner believe that one can do better, a belief in the personal ability to perform, and this is aligned with the idea of - "If I can make a choice, then I am capable of working on getting the best out of it". The "Impact" dimension with the idea of psychologically empowered employees will have its role as now employees would actually believe and feel that they can influence the organizational outcomes towards the achievement of goals and objectives. Accordingly,  $H_1$  may be accepted.

❖ (H2): There is a difference in the level of psychological empowerment between females and males.

| Table 3 : T-test of Females and Males with respect to the level of Psychological Empowerment |        |                        |                |                              |               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| Psychological Empowerment Dimensions                                                         | Gender | Descriptive Statistics |                | T-Value (degrees of freedom) | P-Value       |
|                                                                                              |        | Mean                   | Standard Error |                              |               |
| Meaning                                                                                      | Male   | 2.881                  | 0.09           | 0.103                        | 0.918,p>0.05  |
|                                                                                              | Female | 2.904                  | 0.212          | (63)                         |               |
| Competence                                                                                   | Male   | 2.972                  | 0.084          | 0.441                        | 0.660, p>0.05 |
|                                                                                              | Female | 3.059                  | 0.186          | (248)                        |               |
| Self-determination                                                                           | Male   | 3.001                  | 0.083          | 0.021                        | 0.983, p>0.05 |
|                                                                                              | Female | 3.005                  | 0.185          | (248)                        |               |
| Impact                                                                                       | Male   | 3.043                  | 0.801          | 0.19                         | 0.850, p>0.05 |
|                                                                                              | Female | 3.007                  | 0.181          | (248)                        |               |
| Source: Statistical results of H2                                                            |        |                        |                |                              |               |

The T-test was used to test the two independent samples. The results are presented in the Table 3. The results in the Table 3 show no significant difference between females and males among the "Psychological Empowerment" dimensions. Accordingly,  $H_2$  may be rejected.

## Discussion

In this research paper, we reviewed the theoretical and the empirical research studies related to "Shared Values" and "Psychological Empowerment". We believe, however, that it is important to highlight the limitations of this research before addressing our findings.

While our theoretical review integrated insights of several previous research studies, nevertheless, there is an apparent scarcity of research studies that linked shared values with psychological empowerment. This was the main limitation that restricted us in addressing the previous findings documented in the literature by previous scholars. On the other hand, it was our main concern, to explore a new uncovered topic in literature. The growing importance for developing well motivated employees relies mainly on the environment surrounding them. The organizational climate that is based on the presence of common and shared values will contribute to the creation of positive attitude towards the organization and the workplace.

The overall aim of this study was to define and investigate the impact of shared values on psychological empowerment. First, we investigated the impact of shared values on psychological empowerment dimensions. Our findings confirmed the following assumption; shared values have a positive, strong, and significant impact on psychological empowerment. From this conclusion, the presence of a positive relationship between both dimensions confirms with the research hypothesis ( $H_1$ ). We perceive these findings as a guiding tool, whereby the diffusion of basic convictions as part of the organizational policy through a shared value framework leads to a sense of intrinsic feeling of self-motivation and hence, psychological empowerment increases. However, it should be mentioned that comparison of our findings with prior research is difficult due to the scarcity of similar research studies. It is noteworthy to stress that "Shared Values" had a different variable impact on the dimensions of "Psychological Empowerment". These results prove that the presence of transparent principles, concepts, and beliefs which constitute to the idea of shared values will directly enhance a positive psychological level of being empowered, and in return, will have a positive impact on organizational success.

On the other hand, we investigated the differences in the level of psychological empowerment held between females and males. The research results revealed no significant difference between females and males in the level of psychological empowerment that they possessed. This result is in alignment with the results obtained by Sebastien et al. (2004). This conclusion actually highlights the idea that both females and males perceive the need for psychological empowerment as a key dimension for motivation and the momentum to step ahead. Both females and males need to feel empowered within their workplace through psychological engagement that will, in return, impact their willingness to perform. Gender differences and the studies of how males tend to feel psychologically motivated and empowered are becoming cause of a focal concern due to the rising awareness of the role of women and their empowerment in the workplace. This result is quite interesting as it shows equality among males and females, and their overall perception to the idea of self, psychological empowerment towards the workplace.

## Managerial Implications

The ultimate aim of research studies is the professional contribution of science and theories to the practical working environment. Based on this, we highlight the following research managerial implications that, in essence, are derived from the research findings. The research results showed a positive relationship between "Shared Values" and "Psychological Empowerment". Accordingly, it is recommended that shared values should be well framed, designed, managed, and controlled among the organizational internal environment. This in return will help in increasing the level of psychological empowerment. This could be adopted through:

- ❖ Development of a clear vision statement that is understood and easily recalled by all the employees. The vision statement should be aligned with the organizational goals, objectives, and most importantly, the shared values prevailing and created inside the workplace.
- ❖ The sense of employees' identity to the place should be aligned with the concept of shared values. The use of

symbolism through work slogans, one-to-one sessions with the employees, managers' engagement with employees in the generation of new ideas will support the enhancement of increasing psychological empowerment among employees.

- ❖ The usage of transparency tools to foster the undesired employees' expectations will in return facilitate the development of psychologically empowered employees.
- ❖ Managers should not allow assumptions to create framed or preset employees' perception about the shared values governing the organizational climate. As such, all the shared values should be well identified, and disseminated to employees through the official management channels.
- ❖ The organizational values shared between employees should be aligned with the overall organizational goals towards psychologically empowered employees.
- ❖ Detailed review and periodic evaluation of employees' satisfaction levels and motivation might help in early diagnosis of any unforeseen problems with respect to the level of psychological empowerment held among employees.
- ❖ Motivating employees through the usage of monetary and non-monetary rewards and other benefits will make employees willing to participate in the development of organizational effectiveness.

## Implications for Future Research

The present study investigated the impact of shared values on psychological empowerment in Cairo, Egypt. It is recommended that future research may address other domains in other countries to gain a better insight on the relationship between these variables. The research looked at the differences in the level of psychological empowerment held between females and males. We recommend that the future research covers other demographic variables such as age, marital status, and the managerial position of the respondents.

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