THE RELATIONSHIP OF EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: THE ROLE OF FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT AS STIMULANTS

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Abstract

In the creative industry, the relationship between employee empowerment and employee engagement has a very important role. Employees who feel empowered to contribute with creative ideas and participate in the decision-making process will feel more connected to the company's vision and values. The main aim of the research is to analyze the influence of employee empowerment, flexible work arrangements, and career development on employee engagement. The sample in this research consisted of 190 employees who worked in the creative industries in Indonesia who were determined using a convenience sampling approach. Data collection uses a questionnaire instrument which is then distributed online. Data analysis uses the SPSS application by displaying the results of data processing through validity and reliability tests, multiple regression analysis, coefficient of determination, and hypothesis testing. Based on the results of data analysis, it is stated that employee empowerment, flexible work arrangements, and career development have a positive and significant effect on employee engagement. The theoretical implications of the research explain that implementing policies and practices that support employees in terms of work flexibility and career development can significantly increase employee engagement and performance. Meanwhile, practically, organizations in the creative industries need to pay attention to the importance of creating a work environment that supports employee flexibility and career growth. This can be done through implementing policies that allow remote work, flexible work schedules, and support for skills and career development.

Keywords: Employee Empowerment, Flexible Work Arrangements, Career Development, Employee Engagement

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INTRODUCTION

The key to achieving effective empowerment and engagement is open and clear communication between management and employees. This creates opportunities for individuals to contribute with new ideas and feel heard by leadership (Wahab & Khan Bangash, 2021); (Balwant et al., 2020). Additionally, the importance of providing constructive and supportive feedback to assist individuals in developing skills and improving their performance (Gasic & Berber, 2023). Leaders also have an important role in creating an environment that supports empowerment and engagement. Leaders who practice an inclusive and supportive leadership style tend to be more effective at building strong relationships with their team members (Na-Nan et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, engagement creates an emotional bond between individuals and their work. When individuals feel involved, they tend to be more motivated, productive, and loyal to the organization (Lie et al., 2021). Engagement can also increase job satisfaction and an individual's psychological well-being (Sun & Yoon, 2022); (Ghosh et al., 2020). When individuals feel that their contributions are recognized and appreciated, they will feel more satisfied with their work. Empowerment and engagement complement each other in creating a productive and sustainable work environment (Imawan & Faviandhani, 2018). Through empowerment, individuals are empowered to take initiative and be responsible for their work, while engagement ensures that individuals feel motivated and are actively involved in achieving organizational goals (Alagarsamy et al., 2023).

In addition, organizations need to ensure that existing policies and procedures support empowerment and engagement. This includes recognition of individual achievements, increased access to resources, and performance-based promotions (Alagarsamy et al., 2023); (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). By prioritizing empowerment and engagement, organizations can create a dynamic, innovative, and inclusive work culture (Alotaibi et al., 2020). This not only improves individual and team performance but also creates a work environment that allows for continued growth and development (Gong et al., 2020); (Aggarwal et al., 2020).

Creative industries play an increasingly important role in the global economy, with innovation and creativity key to their success (Halim et al., 2023). In this context, the relationship between employee empowerment and employee engagement is an interesting subject to investigate. Employee empowerment includes giving employees the authority, skills, and resources to take initiative and take responsibility for their work. Meanwhile, employee engagement reflects the level of employee attachment, motivation, and commitment to work and the organization (Aggarwal et al., 2020).

To understand these dynamics better, the role of flexible work arrangements (FWA) and career development has also become a focus of research. FWA, with practices such as remote working and flexible work schedules, has become important in accommodating employees' need for work-non-work-life balance (Gasic & Berber, 2023). Meanwhile, career development includes company efforts to improve employee skills and competencies and provide opportunities for career mobility (Houssein et al., 2020).

However, despite their importance, there is still a knowledge gap in understanding how these factors are interrelated, especially in the context of the creative industries. Therefore, this research aims to bridge this gap by investigating the relationship between employee...
empowerment, employee engagement, flexible work arrangements, and career development in the creative industry sector.

It is hoped that this research will provide deeper insight into the factors that influence employee engagement and performance in the creative industries. The findings from this research can make a significant contribution to human resource management practices in the creative industries, by highlighting the importance of empowering employees and creating a supportive work environment. Apart from that, it is also hoped that this research can provide a basis for developing company policies that are more effective in increasing employee engagement and welfare. This will help companies retain their creative talent and create a work culture that promotes innovation and collaboration.

Thus, this research not only has academic but also practical implications in improving organizational performance and employee satisfaction in the creative industry sector. Increasingly understanding the relationship between employee empowerment, employee engagement, flexible work arrangements, and career development will help companies optimize their human resources and achieve competitive advantage in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing market.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Employee Empowerment

Empowerment theory includes processes and outcomes, stating that actions, activities, or structures can be empowering and that the results of these processes produce a level of empowerment for the individual (Stanescu et al., 2020);(Alagarsamy et al., 2023). In the context of empowerment, organizations need to promote an open, inclusive, and collaborative work culture. This creates opportunities for employees to share ideas, raise issues, and participate in decision-making (Umiyati et al., 2022);(Sherly et al., 2021). Empowerment is also closely related to employee empowerment. Empowerment is the process by which individuals or groups are given control over resources, decisions, and responsibilities relevant to their work (Anggoro KR et al., 2022). By encouraging empowerment, organizations can increase employee motivation, engagement, and performance (Hartini et al., 2021).

The literature review shows that employee empowerment has a significant positive impact on employee engagement in various organizational contexts (Rodoplu Şahin et al., 2014);(Gong et al., 2020). The concept of employee empowerment emphasizes the importance of giving employees control over their work, including autonomy in decision-making, responsibility for specific tasks, and support for developing their skills and potential. Various studies have found that employees who feel empowered tend to have higher levels of employee engagement (Alagarsamy et al., 2023);(Andika & Darmanto, 2020). They feel more emotionally involved with their work, more motivated to contribute optimally, and more committed to organizational goals.

In addition, employee empowerment is also related to an increase in employees' sense of ownership and identification with their work, which directly correlates with higher levels of employee engagement (Imawan & Faviandhani, 2018);(Ahmad & Manzoor, 2017). Overall, the literature supports the idea that empowering employees by giving them control and autonomy in their work can positively influence levels of employee engagement, which in turn contributes to better
organizational performance and higher achievement of business goals (Alotaibi et al., 2020); (Gozukara et al., 2016). Thus, the purpose of this study is to generate hypotheses based on several earlier research findings:

**H1:** Employee empowerment affects employee engagement

**Flexible Work Arrangements**

Literature reviews have highlighted the significant influence of flexible work arrangements (FWA) on the level of employee engagement in various organizational contexts (Jauhar & Suratman, 2022); (Uhlig et al., 2023). Flexible work arrangements cover a wide range of practices, including remote work, flexible work hours, and the use of technology to facilitate remote team collaboration. Research shows that effective implementation of FWA can increase job satisfaction, work-life balance, and employee engagement (Lee et al., 2024); (Timms et al., 2015). Flexible work arrangements give employees the freedom and flexibility to organize their time and place of work, which in turn can increase the sense of control and autonomy that employees feel over their work.

In addition, FWA has been shown to influence psychological aspects of employee engagement, including identification with the organization, commitment to work, and emotional involvement (Mulyono et al., 2021); (Silalahi et al., 2022). Employees who have access to FWA tend to feel more connected to their organizations because they feel valued and supported in achieving a balance between their professional and personal needs (Ugargol & Patrick, 2018). They also tend to be more emotionally involved with their work because they have more control over how and when they do their work.

Apart from providing flexibility, flexible work arrangements can also increase employee satisfaction and motivation (Jung & Yoon, 2021); (Gasic & Berber, 2023). Research shows that employees who have access to FWA tend to be more satisfied with their jobs because they have more control over their work environment (Windia et al., 2020). They are also more motivated to make maximum contributions because they feel appreciated and recognized for their need for flexibility at work. Thus, the purpose of this study is to generate hypotheses based on several earlier research findings:

**H2:** Flexible work arrangements affect employee engagement

**Career Development**

Career development is very important for a person's career path in an organization. Because almost everyone wants to further develop their career, experience improvement, and feel progress in a better situation in their career (Rahadytya & Tridayanti, 2020); (Simatupang et al., 2022). On the other hand, it is almost impossible for anyone to want to experience a setback in their best career, let alone end it. Career development is a condition that refers to the progress of an individual's status in an organization along the career path established in the organization (Permana et al., 2021); (Widati, 2022); (Romy et al., 2022). Status promotion can be in the form of positions or rank groups, starting from the lowest or current position to the highest position.

Literature reviews have consistently shown that career development has a significant impact on the level of employee engagement in various organizational contexts (Ali et al., 2019); (Houssein et al., 2020a). Career development includes a variety of practices, including training, skills development, promotions, and career coaching aimed at improving employees' abilities and career advancement. Research shows that employees who feel supported
in their career development tend to have higher levels of employee engagement (Wiyanto et al., 2024); (Muchibi et al., 2022). They feel more emotionally involved with their work because they see the connection between career development and achieving their personal and professional goals.

Apart from that, career development is also related to increasing employee motivation and commitment to work and the organization. When employees see opportunities for growth and advancement in their careers, they tend to be more motivated to contribute optimally and commit to achieving organizational goals (Robianto et al., 2020). Research also shows that employees who are actively involved in career development have higher levels of job satisfaction because they feel valued and recognized for the investment made in developing their skills and increasing their competencies (Bawono & Lo, 2020); (Hendrawan & Pogo, 2021). Several studies highlight the importance of managerial support and clarity in the career development process to ensure that employees feel supported and connected to organizational goals. Apart from that, the role of transparency and effective communication in conveying career opportunities and company expectations to employees is also very important (Jia-jun & Hua-ming, 2022).

Thus, the purpose of this study is to generate hypotheses based on several earlier research findings:

**H3:** Career development affects employee engagement

**METHODS**

A quantitative research design with an associative approach is used in this study. The research population is MSME actors in the creative industry in Indonesia. The urgency of choosing creative industry is because this sector contributes significantly to overall economic growth. Due to the unknown population, the sample was taken using a convenience sampling technique. According to (Hair, 2014), if the total population is unknown, ideally, the size of the representative respondents depends on the number of all indicators in the variable multiplied by 5-10. This study has nineteen indicators, so the number of respondents for this study is 19x10 = 190 samples. This number is considered representative to be observed as representative of the population because it has met the minimum sample threshold.

This study uses a research instrument test consisting of validity and reliability tests. The quantitative analysis consists of a normality test, regression test, hypothesis test, correlation test, and coefficient of determination. The operational definition of the employee empowerment variable consists of autonomy, participation in decision-making, recognition, and reinforcement, the ability to develop and learn, and involvement in making changes (Gong et al., 2020); (Alagarsamy et al., 2023), the variable operational definition of flexible work arrangements consists of flexible work schedules, remote work, job sharing, the flexibility of working time, and use of technology (Lee et al., 2024); (Ugargol & Patrick, 2018), the operational definition of the career development variable consists of training and skills development, providing feedback and performance evaluation, mentoring and mentoring, recognition and promotion, and flexible work arrangements (Houssein et al., 2020b); (Ali et al., 2019), the operational definition of employee engagement variables consists of affective involvement, cognitive involvement, retentive involvement, and adaptive involvement (Jia-jun & Hua-ming, 2022); (Lee et al., 2024).
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. General Profile of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender (years)</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>44.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>55.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>23.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>28.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>35.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>39.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>28.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>31.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of Creative Business</td>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culinary</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>37.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>23.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Validity and Reliability Test

Table 2. Validity Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Corrected items - Total correlation</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
<th>Test results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee Empowerment</td>
<td>0.470</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Valid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible Work Arrangements</td>
<td>0.487</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Valid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development</td>
<td>0.498</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Valid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Engagement</td>
<td>0.560</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Valid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the validity test of Table 1 above, it is concluded that all indicators in the study have a value above 0.30, and the measurement items used in this research are valid. Next, a reliability experiment is carried out to measure the measurement items on the questionnaire items that describe the indicators of the variables.

Table 3. Reliability Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
<th>Test results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee Empowerment</td>
<td>0.811</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible Work Arrangements</td>
<td>0.820</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development</td>
<td>0.825</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>reliable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the experiment's reliability shown in Table 2 above prove that all indicators have a Cronbach alpha value for each instrument > 0.60, so it can be concluded that all the instruments used are reliable.

Multiple Regression Test

Table 4. Multiple Regression Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>std. Error</th>
<th>t-count</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4,620</td>
<td>2.187</td>
<td>3,412</td>
<td>000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Empowerment</td>
<td></td>
<td>190</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>3,889</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible Work Arrangements</td>
<td></td>
<td>181</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>3,250</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development</td>
<td></td>
<td>231</td>
<td>0.091</td>
<td>4,355</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The equation model is obtained from the multiple linear regression above = 4.620 + 0.190X1 + 0.181X2 + 0.231X3, meaning that employee empowerment, flexible work arrangements, and career development positively affect employee engagement. Based on these equations, it can be explained as follows:

1. The constant value of 4.620 can be interpreted if the variables of employee empowerment, flexible work arrangements, and career development are considered zero, then, the value of employee engagement will be in the range of values of 4.620.
2. The value of the beta coefficient on the employee empowerment variable is 0.190, which means that every change in the employee empowerment variable by one unit will result in a change in the employee engagement of 0.190 units with the assumption that the other variables are at a constant value.
3. The beta coefficient value on the flexible work arrangements variable is 0.181, which means that every change...
in the flexible work arrangements variable by one unit will result in a change in the employee engagement of 0.181 units with the assumption that the other variables are at constant values.

4. The beta coefficient value on the career development variable is 0.231, which means that every change in the career development variable by one unit will result in a change in the employee engagement of 0.231 units with the assumption that the other variables are at constant values.

Simultaneous and Partial Hypothesis Testing

To examine the variable binding simultaneously, experiment F is used. Simultaneous hypothesis testing attempts to analyze whether employee empowerment, flexible work arrangements, and career development variables can simultaneously influence employee engagement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>131,620</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14,410</td>
<td>.000b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>residual</td>
<td>201,142</td>
<td>186</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>301,210</td>
<td>189</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the results of the simultaneous test analysis in Table 5, the F-count value is 14,410 > from F-table with (0.05; 3 vs. 187) of 2.65 or with a significant 0.000 ≤ 0.05 can be employee empowerment, flexible work arrangements, and career development significantly influence employee engagement simultaneously. Subsequently, a partial test was conducted to partially analyze the effect of employee empowerment, flexible work arrangements, and career development on employee engagement. Based on the results of data analysis in Table 4, the results of the t-test in this study are as follows:

1. Employee empowerment has a significant level of 0.000 ≤ 0.05, meaning that employee empowerment has a significant effect on employee engagement.
2. Flexible work arrangements obtained a significant level of 0.000 ≤ 0.05, meaning that flexible work arrangements significantly affect employee engagement.
3. Career development obtained a significant level of 0.000 ≤ 0.05, meaning that career development significantly affects employee engagement.

Coefficient of Determination Test

The coefficient of determination is used to measure how far a model can explain the variation of the dependent variable. The results of the determination test in this study can be explained in Table 6 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode 1</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>Std. An error in the estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.690a</td>
<td>.430</td>
<td>.415</td>
<td>1.184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the results of the data analysis in Table 6 above, the coefficient of determination value is 0.430, which means that the level of employee engagement of 43% can be explained by employee empowerment, flexible work arrangements, and career development, while other factors can explain the remaining 57%, not discussed in this study.

Discussion

Based on partial hypothesis testing (H2) results, employee empowerment positively and significantly affects employee engagement. Data analysis confirms employee empowerment gives employees the authority and confidence to
make decisions related to their work. This creates a greater sense of ownership and responsibility for work results, which directly increases employee involvement in achieving organizational goals. In addition, employee empowerment allows employees to feel heard and valued in the decision-making process. Thus, this increases employees' sense of trust and commitment to the company, which is an important aspect of employee engagement. In the creative industry sector, where creativity and innovation are the keys to success, employee empowerment plays a crucial role in encouraging employees to contribute with new ideas and creative solutions. This creates an environment where employees feel valued for their contributions, which increases their sense of ownership and attachment to the organization. In addition, employee empowerment allows employees to feel more independent and competent in their work. When employees have control over their work and are trusted to make decisions, they feel more empowered and motivated to give their best in their work.

Based on the results of partial hypothesis testing (H2), flexible work arrangements positively and significantly affect employee engagement. Data analysis confirms that in the creative industry sector, where creativity and innovation are key to success, flexible work arrangements (FWA) enable employees to adjust their work schedules in a way that allows them to optimize their creative productivity. This creates a supportive environment for creative expression and experimentation, which can increase employees' sense of satisfaction and engagement in their work. Additionally, FWA allows employees to create a balance between their work life and personal life. In creative industries that often have tight time pressures and high creative demands, having flexibility in work schedules can help reduce the levels of stress and fatigue that employees may feel. This can improve employee well-being and motivation to contribute optimally to their work. Additionally, FWA enables companies to attract and retain high-quality talent in the creative industries. By offering flexibility in work arrangements, companies can attract individuals who have diverse needs and preferences when it comes to work-life balance. This allows companies to have access to diverse and varied creative talent.

Based on the results of partial hypothesis testing (H3), career development positively and significantly affects employee engagement. Data analysis confirms career development allows employees to plan and pursue a career path that suits their interests and talents. By having clear career goals and getting support from the company to achieve them, employees feel more motivated and committed to contributing optimally to achieving organizational goals. In the creative industries sector, where product and service differentiation often depends on individual talent and creativity, career development enables companies to identify, develop, and retain high-quality creative talent. This creates opportunities for continued growth and innovation within the organization. Career development also creates an atmosphere where employees feel valued and recognized for their contributions. When companies provide opportunities for career development and promotions based on performance and achievements, employees feel supported to grow and develop, which can increase their motivation and engagement at work. In a work environment based on career development, employees feel supported to take risks and take initiative in pursuing career opportunities. This creates an inclusive and supportive work culture, which encourages employee involvement and engagement with the organization.
CONCLUSION

The results of this research conclude that employee empowerment, flexible work arrangements, and career development have a positive and significant effect on employee engagement. These three factors complement and strengthen each other, creating a productive, creative, and satisfying work environment for employees. Employee empowerment gives employees the authority, involvement, and support to take initiative and take responsibility for their work. This creates a greater sense of ownership and responsibility for work results, which directly increases employee engagement in achieving organizational goals.

Flexible work arrangements allow employees to adjust their work schedules in a way that allows them to optimize their creative productivity. By providing flexibility in work schedules, flexible work arrangements create opportunities for employees to achieve a balance between work life and personal life, which can improve their well-being and motivation to contribute optimally to their work. In addition, career development provides employees with the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve their creative potential. By planning and pursuing a career path that suits their interests and talents, employees feel more motivated and committed to contributing optimally to achieving organizational goals. By empowering employees, providing flexibility in work arrangements, and providing opportunities for career development, companies can create an environment where employees feel supported, valued, and recognized for their contributions.

Theoretically, this research can enrich our understanding of the factors that influence employee engagement in creative and innovative work environments. By strengthening the relationship between employee empowerment and employee engagement, this research can confirm the importance of empowering employees in creating an engagement-oriented work culture. In addition, this research can contribute to the development of human resource management theory by highlighting the role of FWA and career development in increasing employee engagement. This can help enrich existing theoretical frameworks on employee management in the context of creative industries. Practically, the findings from this research can provide valuable guidance for managers and leaders in the creative industry sector in designing management policies and practices that support employee engagement. By realizing the importance of empowering employees, providing flexibility in work schedules, and providing opportunities for career development, companies can create a work environment that supports creativity, innovation, and productivity. In addition, this research can provide a basis for companies to evaluate and improve existing programs, such as employee training and development, as well as policies that support work-life balance. This can help companies to stay relevant and competitive in the ever-growing creative industry.

The limitation of this research lies in the relatively small sample size. For further research, the author recommends increasing the sample size by selecting a wider research object, so that generalization can be carried out and increasing the number of predictor variables, such as green leadership, organizational trust, innovation culture, and other human capital factors. In terms of time and limited resources, it can also be a limitation. This research may not be able to involve large sample sizes or
conduct long-term monitoring to see changes in the relationships between these variables over time. This may limit the generalizability of the findings and understanding of the dynamics of the relationship. Limitations in measuring key variables can also influence research results. For example, employee empowerment, employee engagement, and career development are complex and multidimensional concepts, and it may be difficult to measure them precisely and accurately. Developing valid and reliable measurement instruments is a challenge that must be overcome. Furthermore, the presence of respondent bias can also be a limitation. Employees may have different perceptions about their experiences with employee empowerment, FWA, and career development, which may influence the validity of research results. Efforts to reduce bias and increase data objectivity must be made.

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