**Empowering Leadership:
Leading People to be Present through Affective Organizational Commitment?**

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Abstract

This study tested a mediation model in which empowering leadership was negatively related to three withdrawal behaviors: lateness, absenteeism, and turnover intention, with affective organizational commitment as a mediator. With 294 full-time US employees, results from structural equation modeling indicated that empowering leader behaviors at one time were positively related to estimates of affective organizational commitment at a second time, which in turn was negatively related to absenteeism and turnover intention at a final time. Additionally, no significant direct effect was found between empowering leadership and withdrawal behaviors, further supporting the mediation model. However, neither empowering leadership nor affective commitment influenced followers' lateness. Empowering leadership, which provides employees with autonomy and developmental support, may have a favorable effect on employees' decisions to attend and stay in the organization, as well as their affective reaction to the organization in the form of psychological commitment. This study extended prior research models by examining a full range of withdrawal behaviors in relation to empowering leadership and showed that commitment may explain why empowering leader behaviors can affect employees' retention decisions.

Keywords: empowering leadership, affective organizational commitment, lateness, absenteeism, turnover intention

Empowering Leadership:

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Considerable attention has been given to employees' withdrawal behaviors that reflect work-related attitudes and behavioral responses, because employee withdrawal (e.g., lateness, absenteeism, and turnover intention) is linked to high organizational costs (Berry, Lelchook, & Clark, 2012; Hancock, Allen, Bosco, McDaniel, & Pierce, 2013). Given that employee withdrawal is an ongoing issue and can cause a substantial financial burden for the organization, it is important to determine potential antecedents that are closely associated with withdrawal behaviors. Lateness, absenteeism, and turnover are conceptually similar behaviors in that employees can engage in them by being out of the organization. They have long been considered forms of employee withdrawal (e.g., Beehr & Gupta, 1978; Hanisch & Hulin, 1990, 1991), but they differ in terms of timing (lateness at the beginning of the workday and absenteeism all of the work day) and permanence (with turnover the employee never comes back to work), and their measures do not necessarily correlate so highly with each other that they are redundant ($r = .20$ to $.57$ in the present study). Hanisch and Hulin argued they might be forms of a larger construct of withdrawal that would also include retirement. They found however, that the three forms of withdrawal were not part of a single latent factor, because lateness and absenteeism were more likely to form their own latent factor without turnover intention. They reported that retirement intention might form a latent factor with turnover, but subsequent research showed that retirement was quite different from the others (Adams & Beehr, 1998). Overall, organizational research has been interested in employee withdrawal—ways that employees are not present in organizations; most studies have not attempted to combine these three withdrawal behaviors into a single latent construct but have instead investigated them separately.

A body of research has addressed this topic and suggested several predictors of withdrawal behaviors. These include job satisfaction, leadership styles, and characteristics of the work environment such as stress and autonomy (Ferris, 1985; Frooman, Mendelson, & Kevin Murphy, 2012; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Waldman, Carter, & Hom, 2015). The present study contributes to the withdrawal literature by focusing on a specific leadership style—empowering leadership—in relation to a broad array of withdrawal criteria: lateness, absenteeism, and turnover intentions.

Amundsen and Martinsen (2014) define empowering leadership as motivating an employee intrinsically by sharing power and by providing support for the employee's development. There are many ways for appointed leaders to attempt to influence their followers, and empowering leadership can be seen as a somewhat unique way, because at its core, the followers are leading themselves, a kind of downward power transfer (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014); some theorists classify empowering leadership as a form of subordinates' self- or shared-leadership (e.g., Pearce & Sims, 2002; Pearce, Sims, Cox, Ball, Schnell, Smith, & Trevino, 2003). The seeming paradox of a leader influencing people to lead themselves is solved by empirical research identifying the behaviors comprising empowering leadership. For example, it is encouraging (rather than directing or forcing) subordinates' opportunity thinking, self-reward, self-leadership, participation in goal setting, and teamwork (Pearce et al., 2003). Because the leadership domain is well-established and contains many leadership types or constructs, when empowering leadership began to be discovered, promoted and measured, it was necessary to show its relationship with and differences from other leadership types. Empowering leadership is somewhat more closely related to consideration than to initiating structure for example, and to participative decision making and showing concern, among several managerial behaviors

(Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000), and it is positively related to both transformational leadership and leader-member exchange (e.g., Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014). Important for its discriminant validity, however, the strength of its relationship with other types of leadership is about the same as other leadership types have with each other (Arnold et al., 2000), factor analyses show it is empirically distinguishable from other types of leadership (e.g. Pearce et al., 2003; Tekleab, Sims, Yun, Tesluk, & Cox, 2008), and it predicts variance in criterion variables even after controlling for other leadership styles (e.g., Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014; Arnold et al., 2000; Pearce & Sims, 2002; Tekleab et al., 2008).

The autonomy provided by empowering leaders helps employees experience more responsibility and expand their skills, because these experiences can theoretically lead to affective commitment (Johnson, Chang, & Yang, 2010). Empowering leader styles are often advocated, because they are expected to lead to employee behaviors that benefit the organization, but relatively little research has investigated the links between empowering leadership and employee withdrawal. In order to elaborate on research findings showing that some other leadership styles had a significant relationship with employee withdrawal processes and actual turnover (Ferris, 1985; Frooman et al., 2012; Waldman et al., 2015), the present study examines the relationship between empowering leadership and a wide array of subordinates' withdrawal behaviors. Furthermore, if empowering leadership is indeed theoretically related to less employee withdrawal, we propose and test an explanatory mechanism for why this relationship occurs, i.e., the development of increased organizational commitment. Thus, the present study contributes specifically to the empowering leadership literature by determining the extent to which this newer form of leader behavior can favorably influence employees' retention decisions and multiple forms of withdrawal.

If empowering leadership can affect employees' withdrawal, then that effect should show across a variety of withdrawal types. A meta-analysis examined the relationship between employees' and groups' feelings of empowerment and one indicator of employee withdrawal, turnover intentions (Seibert, Wang, & Courtright, 2011), but the present study focused on leaders' behaviors that specifically are empowering as a predictor of a wide range of withdrawal indicators. Consistent with our own review of the literature, a review by Sharma and Kirkman (2015) reported that one previous study examined the relationship between empowering leadership and turnover intentions (Chen, Sharma, Edinger, Shapiro, & Farh, 2011), but little or no research has examined the effects of empowering leader behaviors at the individual level on a full range of withdrawal behaviors. That is, one study examined the relationship between empowering leadership and turnover intentions, but (1) it was a cross-level study of leadership at the team level and turnover intentions at the individual level, and (2) it only addressed turnover intentions but not other withdrawal behaviors (i.e., lateness and absenteeism in the present study). The concept of employee withdrawal is broader than just turnover, however, and we sought to determine whether empowering leadership could predict it. To extend prior research models, the present study takes into account three forms of work withdrawal indicators, namely lateness, absenteeism, and turnover intention as consequences of empowering leadership and tests a model illustrating how empowering leaders may affect withdrawal decisions of followers.

In order to learn more about the psychological process resulting in employee withdrawal, the present study proposes the mediator, affective organizational commitment that is a psychological tie binding an employee with the organization. As employees' commitment plays an influential role in predicting behavioral outcomes (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002; Shore & Wayne, 1993), it could be a potential mediator that may be

influenced by leader empowerment styles and may help explain how empowering leadership behaviors can help to diminish followers' withdrawal behaviors (Figure 1). The present study contributes to the literature on empowering leadership by examining its ability to predict a wide range of individuals' voluntary withdrawal in the forms of lateness, absenteeism, and turnover intentions via employee commitment.

Model Development and Hypotheses

Employee empowerment is a positive state that can lead to favorable employee reactions including performance (e.g., Rapp, Gilson, Mathieu, & Ruddy, 2016), and the very notion of empowering leadership behaviors (ELBs) stems from the idea that there are specific things that leaders can do to make subordinates feel empowered. Manz and Sims (1987) argued that the role of leaders in empowered work environments is different from the role of traditional leaders in terms of “the shift in source of control from the leader to the follower” and “leading others to lead themselves” (p. 119). They emphasized the development of followers' self-management or self-leadership (Manz & Sims, 1987, 1991). Arnold et al. (2000) described ELBs as behaviors that facilitate team members' performance by raising their level of autonomy, encouraging subordinates to express opinions and ideas, promoting teamwork, information sharing, and collaborative decision making. The above two definitions have been operationalized in research at the team level especially, focusing on the role of leaders in self-managing work teams.

However, at the individual level, the effect of ELBs on outcomes needs to be developed more fully, because leaders may treat and empower individual subordinates differently. In fact, Leader-Member Exchange theory (LMX) argues that leaders usually do not treat all subordinates the same, suggesting that all leadership behaviors should be examined at the individual level (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Researchers have suggested that empowering leadership specifically

can be seen as a dyadic relationship between a supervisor and an individual follower (Ahearne, Mathieu, & Rapp, 2005; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Supporting this view, a few studies of empowering leadership practices were conducted at the individual subordinate level (Keller & Dansereau, 1995), because supervisors differentiated among subordinates in the amounts of latitude they allowed (Ahearne et al., 2005). Additionally, a study by Zhang and Bartol (2010) supported the analysis of empowering leadership at an individual level, showing that there was no significant difference between within-group variance and between-group variance. Results of these studies imply that focusing on the effect of ELBs at the individual-level (as in the present study) is appropriate. It is expected that ELBs could affect individual subordinates to a greater extent or at least to the same degree as teams and as a result, may lead to different levels of psychological responses and behavioral outcomes compared to those of team-level studies.

More recently, at the individual level, Amundsen and Martinsen (2014) conceptualized the key elements of empowering leadership as follows: Empowering leadership consists of influencing a subordinate in three ways: (1) power sharing and (2) motivation support, which are two forms of autonomy; and (3) development support. These are intended “to promote their experience of self-reliance, motivation, and capability to work autonomously within the boundaries of overall organizational goals and strategies” (p. 489). The process of power sharing and motivation support reflects the leader behaviors of delegating, coordinating, information sharing, encouraging initiative, encouraging goal focus, efficacy support, and inspiring. The process of development support represents the behaviors of modeling and guiding. Consistent with Amundsen and Martinsen (2014), the present study examined ELBs as these three behaviors directed at individuals.

Previous research provided support for the influence of empowerment on some favorable attitudes and behaviors at the individual level including job satisfaction (e.g., Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015), work engagement (e.g., Tuckey, Bakker, & Dollard, 2012), career success (e.g., Kim & Beehr, 2017a), in-role and extra-role behaviors (e.g., Humborstad, Nerstad, & Dysvik, 2014; Raub & Robert, 2010), and lowered depression (e.g. Kim & Beehr, 2017b). Therefore, if a leader successfully empowers subordinates, both employees and employers may benefit.

Taken together, several studies suggested that empowering leadership was associated with positive work outcomes, and thus empowering leadership can be an effective leadership style for both employees and organizations. Considering the conceptualization of empowering leadership, empowering leader behaviors are likely to be associated with positive work outcomes because employees feel some form of intrinsic motivation, a positive feeling about and attraction to the work and the workplace. The present study tests the resulting positive feeling in the form of affective organizational commitment and attraction in the form of (less) employee withdrawal from the organization, as modeled in Figure 1.

Relationship between Empowering Leadership and Affective Organizational Commitment

As noted earlier, empowering leadership emphasizes followers' autonomy, participation, and development through the encouragement of self-direction, and thus empowering leaders are willing to share power with followers and support them. Accordingly, empowering leadership will elicit positive psychological reactions and attitudes from followers. The present study focuses on followers' affective commitment, an "emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization" as a result of positive work experiences (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 67). Affective commitment reflects a deep emotional relationship of the employee with

the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991) as opposed to remaining because of feelings of obligation or working specifically for tangible reasons (e.g., financial return). Because empowering leaders behave in ways that foster motivation and efficacy among followers, as well as promote their involvement in the work processes, followers may feel more confident and have positive experiences and emotions about their work. Affective commitment especially develops through work experiences such as interactions with supervisors and work group (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Thus, affective commitment (a kind of positive feeling) is more likely to represent the influence of empowering leader behaviors than the two other forms of commitment.

The employee development behaviors of empowering leadership include modeling, guiding, and coaching to give followers opportunities to increase their job-related skill, ability, and learning and mastery experiences, thereby enhancing personal efficacy or perceived personal competence. This feeling may be related to raising affective organizational commitment according to psychological contract theory. In that theory, employees tend to consider promises from their leader to be promises from their organization (Rousseau, 1998), and in turn, reciprocity theory (e.g., Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) predicts that employees will show more loyalty and commitment to the organization. In a similar vein, organizational support theory maintains that employees view treatment, evaluation, and support received from leaders as indicative of organizational treatment, evaluation, and support (Eisenberger, Karagonlar, Stinglhamber, Neves, Becker, Gonzalez-Morales, & Seiger-Mueller, 2010). These theories suggest that employees perceive their leaders as representing the organization. Previous research argued that employees tend to become committed to their organization to the extent that their organization or leader provides for growth and achievement needs (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Thus, the more employees receive developmental support from empowering leaders, the more

they will likely have a favorable exchange relationship with the leader or organization, developing positive mood and feelings of obligation, willingness to emotionally bond with their organization.

In addition to empowering leadership in the form of development support, empowering leadership facilitates followers' self-leadership with the behaviors such as the delegation of decision-making, information sharing, encouraging personal initiative, self-defined goal focus, and inspiring, which is represented by the autonomy support process facets of empowering leadership. When employees are encouraged to autonomously self-manage their work and to be accountable for work outcomes in their organization, they are more likely to foster intrinsic motivation and favorable attitudes. Effects of such motivation and attitudes are informed by goal setting theory (Erez & Arad, 1986) and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). A participative goal-setting process increases employees' experiences of intrinsic motivation and a sense of self-control, providing them with opportunities to satisfy their higher psychological needs for autonomy and personal growth. Self-determination theory also maintains that employees are intrinsically motivated when their needs of autonomy, competence, relatedness are met. Empowering leadership can be seen as an autonomy-supporting form of leadership, thereby satisfying the psychological needs and promoting intrinsic motivation of employees, which consequently results in positive attitudes such as affective commitment. Supporting this assumption, in a study by Chen et al. (2011), empowering leadership behaviors including expressing confidence in the team's ability to accomplish its task successfully, allowing the team to self-manage its work and make decisions on its own led team members to feel more emotionally involved in work processes, thereby feeling affectively committed to their organization. It was also found that followers feel more deeply committed to the organization

when they are given individualized support and sufficient opportunity to voice opinions on their work (Den Hartog & De Hoogh, 2009). Given the norm of reciprocity and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), individual employees are likely to reciprocate beneficial empowering leader behaviors by demonstrating higher affective commitment when they perceive that leaders take care of them by providing the needed support, consulting about important decisions, giving more autonomy, and removing unnecessary bureaucratic constraints.

Hypothesis 1: Empowering leadership is positively related to affective commitment.

Relationship between Affective Commitment and Withdrawal Behaviors

Different types of organizational withdrawal including lateness, absenteeism, and turnover intention may be signs of employees' negative behaviors toward the job and the organization, representing a distancing from work physically and psychologically. Employee lateness refers to arriving late at work, whereas absenteeism is missing at least a full day of work (Koslowsky, Sagie, Krausz, & Singer, 1997). Turnover intention can be defined as thinking of leaving, desirability of leaving, and likelihood of leaving the workplace or one's current job (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990, 1991). Previous studies do not seem to provide a single model that explains the relationship between the different withdrawal behaviors. Some researchers argued that no relationship exists (Ross, 1988), while others suggested positive relationships or a spillover model (Iverson & Deery, 2001). These inconsistent findings imply that it may be necessary to seek out the differences between withdrawal behaviors through predictors such as empowering leadership and job attitudes. The present study, therefore, examines whether each of three forms of withdrawal behaviors can be influenced by the perception of leaders' empowering behaviors and followers' affective commitment.

Employees will be likely motivated to care about their attendance or withdrawal when they experience the specific positive emotion of affective commitment to their organization. Such employees will be less inclined to be late, absent, and leave to their organization than those who experience negative commitment. In addition, employees who are emotionally committed to the organization may want to stay and maintain membership in their organization, which makes them exert efforts for the organization and avoid undesirable behaviors. Supporting this assumption, affective commitment was found to have a negative relationship with lateness frequency and lateness duration (Foust, Elicker, & Levy, 2006), as well as with absenteeism and a positive relationship with intent to remain (e.g., El Akremi, Colaianni, Portoghese, Galletta, & Battistelli, 2014; Jaros, Jermier, & Koehler, & Sincich, 1993; Somers, 1995; Thanacoody, Newman, & Fuchs, 2014). Further, meta-analyses showed that organizational commitment was negatively related to withdrawal behaviors including lateness, absenteeism, turnover intention, and turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000; Harrison, Newman, & Roth, 2006; Tett & Meyer, 1993).

These findings suggested that staying with an organization was strongly associated with feelings of loyalty, affection, and belongingness, which are all components of affective commitment. In other words, employees' level of affective commitment influences formation of a tendency to leave from or stay with the organization, and thus an individual who is affectively committed with the organization will be less likely to think about quitting and other withdrawal processes such as lateness and absenteeism (Jaros et al., 1993). Therefore, it is assumed that the emotional bonds to the organization stemming from high levels of affective commitment result in diminishing lateness, absenteeism, and turnover intention.

Hypothesis 2: Affective commitment is negatively related to lateness.

Hypothesis 3: Affective commitment is negatively related to absenteeism.

Hypothesis 4: Affective commitment is negatively related to turnover intention.

Affective Commitment as a Mediator

If supervisors' empowering leadership style can enhance employees' affective commitment, empowering leadership may have a favorable effect on employees' decisions to attend and stay in the organization. Because leaders can be considered as representatives of the organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Simons & Roberson, 2003), their actions can result in employee reactions to the whole workplace, represented by affective organizational commitment. Employees' presence at work (lack of withdrawal) can therefore be a reaction to the leader that is transferred by the effect of the leader behaviors on the employee's commitment. Taken together, therefore, the model in Figure 1 and the set of hypotheses 1 through 4 propose that affective commitment can help to explain the relationship between empowering leadership and withdrawal behaviors. Thus, the final hypothesis is the most important and proposes a mediation effect.

Hypothesis 5a: Empowering leadership predicts lateness by means of affective commitment.

Hypothesis 5b: Empowering leadership predicts absenteeism by means of affective commitment.

Hypothesis 5c: Empowering leadership predicts turnover intention by means of affective commitment.

The present study examines employee commitment as a mediator explaining why empowering leadership can result in a full range of employee withdrawal behaviors: lateness, absenteeism, and turnover intention. By testing the model developed for Figure 1, the present study contributes by reporting the potential effects of empowering leadership on a wide range of employee withdrawal behaviors at the individual level. Importantly, an individual affective

variable, affective commitment, is proposed as the theoretical explanation for why this relationship may exist.

Methods

Participants and Procedure

Participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk, an online service for connecting researchers and respondents. Eligible participants were full-time employees working in the United States and holding at least a 95% approval rating from previous Mturk assignments, consistent with existing recommendations (e.g., Mason & Suri, 2012). Data were collected at two time points three weeks apart in order to reduce the effects of common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). To further reduce response bias effects, social desirability was used as a control variable in case there was socially desirable responding about employees' own withdrawal from the organization. Initially, 599 participants completed the first survey, but 517 responses remained after dropping 82 responses due to low effort responding (e.g., above 80% of the same answers or quick answers—completing the survey more than twice as fast as the average time) on this survey. Of these, 311 employees completed the second survey. After removing unmatched codes from Time 1 and Time 2 of the survey, 294 matched responses were available from all time points to be used for analyses. Of this final sample, 57.3% were female, 83.0% were white, 65.7 % had at least a bachelor's degree, and 61.8% were between the ages of 18 and 39. The participants were employed in a variety of industries (e.g., education, healthcare, and finance).

Measures

The first survey (Time 1) measured the predictor, empowering leadership, and demographics. The second survey (time 2) measured the three criteria, withdrawal behaviors,

and social desirability. The mediator, affective commitment, was measured at both times to use their mean as an estimate of the score at the midpoint (designated as Time 1 ½ in Figures 1 and 2) between Time 1 and Time 2. The mediator should have its effects between Time 1 and Time 2, but instituting an additional data collection is likely to further reduce sample size, and therefore we used a different method to estimate mediator scores between Time 1 and Time 2. If a variable changes its values from Time 1 and Time 2, its value between these two time periods is highly likely to be between its values at those two time points. Below, we report statistical evidence that scores on the mediator indeed were different between Times 1 and 2, thereby suggesting that the mean between the two measurements captures people's scores at some point between Times 1 and 2. This method was also explained and used successfully in a recent study on leadership (Kim & Beehr, 2017c).

Empowering leadership was measured using the 18-item *Empowering Leadership Scale (ELS)* (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014). Amundsen and Martinsen described empowerment conceptually as consisting of three dimensions, power sharing, development support, and motivational support, but after factor analyses of their scale, they concluded that there were two main factors, autonomy support and developmental support; power sharing and motivational support were combined into one factor and labeled as autonomy support. In order to have more than two manifest indicators of empowering leadership, we used the development support facet as one indicator and the two conceptually separate parts of the autonomy support facet, labeled as Amundsen and Martinsen labeled them, motivational support, and the other power sharing. We also compared a 2-factor model with the 3-factor model. The result of a confirmatory factor analysis produced the same fit indices: the two factors model consisting of autonomy support and developmental support, $\chi^2(134, N = 294) = 731.42, p < .01, CFI = .96, IFI = .96, NNFI = .96,$

RMSEA = .12; the three factor model loading the power sharing, motivational support, and developmental support separately, $\chi^2(132, N = 294) = 653.92, p < .01$, CFI = .96, IFI = .96, NNFI = .96, RMSEA = .12.

Four items ($\alpha = .88$) represent power sharing, six items ($\alpha = .93$) represent development support, and eight items ($\alpha = .91$) represent motivational support. An example item is “My leader encourages me to take initiative” rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The three subscales were highly correlated each other, ranging from $r = .73$ to $r = .81$. Reliability for the full scale was .96.

Affective commitment was assessed with eight items (Time 1 $\alpha = .90$; Time 2 $\alpha = .92$) from Allen and Meyer's (1990) scale. An example item is "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me," answered on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The mean *absolute* difference in affective commitment from T1 to T2 was 0.58 with a standard deviation of 0.65, indicating that many employees' scores had changed (increasing for some employees and decreasing for others) during this three-week interval. A one-sample *t*-test showed that the average change was significant, $t(293) = 15.38, p < .01$. Therefore, the mean of T1 and T2 was used to estimate the score between T1 and T2.

Lateness was measured with the three items used in Hanisch and Hulin (1990, 1991). An example item is “How often are you late for work or scheduled assignments?” ($\alpha = .71$), rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 7 (every day).

Absenteeism was also measured with three items from Hanisch and Hulin (1990, 1991) on the same 7-point scale as lateness. An example item is “How often do you think about being absent from work when you are scheduled to be there?” ($\alpha = .72$).

Turnover intention was measured using the five items ($\alpha = .94$) from Walsh, Ashford, and Hill (1985). An example item is “I am thinking about quitting my job” rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree).

Social desirability was used as a control variable, because it is desirable for employees to report their faithful attendance at work. It was measured with the five-item ($\alpha = .75$) *Socially Desirable Response Set (SDRS)* (Hays, Hayashi, & Stewart, 1989). An example item is “No matter who I’m talking to, I am always a good listener.” Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which each statement is true or false on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (definitely true) to 5 (definitely false). Effects of the model on the criteria were thus controlled for social desirability; importantly, effects were also controlled for common method variance, because social desirability was measured with the same method, similar to the concept of a marker variable analysis (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

Results

Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations of all the variables are presented in Table 1. Empowering leadership was positively related to the mediator, affective commitment ($r = .60, p < .01$); it was also negatively related to two of the criteria (empowering leadership to absenteeism, $r = -.21, p < .01$, and to turnover intention, $r = -.43, p < .01$). The mediator was negatively related to the same two criteria (affective commitment to absenteeism, $r = -.30, p < .01$ and to turnover intention $r = -.66, p < .01$).

Because empowering leadership and affective commitment were highly correlated ($r = .60, p < .01$), a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using LISREL 8.8 was run to test the fit of a two-factor model for these measures. The two-factor model produced an excellent fit, $\chi^2(8, N = 294) = 16.13, p < .05$; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .03; GFI = .98; NNFI = .99; CFI = 1.00, which was better than a one-factor model, $\chi^2(9, N = 294) = 453.47, p < .01$; RMSEA = .41; SRMR

= .14; GFI = .66; NNFI = .63; CFI = .78; this provided evidence of discriminant validity of empowering leadership and affective commitment.

We also ran CFAs focused on the outcome variable set (withdrawal behaviors). A three-factor and one-factor model were compared; the three-factor model showed a better fit on all indices, $\chi^2(41, N = 294) = 199.47, p < .01$, CFI = .95, IFI = .95, NNFI = .93, RMSEA = .11 than the one-factor model, $\chi^2(44, N = 294) = 935.07, p < .01$, CFI = .77, IFI = .77, NNFI = .71, RMSEA = .26. Because Hanisch and Hulin (1990, 1991) had reported two factors (turnover versus absenteeism and lateness), we also tested a two-factor model, but it fit the data more poorly than the three-factor model on all fit indices, $\chi^2(43, N = 294) = 244.90, p < .01$, CFI = .93, IFI = .93, NNFI = .91, RMSEA = .13. Therefore, the three facets of withdrawal behaviors used in the present study can be empirically distinct, and we examined them as separate outcomes.

Hypotheses and Model Testing

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the hypotheses and verify the indirect effect of empowering leadership on withdrawal behaviors. For full structural equation modeling with latent variables, empowering leadership's three subscales were used as indicators of a latent variable. As recommended by Matsunaga (2008), the item-parceling method was used for the unidimensional construct of affective commitment; its eight items were randomly parceled to form three indicators of a latent variable (two consisting of three items each and one of two items). For the withdrawal behaviors, each item served as an indicator of the lateness (three items), absenteeism (three items), and turnover intention (five items) constructs.

All the model fit indices are shown in Table 2. According to the recommendations of Kline (2015), multiple indices to assess the fit of the model were used: A satisfactory model fit

can be inferred when the χ^2/df ratio is below 3.00 and values for the comparative fit index (CFI), incremental fit index (IFI), and nonnormed fit index (NNFI) should not be smaller than .90. In addition to these fit indexes, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) measured model lack of fit. For the RMSEA, values of about .05 or less indicate a close fit, values between .05 and .08 indicate a reasonable fit, and values between .08 and .10 indicate marginal fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1992). The values obtained for the CFI, IFI, NNFI, and RMSEA from the CFA results were .96, .96, .95, and .08, respectively. Additionally, the value for the χ^2/df ratio was 2.74. These results suggested that the measurement model had a satisfactory fit to the data. The hypothesized model also fit the data moderately well, $\chi^2(202, N = 294) = 663.81, p < .01$, CFI = .94, IFI = .94, NNFI = .93, RMSEA = .09. The value of RMSEA was somewhat high, but still in an acceptable range for marginal fit (.08 - .10; Browne & Cudeck, 1992).

Additionally, we compared the original model using the average of affective commitment (Time $\frac{1}{2}$) with the two alternative models: (1) the predictor and mediator measured at the same time (2) the mediator and criterion variables measured at the same time. We found that the fit statistics for these two new models were identical at two decimal places; model 1, $\chi^2(202, N = 294) = 699.71, p < .01$, CFI = .93, IFI = .93, NNFI = .92, RMSEA = .09, and model 2, $\chi^2(202, N = 294) = 686.22, p < .01$, CFI = .93, IFI = .93, NNFI = .92, RMSEA = .09. In addition, neither model fits the data better than the original model. Studying the results of each model, we think the best explanation of any differences in the models is more psychometric than theoretical. That is, the T1-T1-T2 model finds stronger parameter coefficients for the left side of the model, and the T1-T2-T2 model finds stronger parameter coefficients for the right side of the model. Therefore, the results are entirely in line with a common-method explanation: When variables were measured at the same time, they related more strongly to each other than when they were

measured at different points in time. Thus, we tested hypotheses with the original form of the mediator ($T1 \frac{1}{2}$).

Standardized parameters are in Figure 2. Empowering leadership was positively related to affective commitment ($\beta = .66, p < .01$), supporting Hypothesis 1, the first link of the model. Hypothesis 2, that affective commitment would be negatively related to lateness, was not supported because the path coefficient for affective commitment to lateness ($\beta = -.13, ns$) was not significant. However, the results supported Hypothesis 3, that affective commitment would be negatively related to absenteeism ($\beta = -.17, p < .01$), as well as Hypothesis 4, that affective commitment would be negatively related to turnover intention ($\beta = -.69, p < .01$).

Social desirability was included as a control variable, because it might especially affect the self-reports of withdrawal behaviors. Social desirability showed significant relationships with lateness ($r = -.21, p < .01$) and absenteeism ($r = -.24, p < .01$), but not with turnover intention ($r = -.11, ns$). Although the path coefficients from social desirability to lateness ($\beta = -.31, p < .01$) and to absenteeism ($\beta = -.35, p < .01$) were significant, the conclusions in the present study were still the same after controlling the effect of social desirability. In summary, the SEM results suggested that empowering leadership had indirect effects on absenteeism and turnover intention via affective commitment but not on lateness, and these effects remained even after controlling for social desirability response sets.

In addition to testing each hypothesis, an alternative model was tested, in which empowering leadership had three direct paths to the criteria: lateness, absenteeism, and turnover intention. The alternative model also provided an adequate fit to the data, $\chi^2(199, N = 294) = 660.74, p < .01$, CFI = .94, IFI = .94, NNFI = .93, RMSEA = .09. However, it did not improve the χ^2 fit significantly, $\Delta\chi^2(3, N = 294) = 3.07, p = .38$, and none of the fit statistics of the

original model was changed. Furthermore, direct effects between empowering leadership and the three types of withdrawal behaviors were all nonsignificant. Therefore, given no noticeable improvement in fit, the originally hypothesized model was judged as the practically better model because it was more parsimonious.

Mediation and Bootstrapping

To further test the mediation effects in the model, bootstrapping analyses were calculated using the PROCESS macro, a computational tool for mediation analysis (Hayes, 2013). Table 3 presents the direct effects and bootstrapped estimates for the indirect effects with 95% confidence intervals. Following the recommendations of Preacher and Kelley (2011), k^2 (Kappa-squared) is also reported as a mediation effect size. The k^2 is not sensitive to sample size, because the k^2 is the ratio of the indirect effect to the maximum possible size of the indirect effect given the constraints of the data (Hayes, 2013). To determine the criteria for describing the magnitude of effect sizes, Cohen's guidelines defining small (.01), medium (.09), and large (.25) effect sizes were considered (Preacher & Kelley, 2011).

Affective commitment significantly mediated the relationships between empowering leadership and two withdrawal behaviors—absenteeism and turnover intention—because their confidence intervals did not include a zero, supporting mediation effects for these two criteria. As seen in Table 3, the direct effects from empowering leadership to absenteeism ($c' = -.05$, $p = .47$) and to turnover intention ($c' = -.06$, $p = .24$) were not significant. The indirect effects of empowering leadership through affective commitment to absenteeism ($ab = -.17$, CI (95%): LL = $-.26$, UL = $-.09$, $k^2 = .13$) and turnover intention ($ab = -.37$, CI (95%): LL = $-.46$, UL = $-.28$, $k^2 = .34$) were significant. The indirect effect size of empowering leadership to absenteeism via affective commitment can be interpreted as medium strength, whereas the effect size of k^2 for

affective commitment for the relationship between empowering leadership and turnover intention can be interpreted as a large effect. Additionally, the completely standardized indirect coefficients were $-.16$ and $-.37$ respectively, indicating that followers' absenteeism decreases by $.16$ and turnover intention by $.37$ for every one standard deviation increase in empowering leader behaviors indirectly via affective commitment.

Overall, both the model fit statistics, the alternative model fit testing, and bootstrapping results all support the proposition that affective commitment mediates the association of empowering leadership with two forms of followers' withdrawal: absenteeism and turnover intention (but not lateness). Thus, mediation Hypothesis 5b and 5c was supported.

Additional Analyses

We tried two more alternative analyses with the model. First, we substituted the three facets of empowering leadership for the overall empowering leadership variable. The new model had good fit, $\chi^2(338, N = 294) = 893.75, p < .01$, CFI = .96, IFI = .96, NNFI = .95, RMSEA = .07, with the new paths for power sharing ($\beta = -.04, ns$), motivational support ($\beta = .50, p < .01$), and development support ($\beta = .22, p < .01$). The lack of a significant path from power sharing to affective commitment is due to its multicollinearity, especially with motivational support ($r = .90$). As noted in the Method section, power sharing and motivational support have sometimes been considered a single facet of empowerment (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014).

Finally, we also considered the control variable, social desirability, as a control for affective commitment as well as for the withdrawal behaviors. Because affective commitment is a report about the self (as are the withdrawal behaviors), social desirability might affect it. Note however, social desirability was not significantly correlated with affective commitment (Table 1), and controlling it did not change the fit indices or path coefficients in the model.

Discussion

The present study examined the effect of empowering leadership on followers' affective commitment and three forms of employee withdrawal, namely lateness, absenteeism, and turnover intention. The results suggest that empowering leadership may affect forms of employee attendance, but primarily because it leads to the experience of commitment: Commitment is an explanatory variable that shows why empowering leadership can result in less employee withdrawal.

Overall, the present research contributes to knowledge about the possible effects of empowering leadership on employee withdrawal. It shows that (1) empowering leadership can influence a wide variety of withdrawal behaviors (lateness, absenteeism, and turnover intentions), (2) it does this at the individual level, and (3) affective organizational commitment explains the effects of empowering leadership. Regarding empowering leadership and withdrawal, the concept of withdrawal is broad, ranging from very short-term (e.g., being late by an hour or less) to medium-term (e.g., being absent for a week or less) to permanent (e.g., turning over). All of these employee responses have in common the fact that the employee is missing from the organization, but they are distinct too, as our CFAs showed. Therefore, it is important to know the degree to which empowering leadership can affect each type of withdrawal.

Furthermore, we have evidence that the effect of empowering leadership on these different withdrawal behaviors is transmitted through empowering leadership engendering organizational commitment in subordinates. Empowering leaders contribute to creating an environment for followers to develop a sense of affective commitment to the organization by letting them actually make decisions or by offering opportunities to voice their opinions in

performing their work, thereby leading to an increased sense of responsibility. Subsequently, employees with higher levels of affective commitment showed lower levels of absenteeism and turnover intention. Furthermore, there were no significant direct links between empowering leadership and withdrawal behaviors, suggesting that affective commitment was an important psychological state that is necessary in order to translate the positive effect of empowering leader behaviors to decreased withdrawal of followers. Therefore, withdrawal behaviors may be decreased if leaders can strengthen the followers' emotional bond to the organization by offering the needed support, recognition, guidance, and chances to participate in work processes.

Unexpectedly, neither empowering leadership nor the mediator, affective commitment, had a significant relationship with lateness. The fact that lateness acted differently from the other two forms of employee withdrawal provides some support for the independence model of withdrawal (Koslowsky et al., 1997), even though lateness did correlate positively with absenteeism and turnover intention. One possible reason for the independence is that employees might be habitually late, no matter how much they are motivated and committed to their job and organization. That is, if arriving a few minutes after start time for work would not be considered inappropriate behavior or there is no big penalty for slightly being late to work, employees are likely to engage in lateness behavior (or not) regardless of their leaders' behaviors, organizational commitment, or withdrawal intentions. Hence, lateness may be well predicted by individual characteristics including personality and disposition as suggested in some previous studies (Blau, 1994; Bowling, Burns, & Beehr, 2010; Koslowsky, 2000; Richard & Slane, 1990), or by penalties other than leadership styles. Lateness is different from absenteeism and turnover in important ways. For one, the late employee is actually at work during the day (after the official starting time), but employees who are absent or who turnover are not present during each

day. Organizational commitment (or leadership style) may not have a strong effect on lateness if the committed employees still show up for work and believe they are contributing strongly to the organization with their work performance.

Additionally, lateness is addressed as only one of three withdrawal behaviors, with other types of withdrawal being absenteeism and turnover intention. However, lateness is a relatively milder form of withdrawal and thus might not well represent stronger withdrawal signs such as more complete avoidance of work. For these reasons, leadership style and affective commitment may fail to predict employees' lateness behavior.

Employees considering withdrawal from their organization are likely to reflect low motivation as well as low commitment to the organization, thereby decreasing their effort at work, which may also negatively affect their coworkers' morale and motivation (Koslowsky, 2000; Tett & Meyer, 1993). This may make it more difficult for an organization to function effectively. Moreover, organizations should pay attention to employees' withdrawal, because absenteeism is a cost to the organization, and intent to turnover is one of the strongest proximal predictors for actual turnover that is costly for the organization (Griffeth et al., 2000). Given the findings that empowering leadership and affective commitment offer benefits to organizations with regard to employee retention and attendance in the present study, providing leaders with empowering leadership training and development programs would have desirable outcomes in terms of decreasing employee withdrawal. Previous research has demonstrated the viability of training management students to use empowering leadership styles (e.g., Sumpter, Gibson, & Porah, 2016), and thus such training seems feasible.

Research and Practical Applications

Although affective commitment was shown to be an important mediator in the present study, future research would be encouraged to investigate other potential intervening variables (e.g., organization-based self-esteem and psychological contract) linking empowering leadership to employees' desirable behaviors. Trust is inherent in empowering leadership (Srivastava, Bartol, & Locke, 2006), that is, leaders are more likely to empower subordinates who they trust to use that empowerment wisely. Future research could examine trust as a mediating variable of empowering leadership with positive employee attitudes and behaviors; indeed, employees' feelings of being trusted (and often reciprocating that trust) have been shown related to a variety of outcomes such as organizational commitment, citizenship behaviors, and team performance (De Jong, Dirks, & Gillespie, 2016; Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). Trust is often reciprocal, and one party, supervisor or subordinate, shows explicit trust in the other, the other party has reason to develop more trust in the relationship also. Future research should investigate trust, as both a cause of leader empowerment and a result of it.

Other forms of withdrawal also could be examined in future studies using the basic model in Figure 1, such as psychological withdrawal, withdrawal from coworkers or others in the workplace (e.g., not responding to communications), or taking long work breaks. Lastly, in addition to withdrawal outcomes, there are many other outcomes that may be influenced by empowering leader behaviors such as followers' job strain, happiness, or career success. Thus, future research can further our knowledge by examining additional outcome domains. Research is also needed on the antecedents or potential causes of leader empowering behaviors that may be found in the organizational environment. One facilitator of leaders' empowering behavior is organizational climate or culture. Leaders may be encouraged to empower subordinates if they

experience the organization as a whole to consist of striving, capability, and high internal motivation. That kind of organization is ripe for leadership styles that include sharing power to enhance employees' already natural motivation tendencies, and to encourage employee development, all characteristics of empowering leadership (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Organization-level research could examine this possibility by studying culture as a promotive factor for empowering leadership.

The study also has applied implications for organizations. In order to retain core employees, organizations should encourage leaders or managers to engage in empowering leadership by developing reward systems or training programs based on a number of empowering behaviors that enhance autonomy and development support among followers. Organizations can also employ the sets of empowering behaviors measured in the present study to use as a tool when selecting its managers for rewards such as pay increases or advancement. Leader behaviors operationalized as empowering in the present study were development support by providing continuous learning and development opportunities through leaders' guidance and role modeling, as well as autonomy/motivation support by expressing confidence in subordinates, providing opportunities for subordinates to participate in decision making along with sharing information, and encouraging initiative and goal focus. The content of the scales used to measure empowering leadership behaviors could be guidelines for using these behaviors effectively in developing empowering leadership programs.

By encouraging and showing supervisors or leaders ways to enhance employee involvement, initiative, and self-development (empowering leadership), organizations can indirectly decrease employees' absenteeism and the tendency to leave their organization. Considering the positive consequences to organizations of having affectively committed

employees, as well as the lack of a direct effect of empowering leadership on withdrawal behaviors, making followers feel emotionally attached to the organization (affective commitment) through the empowering leadership behaviors of power sharing, motivational support, and development support may be a necessary strategy to actually increase the employee's desire to be in the organization.

Limitations

Although the present study provided new insights to the relationships among empowering leadership, affective commitment, and employee withdrawal, some limitations need to be addressed. Even though the variables were measured at different times in the temporal order matching their place in the proposed model, the findings do not ensure strong causal relations among the study variables. Future experimental studies manipulating empowering leadership in randomly assigned training groups of leaders would provide stronger causal inferences regarding its direct causal effects on employees' commitment and indirect effects on their withdrawal. If future studies use the multiple-time-point method of the present study rather than experimental methods, they could address another issue regarding causality: It is possible that there are unmeasured variables that influence multiple variables in the model, and they are at least partial causes of some of the paths being significant. One example variable that could cause both empowering leadership and the outcomes is organizational culture. A culture that is respectful of employees might lead to many organizational practices and conditions that employees react well to, including empowering leadership. However, in addition to empowering leadership, the culture itself could directly make employees more committed to the organization and less inclined to withdraw from it. This could cause any of the pairs of variables linked by paths in the model to be related to each other. Future research on the present model could measure and

control not only organizational culture but also other variables that could theoretically cause multiple variables in the model.

The present study adopted self-reported measures of all withdrawal behaviors, because self-report data have been used successfully in previous studies (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990, 1991; Koslowsky & Dishon-Berkovits, 2001), suggesting this is a viable way for obtaining good withdrawal measures (Johns, 1994). Moreover, care was taken to reduce the effects of common method variance. First, the data were collected at multiple time points, separating the predictor from the outcomes (which can help to reduce common method effects; Podsakoff et al., 2012). Second, we controlled for social desirability, a substantive variable that can affect self-reports. Third, because social desirability was measured with the same method as the rest of the variables, controlling for it also controlled for method variance, the way a marker variable does (Podsakoff et al., 2012). We note that the correlations between the study's variables varied and were only moderately strong, suggesting no strong and consistent effect of the self-report method across variables. Thus, there are multiple empirical reasons to believe the issue of common method bias effects was not a serious problem. Moreover, Spector's (2006) review showed that problems caused by common method variance are often somewhat overstated and seldom serious enough to invalidate research findings based on well-designed measures.

Commitment to the organization is theoretically a reason why people would be willing to attend rather than withdraw from the workplace, because it is a psychological tie to the organization, and empirical research had generally confirmed this link (Griffeth et al., 2000; Harrison, Newman, & Roth, 2006; Tett & Meyer, 1993). A larger question was whether and to what degree commitment would result from empowering leadership, and as a mediator, would transfer its effect to employee withdrawal. Although we found the proposed mediator effects for

commitment, other mediator variables could also be proposed. An intuitive mediator would be psychological empowerment, for example. We recommend that future studies include it as well as other variables of interest. In addition, we note that although empowerment is expected to be a positive state, it could have negative effects, such as feelings of being abandoned by the leader (e.g., Wong & Giessner, 2016), and some employees may directly resist empowerment (e.g., Maynard, Matheiu, March, & Ruddy, 2007).

Finally, even though we controlled social desirability, there still could be some problems with it in the data. There are other variables that are very similar to social desirability that might affect relationships between variables, such as impression management or self-presentation. Any one social desirability measure is unlikely to control for all similar variables, and therefore some influence of social desirability-like variables remains.

Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship of empowering leader behaviors with followers' withdrawal and tested the mediating role of affective commitment in these relationships. Empowering leadership has motivational influences on followers by promoting their sense of control, confidence on their jobs, and feelings of being empowered, conferring greater authority and autonomy to them. The more employees have opportunities to get involved in decisions and work activities as well as to engage in self-development, the more they will have loyalty and affection for the organization (Chen et al., 2011; Den Hartog & De Hoogh, 2009). Subsequently, affectively committed employees develop positive attitudes and behaviors toward the organization, and they thereby engage less in withdrawal processes, especially absenteeism and turnover intention. Together, the present study extended our prior understanding of the effects of positive forms of leadership on employee behaviors by highlighting that

empowering leadership is also an important driver in shaping positive attitude (affective commitment) and behavioral intentions of followers.

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Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations of All Variables

Variables	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Empowering leadership (T1)	4.89	1.14	.96					
2. Affective commitment (mean of T1+T2)	4.53	1.29	.60**	.90/.92				
3. Lateness (T2)	2.05	1.10	-.09	-.11	.71			
4. Absenteeism (T2)	2.30	1.20	-.21**	-.30**	.57**	.72		
5. Turnover intention (T2)	2.32	1.13	-.43**	-.66**	.20**	.38**	.94	
6. Social desirability (T2)	3.59	.75	.10	.12*	-.21**	-.24**	-.11	.75

Note. $N = 294$. Reliabilities are in italics on the diagonal. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$.

Table 2
Summary of Model Fit Indices

Model Test	χ^2	df	CFI	IFI	NNFI	RMSEA	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	p
Measurement model	530.93	194	.96	.96	.95	.08			
Hypothesized structural model	663.81	202	.94	.94	.93	.09			
Alternative model: Direct paths from empowering leadership to each of the three outcomes	660.74	199	.94	.94	.93	.09	3.07	3	.38

Note. $N = 294$. χ^2 -values for the structural models are significant at $p < .01$.

Table 3

Results of Bootstrapping Tests for Estimating Indirect Effects with 95% Confidence Intervals

Predictor	Mediator	Outcome	Direct effects	Indirect effects				
			β (p)	ab	SE	$CI_{95\%}$	ab_{cs}	k^2
Empowering Leadership	Affective Commitment	Lateness	-.04(.57)	-.05	.04	-.13, .02	-.05	.04
		Absenteeism	-.05(.47)	-.17	.04	-.26, -.09	-.16	.13
		Turnover	-.06(.24)	-.37	.04	-.46, -.28	-.37	.34
		Intention						

Note. $N = 294$. $\beta = c'$ (direct effect). ab = unstandardized indirect effect. SE = bootstrap standard error. ab , SE , and $CI_{95\%}$ were obtained from 10,000 bootstrap samples. ab_{cs} = completely standardized indirect effect. k^2 = indirect effect/ maximum possible mediation effect.

Figure 1. *Hypothesized Model*

Figure 2. *Structural Equation Modeling with Standardized Estimates^a*

^aPaths in structural model analysis are significant at $p < .01$. Paths with dashed lines are nonsignificant.