

## Organizational Empowerment: Theory and Research Directions

---

**Summary:** *Organisational empowerment (OE) is a vital research area that moves beyond individual-level analyses to examine the structural, procedural, and systemic mechanisms that enhance collective. While early studies focused primarily on psychological empowerment, the organisational dimension remains under-explored, necessitating the development of robust conceptual frameworks and measurement tools across intraorganizational, interorganizational, and extraorganizational levels. However, the field faces challenges, including the dominance of psychological empowerment, inconsistent terminology, and a lack of empirical validation. To strengthen the theoretical and practical impact of OE, future research must refine its conceptual clarity, integrate diverse methodological approaches, ensuring its role as a transformative force in organisational and community development. In this paper we are reviewing main theories and concepts showing extended Peterson and Zimmerman nomological network and contributing to discussion about delineation of theoretical and methodological approach through extensive literature search.*

---

**Keywords:** *Organisational Empowerment, Empowerment Theory, Conceptual Frameworks, Nomological network, Methodology*

---

---

<sup>1</sup> Ergomed Clinical Research SAS, Paris, France.  
E-mail: m.stamenovic@rocketmail.com

## INTRODUCTION

When choosing theoretical directions for OE research, scholars must consider the organisational context, research objectives, and methodological feasibility. Methodological approaches in OE research also depend on theoretical orientation. Qualitative methods such as ethnography, case studies, and narrative analysis are useful for exploring empowerment processes and experiences, particularly within critical and institutional frameworks. These methods allow for an in-depth examination of organisational cultures, leadership practices, and employee perceptions. Conversely, quantitative approaches, including surveys, experiments, and structural equation modeling, provide empirical validation of empowerment constructs. They are particularly useful for testing hypotheses derived from social cognitive, transformational leadership, and systems theories among others. A mixed-methods approach can offer a comprehensive analysis, combining the depth of qualitative research with the generalisability of quantitative studies. Validation remains a critical challenge in OE research. The lack of standardised measurement tools has led to inconsistencies in assessing empowerment across different organisational contexts. Future research should focus on developing reliable and context-specific instruments to measure OE across various levels. One approach to validation involves testing empowerment models across diverse organisational settings to ensure their applicability. Cross-cultural studies, for example, can help determine whether theoretical models of OE hold across different industries and cultural environments. Another validation strategy is longitudinal research, which examines how empowerment evolves over time. This method is particularly useful for assessing the sustainability of empowerment interventions and their long-term impact on organisational effectiveness. The terminology surrounding empowerment remains an ongoing challenge. The concept is often conflated with related terms such as capacity building, social capital, and community engagement, leading to definitional ambiguities. Establishing clear distinctions among these terms is essential for theoretical clarity and methodological precision. Different disciplines use empowerment in varied ways, contributing to its conceptual fluidity. In psychology, empowerment is often understood in terms of individual agency and self-efficacy, while in sociology, it emphasises collective action and structural transformation. Organisational studies, meanwhile, frame empowerment as a function of leadership, workplace autonomy, and participatory governance. The practical implications of OE research extend to policy-making and organisational development. By refining empowerment frameworks, researchers can provide actionable insights for improving workplace policies, leadership training, and employee engagement strategies. Additionally, OE research has the potential to enhance organisational sustainability by fostering adaptive and resilient work environments. Organisations that effectively implement empowerment strategies tend to exhibit higher levels of innovation, employee satisfaction, and operational efficiency. A critical consideration in advancing OE research is addressing the limitations of existing models. The predominance of psychological empowerment in research has led to an

individualistic bias, which fails to capture the collective dimensions of empowerment. Future studies should integrate broader organisational and community-level perspectives. Another key challenge is ensuring that empowerment research does not merely serve as an academic exercise but translates into real-world applications. Collaborative research involving practitioners, policymakers, and community stakeholders can bridge the gap between theory and practice, ensuring that empowerment initiatives lead to tangible improvements in organisational effectiveness.

As empowerment research continues to evolve, interdisciplinary approaches will be crucial in refining its theoretical foundations. Integrating perspectives from management, psychology, sociology, and public policy can yield a more holistic understanding of organisational empowerment and its broader societal implications. Organisational empowerment research requires a multidimensional approach that incorporates diverse theories, methodological innovations, and rigorous validation strategies. By addressing terminological inconsistencies and expanding theoretical frameworks, scholars can enhance the conceptual clarity and practical relevance of OE research, ultimately contributing to more empowered and resilient organisations.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Empowerment is a dynamic and participatory process that enables individuals, organizations, and communities to increase their authority, effectiveness, and equity. (1,2) This concept plays a crucial role in community psychology, health promotion, and social work (3,4,5,6). It also provides a strategic framework for interventions in high-risk communities (7). The continued interest in empowerment theory is driven by its effectiveness in supporting social movements and interventions at multiple levels (8).

Although empowerment is inherently multilevel, early research primarily focused on individual empowerment (9). Much of the research concentrated on understanding the mechanisms of participation and evaluating individual-level empowerment (10,11, 12,13,14). However, there has been relatively less attention to the processes, structures, and outcomes related to organizational and community-level empowerment. The growing importance of organizational empowerment (OE) is therefore critical in addressing the limitations of traditional empowerment research, offering a more comprehensive understanding of empowerment within organizational settings. Zimmerman (2000) emphasizes the need to move beyond individual-focused interventions to explore the broader organizational context.

The shift toward examining OE is necessary to counter the individualistic bias that has characterized traditional empowerment theory (15). By incorporating collective principles, OE provides a more nuanced framework for understanding empowerment within organizational settings (16). To advance this field, it is crucial to develop robust conceptual frameworks and measurement strategies for OE. Recent research efforts have begun to

address these gaps, following the foundational model established in 2004. These studies propose frameworks for understanding OE at intraorganizational, interorganizational, and extraorganizational levels (17, 18, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24). These studies also aim to provide actionable insights to further conceptualize and understand OE. Zimmerman and Peterson's (2004) pioneering work on OE continues to influence the field, with their nomological network describing the key features and interconnections of OE. This network remains a critical foundation for future research and practical applications, highlighting the need for ongoing development of tailored measures and interventions that cater to organizational contexts. The continued exploration of OE across multiple organizational levels will deepen our understanding of empowerment and its transformative potential in diverse settings.

On the other hand, there are differing perspectives on the understanding of organizational empowerment, as highlighted by Peterson (2014), who argues that empowerment remains largely an untested theory. Christens (2012) emphasized that higher-order, multidimensional empowerment models have rarely been empirically validated. Additionally, he pointed out the need for more context-specific, quantitative instruments that can be developed and validated to measure empowerment across different populations. These gaps have raised concerns among researchers regarding the future trajectory of empowerment theory, research, and practice. They also warned that unless both theoretical and empirical issues are addressed with greater precision, the continued significance of empowerment as a key area of focus may be at risk. Peterson (2014) advocates for exploring alternatives to the traditional superordinate model of empowerment, where various dimensions are typically seen as manifestations of a higher-order construct. The aggregate model of empowerment offers a promising alternative, conceptualizing empowerment as a higher-order construct formed by its distinct dimensions. While much of the discussion has been centered on psychological empowerment (PE), these insights are also relevant to research on organizational and community empowerment. Researchers, at any level of analysis, must pay closer attention to measurement perspectives and provide clear justifications for their specific conceptualizations of empowerment as a multidimensional construct (25).

Furthermore, empowerment, as a higher-order multidimensional construct, is transitioning from its traditional focus on social and political change to a more individualistic interpretation, possibly reflecting the influence of neoliberal ideas on health promotion. (27, 28) Practitioners and scholars in this field often use the term loosely, leading to a proliferation of definitions and the frequent interchangeability of empowerment with other concepts such as community, capacity, competence, social capital, and cohesiveness. This blending of terms can obscure the original focus on "power," with some scholars arguing that the concept has become diluted.

Empowerment is inherently complex, encompassing processes and outcomes for both individuals and communities, making efforts to define it clearly even more challenging. The lack of a universally accepted definition can be traced to the term's development across various disciplines, such as health education, psychology, social work, and

sociology. Essentially, the inconsistent evolution of empowerment discourse in global health promotion has led to frequent misinterpretations. For instance, some view empowerment as a “Eurocentric phenomenon,” likely due to its central role in the WHO European Healthy Cities program of the late 1980s and the significant academic attention it has received from European scholars (28). In contrast, while empowerment and community development strategies have long been central in Africa, there is still limited academic commentary from the continent. In many Asian countries, empowerment remains a relatively new concept. Despite these definitional challenges, empowerment continues to be recognized as a valuable element of health promotion across disciplines. Similar to health promotion, which also lacks a universally accepted definition, empowerment remains ambiguous in contemporary literature and is applied and understood differently worldwide (28).

Achieving greater clarity and precision in defining and applying the concept of empowerment is essential for ensuring that practitioners can accurately measure it at both the individual and community levels. A more precise understanding will help clarify the various dimensions of empowerment and how they manifest in different contexts, enabling practitioners to implement more effective strategies and interventions.

This clarity is crucial for advancing research and practical applications, as it ensures that empowerment is measured consistently and meaningfully across different settings. By refining the conceptual framework, researchers can better assess the impact of empowerment initiatives, providing valuable insights for improving both individual and community well-being.

## METHODOLOGY

In this paper, we aim to contribute to the ongoing discourse on Organizational Empowerment (OE) by reviewing the main theories and concepts that form its foundation. Our goal is to clarify the theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches currently employed in OE research. By conducting an extensive literature review, we examine the existing strengths and weaknesses of these frameworks, providing a comprehensive overview of where the field stands today. This review will help identify key areas that require further investigation and offer valuable insights for refining the current understanding of OE. Despite the substantial body of work that has been published, several aspects of OE remain underexplored, particularly at the intraorganizational and interorganizational levels. Through this review, we seek to highlight these gaps and provide recommendations for future research that will address the complexities of OE across various organizational settings. By doing so, we hope to foster a deeper understanding of the processes, structures, and outcomes that constitute organizational empowerment.

The research presented here is a updated segment of a doctoral dissertation conducted at IAE Nice (Institut d’administration des entreprises de Nice), where we explored the

challenging intersection of organizational empowerment and patient engagement. This context-specific exploration adds additional dimension to the broader OE discourse.

Through this paper, we contribute to the evolving narrative of OE research, emphasizing the need for methodological refinement and a clearer conceptualization of the construct. Our analysis of current and potential research directions is intended to provide a roadmap for future studies in the field. By synthesizing existing knowledge and proposing a more refined approach to OE research, we aim to ensure that the concept remains a transformative force in both organizational and community development, with the potential for broader applications across diverse sectors.

Another crucial aspect of strengthening OE research is the integration of diverse methodological approaches. The study of OE requires a comprehensive understanding of its various dimensions, and different research methodologies are necessary to capture this complexity. Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, such as case studies, interviews, surveys, and statistical modeling, will allow researchers to explore both the lived experiences of individuals within organizations and the broader systemic structures that influence empowerment. A mixed-methods approach can help provide a more complete picture of how empowerment operates within organizational contexts, ultimately improving the applicability and validity of OE research.

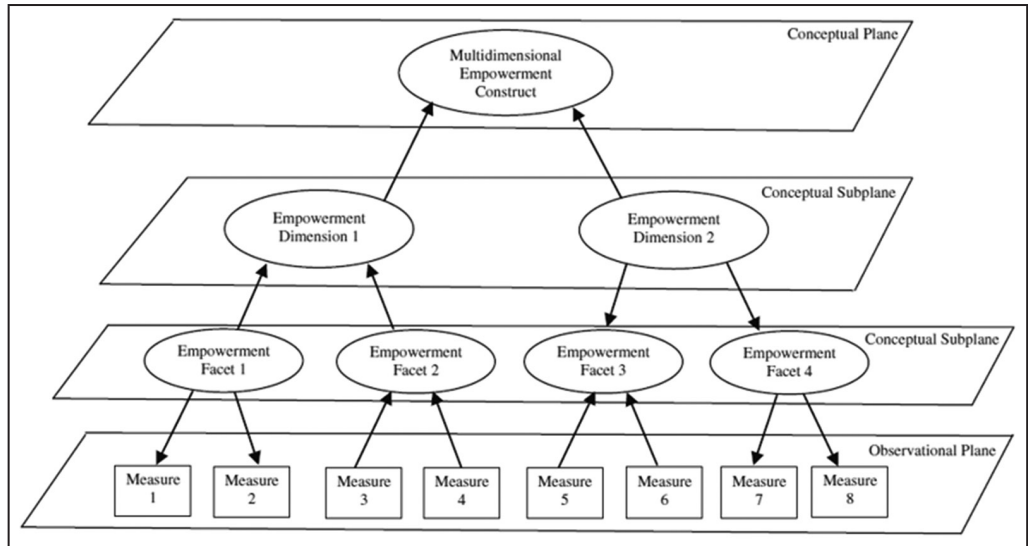
In addition to refining conceptual clarity and integrating diverse methods, future research must maintain a critical focus on power dynamics within organizations. Investigating power dynamics in OE research can reveal important insights into the barriers and facilitators of empowerment, helping to identify where interventions may be most needed to promote organizational change and development.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Recent reviews and empirical studies have continued to refine and expand the concept of Organizational Empowerment (OE) within the framework established by Peterson and Zimmerman's nomological network. Developing robust methods to validate and assess OE will be essential for designing effective interventions and achieving organizational goals as the field evolves. These efforts will help bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical applications in diverse organizational settings. While early empowerment theory primarily focused on individual-level analysis, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s, more recent research emphasizes the need to broaden this focus to encompass organizational and community contexts. By addressing these wider levels, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of empowerment and its implications for improving organizational performance and impact.

It is important to note that the higher-order multidimensional construct proposed by Peterson (2014) is primarily associated with psychological empowerment (PE), rather than organizational empowerment (OE). However, Peterson's work also reflects similar themes

and the growing recognition of the importance of shifting toward a multidimensional approach. This perspective highlights the need for a more comprehensive understanding of empowerment that includes multiple levels of analysis, which is crucial for exploring its full impact on both individuals and organizations. As OE research continues to evolve, integrating these broader conceptualizations will be key to developing more effective empowerment strategies that can enhance both individual and organizational outcomes.



**Figure 1.** The higher-order multidimensional construct proposed by N.A. Peterson (2014), adapted from MacKenzie et al. (2005) (25,27)

Organizational Empowerment (OE) offers a valuable approach to counter the misconception that empowerment theory is primarily individualistic and conflict-driven (15). By incorporating collective principles, OE provides a broader and more comprehensive framework for understanding empowerment within organizational settings (16). To fully explore OE, it is essential to develop clear conceptual frameworks that define its key attributes, guide its measurement, and offer practical strategies for implementation.

Zimmerman and Peterson's work marks a significant advancement in developing a conceptual model of OE. Although earlier research by Zimmerman (2000) addressed empowerment across multiple levels of analysis, it did not specifically focus on OE. The nomological network they introduced defines OE and its components, integrating them into a cohesive model. This model has major implications for both future research and practical applications, offering a foundation for the creation of new measures and interventions tailored to organizational contexts.

For example, applying the OE framework to community-based organizations can support initiatives like substance abuse prevention. Researchers can empirically validate OE by examining its relationship with goal achievement, such as reductions in substance

abuse within targeted communities. This approach emphasizes the importance of refining and conceptualizing OE to better align with real-world applications.

Building on the nomological network, our research framework argues that qualitative research plays a crucial role in further conceptualizing OE. It also addresses the potential limitations of the model, as highlighted by Peterson (2014) and others. This network outlines the key features, observable manifestations, and interconnections of OE. Zimmerman and Peterson's work provides a solid foundation for understanding organizational-level features that characterize empowered organizations, guiding future studies in the field.

**Table 1.** Nomological network according to Petterson and Zimmerman (2004)

Component	Processes	Outcomes
Intraorganizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Incentive management (Prestby, Wandersman, Florin, Rich, &amp; Chavis, 1990)</li> <li>- Subgroup linkages (Bond &amp; Keys, 1993)</li> <li>- Opportunity role structure (Maton &amp; Salem, 1995; Minkler et al., 2001; Peterson &amp; Hughey, 2002; Peterson &amp; Speer, 2000; Speer Hughey, Gersheimer, &amp; Adams-Lavitt, 1995)</li> <li>- Leadership (Maton &amp; Salem, 1995; Minkler et al., 2001)</li> <li>- Social support (Gutiérrez et al., 1995; Kieffer, 1984; Maton, 1988; Maton &amp; Salem, 1995; Minkler et al., 2001; Peterson &amp; Hughey, 2002; Peterson &amp; Speer, 2000)</li> <li>- Group-based belief system (Maton &amp; Salem, 1995; Minkler et al., 2001; Rappaport, 1993; Spreitzer, 1995)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Viability (Perkins, Brown &amp; Taylor, 1996; Prestby et al., 1990)</li> <li>- Underpopulated settings (Zimmerman et al., 1991)</li> <li>- Collaboration of coempowered subgroups (Bond &amp; Keys, 1993; Gruber &amp; Trickett, 1987)</li> <li>- Resolved ideological conflict (Riger, 1984)</li> <li>- Resource identification (Zimmerman et al., 1991)</li> </ul>
Interorganizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accessing social networks of other organizations (Gulati &amp; Gargiulo, 1999; Snow, Zurcher, &amp; Ekind-Olson, 1980)</li> <li>- Participating in alliance-building activities with other organizations (Foster-Fishman, Salem, Allen, &amp; Fahrback, 2001; Itzhaky &amp; York, 2002)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaboration (Bartle et al., 2002; Baum &amp; Oliver, 1991; Checkoway, 1982; Checkoway &amp; Doyle, 1980; Orians, Liebow, &amp; Branch, 1995)</li> <li>- Resource improvement (Zimmerman et al., 1991)</li> </ul>
Extraorganizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementing community actions (Speer et al., 1995; Speer &amp; Hughey, 1995)</li> <li>- Disseminating information (Bonal, 2000; Burstein, 1999; Stevenson &amp; Greenberg, 2000)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Influence of public policy and practice (Fawcett et al., 1995; Speer &amp; Hughey, 1996)</li> <li>- Creation of alternative settings and programs (Chertis &amp; Deegan, 2001; Minkler et al., 2001; Sarason, 1972)</li> <li>- Deployment of resources in the community (Zimmerman et al., 1991)</li> </ul>

**Table 2.** Adjusted nomological network through literature search and systematisation

Component	Processes	Outcomes
Intraorganizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Incentive management (Prestby, Wandersman, Florin, Rich, &amp; Chavis, 1990)</li> <li>- Subgroup linkages (Bond &amp; Keys, 1993)</li> <li>- Opportunity role structure (Maton &amp; Salem, 1995; Minkler et al., 2001; Peterson &amp; Hughey, 2002; Peterson &amp; Speer, 2000; Speer Hughey, Gersheimer, &amp; Adams-Lavitt, 1995)</li> <li>- Leadership (Maton &amp; Salem, 1995; Minkler et al., 2001)</li> <li>- Social support (Gutiérrez et al., 1995; Kieffer, 1984; Maton, 1988; Maton &amp; Salem, 1995; Minkler et al., 2001; Peterson &amp; Hughey, 2002; Peterson &amp; Speer, 2000)</li> <li>- Group-based belief system (Maton &amp; Salem, 1995; Minkler et al., 2001; Rappaport, 1993; Spreitzer, 1995)</li> <li>- <b>team empowerment (added process) (Yiannakis et al., 2006; Janssen et al., 2015)</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Viability (Perkins, Brown &amp; Taylor, 1996; Prestby et al., 1990)</li> <li>- Underpopulated settings (Zimmerman et al., 1991)</li> <li>- Collaboration of coempowered subgroups (Bond &amp; Keys, 1993; Gruber &amp; Trickett, 1987)</li> <li>- Resolved ideological conflict (Riger, 1984)</li> <li>- Resource identification (Zimmerman et al., 1991)</li> <li>- <b>Organizational commitment (Forenza, 2016, 2017; Valsania et al., 2016). (added Outcome)</b></li> <li>- <b>Sense of community (SOC) (added outcome) (Hughey et al., 2008; Speer et al., 2013).</b></li> </ul>
Interorganizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accessing social networks of other organizations (Gulati &amp; Gargiulo, 1999; Snow, Zurcher, &amp; Ekind-Olson, 1980)</li> <li>- Participating in alliance-building activities with other organizations (Foster-Fishman, Salem, Allen, &amp; Fahrback, 2001; Itzhaky &amp; York, 2002)</li> <li>- <b>organizational learning (Maton (2008, ))(added process)</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaboration (Bartle et al., 2002; Baum &amp; Oliver, 1991; Checkoway, 1982; Checkoway &amp; Doyle, 1980; Orians, Liebow, &amp; Branch, 1995)</li> <li>- Resource improvement (Zimmerman et al., 1991)</li> </ul>
Extraorganizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementing community actions (Speer et al., 1995; Speer &amp; Hughey, 1995)</li> <li>- Disseminating information (Bonal, 2000; Burstein, 1999; Stevenson &amp; Greenberg, 2000)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Influence of public policy and practice (Fawcett et al., 1995; Speer &amp; Hughey, 1996)</li> <li>- Creation of alternative settings and programs (Chertis &amp; Deegan, 2001; Minkler et al., 2001; Sarason, 1972)</li> <li>- Deployment of resources in the community (Zimmerman et al., 1991)</li> </ul>

Following the successful development of the nomological network for Organizational Empowerment (OE) by Zimmerman and Peterson (2004), subsequent scholars have continued to explore similar themes. Our literature review reveals additional studies that contribute to the ongoing discussion of OE components. While further research is needed on all components, there is a specific need to investigate intraorganizational outcomes

and the inter- and extraorganizational elements. This gap may stem from the inherent complexity of these components, which can pose challenges for researchers. Additionally, there has likely been an overemphasis on the initial component, resulting in insufficient exploration of the other two.

Current research has predominantly relied on quantitative methods, which may not fully capture the nuanced insights that qualitative approaches could provide, particularly in understanding how professionals achieve empowerment and the role organizational factors play in this process (22). The abstract nature of OE components also raises questions about how the model adapts to the fluid and dynamic characteristics of organizations. Thus, further research is needed to explore the relationships between the processes and outcomes of each OE component, as well as their interactions across different components.

Preliminary findings suggest a potential link between viability and alliance building, which highlights the need to examine additional connections within the OE model. It is essential to identify and prioritize the most significant processes and outcomes, and to assess how newly introduced components impact and interrelate with each other. This will provide a more comprehensive understanding of OE and its application in organizational settings.

While participation is a crucial element of empowerment, it is only implicitly addressed within the current OE framework, with limited exploration in the literature. Future research should focus on clarifying how the processes outlined in the OE model affect participation, given its foundational role in empowerment. The framework developed by Depauw and Driessens (2016) offers valuable insights for integrating and examining participation more thoroughly within the OE model. (29)

The current Organizational Empowerment (OE) model emphasizes how organizations influence public policy and practice through extraorganizational empowerment. However, it overlooks how organizations respond to institutional demands and create new institutions to serve their interests (29). This gap reflects a disconnect between OE and organizational theories. Franscscato and Aber (2015) stress the need to incorporate organizational theory into OE.(30) Institutional theory, in particular, provides a useful framework for analyzing how organizations and professionals interact with and shape their institutional environments, offering a potential opportunity to bridge organizational theories with OE. (31) Further studies have explored the relationships between empowerment-related constructs and their outcomes and have connected empowerment constructs with those from other theoretical perspectives (11, 17, 18, 32).

A deeper review of the literature, including work by Rothman and Vijlder (2019), has identified additional processes and outcomes that enhance the original model proposed by Zimmerman and Peterson. For example, intraorganizational empowerment processes now include team empowerment, which is vital for promoting individual empowerment among members and improving the team's overall effectiveness as a cohesive social unit. Moreover, adopting a collaborative approach to addressing institutional and policy barriers is crucial for strengthening team empowerment. Research also indicates that diversity in management plays a significant role in enhancing the sense of community (SOC), an added

intraorganizational outcome, while access to information positively influences professional empowerment, reinforcing the findings of Hughey.(25,18)

Furthermore, a higher SOC among individuals is linked to improved organizational effectiveness. Christens and Lin (2014) found a strong connection between social support and SOC, highlighting the importance of social networks in fostering empowerment within organizations.(22) Opportunity role structures also have a positive indirect and direct impact on SOC, and they directly predict perceived effectiveness, with an indirect effect through SOC (25). These insights underscore the importance of incorporating diverse factors, such as team dynamics, diversity, and role structures, into the broader OE framework to enhance its applicability and effectiveness across organizational contexts.

Within the intraorganizational component, organizational learning has emerged as an important interorganizational process, reflecting how organizations adapt and respond to environmental changes, thus enriching Organizational Empowerment (OE) (17). Integrating this aspect into the OE model provides deeper insight into the dynamic evolution of organizations and enhances our understanding of their capacity to learn and adjust over time.

The development of outcomes related to interorganizational empowerment has also been a key area of focus. Collaboration among organizations, such as coordinating services and formalizing relationships, plays a crucial role in achieving collective goals. Resource procurement, including securing finances and other external resources, significantly strengthens an organization's effectiveness. Participation in alliances provides tangible benefits, such as financial support and technical assistance. However, maintaining numerous relationships may not always be feasible due to the substantial effort required. Furthermore, accessing social networks with other organizations fosters growth and enhances the ability to influence the organizational environment. In turn, alliance-building positively impacts collaboration and access to external networks (33). The effectiveness of alliances is influenced by factors such as competent coordination, strong leadership, a supportive climate, effective information dissemination, positive interactions between the alliance and the home organization, and flexibility. These elements contribute to network formation, professional development, and cross-institutional collaboration, all of which support capacity building (34). Furthermore, empowering environments can be enhanced through the reform and restructuring of relationships into more strategic partnerships (17). At the interorganizational level, the focus should be on integrating a diverse range of empowered processes across different organizations.

In terms of extraorganizational empowerment, original processes involve implementing community actions and disseminating information to influence community policies and practices (33). These activities enhance citizen participation, particularly through engagement in social network activities. Furthermore, developing outcomes related to extraorganizational empowerment entails influencing public policy and achieving positive impacts on goals. This influence is often driven by community leadership and collective pressure (17,33). Alliances serve as intermediary structures that bring critical issues to the forefront and can evolve into broader social movements. Community participation plays a crucial role in shaping public

policy and practice, though low-income groups may experience fewer benefits in terms of political influence (22). The extent of control over local politics is often strengthened by positive organizational characteristics recognized by the community. Additionally, organizational learning strategies can impact community learning, driving transformation. Developing alternative programs and strategically allocating resources within the community are vital outcomes of Organizational Empowerment (OE), contributing to the achievement of broader social and organizational goals (17,33).

The intra- and interorganizational components provide the foundational framework for the extraorganizational component. Together, they contribute to building community capacity and influencing practice and policy through a network of interconnected. These components work synergistically, setting the stage for broader impacts within and beyond organizational boundaries.

The theoretical framework integrates elements from all three components— intraorganizational, interorganizational, and extraorganizational—based on the Zimmerman and Peterson model. These components are clearly defined, with their corresponding processes and outcomes outlined within their nomological network. Building on insights from the literature review, there are made adjustments to enhance the framework's applicability. This updated network not only incorporates recent findings but also addresses the emerging complexities in OE research, offering a more nuanced understanding of the concept. In addition to revising the nomological network, we propose a theoretical framework that emphasizes inductive research on organizational empowerment. This framework highlights the interconnectedness of the OE components, their underlying processes, and the outcomes they produce all essential for achieving organizational success. By exploring these relationships, the framework provides a comprehensive view of how OE operates within organizations and offers insights into the pathways through which empowerment leads to success. This theoretical framework serves as a valuable tool for both researchers and practitioners, offering actionable strategies to enhance organizational effectiveness through empowered practices.

## CONCLUSION

The development of Organizational Empowerment (OE) has significantly advanced through the establishment of a nomological network by Zimmerman and Peterson (2004), with ongoing contributions from subsequent researchers further exploring the model. This literature review highlights the continuing evolution of OE and emphasizes that while progress has been made in some areas, much remains to be explored. In particular, further research is needed to delve deeper into the intraorganizational, interorganizational, and extraorganizational components of OE, as these areas are underexplored and present inherent complexities. These gaps in the literature are not only due to the challenging nature of these components but also the tendency of previous studies to overemphasize certain elements while neglecting others.

A major insight from the literature is the need for a balanced focus on both qualitative and quantitative research methods. While current studies have relied heavily on quantitative approaches, this has resulted in a limited understanding of how professionals achieve empowerment and the organizational factors that influence this process. Qualitative research, with its ability to provide in-depth insights into lived experiences, can reveal the nuances of how OE is enacted within organizations. It can also help address the abstract nature of the OE components and how they adapt to the dynamic and ever-changing nature of organizational environments. Moving forward, incorporating a wider range of methodologies will provide a richer, more holistic understanding of OE.

An important aspect of the OE model that requires further clarification is the concept of participation. While participation is recognized as a foundational element of empowerment, it is currently only implicitly addressed in the OE framework. More focused research is needed to examine how participation is integrated into the organizational empowerment process and how it influences empowerment at both the individual and organizational levels.

Furthermore, the existing OE model largely overlooks how organizations respond to institutional demands and shape new institutions to serve their interests. This gap is particularly relevant for extraorganizational empowerment, where organizations influence public policy and practice. However, there is little exploration of how organizations create or transform institutions to fulfill their goals. Incorporating insights from institutional theory can bridge this gap, enabling a deeper understanding of how organizations interact with their institutional environments and drive institutional change. This theoretical integration could significantly enrich the OE framework, providing a more comprehensive view of empowerment across different organizational levels.

In addition to enhancing the conceptual clarity of OE, research has also highlighted the importance of developing original outcomes related to the intraorganizational and interorganizational components. For example, team empowerment has emerged as a critical factor in promoting individual empowerment within organizations, and collaborative efforts to address institutional barriers are essential for strengthening team effectiveness. Moreover, the importance of diversity in management and access to information for professional empowerment has been reinforced. These findings emphasize the need for further research to examine the relationship between these components and to explore how factors such as social support and opportunity structure contribute to the overall empowerment process.

Research on interorganizational empowerment has also progressed, particularly regarding the role of collaboration and alliances between organizations. These alliances are essential for achieving collective goals and securing external resources, which contribute to organizational effectiveness. However, maintaining multiple relationships can be challenging, and factors such as leadership, coordination, and flexibility play a significant role in the success of these collaborations. Understanding the dynamics of interorganizational relationships will provide valuable insights into how organizations can leverage external networks for capacity building and achieve broader organizational goals.

The extraorganizational component of OE has seen developments in the context of community empowerment, particularly regarding how organizations influence public policy and drive community participation. While community leadership and activism play crucial roles in shaping public policy, there is a need to examine how organizational characteristics contribute to political influence, especially for low-income communities. Research into how organizational learning strategies impact community learning and transformation could also offer valuable insights into how organizations can help drive positive social change.

The updated version of the nomological network, as proposed in this paper, offers a comprehensive theoretical framework that reflects the latest research findings in the field of OE. By integrating these new insights, the framework addresses the complexities and challenges that have emerged in the study of OE and provides a clearer understanding of the interconnectedness between the different components. This updated network serves as a valuable tool for researchers seeking to further explore the processes and outcomes associated with OE, offering a more robust foundation for future studies.

Incorporating inductive research into the theoretical framework is another crucial step in advancing the study of OE. By focusing on the interconnectedness of the components and the outcomes they produce, this approach allows for a deeper understanding of how OE drives success within organizations. The proposed framework is designed to be adaptable to various organizational contexts, offering practical insights for both researchers and practitioners. It provides a structured approach to exploring the dynamics of empowerment and its role in achieving organizational goals, thereby fostering a more empowered and effective organizational culture.

The future of OE research depends on the continued refinement of its theoretical foundations and the development of new methodologies that can capture the complexities of organizational empowerment. By expanding the scope of research to include all components—both intraorganizational and interorganizational—the field can better address the challenges organizations face in fostering empowerment at all levels. Through a more comprehensive understanding of OE, organizations will be better equipped to create environments that promote empowerment, enhance organizational performance, and contribute to broader social and community development.

## Literature

1. Rappaport, J. (1987). Terms of empowerment/exemplars of prevention: Toward a theory for community psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 15(2), 121–148.
2. Solomon, B. (1976). *Black empowerment: Social work in oppressed communities*. Columbia University Press.
3. Rappaport, J. (1984). Studies in empowerment: Introduction to the issue. *Prevention in Human Services*, 3(2-3), 1–7.
4. Rappaport, J. (1981). In praise of paradox: A social policy of empowerment over prevention. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 9(1), 1–25.
5. Braithwaite, R. L., & Lythcott, N. (1989). Community empowerment as a strategy for health promotion for black and other minority populations. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 261(2), 282–283.

6. Itzhaky, H., & York, A. S. (2002). Showing results in community organization. *Social Work, 47*(2), 125–131.
7. Minkler, M., Wallerstein, N., & Wilson, N. (2001). Improving health through community organization and community building: A health education perspective. In M. Minkler (Ed.), *Community organizing and community building for health* (pp. 30–52). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
8. Perkins, D. D., & Zimmerman, M. A. (1995). Empowerment theory, research, and application. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 23*(5), 569–579.
9. Zimmerman, M. A. (2000). Empowerment theory: Psychological, organizational and community levels of analysis. In J. Rappaport & E. Seidman (Eds.), *Handbook of Community Psychology* (pp. 43–63). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
10. Cox, E. O. (2002). Empowerment as an intervention with near poor women. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 10*(2), 197–210.
11. Gutiérrez, L. M. (1995). Understanding the empowerment process: Does consciousness make a difference? *Social Work Research, 19*(4), 229–237. <https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/19.4.229>
12. Frymier, A. B., Shulman, G. M., & Houser, M. L. (1996). The development of a learner empowerment measure. *Communication Education, 45*(3), 181–199.
13. Segal, S. P., Silverman, C., & Temkin, T. (1995). Measuring empowerment in client-run self-help agencies. *Community Mental Health Journal, 31*(3), 215–227.
14. Speer, P. W. (2000). Intrapersonal and interactional empowerment: Implications for theory. *Journal of Community Psychology, 28*(1), 51–61.
15. Riger, S. (1993). What's wrong with empowerment. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 21*(3), 279–292.
16. Rappaport, J. (1995). Empowerment meets narrative: Listening to stories and creating settings. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 23*(5), 795–807.
17. Maton, K. I. (2008). Empowering community settings: Agents of individual development, community betterment, and positive social change. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 41*(1–2), 4–21.
18. Hughey, J., Speer, P. W., & Peterson, N. A. (2008). Sense of community in community organizations: Structure and evidence of validity. *Journal of Community Psychology, 36*(5), 610–621.
19. Forenza, B. (2016). Psychological empowerment: A study of youth in residential treatment. *Journal of Social Service Research, 42*(5), 724–737.
20. Forenza, B. (2017). Empowering processes in youth-adult partnerships: An analysis of multiple perspectives. *Journal of Community Psychology, 45*(5), 667–678.
21. Valsania, S. E., Moriano, J. A., & Molero, F. (2016). Authentic leadership and intrapreneurial behavior: Cross-level analysis of the mediator effect of organizational identification and empowerment. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal, 12*(1), 131–152.
22. Christens, B. D., & Lin, C. S. (2014). Influence of community and organizational participation, social support, and sense of community on psychological empowerment: A longitudinal multilevel study. *Journal of Community Psychology, 42*(5), 579–591.
23. Francescato, D., & Aber, M. S. (2015). Learning from organizational theory to build organizational empowerment. *Journal of Community Psychology, 43*(6), 717–738.
24. Rothman, L., & Vijlder, F. (2019). A systematic review on organizational empowerment. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis, 27*(5), 1336–1361. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-02-2019-1657>
25. Peterson, N. A. (2014). Empowerment theory: Clarifying the nature of higher-order multidimensional constructs. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 53*(1–2), 96–108. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-013-9612-1>
26. Edwards, J. R. (2001). Multidimensional constructs in organizational behavior research: An integrative analytical framework. *Organizational Research Methods, 4*(2), 144–192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/109442810142004>

27. MacKenzie, S. B., Podsakoff, P. M., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2005). The problem of measurement model misspecification in behavioral and organizational research and some recommended solutions. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 90*(4), 710–730. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.90.4.710>
28. Johnson, R. E., Rosen, C. C., & Chang, C. H. (2012). Recommendations for improving the construct clarity of higher-order multidimensional constructs. *Human Resource Management Review, 22*(1), 62–72. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2011.06.003>
29. Depauw, J., & Driessens, K. (2016). Empowerment bij sociaal werkers gemeten: Organisatorisch empowerment in kaart gebracht. *Vlas studies (33)*
30. Francescato, D., & Aber, M. S. (2015). Learning from organizational theory to build organizational empowerment. *Journal of Community Psychology, 43*(6), 717–731. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.21722>
31. Scott, W. R. (2008). *Institutions and organizations: Ideas and interests*. SAGE Publications.
32. Brodsky, A. E., & Cattaneo, L. B. (2013). A transconceptual model of empowerment and resilience: Divergence, convergence, and interactions in kindred community concepts. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 52*, 333–346. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-013-9599-x>
33. Zimmerman, M. A., & Peterson, N. A. (2004). A nomological network of organizational empowerment: Toward a comprehensive model. *Journal of Community Psychology, 32*(1), 29–50. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.10082>
34. Janssen, B. M., Meijboom, B. R., & Van der Meer, J. (2015). Working towards integrated community care for older people: Empowering organizational features from a professional perspective. *Health Policy, 119*(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthpol.2015.08.010>

## Organizaciono osnaživanje: Teorija i pravci istraživanja

**Rezime:** Organizaciono osnaživanje (OE) predstavlja ključnu oblast istraživanja koja prevazilazi analize na individualnom nivou kako bi ispitala strukturalne, proceduralne i systemske mehanizme koji unapređuju kolektivno delovanje. Dok su se rane studije prvenstveno fokusirale na psihološko osnaživanje, organizaciona dimenzija i dalje ostaje nedovoljno istražena, što zahteva razvoj snažnih konceptualnih okvira i alata za merenje na intraorganizacijskom, interorganizacijskom i ekstraorganizacijskom nivou. Međutim, ovo polje se suočava sa izazovima, uključujući dominaciju psihološkog osnaživanja, neujednačenu terminologiju i nedostatak empirijske validacije. Kako bi se ojačao teorijski i praktični uticaj OE, buduća istraživanja moraju unaprediti konceptualnu jasnoću, integrisati različite metodološke pristupe i osigurati njegovu ulogu kao transformativne sile u organizacionom i društvenom razvoju. U ovom radu analiziramo glavne teorije i koncepte, proširujući nomološku mrežu Petersona i Zimmermana i doprinosimo diskusiji o definisanju teorijskog i metodološkog pristupa zasnovanom na obimnom pretraživanju literature.

**Ključne reči:** organizaciono osnaživanje, teorija osnaživanja, konceptualni okviri, nomološka mreža, metodologija.