Meetings as a positive boost? How and when meeting satisfaction impacts employee empowerment

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ABSTRACT

Meetings constitute an important context for understanding organizational behavior and employee attitudes. Employees spend ever-increasing time in meetings and often complain about their meetings. In contrast, we explore the positive side of meetings and argue that satisfying meetings can empower rather than deplete individual employees. We gathered time-lagged data from an online sample of working adults in the U.S. As hypothesized, meeting satisfaction predicted employee empowerment, and information availability partially mediated this effect. Moreover, we found that these effects were stronger when employees participated in more meetings: Meeting demands moderated the link between meeting satisfaction and information availability as well as the positive, indirect effect of meeting satisfaction (through information availability) on psychological empowerment. Our findings underscore the relevance of workplace meetings for managing and promoting positive employee attitudes. We discuss implications for meeting science and the value of satisfying meetings as a managerial tool for promoting empowerment.

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1. Introduction

Meetings are an important context for understanding organizational behavior and employee attitudes. They provide a window into social dynamics in the workplace (Meinecke & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2015) and take up substantial work time for employees of contemporary organizations: a typical employee spends about 6 h per week in scheduled meetings (Rogelberg, Leach, Warr, & Burnfield, 2006). Meetings are defined as work-related interactions between three or more people that have purpose and structure; they are usually scheduled in advance, last between 30 and 60 min, and can be conducted face to face as well as virtually (Schwartzman, 1986; Rogelberg et al., 2006). Employees' behaviors and experiences in meetings can affect many different aspects of their jobs and also influence the general success of an organization (e.g., Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012; Rogelberg, Allen, Shanock, Scott, & Shuffler, 2010). Unfortunately, meetings can be a nuisance rather than a site for productive collaboration, and employees evaluate almost half of their meetings as ineffective (Lehmann-Willenbrock, Allen, & Belyeu, in press; Schell, 2010). In addition to wasting time and money, bad meetings negatively impact employee outcomes such as job satisfaction, co-worker trust, and other job attitudes as well as well-being (Luong & Rogelberg, 2005;

Rogelberg et al., 2006, 2010; Allen, Yoerger, Lehmann-Willenbrock, & Jones, 2015).

In this paper, we depart from this negative view and highlight the positive sides of workplace meetings. Instead of viewing meetings as hassles or interruptions at work, we argue that meetings can function as sensemaking episodes. Sensemaking in organizations occurs through interpersonal communication, for example when employees discuss a problem, develop solutions, and identify necessary action steps (e.g., Maitlis, 2006; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Such sensemaking activities are typically observed behaviors in many organizational meetings (cf. Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012). Recent theorizing suggests that sensemaking in meetings occurs because meetings are often called in an effort to share information, reduce ambiguity, and promote collaboration (Scott, Allen, & Rogelberg, 2015). As such, meetings can create a work context that can be conducive to employee empowerment.

Empowerment refers to a cognitive orientation toward an employee's own work role that is typically characterized by an individual's perceived sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Spreitzer, 1995). Although research on empowerment initially focused on individual differences as predictors of empowerment, more recently the focus has shifted toward contextual factors that relate to psychological empowerment (e.g., Seibert, Wang, & Courtright, 2011). When meetings go well, they can constitute one such contextual factor. Satisfying meetings can provide psychological resources to employees (Cohen, Rogelberg, Allen, & Luong, 2011), which suggests that

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satisfying meetings may contribute to individual psychological empowerment in the workplace.

Yet, the relationship between meeting satisfaction and psychological empowerment may hinge upon a number of underlying processes as well as contextual or boundary conditions. First, in terms of underlying processes, we focus on information availability—an important resource for communicating effectively during meetings (Tracy & Dimock, 2004) and a previously established antecedent of psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995). We argue that employees will be empowered through experiencing satisfying meetings in which information is readily available (mediating process). Second, in terms of boundary conditions, we focus on the salience of meetings, in terms of the level of an employee's experienced meeting demands. If employees regularly attend many meetings, then meetings may be a more salient part of their job and thus have a stronger impact on their attitude development in general (Rogelberg et al., 2010). Hence, we expect that high meeting salience, in terms of employees' regular experiences of high meeting demands in their work, will augment the positive effect of meeting satisfaction on empowerment.

Taken together, this study offers the following contributions. First, by linking employees' meeting satisfaction to psychological empowerment, we move beyond the view of meetings as negative events that interrupt work processes (Rogelberg et al., 2006). In particular, we build on the notion of meetings as sensemaking episodes in organizations (Scott et al., 2015) to develop our argument that satisfying meetings can foster employee empowerment. To substantiate this claim, we examine the effect of meeting satisfaction on psychological empowerment while controlling for previously studied predictors of empowerment, as well as individual differences. Second, we examine the role of information availability as a partial mediator within the relationship between meeting satisfaction and empowerment. Finally, we examine how employees' individual salience of meetings affects the relationship between their meeting satisfaction and psychological empowerment via information sharing (i.e., moderated mediation model). We discuss implications for meeting science and managerial implications for running empowering meetings.

2. Theory

2.1. Meeting satisfaction and empowerment

Meetings can have a profound impact on employee attitudes and well-being. Meeting satisfaction is a distinct facet of job satisfaction, defined as the experience of one's meetings being pleasant, enjoyable, or stimulating (Cohen et al., 2011; Rogelberg et al., 2010). Providing meeting participants with more positive and satisfying meeting experiences may create a lasting impact on the employee that stretches beyond the present meeting (Cohen et al., 2011; Rogelberg et al., 2010). When meetings go well, they can be similar to the contexts in which empowerment typically occurs. In the workplace context, psychological empowerment is defined as a set of motivational cognitions influenced by the work environment that reflect an individual's active orientation to his or her work role (Spreitzer, 1995). Psychological empowerment as intrinsic task motivation is manifested in four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Spreitzer, 1995). Meaning refers to the value of a work goal judged in terms of one's own beliefs, values or standards (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Competence is similar to self-efficacy in the sense that the individual believes that he or she has the capability to perform work activities successfully (Bandura, 1989). Self-determination is one's sense of choice regarding the initiation or regulation of one's activities and work methods (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989). Finally, impact is the degree to which the individual believes that he or she can influence strategic, administrative, or operational activities and outcomes in one's work unit (Ashforth & Meal, 1989). These four cognitions of psychological empowerment combine additively to form the overall definition of the construct (Seibert et al.,

2011; Spreitzer, 1995). Empowered employees will not wait passively for instructions but instead actively make changes and influence their work environment, which may lead to greater efficiency (Sigler & Pearson, 2000). Empowered employees perform better, they are more committed, and less likely to leave their organization (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004; Chen, Kirkman, Kanfer, Allen, & Rosen, 2007; Ertürk & Vurgun, 2015; Wall, Wood, & Leach, 2004). Psychological empowerment can also promote employee creativity by increasing intrinsic motivation and creative process engagement (Seibert et al., 2011).

Meetings are a place where employees share information, coordinate and plan future actions, deliberate, collaborate to solve problems, and make decisions (Tracy & Dimock, 2004). Moreover, meetings can play an important role for managing complexity and reducing ambiguity in contemporary organizational settings (Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008). Given their ubiquity in the workplace and their ability to facilitate sensemaking for employees (Scott et al., 2015), meetings may provide an environment to promote empowerment among employees. For example, Seibert et al. (2011) suggest that high-performance managerial practices such as open information sharing and participative decision making (which are often the functions of meetings) affect all four components of psychological empowerment. Seibert et al. (2011) also contend that socio-political support increases empowerment and refer to Spreitzer (1996) to define this type of support as the degree to which elements within the workplace setting provide an employee with various material, social, and psychological resources. Meetings provide psychological resources to employees because problems are solved and plans are made in meetings. This knowledge sharing resource, along with employee relationships, tasks, roles, and responsibilities are developed and sustained through interactions in meetings (Cohen et al., 2011). Thus, we assume that satisfying workplace meetings can promote psychological empowerment.

Hypothesis 1a. : Meeting satisfaction promotes psychological empowerment.

If satisfying meetings are indeed sensemaking episodes (Scott et al., 2015) that can empower employees, then satisfying meetings should create specific conditions or contextual characteristics that are conducive to employee empowerment. One such factor that has been identified as an antecedent of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995) and seems particularly relevant in terms of a meeting outcome concerns the extent to which employees feel well informed through meetings.

2.2. The role of information availability

Meetings are locations where resources are distributed as well as constrained (Allen & Rogelberg, 2013), thereby potentially empowering employees. In the context of meetings, a particularly important resource concerns the availability of information (e.g., Mesmer-Magnus & DeChurch, 2009). Meetings are ultimately communication situations in which managers and employees collaborate and share ideas and information (Tracy & Dimock, 2004). Moreover, information availability has been identified as an important antecedent of psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995). That is, when information is readily available to employees, employees will be empowered because it helps them do their jobs more effectively. Further, meetings that are satisfying likely provide the outcomes, such as needed information, that are necessary for empowerment. As such, the following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1b. : Meeting satisfaction is positively related to information availability.

Furthermore, information availability could mediate the relationship between meeting satisfaction and psychological empowerment. When a meeting goes well, this should not only leave participants satisfied but should also improve individual access to information. Employees who are satisfied with their meetings will likely experience that they

have the information they need to do their jobs well, which in turn could promote psychological empowerment. However, previous findings show that meeting satisfaction is a distinct component of job satisfaction (Rogelberg et al., 2010), such that we presume that meeting satisfaction will continue to predict psychological empowerment even after accounting for information availability. Meetings are held for many different purposes and different types of meetings may produce other outcomes that are potentially empowering (Allen, Beck, Scott, & Rogelberg, 2014). There may be other processes following satisfying meetings that could explain the link to empowerment (e.g., increased trust in other meeting attendees as a result of good meetings; cf. Kanagaretnam, Mestelman, Nainar, & Shehata, 2014). Thus, while we acknowledge the role of information availability in the meeting satisfaction—empowerment link, we only assume a partial mediation effect.

Hypothesis 2. : The relationship between meeting satisfaction and employee empowerment is partially mediated by information availability.

Nevertheless, there may be boundary conditions for the meeting satisfaction empowerment link. Although most employees of contemporary organizations participate in meetings (e.g., Allen, Lehmann-Willenbrock, & Rogelberg, 2015), the frequency of these meetings may determine whether meeting satisfaction can unfold its beneficial effects for individual empowerment or not. In other words, employees' individual meeting demands may drive the salience and the impact of satisfying meeting experiences.

2.3. Meeting demands as a moderator

Employees vary greatly on the number of meetings they attend at work (Luong & Rogelberg, 2005; Rogelberg et al., 2006). Meeting demands are typically defined as the number of meetings per week or the amount of time spent in meetings. Some employees may attend just one meeting a month while others consistently have over 30 meetings a week (Rogelberg et al., 2006). These differences in meeting demands have consequences for the salience of workplace meetings, in terms of representing more or less meaningful events that can trigger affective experiences and attitudinal outcomes. According to affective events theory (e.g., Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), work events—such as regular workplace meetings—can trigger momentary affective experiences. Such positive or negative affective experiences, along with employees' cognitive appraisal of these experiences, can in turn affect overall job attitudes (Diefendorff, Richard, & Yang, 2008; Fisher, 2002).

Consistent with affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) as well as job strain theory (e.g., Karasek, 1979), we expect that high meeting demands will place a greater emphasis on meetings as an antecedent to employee empowerment. In other words, if employees regularly attend many workplace meetings (i.e., high meeting demands), then positive affective experiences resulting from those meetings (i.e., meeting satisfaction) will more likely lead to empowerment. In line with these theoretical considerations, previous findings suggest that meeting demands can affect employees' feelings about meetings (Romano & Nunamaker, 2001). Moreover, previous research shows that meeting demands can moderate the relationship between meeting satisfaction and job satisfaction, such that the relationship between meeting satisfaction and job satisfaction is stronger when employees report a high rather than low meeting demands (i.e., when they participate in a larger number of meetings; Rogelberg et al., 2010).

Taken together, in the context of meeting satisfaction as a promoter of empowerment, we anticipate that meeting demands may serve as a boundary condition that can determine the extent to which meeting satisfaction will have a meaningful impact on employees' experiences and attitudes at work. Specifically, whether or not employees will experience higher information availability at work based on having satisfying meetings may be driven by the extent to which meetings are a salient feature of their work. In other words, meeting demands could moderate the relationship between meeting satisfaction and information availability. We hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3a. : Meeting demands moderate the link between meeting satisfaction and information availability, such that the positive relationship is stronger when meeting demands are high and weaker when meeting demands are low.

Similarly, we expect that meeting demands can function as a boundary condition for the link between having satisfying meetings and feeling empowered. In fact, recent research suggests that managers who run their meeting effectively can engage their employees and by extension, if employees have more meetings that have these qualities, then job attitudes such as psychological empowerment may also be enhanced (Allen & Rogelberg, 2013). This line of reasoning suggests that high meeting demands may strengthen the meeting satisfaction—empowerment relationship, whereas low meeting demands could weaken this relationship. Moreover, given our earlier argument concerning the mediating role of information availability, meeting demand also needs to be considered as a boundary condition or moderator variable in the context of our hypothesized indirect effect of meeting satisfaction on individual employee empowerment via information availability. Our final hypothesis thus posits:

Hypothesis 3b. : Meeting demands moderate the positive, indirect effect of meeting satisfaction (through information availability) on psychological empowerment, such that the indirect effect is stronger at higher levels of meeting demands.

Fig. 1 shows the proposed moderated mediation model for the four hypotheses described above.

3. Method

3.1. Sample and procedure

Participants were recruited through a university alumni group email list in the Southeastern United States. They worked in a wide variety of organizations in the Southeast region of the United States. After pilot testing the survey measures, we administered two online surveys. A pre-notification email was sent to the panel of employed adults from across the Southeast United States. Then a second invitation email was sent giving the participants access to the link for the first survey. A total of 248 individuals (8% response rate) completed the first survey. After one reminder email, a second survey was sent via email two weeks later to assess the main outcome variable, empowerment. This survey was only sent to the participants who had completed the initial survey. Of the 248 participants who completed the first survey, 59% ($N = 148$) completed the second survey. By using a time-lag two-survey design, we follow current convention and recommendations for avoiding common method bias concerns (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003; Conway & Lance, 2010). The final usable sample included 148 individuals and about half (48%) of the participants were male. Their ages ranged from 24 years to 65 years with a mean age of
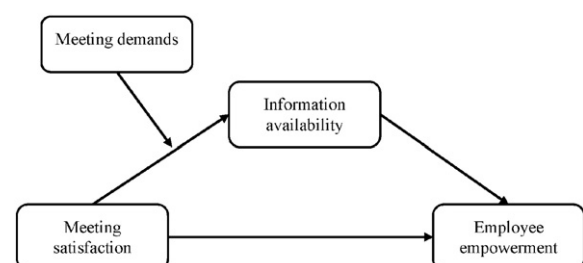

Fig. 1. Hypothesized moderated mediation model.

42 years. 46.2% worked at the employee associate level, while 44.9% were supervisors, managers, or directors. The remaining 8.5% were at the senior/top management level. Participants' mean tenure with their organization was 10.39 years, ranging from less than one year to 39 years. The majority of participants (77%) reported working 40 h per week or more; 19.5% reported working between 36 and 40 h per week; and the remaining 3.5% reported working between 21 and 35 h per week on average. Of the organizations represented by the participants, 37.7% were in the public sector, 24.6% were privately held, for profit, not quoted on the stock exchange; 25.4% were publicly traded, for profit, quoted on the stock exchange; and 11% were private, not for profit. In terms of meetings led, 71% of participants led less than 40% of their meetings while only 1.4% led all of their meetings.

The response rate was lower than desirable, however the email list administrators indicated that at least 50% of the emails are not checked frequently. To ensure that our results were not simply an artifact of the low response rate, we first conducted an interest-level analysis comparing participants who completed the first survey but not the second survey with those who completed both surveys. Survey results may be biased because more interested individuals tend to respond more readily (Rogelberg & Stanton, 2007). Means and standard deviations on the focal variables were nearly identical across these groups, and t-tests showed no significant mean differences across these two groups on meeting satisfaction, meeting demand, and information availability ($t = -1.84$, $.51$, -1.07, respectively, $p > .05$). Second, we compared the first 124 respondents by day and time to later respondents. These subgroups also did not differ on the key variables (i.e., meeting satisfaction, meeting demand, and information availability; $t = -.92$, $.46$, -1.45, respectively, $p > .05$). Based on these analyses, nonresponse bias could be ruled out.

3.2. Measures

All of the following measures were obtained during the first survey (t1), except empowerment, which was measured at t2. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each item on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Psychological empowerment was measured with the 12-item scale by Spreitzer (1995). This scale comprises four subscales: meaning (e.g., "The work I do is meaningful to me"), competence (e.g., "I am confident about my ability to do my job"), self-determination (e.g., "I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work"), and impact (e.g., "My impact on what happens in my department is large"). Meeting satisfaction was assessed with eight items (Briggs, Reinig, & De Vreede, 2006) such as "I feel satisfied with the way in which my work meetings are conducted" or "I like the outcomes of my workplace meetings". Information availability was measured with three items (Spreitzer, 1995) concerning the extent to which participants agreed that they had access to the strategic information necessary to do their jobs well, understood top management's vision of the organization and also comprehended the organization's goals. Although Spreitzer's original measure included a second part for information focused on performance, the context under investigation (i.e. workplace meetings) does not overtly apply to this form of information access. Thus, only the items pertaining to access relative to mission were included. Meeting demands was assessed by one item ("On average, how many meetings do you attend in a typical week?"; from 0 to more than 10) used by Rogelberg et al. (2006, 2010), who found that assessing the number of meetings, opposed to the amount of time spent in meetings, is a more meaningful indicator of meeting demand.

3.3. Control variables

If the relationship between meeting satisfaction and empowerment is meaningful, it should persist after statistically controlling for previously established predictors of empowerment. We controlled for individual self-esteem, locus of control, and rewards, all of which have been positively linked to psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995). Self-esteem was measured using six items (Bachman, O'Malley, Freedman-Doan, Trzesniewski, & Donnellan, 2011), for example, "I feel I have a lot to be proud of". Locus of control was measured with four items adapted from Rotter (1966), for example, "Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partly due to bad luck". Rewards were measured using three items concerning the extent to which the individual's overall pay, pay level and raises or bonuses depended on their individual performance (Spreitzer, 1995). All responses were made on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

Finally, we gathered demographic information on participants' age, gender, education level, organizational tenure, supervisor status, how many hours they worked on average, job level, and the type of organization they worked for. Following recommendations by Becker (2005), we only controlled for those variables that were related to both the predictor and outcome variable, which was the case for supervisor status, tenure, and job level.

4. Results

Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics, correlations, and scale reliabilities for the principal variables. The correlations appear to be in the direction that we anticipated.

4.1. Linking meeting satisfaction to psychological empowerment and information availability

A regression analysis was used to test the relationship between meeting satisfaction and psychological empowerment, while controlling for demographic variables (i.e., organizational tenure and supervisor status) as well as three previously studied predictors of psychological empowerment (i.e., individual self-esteem, locus of control, and rewards). In step 1 we entered the control variables, in step 2 we entered the three predictors of psychological empowerment, and in step 3 we entered meeting satisfaction, testing if it is related to empowerment beyond the control variables (see Table 2).

First, in step 1, the demographic control variables accounted for a significant portion of the variance in empowerment ($R^2 = .19$, $p < .05$). Next, as a group, the three predictors to empowerment explained a significant portion of the variance in empowerment ($\Delta R^2 = .13$, $p < .05$). However, only self-esteem showed a significant effect ($\beta = .36$, $p < .05$). In step 3, we saw that meeting satisfaction predicted psychological empowerment even after controlling for the previous predictors ($\beta = .37$, $\Delta R^2 = .11$, $p < .05$). This finding supports Hypothesis 1a.

In addition, a regression analysis was used to test the relationship between meeting satisfaction and information availability, while controlling for demographic variables (i.e., organizational tenure and supervisor status) as well as the other predictors of psychological empowerment (i.e., individual self-esteem, locus of control, and rewards). In step 1 we entered the control variables, in step 2 we entered the three predictors of psychological empowerment, and in step 3 we entered meeting satisfaction, testing if it is related to empowerment beyond the control variables (see Table 3).

First, in step 1, the demographic control variables accounted for a significant portion of the variance in empowerment ($R^2 = .05$, $p < .05$). Next, as a group, the three predictors to empowerment explained a significant portion of the variance in empowerment ($\Delta R^2 = .09$, $p < .05$). However, only self-esteem showed a significant effect ($\beta = .44$, $p < .05$). In step 3, we saw that meeting satisfaction predicted information availability even after controlling for the previous predictors ($\beta = .63$, $\Delta R^2 = .32$, $p < .05$). This finding supports Hypothesis 1b.

Table 1
Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of all measures.

	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.
1. Meeting satisfaction	3.21	.79	(.97)												
2. Empowerment	3.96	.57	.48*	(.86)											
3. Meeting demands	4.94	3.06	.07	.07											
4. Information availability	3.64	1.00	.64*	.54*	.05	(.88)									
5. Rewards	2.77	1.24	.21*	.11	.17*	.15*	(.91)								
6. Self-esteem	4.38	.56	.15*	.38*	.06	.22*	−.08	(.93)							
7. Locus of control	2.77	.44	.07	−.04	.04	.06	.08	−.02	(.72)						
8. Tenure	10.39	8.91	.26*	.24*	.14*	.18*	.12	.04	.06						
9. Supervise[a]	1.49	.50	−.18*	−.36*	−.27*	−.10	−.06	−.10	−.08	−.22*					
10. Age	41.93	10.8	.12	.29*	.09	.00	.17*	.09	.11	.64*	−.24*				
11. Gender[a]	1.51	.50	.04	.04	−.11	.13*	.01	.02	.02	.07	.02	−.06			
12. Education	5.09	.96	.05	.22*	.17*	.19*	.01	.11	−.15*	.28*	.10				
13. Job level	2.20	1.30	.27*	.40*	.39*	.15*	.25*	.09	.03	.23*	−.62*	.29*	.00	.20*	
14. Hours	8.73	.58	−.08	.10	.18*	−.09	.08	.02	.02	.11	−.21*	.17*	−.08	.12	.26*

Notes. Diagonal values in parentheses show internal consistency estimates for each scale, where applicable. $N = 148$.

[a] All correlations with these variables are point-biserial.

* $p < .05$ (2-tailed).

4.2. Partial mediation via information availability

Finding that the initial hypothesis was supported provides preliminary support for the assumption in H2 (MacKinnon, Cheong, & Pirlott, 2012). An additional step in the regression analysis (see step 4 in Table 2) showed that the beta weight for the relationship between meeting satisfaction to empowerment reduced significantly when we introduced information availability into the model. The indirect effects of meetings satisfaction on empowerment through information availability were tested using bootstrapping methods developed by Preacher and Hayes (2008). Using 5000 bootstrap samples, indirect effects estimates were computed along with 95% confidence intervals around the estimates. The indirect effect was significant ($\beta = .37$, $SE = .05$, Lower $= .08$ and Upper $= .29$, $p < .05$), which provides support for Hypothesis 2.

4.3. Tests of moderated mediation

Table 4 summarizes the regression results concerning the interaction of meeting satisfaction and meeting demand on empowerment ($B = .05$, $t = 2.03$, $p < .05$).

Fig. 2 illustrates the identified moderating effect of meeting demands on meeting satisfaction and information availability.

Indeed, the relationship between meeting satisfaction and information availability was stronger and in the proposed direction (i.e., positive) at higher levels of meeting demands, supporting Hypothesis 3a.

Following procedures developed by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007), we tested Hypothesis 3b by examining the conditional indirect effect of meeting satisfaction on empowerment through information availability at three values of meeting demands: the mean and ± 1 SD from the mean (see Table 4). All three conditional indirect effects

Table 2
Regression of meeting satisfaction to empowerment relationship and summary illustrating the partial mediation effect of information availability.

Model	Empowerment				
	R^2	ΔR^2	B	SE B	β
Step 1: Control	.19*	.19*			
Intercept			3.74*	.26	
Tenure			.01*	.00	.17*
Supervise			−.10	.12	−.09
Job level			.13*	.05	.29*
Step 2: Predictor controls	.32*	.13*			
Intercept			2.24*	.50	
Tenure			.01*	.00	.17*
Supervise			−.08	.11	−.08
Job level			.10*	.04	.23*
Rewards			.04	.03	.08
Self-esteem			.35*	.07	.36*
Locus of control			−.04	.09	−.04
Step 3: Main effect	.43*	.11*			
Intercept			2.06*	.46	
Tenure			.01	.00	.09
Supervise			−.15	.10	−.14
Job level			.06	.04	.13
Rewards			.00	.03	.00
Self-esteem			.28*	.07	.29*
Locus of control			−.04	.08	−.03
Meeting satisfaction			.25*	.06	.37*
Step 4: Partial mediation effect	.46*	.03*			
Intercept			2.16*	.42	
Tenure			.01	.00	.09
Supervise			−.15	.10	−.14
Job level			.07	.04	.15
Rewards			−.00	.03	−.02
Self-esteem			.23*	.07	.25*
Locus of control			−.04	.08	−.04
Meeting satisfaction			.15*	.06	.22*
Information			.13*	.05	.25*

Notes. $N = 148$. All coefficients are reported for the final step.

* $p < .05$.

Table 3
Regression of meeting satisfaction to information availability.

Model	Information availability				
	R^2	ΔR^2	B	SE B	β
Step 1: Control	.05*	.05*			
Intercept			3.00*	.39	
Tenure			.02*	.00	.16*
Supervise			.15	.17	.07
Job level			.11	.07	.15
Step 2: Predictor controls	.14*	.09*			
Intercept			.62	.50	
Tenure			.01*	.00	.13*
Supervise			.12	.17	.06
Job level			.06	.07	.07
Rewards			.16*	.05	.20*
Self-esteem			.44*	.12	.25*
Locus of control			.07	.15	.03
Step 3: Main effect	.46*	.32*			
Intercept			−.34	.63	
Tenure			.00	.00	.02
Supervise			.09	.13	.05
Job level			−.04	.05	−.05
Rewards			.07	.04	.09
Self-esteem			.27*	.09	.15*
Locus of control			.02	.12	.10
Meeting satisfaction			.75*	.06	.62*

Notes. $N = 148$. All coefficients are reported for the final step.

* $p < .05$.

Table 4
Regression summary for the moderated mediation effect.

Predictor	B	SE B	t	p
Information availability				
Constant	1.86	.67	2.75	.00
Tenure	.00	.00	.21	.83
Supervise	.00	.19	.01	.98
Job level	−.02	.08	−.27	.78
Meeting satisfaction	.58*	.16	3.50	.00
Meeting demands	−.18*	.09	−2.08	.04
MS × MD	.05*	.02	2.03	.04
Empowerment				
Constant	3.45	.37	9.12	.00
Tenure	.00	.00	.97	.33
Supervise	−.17	.10	−1.73	.08
Job level	.08*	.04	2.06	.04
Meeting satisfaction	.02	.09	.21	.83
Meeting demands	−.09	.04	−1.93	.06
MS × MD	.02	.01	1.61	.10
Information availability	.16*	.05	3.27	.00

| Meeting demands	Boot indirect effect	Boot SE	Boot z	Boot p
−1 SD (2.21)	.11*	.04	2.81	.00
M (5.33)	.14*	.05	3.07	.00
+1 SD (8.45)	.17*	.06	3.01	.00

Notes. $N = 148$. All coefficients are reported for the final step. MS = meeting satisfaction. MD = meeting demands.
* $p < .05$.

were positive and significantly different from zero. Bootstrapped CIs confirmed these results. Therefore, the indirect effect of meeting satisfaction on empowerment through information availability existed at all observed levels of meeting demands and the relationship was stronger at higher levels of meeting demands. Hypothesis 3b was supported.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Meetings take up substantial work time for employees of contemporary organizations and can substantially impact employee attitudes and performance outcomes (Allen & Rogelberg, 2013; Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012; Rogelberg et al., 2010). This study promotes a positive perspective of workplace meetings: Rather than viewing meetings as a nuisance or a waste of time (e.g., Rogelberg et al., 2006), our findings showcase that meetings have the potential to create positive boosts for employee empowerment. Building on the idea that meetings can function as sensemaking episodes in organizations, we argued that satisfying meetings can create conditions such as improved access to information that foster employee empowerment.

First, we found that employees' meeting satisfaction was indeed linked to information availability and their psychological empowerment, even after controlling for previously studied predictors of
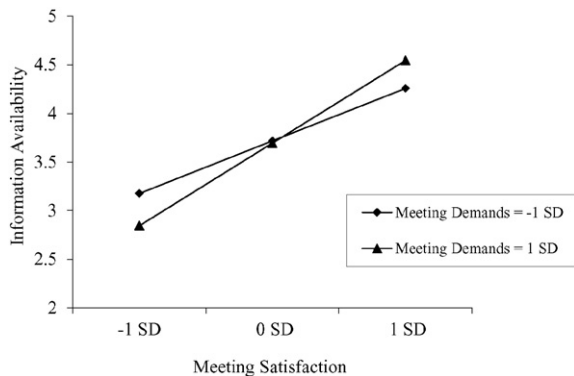
Fig. 2. Moderating effects of meeting demands on meeting satisfaction and information availability.

empowerment (rewards, self-esteem, and locus of control; see Spreitzer, 1995). This finding lends support to our argument that meetings can serve as sensemaking episodes for employees, in line with recent theorizing (Scott et al., 2015).

Second, we hypothesized and found that information availability partially mediated the empowering effects of satisfying meetings. Employees who experienced satisfying meetings were more likely to report that they felt they had all the information necessary to accomplish their work tasks, which promoted a sense of empowerment. Although this mediating effect was only partial and several additional mediators are plausible, this finding highlights the importance of information availability as a result of satisfying meetings.

Third, we found that meeting demands moderated the relationship between meeting satisfaction and information availability, such that the positive relationship between meeting satisfaction and information availability was stronger at higher levels of meeting demands. In essence, this finding suggests that when employees attend a lot of meetings as part of their work, the extent of their meeting satisfaction can enable or constrain (in the case of meeting dissatisfaction) the availability of necessary information. Further, meeting demands also moderated the positive, indirect effect of meeting satisfaction on psychological empowerment through information availability such that the effect was stronger at higher levels of meeting demands (see Table 3). Thus, our findings suggest that the positive boost of meetings on employee empowerment depends both upon whether or not those meetings are satisfying and whether they happen at a high enough frequency to make them a salient part of employees' workplace experience.

5.1. Implications for research

The present findings provide several theoretical implications. Moving away from meetings as an annoyance or disruption at work, we built on the notion of meetings as sensemaking episodes in organizations to argue that satisfying meetings can be sources of empowerment. Our finding that satisfying meetings can meaningfully add to individual employee empowerment underscores this theoretical claim and aligns with a small but growing research base on the positive sides of workplace meeting experiences (e.g., Allen & Rogelberg, 2013; Lehmann-Willenbrock, Meyers, Kauffeld, Neininger, & Henschel, 2011; Lehmann-Willenbrock & Allen, 2014). Future research should continue to investigate meetings as a positive boost, but perhaps focus on the behaviors that attendees and meeting leaders engage in that help maintain satisfying meetings.

Second, this study adds to our theoretical understanding of the contextual (rather than individual) drivers of psychological empowerment. Previous research has identified high-performance managerial practices, socio-political support, positive leadership, and work design characteristics as contextual factors promoting empowerment (Seibert et al., 2011). By considering meetings as a previously unstudied contextual predictor of individual empowerment in the workplace, this study broadens our understanding of psychological empowerment and expands the nomological network surrounding the empowerment construct. It should be noted that this study focused on individual perceptions of meetings (i.e., individual meeting satisfaction) as a contextual driver of psychological empowerment. Future research could build upon this and investigate more objective contextual drivers related to meetings, such as behavioral team meeting processes and outcomes (cf. Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012).

Finally, this study illustrates the importance of studying meetings as more than just a byproduct of organizing, but rather a meaningful characteristic of many jobs (Schwartzman, 1986). In particular, our results show that meetings offer a context in which employees can gain access to information they need thereby increasing empowerment. Recent findings show that what happens in meetings has a considerable impact not only on meeting satisfaction, but also on productivity and organizational effectiveness (Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012). The

present findings align with this idea by showing that employee empowerment can be significantly elevated when employees have frequent and positive meeting experiences. Future research should investigate other important outcomes of frequent and positive meeting experiences such as employee engagement, team performance, and so on.

5.2. Limitations and future directions

First, a common limitation of any survey research concerns common method bias. However, this limitation can be mitigated by the use of a time-lag technique (Podsakoff et al., 2003). We assessed the primary predictor and criterion variables on separate surveys with a brief time interval. We also included the psychological empowerment predictor control variables on the same survey as our measure of meeting satisfaction, thus making our test slightly more conservative if common method bias is present.

Second, participant recruitment via the alumni email list resulted in a low response rate, partly because the list was dated and many of the email addresses were no longer active. We addressed this concern by following recommendations by Rogelberg and Stanton (2007). However, our method of recruitment still limited the generalizability of our findings, as our sample primarily consisted of Caucasian adults with college degrees working in the U.S. Recent research shows that the behavioral processes during meetings differ substantially across cultures (Lehmann-Willenbrock, Allen, & Meinecke, 2014). The resulting meeting experiences will likely differ, potentially resulting in cross-cultural differences in the meeting satisfaction—empowerment link. Future research should obtain a more diverse sample to test these possibilities.

Third, there are a variety of previously studied contextual predictors to psychological empowerment. For reasons of feasibility, we only controlled for a few of these (Spreitzer, 2007). However, future research on the empowering potential of meetings should particularly consider other theoretically relevant contextual factors that could affect perceived meeting quality and meeting satisfaction. Such factors may include whether the meeting is virtual or face-to-face, structured around an agenda or free flowing, or whether a meeting has mainly informational or problem-solving purposes (Cohen et al., 2011).

Fourth, we asked employees to reflect on their meeting experiences at work in general, which aligns with previous research on meeting satisfaction (e.g., Rogelberg et al., 2010). However, this measurement approach does not account for the possibility that employees' meeting experiences can fluctuate over the course of a work week, with some meetings being satisfying and others potentially rather unsatisfying. Such fluctuations in meeting satisfaction could then trigger changes in psychological empowerment over time. Future research could pursue this idea, for example by means of a diary-study design.

Fifth, even with a time-lagged criterion variable, the current study and data structure do not allow for causal inferences. For example, it is also conceivable that empowered employees may have more satisfying meetings because they engage in their meetings more fully, participate in decision making, and thereby gain access to the information they need. When employees experience self-determination and competence in the meeting process, they will probably feel more satisfied with the meeting overall. In line with this notion, earlier findings by Seibert et al. (2011) suggest that empowerment leads to satisfaction. Considering our findings in concert with these earlier insights, we might expect a feedback loop similar to the input-mediator-output–input model discussed in the teams' literature (e.g., Ilgen, Hollenbeck, Johnson, & Jundt, 2005). This would suggest an additional line in our model linking empowerment back to meeting satisfaction. Because our data were time-lagged, it was neither plausible to test such a feedback loop nor would it conform to the assumptions of chronology (i.e., meeting satisfaction measured first and then empowerment). Future research using a times-series approach could test such an input-mediator-output–input model for meetings and employee empowerment.

Finally, future research should also tap into the actual processes inside the meeting that create meeting satisfaction and thereby contribute to individual empowerment. Previous research on team meeting interactions has shown that behaviors such as coming up with new ideas or action planning correlate positively with meeting satisfaction (Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock). However, we have yet to understand which of these behaviors actually relate to individual empowerment beyond the meeting context. By showing that meetings—a group context—meaningfully relate to individual empowerment, and by identifying the mediating mechanisms within this relationship, our current findings have paved the way for these future endeavors.

5.3. Implications for practice

To reap the benefit of satisfying meetings for employee empowerment, managers may simply ask their employees about their overt feelings about their meetings (Allen et al., 2012). Moreover, meeting satisfaction can be promoted by adopting best practices for meeting management, such as using an agenda, sticking to that agenda, limiting the time spent in the meeting, and considering calling fewer meetings in general (Cohen et al., 2011). Additionally, managerial training on specific meeting facilitation skills such as appropriate planning of a meeting, proper agenda usage, active listening, and constructive conflict resolution may be useful (Tracy & Dimock, 2004; Perkins, 2009). Finally, team members themselves can facilitate productive meetings in order to promote meeting satisfaction (Lehmann-Willenbrock, Allen, & Kauffeld, 2013) and benefit from the positive boost for their empowerment.

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