

Original article

Social Representation: perceived identity on empowerment in state and non-state sector workers



Representación Social: identidad percibida sobre el empoderamiento en trabajadores del sector estatal y no estatal

Representação social: identidade percebida no empoderamento de trabalhadores do setor estatal e não estatal

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ABSTRACT

Empowerment in labor organizations is a learning process based on the participation, autonomy and assumption of power by workers. Knowing how the subjects think about empowerment is the starting point for understanding how they subjectivize this phenomenon at the group level in organizations, which serves as a strategy for transformation in the management of managers. For this purpose, the theory of Social Representations, which theoretical and methodological flexibility allows explaining dissimilar social phenomena, is taken as a reference. The objective of this study is to characterize this representation in its dimensions, information, attitudes and field, in a group of workers of the state and non-state sector of the economy in Cuba. The research is based on a mixed methodology, sequential explanatory, quantitative and quantitative, by means of multiple case studies, with a non-probabilistic sample of typical subjects. A questionnaire, semantic differential, drawing and free composition were used as instruments, which allowed characterizing the level of information,

attitudes and the representational field of the sample. In both sectors, the core of representation is associated with the term power, and specifically in the state sector, participation is added. The attitude towards the term is favorable, although direct experience in the organization degrades its intensity, as it is not frequently used as a management strategy.

Keywords: empowerment; social representation; state and non-state sector.

RESUMEN

El empoderamiento en las organizaciones laborales constituye un proceso de aprendizaje que se sustenta en la participación, autonomía y asunción de poder de los trabajadores. Conocer cómo los sujetos piensan el empoderamiento, constituye el punto de partida para comprender cómo subjetivan este fenómeno a nivel de grupo en las organizaciones, lo que sirve como estrategia de transformación en la gestión de los directivos. Para ello se toma como referente la teoría de las Representaciones Sociales, cuya flexibilidad teórica y metodológica permite explicar disímiles fenómenos sociales. El objetivo de este estudio es caracterizar dicha representación en sus dimensiones, información, actitudes y campo, en un grupo de trabajadores del sector estatal y no estatal de la economía en Cuba. La investigación se sustenta en una metodología mixta, explicativa secuencial cuan-cuali mediante estudios de casos múltiples, con una muestra no probabilística de sujetos tipo. Se utilizaron como instrumentos un cuestionario, diferencial semántico, el dibujo y la composición libre, lo que permitió caracterizar el nivel de información, las actitudes y el campo representacional de la muestra. En ambos sectores se constata que el núcleo de la representación es asociado al término poder y específicamente en el sector estatal se añade participación. La actitud asumida hacia el vocablo es favorable, aunque la experiencia directa en la organización degrada su intensidad, al no ser empleado con frecuencia como estrategia de dirección.

Palabras clave: empoderamiento; representación social; sector estatal y no estatal.

RESUMO

O empoderamento nas organizações trabalhistas é um processo de aprendizagem baseado na participação, na autonomia e na assunção de poder por parte dos trabalhadores. Saber como os sujeitos pensam sobre o empoderamento é o ponto de partida para entender como eles subjetivam

esse fenômeno no nível do grupo nas organizações, o que serve como estratégia de transformação na gestão dos gerentes. Para tanto, toma-se como ponto de referência a teoria das Representações Sociais, cuja flexibilidade teórica e metodológica permite explicar diferentes fenômenos sociais. O objetivo deste estudo é caracterizar essa representação em suas dimensões, informações, atitudes e campo, em um grupo de trabalhadores dos setores estatal e não estatal da economia em Cuba. A pesquisa se baseia em uma metodologia explicativa mista, quanti-quantitativa e sequencial, utilizando estudos de casos múltiplos, com uma amostra não probabilística de sujeitos típicos. Os instrumentos utilizados foram um questionário, diferencial semântico, desenho e composição livre, que permitiram caracterizar o nível de informação, as atitudes e o campo representacional da amostra. Em ambos os setores, o núcleo da representação está associado ao termo poder e, especificamente no setor estatal, acrescenta-se a participação. A atitude em relação ao termo é favorável, embora a experiência direta na organização diminua sua intensidade, pois não é usada com frequência como estratégia de gestão.

Palavras-chave: empoderamento; representação social; setor estatal e não estatal.

INTRODUCTION

The idea that today's world is constantly undergoing profound changes is increasingly advocated in contemporary scientific literature. These transformations are of various kinds: technological, economic, political and social. Labor organizations have not been unaffected by these changes and have had to adopt new philosophies, strategies, techniques and tools.

In order to contribute to the successful management of these processes, the research presented here proposes a methodological alternative for the evaluation and development of the culture of empowerment (central concept of the research, which conceives empowerment as a management strategy based on the empowerment of employees, where it is recognized that there is a facilitating scenario and it is that culture that promotes successful performance and teamwork) (Blanco García & Moros Fernández, 2019).

In this sense, it is bet to organizational development as a support for society, where people are active and self-managing subjects of participation. Accordingly, it is necessary to redesign new proposals

that open dialogue to contribute to the promotion of more committed and self-realized individuals within labor institutions.

According to Aragón and Bretones (2020), many organizations use empowerment as an alternative to face the scenarios described above. Therefore, detecting and implementing the characteristics of empowerment in the subjects of an organization is feasible, since it favors the origin of a trend that encourages the participation of workers, contributes to autonomy and reformulates the vision, the approach and the decision-making process in the workplace, which favors personal and professional growth.

Empowerment as a management strategy

Empowerment is a process of management techniques that since the end of the last decade and the beginning of the current one has been applied and perfected worldwide, in leading countries in the field of business administration and management.

According to the ideas shared by González González et al. (2019) the advantages of applying this approach are synthesized in table 1.

Table 1. Advantages of applying empowerment in labor organizations.

Person	Organization
Creativity is manifested on a larger scale, decreasing resistance to change.	Shared leadership, where the members of the organization contribute to the final objective.
Provides autonomy, empowered to perform delegated functions without the need for extensive supervision.	It is a mediator to eliminate bureaucracy.
Increase of responsibility and commitment.	Satisfaction and credibility of the people who make up the organization.
Increased motivation to collaborate, take risks and assume responsibilities.	Quality in communication and interpersonal relationships.

<p>The role occupied within the organization is known and each contribution is valued.</p>	<p>Processes are streamlined for more timely and efficient decision making.</p>
<p>Teamwork and development of knowledge and skills.</p>	<p>It favors productivity and customer service. It favors the capacity to adapt to change in two senses, adaptation of the organization to the changes of the environment and of the workers to the organizational changes.</p>

Source: Own elaboration

To the above, Arreola Bravo et al. (2020) add as advantages of empowerment:

- The responsibility assumed by the workers for decision making, always linked to the activity they perform, where each member of the organization feels that he/she is supported, giving him/her a sense of belonging.
- Working with teams that are flexible to change and take risks, with the power to do so according to their professional judgment, skills and knowledge.
- Promotes innovation, trust, commitment, unity, internal locus of control to drive continuous change, maintain competence, optimism, creativity and collaboration.
- This type of culture works on the four pillars of empowerment: Power, Motivation, Development and Leadership.
- It has been found to improve the quality and productivity of employees, making the result better because it has been carried out in a satisfactory manner.

Therefore, conceiving organizations from this point of view and applying them in the Cuban business context is a necessity, not only for state management forms, but also for non-state and mixed ones, which every day demand more in-depth study.

According to Blanco García and Moros Fernández (2019), three types of empowerment are considered, divided methodologically into: *Structuralist*, *Psychological* and *Integrationist*, resulting from the historical evolution that the constructor has had and the different positions from which the experts have positioned themselves.

The model to which this research is ascribed is that of psychological empowerment, which means having sufficiency and mastery of the activity being performed; this implies knowing the meaning of the work activity, which has an effect that impacts on oneself and on the organization.

Cuba is immersed in a process of reordering its economic model that implies an organizational change in its labor dynamics. Global phenomena such as subcontracting, outsourcing of professional services, informal work and offshoring are being transferred to organizations (Medina Macías et al., 2020). For their part, Blanco Rosales and Anaya Cruz (2021) reinforce these ideas and state that in the country the situations of change are accompanied by a scenario of poor economic growth, with the need to improve the performance of state enterprises, predominance of economic methods over administrative ones in the conduct of the economy, macroeconomic distortions, deformations in the productive structure and foreign trade and promotion of private economic actors (Small and Medium Enterprises) and cooperatives, in addition, work is being done to increase productivity and work incentives.

In this sense, these authors refer that the non-state sector is heterogeneous in Cuba, mainly because of the type of actor and the activity to which it is dedicated, the scale on which it is carried out and the market to which it is directed. This includes cooperatives (agricultural and non-agricultural), self-employed workers (owners and employees), peasants and other private actors. In this sense, Blanco Rosales and Anaya Cruz (2021) consider measures aimed at expanding the state sector and the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises to be opportune.

Several Cuban authors (Blanco, 2020; Pérez Vallejo et al., 2016) consider that the greatest challenge in Cuba lies in maintaining motivation and involvement of those involved in the implementation of strategies, leadership and an organizational culture consistent with the measures to be executed, efficient organizational structures, timely allocation of resources and the necessary efficiency in communication and information systems.

This reality makes to think of empowerment as a management strategy, but in order to implement it, it is necessary to know the subjective referents that people have and how they shape, according to the level of information and attitude, a representational field towards the concept; hence, the ideal reference for this approach is the Social Representation Theory (SR), which, from the theoretical point of view, allows explaining dissimilar social phenomena and, from the methodological point of view, gives the possibility of creating, discerning and interpreting such phenomena without those

methodological "straitjackets" that reduce the possibility of associating, establishing links and reinterpreting the daily events that limit the development of organizations, groups and individuals (Reyes Hernández, 2013).

The Theory of Social Representations

According to Perera (2006), SRs make it possible to understand and explain reality, enable subjects to acquire new knowledge and integrate it into their frame of reference, in line with their cognitions, values and needs. Through them, the novel acquires cognitive legibility, i.e., new objects or events become intelligible, understandable and the strange, known and more familiar, cognitively manageable.

According to Reyes Hernández (2015), it is Jodelet (1986) who makes a more finished attempt to define SR and points to certain elements that characterize it and that it would be very appropriate to rescue. For the author, SR is:

- The way in which social subjects apprehend the events of daily life, the characteristics of the environment, the information that circulates in it and the people in the near or distant environment.
- Spontaneous, naive or common-sense knowledge, as opposed to scientific thinking.
- Socially elaborated and shared knowledge, constituted from the experiences, information and models of thought that we receive and transmit through tradition, education and social communication.
- Practical knowledge that participates in the social construction of a reality common to a social group and tries to essentially dominate that environment, to understand and explain the facts and ideas of the universe of life.
- They are both product and process of an activity of appropriation of an external reality and of psychological and social elaboration of that reality. They are constitutive and constituent thought.

The above theoretical references show that to date it is an open concept, which coexists with different conceptual approaches, which, according to Perera (2006), are not incompatible with respect to their primary referents and neither with each other, since in a general sense it is a kind of undefined juxtaposition that does not transcend the initial propositions. This, together with the culture of empowerment, would make possible the integrated treatment demanded by the complexity with

which the labor organization is conceived, since it does not only take into account generating internal changes and allowing the development of its members, but also conceives how it can be used to respond to contingencies of the external environment, while adapting to it, transforming it and transforming itself. With this, the objective of this article is to characterize representation in its dimensions, information, attitudes and field, in a group of workers of the state and non-state sector of the economy in Cuba.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research used a mixed quantitative and qualitative sequential explanatory design, which allows a more precise knowledge of the phenomenon studied and a greater variety of perspectives of the problem: frequency, breadth and magnitude (quantitative), as well as depth, comprehension and complexity (qualitative), where the sample subjects become case studies, since the objective is the richness, depth and quality of the information, not quantity or standardization.

The sample selected in the first phase was a random sample of 89 subjects; of these, 59 corresponded to the state sector and 30 to the non-state sector, with the objective of describing criteria and behaviors that regulate them. For this purpose, a semantic differential and a previously elaborated and validated questionnaire were applied. In a second stage, it was sought to go deeper into the cause and determination of the representations and nuclei, therefore, an intentional sampling of 19 subjects was carried out, of which 9 correspond to the State Sector and 10 to the non-State Sector, where individual interviews were conducted. The inclusion criteria were: willingness to participate, work experience workers with more than 5 years working in the current center.

Of the total sample, 46.67% were women and 53.33% men. In terms of experience in the position, those who had been working in this activity for 5 to 6 years prevailed (64.67%). There was a greater representation of people between 21 and 25 years of age (46.67%) and the prevailing level of education was high school (63.33%).

Techniques and instruments

Questionnaire: its objective is to explore an approach to the level of information and attitudes. Consisting of 7 open questions, it explores by free association of ideas the figurative core of the representation as the most stable element. In addition, the way in which knowledge is organized

(quantity and quality of information) about the object of representation, as well as about the contents associated with it in terms of experiences and affective disposition.

Semantic differential: it is applied with the objective of delving deeper into attitudes. It presents a list of opposing adjectives and explores the knowledge of the main valuations held by the subjects associated with empowerment in their work organization.

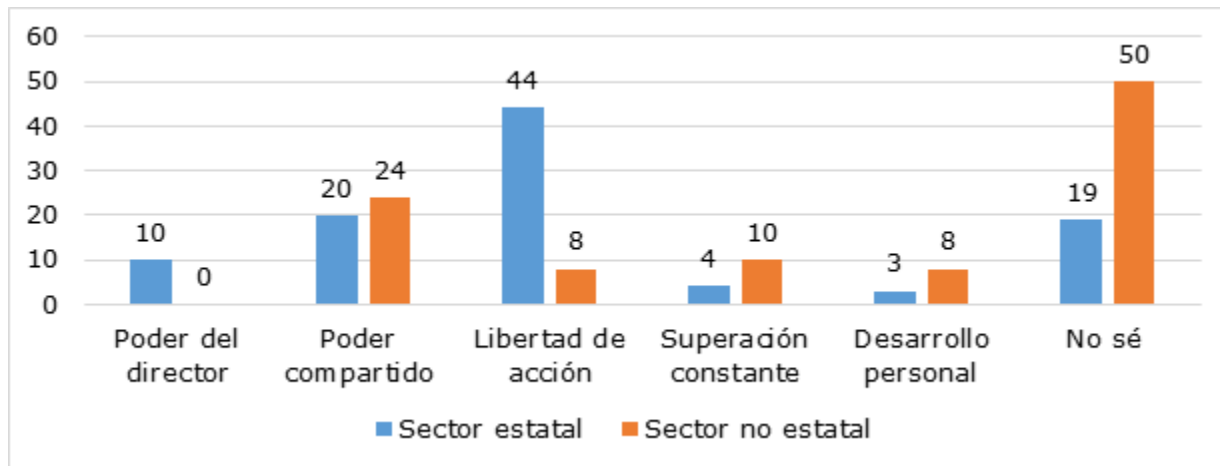
Individual interview: Complements the basic information on the structural and dynamic elements (core and field of SR, knowledge, level or information, attitudes, assessments) of Organizational Empowerment SR.

Free Drawing: This was used to deepen the information obtained from the other instruments. The instruction is for the subjects to draw: How is Empowerment represented? For this purpose, they are provided with sheets of paper and colored pencils.

Data processing was performed using the SPSS statistical package, by means of mean and standard deviation analysis. Subsequently, the t-Student test for independent means was used as a group comparison test. With the hypothesis that the difference between groups will be equal to zero, which implies that $t=0$ and the higher the value of t , the less probability there is that the difference between groups is due to chance, therefore, a significance level of 0.05 was used. The null hypothesis formulated is that the groups do not differ significantly in terms of their social representation of empowerment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When analyzing the results obtained for both sectors in the questionnaire applied, the free association (Graph 1) shows elements that allow the evaluation of the core of SR, since they are ideas that emerge spontaneously and express the perception of the concept without mediation or elaboration.



Graph 1. Free association with the term "empowerment"

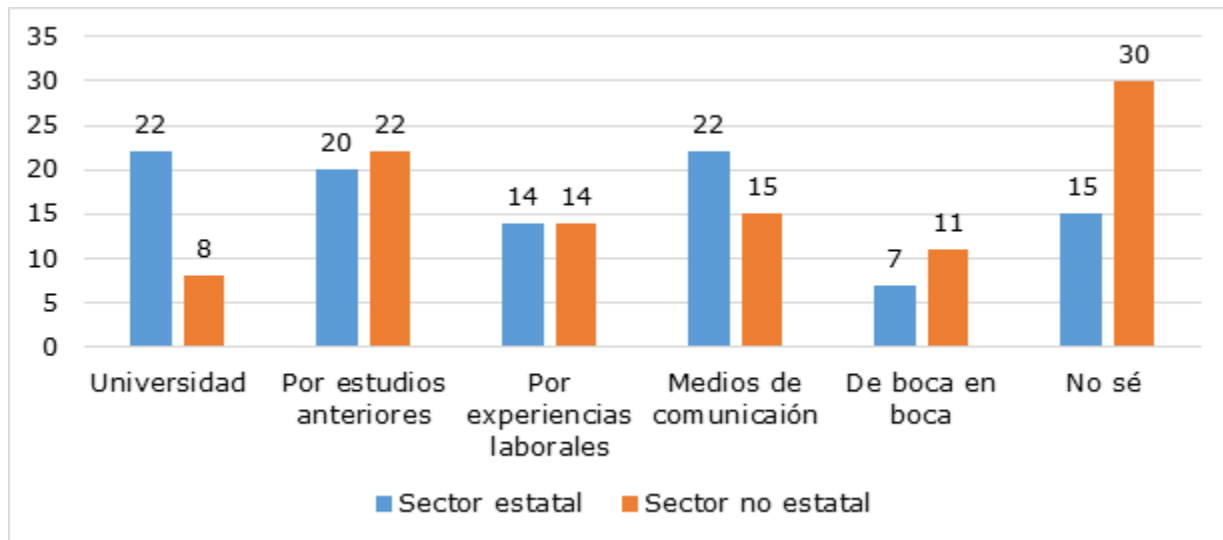
Source: Own elaboration

As can be seen in both sectors, the consensus lies in considering empowerment as power shared between management and workers; however, in the state sector it is associated much more with freedom of action and managerial power. Although on a smaller scale, empowerment is also considered as that which allows workers to be empowered on an individual level. It is also associated with autonomy, direction, delegation, change and cooperation. However, as can be seen, there is a high percentage of workers who express total ignorance of the term.

The standard deviations of the responses range between 0.33 and 0.40, which shows the consensus of both groups in the responses, thus demonstrating that there is no representation of the construct with elements that encompass the full complexity of empowerment. Similarly, by associating the term empowerment only with power, with the ability to lead and a strong character, the necessary skills for empowerment and the sense of belonging, which is proposed as an essential element by one of the authors of *Psychological Empowerment*, in this case Spreitzer (2007), are being left out.

When the level of knowledge about the term is explored in depth, it can be seen that it is poor and very unstructured in both sectors. In spite of this, the sources of information are varied, which influences the possibility of obtaining a more elaborated concept in the future, since the existing one is associated with the experiences of these workers. It can be seen that the most elaborated answers were those related to freedom of action, expression and decision.

When the sources of access to such information are explored, it is shown that those who could cite the most sources were those who had prior knowledge of the construct, mainly through informal means such as school or previous work (Graph 2).

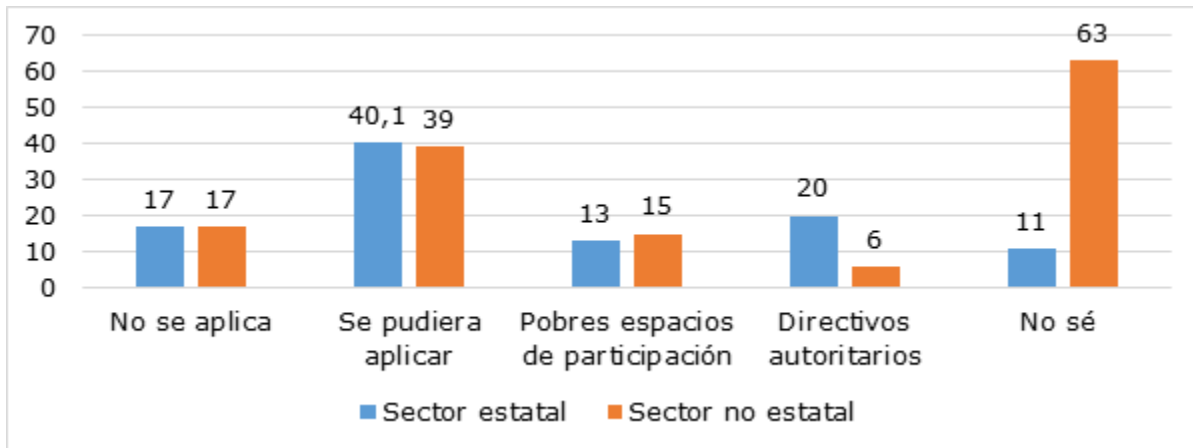


Graph 2. Sources of access to the term "empowerment"

Source: Own elaboration

In both sectors, different modes of socialization stand out as forms of knowledge: "a friend, the media, school, rumor, in the workplace". However, in the case of the non-state sector, the majority of the sample (30%) responded that they had not looked for a source of meaning or association with the term. Related to this lack of knowledge, some people stated that they "just thought of it now", "recently came across it, in the interview itself or were just expressing their personal knowledge".

Lack of knowledge of the term means that the references regarding its application in organizations are almost nil. Graph 3 shows the results of the perception of the application or non-application of empowerment in the workplace.

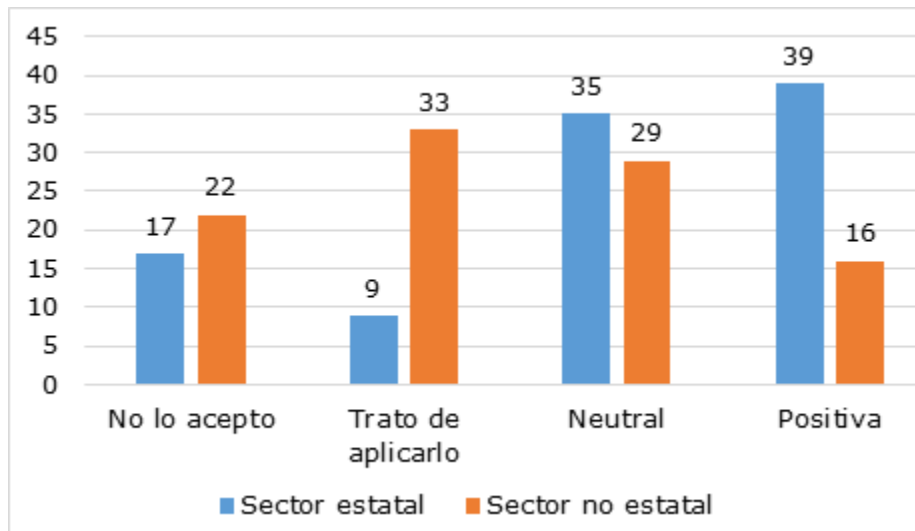


Graph 3. Possibilities for the application of "empowerment"

Source: Own elaboration

In the case of the non-state sector, it is clearly evident that most of the subjects (63.3 %) do not know about the application of the term in their work center, however, in both cases (39 % and 40.1 %) they affirmed that this category is applied in their organization, while others claim that it is a difficult process to apply due to poor spaces for participation and authoritarian managers.

Similarly, the attitude assumed by the respondents to the term Organizational Empowerment is very diverse. Although the predominance in both sectors is to assume no attitude (which corresponds to those who have no knowledge of the term), 39%, in the case of the state sector, explicitly refer to a positive attitude, as they consider that it is a work philosophy that can contribute to the improvement of their organization, supported by 16% in the non-state sector (Graph 4).



Graph 4. Attitude towards empowerment in the organization

Source: Own elaboration

Attitudes are nothing more than feelings towards the object under study. They represent the affective element, imprint a dynamic character to the representation and orient the behavior towards the object of these, thus endowing it with emotional reactions of diverse intensity and direction. In this case, they tend to be positive or ambivalent, which is given because a large part of the sample that accredits does not know about empowerment, therefore, they conceive it with ambivalent adjectives.

In terms of behavior as an ostensible element of the attitude possessed by the subjects, the majority opted for communication, support, help, contribution and disclosure, even when a need for self-improvement prevailed.

When analyzing the semantic differential, it is confirmed that many subjects characterize empowerment as very necessary, important and useful (with a low level of standard deviation 0.31, which shows homogeneity in the responses). This shows that most are aware of the value of empowerment in a work organization and that they have at least a basic knowledge of the term.

However, most agree on the difficulty of putting this new management philosophy into practice, as they assume a neutral position that questions whether Organizational Empowerment is easy or difficult to apply. This indicates that more work should be done with the empowerment construct so that workers have greater knowledge and this can be generated correctly in the organizations.

The subjects are unable to define correctly whether empowerment in their work organization is productive or unproductive. This is a very interesting fact for this research, since whether such a novel management philosophy is shown to be productive will depend on whether or not the workers feel that great need for change, improvement and acting differently in the business or organization in which they work.

The qualification of the drawing allows to explore the field of representation. This would be the peripheral level of representation. Here the person elaborates from his experiences and experiences; it is the most stable and solid part, composed of cognitions that give meaning to the rest of the elements.

In this case, it can be seen that, as a result of the lack of knowledge of the term, in most of the sample it can be concluded that from the symbolic point of view, empowerment is qualified for many as negative, as it is related to theft by the owners or workers. For others it is linked to the hierarchy within the same labor institution, which will always be maintained with the same order, since the workers reveal that they do not move up in position or level.

Many people relate it in drawings to economic power, wealth, etc., a conception that is based, above all, on common sense and on what they experience on a daily basis in their work institutions. There were designs that managed to go to the essence of the meaning of the term, representing the collaboration of groups when making important decisions. Union, respect and the importance of communication to achieve productive results are evidence of this.

From the composition and through discourse, the field of representation is shown to be insufficient, since an order or hierarchy of this knowledge cannot be established due to the nullity of responses from a significant part of the sample. There is a close relationship between symbolism and the discourse of the subjects, since again criteria are issued in relation to economic power, monetary power and the existence of leaders who make decisions without taking into account employees, etc.

Throughout the research, certain differences have been shown between both sectors; in spite of this, equality of criteria that advocates the permanence of the SR of Organizational Empowerment for the groups studied can be appreciated. The above is demonstrated through the Levene test, which yielded a $p=0.94$, indicative of homogeneity in the variance of the data, it is also added that $t=0.67$, with a high significance value that demonstrates the relationship between both groups and therefore the null hypothesis is fulfilled.

For both sectors, the word power is distinguished as a central nucleus. On the other hand, the combination of elements points to the fact that Organizational Empowerment is assumed from its psychological dimension that has the competencies, meaning, impact and self-determination for the search for efficiency.

The field of representation of workers in the non-state sector is related to the presence of discipline, organization and taking hold of something, which evidences a SR which elements of the field glimpse its relationship with the central core. In spite of this, it is necessary to emphasize that one thing is what is understood of the term (from theories) and the other is how it is anchored to common thinking (from experiences in the organization).

Knowledge about the object of representation (Organizational Empowerment) is varied in quantity and quality. In the case of the state sector, there is an approximation to the concept of Empowerment, they relate it to freedom of action, expression and decision, in spite of this, the active role that the subject plays in assuming it is omitted, which is not reflected in the non-state sector either, since as it was found in the applied techniques, there is a lack of knowledge of the term, hence the need to work around it in order to be able to revert such results (being able to revert such results), There is a lack of knowledge of the term, hence the need to work on this in order to reverse these results (training courses, partnership with flexible organizations that provide the possibility of dialogue, dissemination through advertising campaigns and the applicability of the work done).

Similarly, in both sectors, it is evident that they obtain information on Organizational Empowerment through a large number of channels such as: mass media, books, group meetings, internet, through university officials and students. In spite of this, it is important to highlight that in the case of the non-state sector there is a majority that states that they do not obtain information from any media, which is in line with the lack of knowledge about the term. The distinction for the state sector is given by the way the information is obtained, which is essentially through university studies or training in the organization that the person studied.

When obtaining a high number of external agents as means of information, it is important to highlight the relevance of group membership and social insertion, since access to information is always mediated by both variables. The proximity or distance of the groups to the object of representation and the social practices related to empowerment also have a strong influence.

In the applicability of the term empowerment for both sectors, similarities are shown, since there is a preponderance of non-application of the term in the organization. In relation to the state sector, it is obtained that some workers recognize themselves as empowered subjects, despite the fact that the arguments, before such positions, are in contradiction with the cognitive basis they have of the term Organizational Empowerment. Therefore, it is necessary to apply the model presented by Alles (2012), since both place special emphasis on the need to align the behaviors of workers with the goals of the organization. Hence, the need to invest in employees and to demonstrate the organization's interest in promoting their personal and professional development.

In relation to the attitude assumed towards Organizational Empowerment by workers in the state sector, it is presented as positive, trying to be as fair as possible in their jobs, sharing responsibility and including all workers in decision-making. In the non-state sector, the opposite is shown, since the majority of the sample has negative attitudes towards this process of empowerment. This is not the case in all cases, but this minority is at a disadvantage when it is put in dialogue with the concrete experience, with the exercise of the application of the term in the institution.

Generally speaking, it can be said that it is the experience that authorizes to reinforce attitudes in intensity or to change their sign. In this research, Organizational Empowerment positively encourages both sectors, but the concrete experience in the organization degrades its intensity, and there are even contradictions between what is desired and what actually occurs; that is, assuming from the contributions of Denise Jodelet (1986) that SR is defined by its content from the experiences, images and opinions of the subjects, without being a pure reflection of the outside world.

From these results, it can be seen that talking about empowerment raises silences and resistances typical of a subject that is presented uncritically in everyday life and which, in organizations, is only approached from its theoretical precepts. This makes to think about the creation of openings for the dialogue of organizational development and educating workers in the exercise of an empowered organization.

This new business management philosophy is mainly based on delegating authority and responsibility, which, as Blanco García and Moros Fernández (2019) refer, brings benefits such as: increased creativity, increased responsibility, authority and commitment, and also helps to promote participative leadership and teamwork.

From the triangulation of the techniques applied to the subjects, the results can be integrated. Most of the subjects show a great lack of knowledge about this new management philosophy, which is very characteristic of this form of management, since in other research in the state and mixed sector, there is a greater dominance of the term by managers and workers. This may also be due to the fact that in the non-state sector it is considered that only the owner is concerned with decision making and, consequently, subordinates are not involved in true participation. In the literature on empowerment in small and medium-sized enterprises, it has been shown that through this technique businesses considerably increase their performance (Aguilar Bustamante & Correa Chica, 2017; Rozo Sánchez et al., 2019).

The workers studied present a low level of information about Organizational Empowerment, as they fail to correctly identify the term, generally associating it with economic or monetary power and the acquisition of profits by the bosses.

These conceptions are far from what Organizational Empowerment really is, since the term is associated with the power to enable, to grant, to allow an initiative to a certain person to act by himself and to propitiate the initiative in others. It is synonymous with a culture of participation, which requires the participation of all to achieve quality objectives, where organizations discard, once and for all, those schemes and models in terms of decisions, leadership styles and benefits within the management-worker axis; but, above all, in the processes of communication and integration of human work groups around the values and organizational culture.

An interesting fact that reinforces the idea of the lack of knowledge that workers have about the term is that they tend to identify Organizational Empowerment with expressions of inequality in the workplace. However, the fundamental objective of this new business management philosophy lies in setting aside all those differences that may exist between employees and business leaders, since it allows workers to have access to learning opportunities, growth and the possibility of making a career within an organization, which is an essential condition for achieving prosperous results in relation to greater employee satisfaction and, therefore, a greater commitment to productivity.

Likewise, these results reflect the need for education and training in this sector on management and administration strategies for companies of international reference. Organizational Empowerment is a novel management philosophy that grants power and authority to subordinates in decision making, which increases trust, responsibility, authority and commitment among all workers to provide better

customer service. This essential characteristic, typical of Organizational Empowerment, goes unnoticed by the subjects due to lack of knowledge.

The main cause of the lack of information is the lack of disclosure of this new form of management, which has been repeatedly pointed out by the workers, since many of them are not aware of the channels that allow them to access information on this subject.

Most of the workers assume an ambivalent or null attitude towards Organizational Empowerment due to the lack of knowledge they have about the construct; those who assume a positive attitude have at least a basic knowledge about this form of management. Although it cannot be left to mention those who also assume it without having real knowledge, since they tend to link Organizational Empowerment with obtaining monetary power or salary stimulation, which for them constitutes an important requirement to be fulfilled by the work center to which they render their services.

The field of representation of the subjects is poor and insufficient, both in terms of discourse and symbolism. Generally, workers identify empowerment with the existing hierarchy within the same labor institution or with the amount of profits acquired by owners and employees.

Finally, the results presented here demonstrate the need in Cuba to raise awareness among workers of the advantages of applying this management tool to their work. Sometimes, due to lack of knowledge, methods that can help to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of organizations are not used. A poor level of information on the subject was demonstrated, associating it mainly with the word "power". The attitudes provoked by the object of representation are ambivalent and positive, which is due to the fact that many, being unfamiliar with the subject, do not opt for the extremes: positive or negative. This confirms the need, from Organizational Psychology, to focus on training and awareness strategies in relation to the subject.

Based on the results obtained, and according to the stated objective, it can be concluded that:

- The core of the SR of empowerment, both for the state and non-state sectors, focuses on the word power. Although there is a structured SR, the elements of the field are not related to the central core in any of the sectors, showing a distance between the definition of the term and its anchoring to common thinking, based on the experiences of workers in each organization.

- The level of information is not homogeneous for both sectors. The differences are marked by the existing lack of knowledge about the construct. The information obtained by both sectors is the product of dissimilar sources (mass media, books, group meetings, Internet, through university officials and students). It is reinforced that in both the state and non-state sectors there is a gap between what they understand by organizational empowerment (in theory) and the way in which each worker performs his or her role in the organization (in practice).

In general, the research showed that talking about organizational empowerment still brings barriers and myths, associated to the little known. Therefore, it shows the need to provide more information and training on the subject, based on dialogue strategies in the organizations and involving workers in the goals and objectives of the institution.

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Conflict of interest

Authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Authors' contribution

Javier Reyes Hernández, Helena Moros Fernández and Yaima Blanco García: original idea and design of the study.

Yaima Blanco García and Javier Reyes Hernández: data collection, analysis and interpretation.

Helena Moros Fernández, Javier Reyes Hernández and Yaima Blanco García: writing of the draft and approval of the final version.

Yaima Blanco García and Javier Reyes Hernández: analysis and critical review in the research process and approval of the final version.



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