

Emotions Interact With Empowering Leadership to Reduce Counterproductive Work Behavior

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Abstract

Getting a grasp of the psycho-affective processes and social anomie leading to counterproductive work behavior (Fox & Spector, 2006) represents a major challenge for researchers and organizations. The Cameroonian context is characterized by widespread impoverishment, which incites some officials to divert the objectives of the prescribed work to their personal interest, with no regard to the damage caused to either the organization or its members (Nyock Ilouga et al., 2018). This study examines the mediating role of emotions in the relationship between empowering leadership and counterproductive work behavior. 156 civil servants of both sexes were selected to complete a questionnaire which includes both the *Empowering Leadership Questionnaire* (Arnold et al., 2000) and the *Job Affective-relative Work questionnaire* (Van Katwyk et al., 2000). Our results suggest that the emotions felt by employees mediate the effect of perceived empowering leadership on the counterproductive behavior that employees manifest at work.

Keywords: empowering leadership, resentment, emotion, helplessness, entropy

1. Introduction

Counterproductive work behaviors constitute a complex and dynamic phenomenon. The study of such behaviors requires the consideration of various factors: emergence factors, vulnerability factors and moderating factors (Jauvin & al., 1999). In the recent decades, the prevention of deviant behaviors and the promotion of well-being have become the major concerns of public and private companies (Bernaud & al., 2016). These concerns become alarming in Cameroon where workers evolve in a context characterized by the collapse of the value placed on work, boredom, dissipation, vacuity, apathy and disloyal behaviors (Nyock Ilouga & al., 2018). An investigation by the Cameroonian Ministry of Finance reveals that the country lost nearly 6,000 billion CFA francs between 2012 and 2017 as a result of embezzlement of public funds, desertion at work and unreported deaths (Biaga, 2019). In a bid to identify the causes and eventually find solutions to this phenomenon, researchers pay particular attention to the organizational disinvestment caused by long breaks, repeated absences, presenteeism (El Akremi, 2006), theft, aggression or sabotage (Le Roy, 2010) or any other form of disloyal practice aimed at harming a client, a colleague or the organization itself (Buss, 1961). The psychodynamic perspective suggests that, these various types of behavior often reflect a sort of revenge displayed by employees in response to a perceived frustration or injustice (Dejours, 2001). This situation is usually the root of interpersonal conflicts at work (Aquino & al., 1999; Bies & TRipp, 1996; Kim & al., 1998; Le Roy, 2010).

The interest in the psycho-affective mechanisms that precede counterproductive work behavior stems from an attempt to overcome the obvious limitations of behaviorism, which overlooks the interiority of individuals. However, as El Akremi (2006) points out, the first reaction to frustration is emotional and attitudinal. It is therefore appropriate to admit that the external stimuli for this behavior are transmitted by psychological mechanisms. In the same vein, this study examines the mediating role of emotions, expressed as resentment, in the relationship between perceived empowering leadership and counterproductive work behaviors. Resentment refers to a memory of injustice (or frustration) experienced repeatedly, causing negative emotions, which-combined with a feeling of powerlessness, drives the victim into taking revenge (Fleury, 2020). The Cameroonian work environment is dominated by an erratic mode of operation enforced by line managers. Workers must comply with operating rules from hierarchical structures that are rigid and poorly adapted to operational objectives and constraints (Tamekou, 2008). This increases formalism and submission to the detriment of autonomy and creativity. Such a situation is the antithesis of so-called empowering managerial practices and can be a source of frustration for employees.

As a matter of fact, the steps taken by the Cameroonian authorities are barely able to considerably reduce

counterproductive work behavior. Most of these legal and administrative measures - derived from the *situational prevention model* in criminology (Clarke, 1980) - focus on prevention, control and repression. It is accepted from a behaviorist point of view that negative reinforcement contributes to the gradual reduction of unwanted behaviors (Skinner, 1938). However, the persistence of counterproductive behaviors in the Cameroonian context leads to a closer look at some of the deepest psychological processes within the employees. These processes involve emotions and resentment, motivate the willingness to violate organizational norms and harm stakeholders.

Based on the analysis of leadership practices in some Francophone African countries, Shu (2013) suggested that non-formal socio-cultural criteria such as: dowry, solidarity and the strong involvement of traditional power are considered when designing and implementing management practices in African organizations. This reality hinders the ambitions of many employees in need of autonomy and a large degree of decision-making latitude in the practice of their professions. This frustration also affects many workers who, due to these managerial difficulties associated with the lack of resources, are bored at work.

2. Frustration and Negative Emotions at Work

Based on current knowledge in the field, we know that the increase in counterproductive work behaviors is a structural and systemic problem, rooted in social, economic, organizational and cultural factors (Chappell & Di Martino, 2000; Mayhew & Quinlan, 1999). Several individuals, organizational and social factors are associated to it. Some are not work related (personality, family tensions) while others are directly related to work (incomprehension of tasks, impoverishment of workers, boredom and vacuity, perceived leadership). The emergence of counterproductive work behaviors may result from a combination of multiple and interrelated factors. According to the explanatory models formulated, emotions play an important role. We can regard emotion as a mental state that triggers one to react in an impulsive and irresponsible manner. As such, emotion remains an intrinsic component of our action insofar as it is integrated in our beliefs and desires. Emotion is a particular state of a being mobilized under well-defined conditions (a so-called emotional state) accompanied by a subjective experience and somatic and visceral manifestations (Doron & Parot, 2004). Whether pleasant or unpleasant, emotions have the common characteristic of not being purely cerebral but rather being accompanied by somatic and physiological modifications. Some theories consider the cognition of emotional sequence as the perception and evaluation of the significance of an event for a person's well-being (Christophe, 1998). These cognitive approaches also assume that the nature of emotion is determined by a cognitive evaluation ("appraisal"). In this process, the criteria of usefulness or harmfulness to the organism of a transaction with the environment occupy a central position. Emotion is a temporal process that includes various psychological mechanisms through which an event or a situation will become an emotional stimulus and give rise to an evaluation. In other words, counterproductive work behaviors result from the negative evaluation of an event that is emotionally perceived as harmful to the person's well-being. The frustrating event gives rise to emotions such as rage, anger, revenge and betrayal although reactions can vary over time and are intimately related to the subjective meaning given by the individual to the event (Fineman, 2008).

In the view of Berkowitz (1998), strong emotions can lead to impulsive reactions. In this light, a model developed by Fox and Spector (1999) clearly links frustration to the increase in counterproductive work behaviors. These authors consider frustration as the main trigger for revenge. Which role do stable emotional tendencies play in the expression of the response to a frustrating event?

Founded on the frustration-aggression model (Dollard et al., 1939), Berkowitz (1989) highlights the role of negative emotions in the relationship between frustration and aggression. From this author's view, aggressive behavior is a function of the individual's evaluation of a situation and the intensity of negative emotions. Emotion is an adaptive response to environmental stimuli (Plutchik, 1989) that gives way to the formulation of intentions to either engage or not in certain behaviors (Bies & al., 1997).

Following the *Stressor-Emotion Model* (Spector & Fox, 2005), negative emotions do not only result from an unforeseen blockage in the quest for a goal; but they also emerge in response to any stressful organizational situation. As such, according to the *Stressor-Emotion Model*, when an employee experiences a frustrating or stressful situation at work, he or she develops negative emotions and feelings and eventually adopts anti-social behaviors. Empirical studies indicate that high work demands, organizational injustice, conflicting relationships with supervisors and interpersonal injustice are important sources of frustration that lead to negative emotions in the employee, such as depression, sadness and anger (Bruk-Lee & Spector, 2006; Fox & Spector, 1999; Fox & al., 2001; Miles & al., 2002; Spector & Fox, 2002, 2005). Similarly, a study by Fox et al. (2001) points out that negative emotions are linked to certain stressful variables in organizational settings such as conflict ($r = .45$), organizational constraints ($r = .47$), distributive justice ($r = .38$), and procedural justice ($r = .44$).

The frustration-aggression dynamic model (Dollard et al., 1939) emphasizes that counterproductive work behaviors are generally used to reduce the tension created by the frustration. In this perspective, the individual will only resort to

revenge if he or she does not have the right and legitimate means to repair a frustration (or injustice) incurred. The feeling of powerlessness then appears as an indispensable mediator in the relationship between frustration and revenge. As a matter of fact, Bies (2001) points out that negative emotions felt repeatedly form hostile scripts. As such, once the stressful and frustrating situation is felt, negative emotions settle in the individual, then primary and secondary evaluations follows according to the cognitive (arousal of hostile thoughts, memory and affective scripts); the affective (recurrence of hostile and angry feelings) and the conative aspects (transfer of arousal, willingness to engage in hostile behavior). From the elaborated hostile schemas, the interpretation of ambiguous events feed the feeling of powerlessness resulting to resentment (Fleury, 2020).

3. Understanding the Dynamics of Resentment

Resentment is defined as a memory of injustice that arouses negative emotions accompanied by a desire for revenge. It is fostered by repeated instances of injustice experienced by man in his environment (Fleury, 2020). Resentment in individuals always results from an injury, violence endured, frustration or trauma to which the victim cannot react directly, due to powerlessness. He therefore ponders his revenge, which he cannot carry out and which torments him incessantly to the point of “explosion”.

Schematically, an employee experiences frustration or injustice as a result of a belief in a right that he or she is denied (Greenberg, 1996). This situation can expose the employee to the ordeal of resentment if he or she lacks the possibility of obtaining redress. As Fleury (2020) points out, the mechanism of resentment is based on “mental rumination”, which is a characteristic of bitterness related to the uncomfortable situation experienced and maintained on a daily basis in the psyche with the desire to take revenge. This revenge is not only aimed at repairing the harm incurred, but also to get rid of the negative emotions associated with it.

According to Leventhal (1979), Lang (1985) and Bower (1980), the schematic process of emotions starts from the different components (circumstances, perceptual conditions, expressive, psychological, subjective, behavioral responses) of each particular emotional experience which are represented together in the episodic memory. The recurrence of these emotional experiences with similar elements then leads to the formation of a prototype (generalized pattern) of this class of emotion. Whether manifest or dormant, if this class of emotion is associated to feelings of powerlessness, the individual will be exposed to resentment. Once resentment sets in, the undefined address of the response broadens the target of revenge. This situation helps to deal with a reality that could not be tolerated because it is deemed unfair, unequal, humiliating, unworthy of the merit that one attributes to oneself (Scheller, 1970).

4. The Empowering Leadership in an Entropic Context

In their analysis, Pinder and Harlos (2001) note that maintaining a culture of perceived unfairness and frustration in a company (with strong control, ambiguous rules and weak evaluations) often makes employees silent, so that they choose to not express their views. Yet, leadership needs are constantly evolving to accommodate the fact that workers are the main resources for organizations. (Davenport, 2010). Adopting an approach that helps to maximize organizational performance and human capital well-being has become an imperative that forces many organizations and managers to review their leadership practices. Considered as a process of power sharing by line managers, empowering leadership enhances the autonomy, potential, meaning and impact of employees and work teams (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999). Empowerment is a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficiency among organizational members by identifying and eliminating disempowering conditions, increasing resources-and expanding room for maneuver and empowering people through formal and informal organizational practices of sharing useful information (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Empowering leadership generally gives rise to prosocial behaviors since it requires formal leaders to encourage subordinates to express their opinions, promote collaborative decision making and support information sharing and teamwork (Arnold & al., 2000; Chen & al., 2011; Pearce & al., 2003). However, Cameroonian workplaces go through a leadership crisis which seems to have abandoned to the workers the responsibility to invent their functioning mode. This leadership crisis is rooted in the difficulty, already chronic, of moving from bureaucratic and authoritarian style to a management by objectives and control (Nyock Ilouga & Moussa Mouloungui, 2019). In reality, the networks of solidarity in charge of the organization of professional circles in Cameroon disable the control mechanisms, which are indispensable in management by objectives. Nevertheless, some of the empowering leadership behaviors identified by Arnold & al. (2000) seem to have taken root in this context. These are: 1) *management by example*, which reflects the leader's commitment not only to his work, but also to that of his team members ; 2) *coaching (autonomy)* which is a set of behavior aimed at empowering team members; 3) *participatory decision-making*, which comprises the inclusion of ideas and opinions of team members into the decision-making process; 4) *consideration (interaction with collaborators)* which is a set of behavior that promotes the well-being of team members; and 5) *information sharing* which is the dissemination of important information such as information concerning the mission and philosophy of the organization. These observations suggest the hypothesis that perceived empowering leadership reduces the expression of resentment in employees. This

reduction is amplified by the control of negative emotions.

Theoretical research model and data analysis strategy

Baron and Kenny (1986) clarified the roles of the variables involved in a triangular relationship in which one variable (the mediator variable) plays an intermediary role between two other variables (the independent variable and the dependent variable) all involved in an explanatory model. The figure of their mediation model is similar to the following figure:

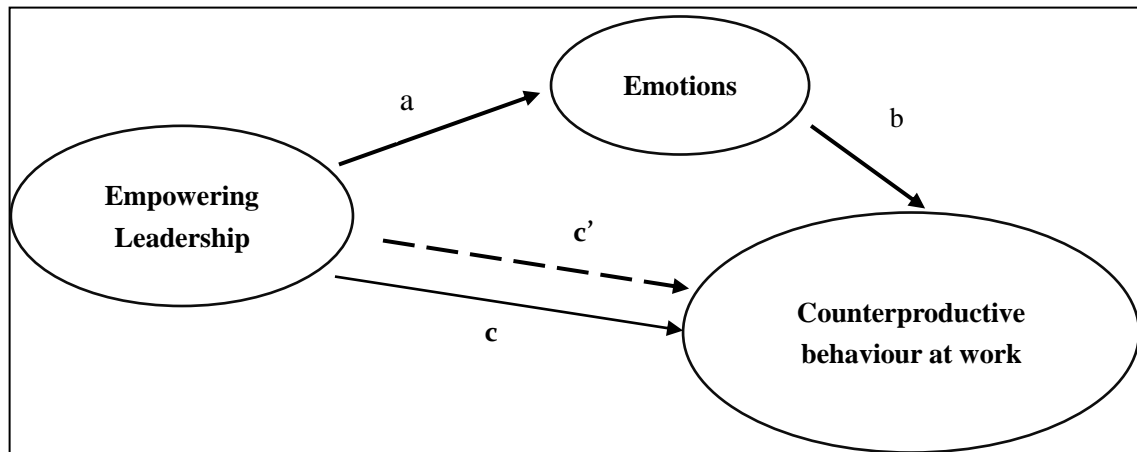


Figure 1. The conceptual framework of the research

This model has three variables, of which it is assumed that the interaction between two (empowerment leadership and emotions), rather than the underlying components, causes the third (counterproductive work behavior). This structure involves a system of three linear regression equations that enables the materialization of the direct impact of the independent variable (X) on the mediator (M) and on the dependent variable (Y), but also the residual effects of the independent variable (X) and the mediator variable (M) on the dependent variable (Y) when (M) and (X) are introduced simultaneously in the same linear least squares regression equation.

$$Y = \beta_{1.0} + cX + e_1 (E_1)$$

$$M = \beta_{2.0} + aX + e_2 (E_2)$$

$$Y = \beta_{3.0} + c'X + bM + e_3 (E_3)$$

If E_1 ; E_2 ; E_3 represent the three linear least squares equations, $\beta_{1.0}$; $\beta_{2.0}$; $\beta_{3.0}$ denote the intercept of each of the three equations; with c' the total effect of X on Y ; the direct effect of X on M ; c' the residual effect of X on Y and b the residual effect of M on Y .

Yzerbyt et al. (2018) recently showed that: when all three conditions are met, mediation is effective if and only if the total effect (c) of the independent variable X on the dependent variable Y (E_1) is greater in absolute value than the residual effect (c') of the independent variable X on the dependent variable Y (E_3). In other words, assuming that all three equations are correctly estimated, the mediation model has an underlying equality that can be formulated through the following fundamental equation: $c = c' + a \times b$. It appears that the difference between the direct effect (c) and the residual effect (c') of X on Y is equal to the product of the direct effect (a) of X on M and the residual effect (b) of M on Y .

In this conception, rather than focusing on the direct benefits of empowering leadership and the role of emotions, Baron and Kenny (1986) mainly focus on the effect of their interaction. There is therefore a high risk of inflation in multicollinearity when the effects of the independent variable and the mediator on the dependent variable are jointly estimated (E_2). As a result, the independent variable could have a smaller coefficient when it predicts the dependent variable (c) on its own and a larger coefficient when it acts simultaneously in the same equation with the mediator (c'), but the larger coefficient will not be significant while the smaller coefficient would be. In the case where the value of c' is reduced to zero, we have strong evidence of a single dominant mediating variable, whereas, if this same residual effect of X on Y is non-zero, then several mediating factors are involved. In order to reduce the risk of multicollinearity inflation and to ensure the significance of the mediator effect, the use of the factorial approach suggested by Yzerbyt et al. (2018) is recommended. This approach proceeds to the demonstration that the two coefficients that form the product between the direct effect of X on M (a) and the residual effect of M on Y (b) are simultaneously significant.

Hypothesis

Emotions are structured and adaptive responses to stimuli perceived by humans. These lead to an evaluative process that includes organizational justice issues which induce subsequent behavior. This is because, in a given organizational context, different categories of emotions do not specifically appear in isolation. However, McCraty et al. (1995) admit that, under certain conditions, one category of emotions may dominate the others. Thus, Beaud and Pialoux (1999) have noted that even in the most authoritarian organizations, hostile to any form of emergence of divergent subjectivity, laughter, humor, joy, anger, hostility or affection are always involved. It is known that the interpretation of relationship issues as well as the choice of adaptive response is a matter of personal emotional experience (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Viaux and Bernaud (2001) observed that the indicators of resentment, particularly negative emotions, emanate from the disruption of the ethical bond that occurs among the people involved in maladaptive work behavior. Workers actually build bonds with the organizations that employ them. These bonds usually spring from the manner in which workers get recruited into the organization, the way they represent it, as well as the value they place on their work, their personal duties, and those of the organization. Organizations have their own bonding culture, which is particularly manifested in hierarchical relationships. Resentment arises from the fact that the employee's professional conscience may lead him to defend principles that are in opposition to those widely shared by colleagues and advocated by the organization's hierarchy. Such opposition can lead to derogatory mishaps, followed by the generation of ambivalent emotions. In this view we postulate that the emotional state of the employee mediates the relationship between perceived empowering leadership and counterproductive work behavior (H_1).

5. Methodology

5.1 Participants

This study was carried out using a snowball sample of 156 civil servants from the central administration of Cameroon (78 men and 78 women), serving in different government ministries in Yaoundé. In order to better describe the nature of the sample, the socio-demographic data of the 156 participants are presented in Table 1. It appears that the sample is made up of teachers undergoing professional retraining (33.3%); engineers (23.7%); works inspectors (14.7%); senior technicians (11.5%); health personnel (15.4%) and civil administrators (1.3%). The average age is 36.1 years and the average professional experience is 7.73 years. Here is a characteristic of the population dominated by youths under 40, where the youngest is 20 years old and the oldest is 59. This age distribution reflects the population of the country, and perhaps of the African continent, which is made up of a large cohort of youths with a low life expectancy and which presents major challenges in terms of employability, health, nutrition etc. (Nyock Ilouga & al., 2018).

Table 1. Sample description

		Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
SEX	Men	78	50.0	50.0
	Women	78	50.0	100.0
AGE M= 36.10 years	20-29	38	24.4	24.4
	30-39	71	45.5	69.9
	40-49	31	19.9	89.7
	50-59	16	10.3	100.0
EXPERIENCE M= 7.73 years	6months- 5 years	72	46.2	46.2
	6- 10 years	32	20.5	66.7
	11- 15 years	33	21.2	87.8
	16years+	19	12.2	100.0
PROFESSIONAL CATEGORIES	Teachers	52	33.3	33.3
	Health personnel	24	15.4	48.7
	Engineers	37	23.7	72.4
	Inspectors (postal, work, treasury)	23	14.7	87.2
	Senior technicians	18	11.5	98.7
	Civil administrators	2	1.3	100.0

5.2 Material

This research took place during the month of January 2022. Participants were asked to complete a paper-and-pencil questionnaire structured in four main parts. The first part deals with personal information (age, gender, occupation, work experience). The second part deals with empowering Leadership which was assessed by *Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ)* developed by Arnold et al. (2000). This scale provides 38 items distributed into five dimensions. Example: "To what extent does your supervisor impulse high performance through his/her behavior?". Respondents were asked to give their opinion on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1. (Never) to 5. (Always). Items 1-5 measure *management by example* ($\alpha = .89$); 6-11 measure *participatory decision-making* ($\alpha = .86$); 12-22 measure *autonomy* ($\alpha = .94$); 23-28 measure *information sharing* ($\alpha = .89$); 29-38 measure *interaction with collaborators* ($\alpha = .93$). The overall value of Cronbach's α (0.97) confirms a good internal consistency of this scale. In the third part, the evaluation of emotions was based on the scale of Van Katwyk et al. (2000). The *Job Affective-relative Work Scale (JAWS)* provides 20 items (Ex: My job irritates me) and measures 10 negative emotions ($\alpha = .90$) and 10 positive emotions ($\alpha = .88$) encountered at work. Respondents were asked to express their opinions on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1. (never) to 5. (very often). The fourth section measuring counter-productive work behavior comprises the *Counter-productive Work Behavior Check list (CWB-C)* by Spector et al., (2006). This instrument is an integrated version of previous tools (Fox & Spector, 1999; Hollinger, 1986; Neuman & Baron, 1998; Robinson & Bennett, 1995; Spector, 1975). Since this study focuses on the occurrence of counterproductive work behavior, we opted for the actor-aggressor perspective and respondents were asked to rate the observation frequency of counterproductive work behavior using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1. (never) to 5. (every day). Example: "Verbally abusing a colleague or client".

5.3 Process of Data Analysis

Internal consistency tests (Cronbach's alpha) were used to assess the internal consistency between the items of the tools used. Descriptive analyses (means and standard deviations) were also used to summarize the information collected on each variable. To test our different hypothesis, the linear least squares technique was used to solve linear regression equations (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

6. Results

6.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 2. The matrix of correlations between variables of the research. Notes; ME (management by example); PDT (participation in decision making); AUTO (autonomy); INF-S (information-sharing); INT (interaction); NE (negative emotions); PE (positive emotions); CWB O (counterproductive work behavior towards the organization); CWB I (counterproductive work behavior towards individuals.); M= Mean); SD= Standard deviation), $** (p < .01)$.

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
ME	3.79	1.00	1								
PDT	3.29	1.00	,659**	1							
AUTO	3.35	1.08	,622**	,802**	1						
INF-S	3.30	1.08	,504**	,665**	,821**	1					
INT	3.18	1.06	,510**	,729**	,806**	,668**	1				
NE	2.49	0.88	-,338**	-,498**	-,531**	-,558**	-,462*	1			
PE	3.54	0.80	,331**	,323**	,378**	,406**	,333**	-,547*	1		
CWB O		1.05	-,366**	-,455**	-,487**	-,509**	-,393*	,551**	-,434**	1	
	2.47										
CWB P	1.73	0.96	-,317**	-,409**	-,464**	-,474**	-,359*	,566**	-,357**	,671**	1

** . The correlation is significant at the 0.01 (two-tailed).

The descriptive statistics on the variables show that the average level of positive emotions expressed by Cameroonian civil servants ($M_{PE} = 3,54$; $SD = 0.8$) is relatively higher than the level of negative emotions ($M_{NE} = 2,29$; $SD = 0.88$). The standard deviation values are low. This reflects a high concentration of respondents' opinions among the average values obtained in the evaluation of the various variables of the study. It appears that work experience has a rather positive dominant tone for Cameroonian civil servants. Regarding empowering leadership, the mean scores obtained are very close for all considered dimensions and slightly above the theoretical mean of the 5-point Likert scale. The standard deviation values are equally very low. However, it should be noted that management by exception has the highest scores of all empowering management leadership dimensions. This observation is particularly interesting in a context known to be in leadership crisis, where workers are forced to think about their work and adjust their ability to cooperate without

managerial intervention (Nyock Ilouga & Moussa Mouloungui, 2019). The mean score of counterproductive behavior towards individuals ($M_{CWB_I} = 1.73$; $SD = 0.96$) remains relatively lower than the mean score of counterproductive behavior towards the organization ($M_{CWB_O} = 2.47$; $SD = 1.05$). This therefore shows that the context of the Cameroonian public service is strongly dominated by counterproductive behavior towards the organization such as theft and misappropriation of state property as mentioned in the National Anti-Corruption Commission report published in 2020.

The analysis of the correlation matrix reveals that, the different dimensions of empowering leadership (IV) are significantly and positively related to each other. On the other hand, a very significant relationship exists between these dimensions of the IV and the counterproductive work behaviors (DV). All correlations between the dimensions of empowering leadership and counterproductive work behaviors are negative. This trend can be illustrated through the relationships observed between information sharing and the counterproductive behavior towards the organization ($r = -0.409$) and towards individuals ($r = -0.474$). It would appear that information sharing is related to a reduction in the probability of occurrence of counterproductive work behavior. While all the relationships found between the dimensions of empowering leadership and negative emotions are negative, those found between the same dimensions of empowering leadership and positive emotions are all positive. The values of the correlation coefficient between autonomy and negative emotions ($r = -.478$); autonomy and positive emotions ($r = .378$) are particularly illustrative in this finding. It can therefore be concluded that empowering leadership is related to a reduction in negative emotions and an increase in the expression of positive emotions. Positive emotions are negatively related to counterproductive behavior towards the organization ($r = -0.434$) and towards individuals ($r = -0.357$), while negative emotions are positively related ($r = 0.55$) towards the organization ($r = 0.56$) and towards individuals. These observations fully support the idea that counterproductive work behaviors mostly result from the integration of emotional considerations in the choice of adaptive response that involves cognitive processing of aversive situations.

6.2 Hypothesis Tests

The results of the hypothesis test from the linear regression analysis indicate that all dimensions of perceived empowering leadership have a statistically significant effect on employees' emotions. Multiple regression analysis was carried out on SPSS to estimate the direct effects of empowering leader behaviors on counterproductive behavior. These results equally reveal the respective contributions of each empowering leader behaviors in the explanation of the variance of the scores obtained during the evaluation of counterproductive behavior.

Overall, it appears that empowering leadership is a predictor of counterproductive behavior towards the organization ($R_{aj}^2 = 0,222$; $F = 9,861$; $p = 0,000$) and the effect of information sharing remains significant ($\beta = -,254$; $t = -2,289$; $p = 0,023$). However, the effects of other dimensions are insignificant, i.e., management by example ($\beta = -,021$; $p = 0,819$), interaction with the supervisor ($\beta = 0,068$; $p = 0,551$), autonomy ($\beta = -0,173$; $p = 0,275$) and participation in decision making ($\beta = 0,102$; $p = 0,420$). Concerning counterproductive behavior towards individuals, the analyses carried out show that empowering leadership practices represent an explanatory factor with a significant effect ($R_{aj}^2 = 0,321$; $F = 12,115$; $p = 0,000$).

Among the empowering leader, only the effect of information sharing remains significant ($\beta = -,325$; $t = -2,763$; $p = 0,006$). The effects of other dimensions are insignificant. Namely, management by example ($\beta = -,071$; $p = 0,476$), interaction with the supervisor ($\beta = 0,42$; $p = 0,725$), autonomy ($\beta = -,079$; $p = 0,637$) and participation in decision making ($\beta = -0,164$; $p = 0,222$). The result of this analysis indicates that empowering leadership contributes to a significant reduction in counterproductive work behaviors. Similarly, the effect of empowering leader behaviors on employees' emotions turned out to be significant. Empowering leadership specifically helps increase positive emotions ($R_{aj}^2 = 0,321$; $F = 6,985$; $p = 0,000$) in employees. The effect of the information sharing dimension is significant ($\beta = ,217$; $t = 2,286$; $p = 0,02$). The effects of management by example ($\beta = -0,79$; $p = 0,688$) as well as other dimensions remained insignificant. No significant direct effects were observed with participative decision making ($\beta = -0,037$; $p = 0,734$); interaction with the supervisor ($\beta = 0,061$; $p = 0,528$) information sharing ($\beta = -0,217$; $p = 0,024$) and autonomy ($\beta = 0,001$; $p = 0,993$).

On the other hand, it appears that empowering leadership contributes to a significant decrease in negative emotions in employees ($R_{aj}^2 = 0,162$; $F = 12,115$; $p = 0,000$) where information sharing is the only dimension having a significant effect ($\beta = 0,217$; $p = 0,06$). While management by example ($\beta = 0,071$; $p = 0,476$); participative decision making ($\beta = -0,164$; $p = 0,222$); interaction with the supervisor ($\beta = -0,042$; $p = 0,725$) and autonomy ($\beta = 0,079$; $p = 0,637$) have no significant effect. These results reveal that potential effects produced by the different dimensions of empowering leadership crisis may favour the multiplication of counterproductive behaviors towards individuals. However, not all the potential effects observed here are statistically significant. Moreover, the analysis carried out revealed that emotions felt by employees explain their adoption of counterproductive work behaviors towards organizations ($R_{aj}^2 = 0,320$; $F = 37,45$; $p = 0,000$), while the negative emotions expressed tend to favor their

multiplication ($\beta = 0,539; t = 5,655; p = 0,000$), the positive emotions felt rather contribute to their reduction ($\beta = -0,250; t = -2,390; p = 0,018$). This result indicates a need for leaders to multiply actions that generate positive emotions while avoiding those that may cause negative emotions in employees. This would significantly reduce aggressive behaviors towards their organizations. Furthermore, our analyses revealed that employees' emotions account for their engagement in aggressive acts towards individuals ($R^2_{aj} = 0,315; F = 36,575; p = 0,000$). In fact, it appears that the expression of negative emotions significantly increases CWBI ($\beta = 0,585; t = 6,654; p = 0,000$) while positive emotions slightly contribute to their reduction ($\beta = -0,085; p = 0,392$). This result is in line with our hypothesis.

6.3 The Mediation Analysis

Correlation analyses showed that all dimensions of empowering leadership are related to emotions (positive and negative) and counterproductive work behavior towards individuals and the organization. It also appears that emotions, both positive and negative, are related to all the modalities of counterproductive work behaviors. Regression analyses were conducted to clarify the mediating role of emotions in the relationship between empowering leadership and the occurrence of counterproductive work behavior. The guidelines of Baron and Kenny (1986) were followed to test for compliance with the basic statistical postulates of a mediation effect. The analyses conducted in the following lines therefore examine the mediating role of emotions (M) in the relationship between empowering leadership (X) and counterproductive work behavior (Y). Nevertheless, a causal path analysis was used using the structural equation modelling technique (Alger & De Boeck, 2017).

According to Baron and Kenny (1986), perfect mediation is observed if the independent variable no longer has an effect on the dependent variable when the mediating variable is controlled. Conversely, if the relationship between the independent and dependent variable decreases but remains significant when the mediating variable is jointly considered with the independent variable, then a partial mediator effect can be concluded. However, Yzerbyt and al. (2018) have shown that : when the three conditions are met, mediation is effective if and only if the total effect (c) of the independent variable X on the dependent variable Y [$Y = \beta_{1,0} + cX + e_1 (E_1)$] is greater in absolute value than the residual effect (c') of the independent variable X on the dependent variable Y [$Y = \beta_{3,0} + c'X + bM + e_3 (E_3)$]. In other words, assuming that all three equations are correctly estimated, the mediation model has an underlying equality that can be formulated through the following fundamental equation: $c = c' + a \times b$. It appears that the difference between the direct effect (c) and the residual effect (c') of X on Y is equal to the product of the direct effect (a) of X on M and the residual effect of M on Y.

6.4 The Mediating Role of Negative Emotion

6.4.1 Mediating Effect of Negative Emotions in the Relationship between Empowering Leadership and Counterproductive Work Behaviors Towards the Organization

The data in Table 3 below show that all dimensions of empowering leadership significantly inhibit the expression of negative emotions and the occurrence of counterproductive behavior towards the organization. Information sharing is the leadership dimension with the highest inhibitory control over negative emotions ($\beta = -.56; p < .01; R^2_{aj} = .31$) and counterproductive work behaviors towards the organization ($\beta = -.51; p < .01; R^2_{aj} = .25$). Management by example is the leadership dimension with the lowest inhibitory control over negative emotions ($\beta = -.34; p < .01; R^2_{aj} = .11$) and counterproductive work behavior towards the organization ($\beta = -.36; p < .01; R^2_{aj} = .12$).

Table 3. Mediating effect of negative emotions in the relationship between empowering leadership and counterproductive anti-organizational behavior; M_1 refers to the model of the direct effects of empowering leadership dimensions on the expression of negative emotions and the occurrence of counterproductive work anti-organizational behavior; M_2 corresponds to the mediation model

		Negative Emotions (MV)		Counterproductive Work Behavior Towards the Organization (DV)			
		Direct Effect (M_1)		Direct Effect (M_1)		Residual effect (M_2)	
		R^2_{aj}	a	R^2_{aj}	c	R^2_{aj}	c'
Empowering Leadership (IV)	Information sharing	.31	-.56**	.25	-.51**	.37	-.18(ns)
	Management by example	.11	-.34**	.12	-.36		-.08 (ns)
	Interaction with supervisor	.21	-.46**	.15	-.40**		.06(ns)
	Autonomy	.28	-.53**	.23	-.49**		-.06(ns)
	Participation in decision-making	.24	-.50**	.20	-.45**		-.08(ns)

The results also reveal that negative emotions significantly increase the occurrence of counterproductive behavior towards the organization ($\beta = .55; p < .01; R^2_{aj} = .3$). The figure 2 below shows the regression coefficients linking the dimensions of empowering leader behavior to counterproductive behavior towards the organization when negative emotions are included in the regression equation.

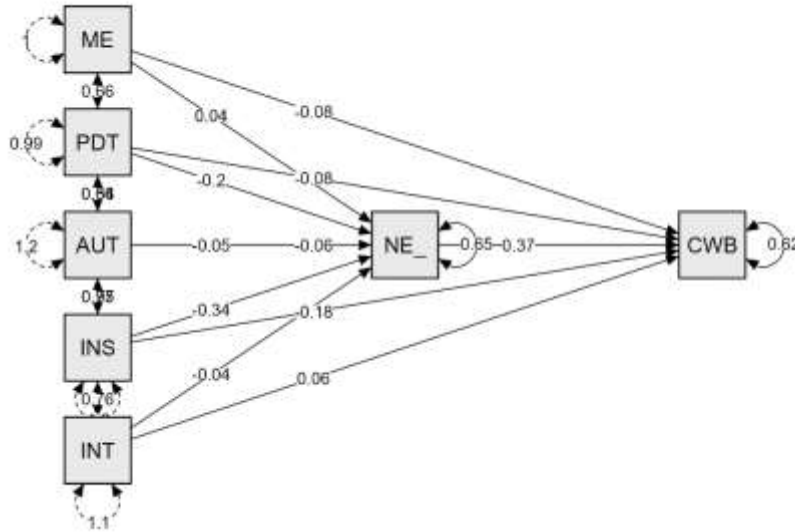


Figure 2. The mediating effect model of negative emotions in the relationship between empowering leadership and counterproductive behavior towards the organization. INT (interaction with supervisor); INS (information-sharing); AUT (autonomy); PDT (participation in decision-taking); ME (management by example); NE (negative emotion); CWB (counterproductive work behavior)

Apparently, the empowering leader behaviors and negative emotions are introduced simultaneously into the same regression equation, all the regression coefficients that evaluate the indirect effects of empowering leadership dimensions lose the ability to reduce the occurrence of counterproductive behavior towards the organization. The effect of interaction with the supervisor is reversed by the effect of negative emotions, thus promoting the occurrence of counterproductive behavior. In line with the hypothesis of Yzerbyt and al. (2018), these results show that negative emotions completely mediate the effects of empowering leadership on counterproductive behaviors towards the organization. The presence of negative emotions nullifies the effectiveness of empowering leadership in the reduction of counterproductive behavior at work. Some leadership practices, such as interaction with supervisors, even lead to an increase in maladaptive behaviors when negative emotions are involved.

6.4.2 Mediating Effect of Negative Emotions in the Relationship between Empowering Leadership and Counterproductive Work Behavior towards Individuals

The data in Table 4 below show that all dimensions of empowering leadership significantly inhibit the expression of negative emotions and the occurrence of counterproductive behavior towards individuals. Information sharing is the leadership dimension with the highest explanatory power for counterproductive behavior towards individuals ($\beta = -.47; p < .01; R^2_{aj} = .22$) whereas management by example is the dimension with the lowest explanatory power for counterproductive behavior towards individuals ($\beta = -.32; p < .01; R^2_{aj} = .09$).

Table 4. Mediating effect of negative emotions in the relationship between empowering leadership and counterproductive behavior towards individuals; M_1 refers to the model of the direct effects of empowering leadership dimensions on the expression of negative emotions and the occurrence of counterproductive anti-organizational behavior; M_2 corresponds to the mediation model.

	Negative Emotions (MV)		Counterproductive Work Behavior Towards individuals (DV)			
	Direct Effect (M_1)		Direct Effect (M_1)		Residual effect (M_2)	
	R^2_{aj}	a	R^2_{aj}	c	R^2_{aj}	c'

Empowering Leadership (IV)	Information sharing	.31	-.56**	.22	-.47**	.36	-.117(ns)
	Management by example	.11	-.34**	.094	-.32**		-.037(ns)
	Interaction with supervisor	.21	-.46**	.123	-.36**		.087(ns)
	Autonomy	.28	-.53**	.21	-.46**		-.16(ns)
	Participation in decision-making	.24	-.50**	.162	-.41**		-.02(ns)

These results also reveal that negative emotions significantly increase the occurrence of counterproductive behaviors towards individuals ($\beta = .56; p < .001; R_{aj}^2 = .31$). The diagram in Figure 3 below shows the regression coefficients linking the dimensions of empowering leadership to counterproductive behavior towards individuals when negative emotions are included in the regression equation.

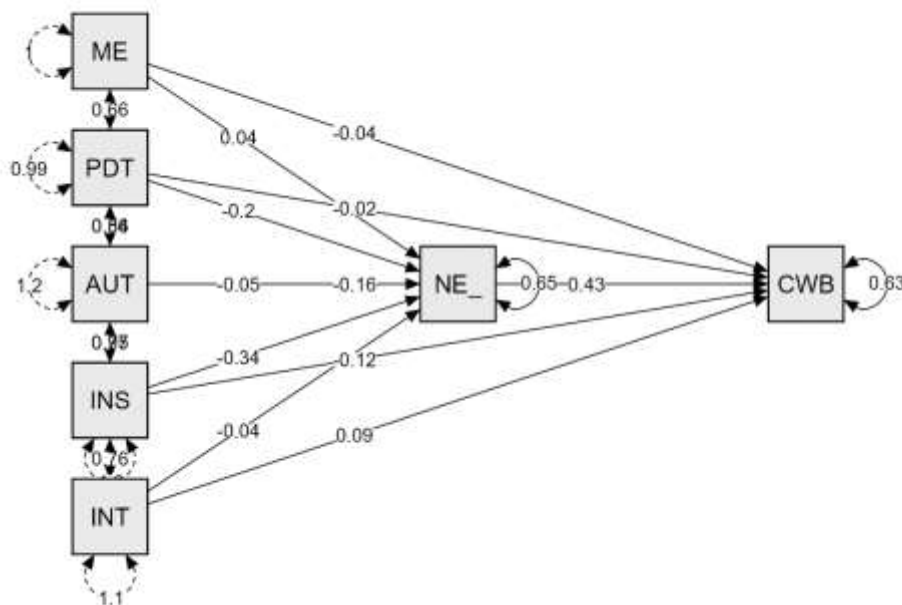


Figure 3. The mediating effect model of negative emotions in the relationship between empowering leadership and counterproductive behavior towards individuals. INT (interaction with supervisor); INS (information-sharing); AUT (autonomy); PDT (participation in decision-taking); ME (management by example); NE (negative emotion); CWB (counterproductive work behavior)

As empowering leadership dimensions and negative emotions are introduced simultaneously into the same regression equation, all the regression coefficients that evaluate the indirect effects of empowering leadership dimensions lose the ability to reduce the occurrence of counterproductive behaviors towards the organization. The effect of the interaction with the supervisor is once more reversed by negative emotions. In line with the hypothesis of Yzerbyt et al. (2018), these results show that negative emotions completely mediate the effects of empowering leadership on counterproductive behavior towards individuals.

6.5 The Mediating Role of Positive Emotions

6.5.1 Mediating Effect of Positive Emotions in the Relationship between Empowering Leadership and Counterproductive Behavior Towards the Organization

The data in Table 5 below show that all empowering leadership dimensions significantly foster the expression of positive emotions and significantly inhibit the occurrence of counterproductive behaviors towards the organization. Further to this trend, information sharing is the leadership dimension with the highest explanatory power of positive emotions ($\beta = .41; p < .01; R_{aj}^2 = .16$). Participation in decision making is the leadership dimension with the lowest explanatory power of positive emotions ($\beta = .32; p < .01; R_{aj}^2 = .10$).

Table 5. Mediating effect of positive emotions in the relationship between empowering leadership and counterproductive anti-organizational work behavior; M_1 refers to the model of the direct effects of empowering leadership dimensions on the expression of positive emotions; M_2 corresponds to the mediation model

		Positive Emotions (MV)		Counterproductive Work Behavior Towards the Organization (DV)			
		Direct Effect (M_1)		Direct Effect (M_1)		Residual effect (M_2)	
		R_{aj}^2	a	R_{aj}^2	c	R_{aj}^2	c'
Empowering Leadership (IV)	Information sharing	.16	.41**	.25	-.51**	.34	-.24*
	Management by example	.10	.33**	.12	-.36		-.023(ns)
	Interaction with supervisor	.10	.33**	.15	-.40**		.06(ns)
	Autonomy	.14	.38**	.23	-.49**		-.074(ns)
	Participation in decision-making	.10	.32**	.20	-.45**		-.17(ns)

These results also reveal that positive emotions significantly decrease the occurrence of counterproductive behaviors towards the organization ($\beta = .55; p < .001; R_{aj}^2 = .31$). The diagram in Figure 4 below shows that: as the dimensions of empowering leadership and positive emotions are simultaneously introduced into the same regression equation, the regression coefficients estimating the indirect effects of empowering leadership dimensions lose their capacity to reduce the occurrence of counterproductive behavior towards the organization, with the exception of information sharing, whose regression coefficient $\beta = -.24; p < .01$) remains significant, in the same direction and with a smaller magnitude than the coefficient for the direct effect $\beta = -.51; p < .01$). We note that information sharing maintains its power to inhibit counterproductive behavior towards the organization when the subsequent emotions are positive. On the other hand, the downward curve of counterproductive behaviors towards the organization seems to reverse when the interaction with the supervisor produces positive emotions ($\beta = .06$). This effect is statistically insignificant. This tendency, previously observed in the presence of negative emotions, suggests that the outbreak of emotions in hierarchical relationships favors the inflation of counterproductive behaviors towards the organization.

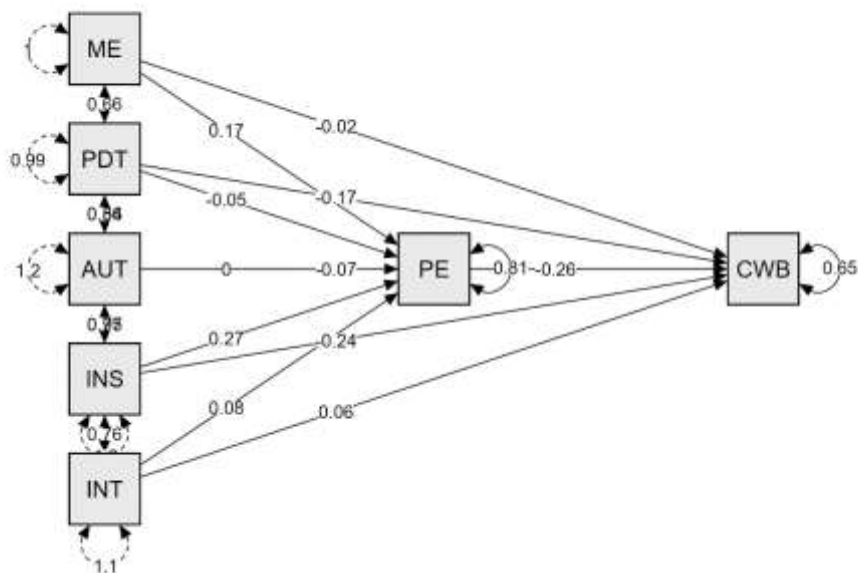


Figure 4. The mediating effect model of positive emotions in the relationship between empowering leadership and counterproductive behavior towards the organization. INT (interaction with supervisor); INS (information-sharing); AUT (autonomy); PDT (participation in decision-taking); ME (management by example); PE (positive emotion); CWB (counterproductive work behavior)

The effect of the interaction with the supervisor is once more reversed by positive emotions. In line with the hypothesis of Yzerbyt et al. (2018), these results show that positive emotions completely mediate the effects of empowering leadership on counterproductive behaviors towards the organization. This mediation is partial on information sharing.

6.5.2 Mediating Effect of Positive Emotions in the Relationship between Empowering Leadership and Counterproductive Work Behavior towards Individuals

The data in Table 6 below show that all empowering leadership dimensions significantly foster the expression of positive emotions and significantly reduce the occurrence of counterproductive behaviors towards the organization. This is evident in the effect of information sharing on the expression of positive emotions ($\beta = .41; p < .01$). The results also reveal that positive emotions significantly decrease the occurrence of counterproductive behaviors towards the individuals ($\beta = -.36; p < .01; R_{aj}^2 = .12$).

Table 6. Mediating effect of positive emotions in the relationship between empowering leadership and counterproductive work behavior towards individuals; M_1 refers to the model of the direct effects of empowering leadership dimensions on the expression of positive emotions; M_2 corresponds to the mediation model

		Positive Emotions (MV)		Counterproductive Work Behavior Towards individuals (DV)			
		Direct Effect (M_1)		Direct Effect (M_1)		Residual effect (M_2)	
		R_{aj}^2	a	R_{aj}^2	c	R_{aj}^2	c'
Empowering Leadership (IV)	Information sharing	.16	.41**	.22	-.47**	.27	-.21(ns)
	Management by example	.10	.33**	.094	-.32**		.01(ns)
	Interaction with supervisor	.10	.33**	.123	-.36**		.08(ns)
	Autonomy	.14	.38**	.21	-.46**		-.18(ns)
	Participation in decision-making	.1	.32**	.162	-.41**		-.11(ns)

The diagram in Figure 5 below shows that: when empowering leadership dimensions and positive emotions are simultaneously introduced into the same regression equation, the regression coefficients that estimate the residual effects of all the dimensions of empowering leadership lose their capacity to reduce the occurrence of counterproductive behaviors towards the organization. The effects of interaction with the supervisor and management by example are reversed under the effect of positive emotions. As a result, the downward curves of counterproductive behaviors towards individuals seem to invert when interaction with the supervisor ($\beta = .08$) and management by example $\beta = .01$) produce positive emotions. These residual effects are statistically insignificant. But this tendency, previously observed with information-sharing on counterproductive behavior towards the organization when negative emotions are involved, also affects management by example on counterproductive behavior towards individuals when positive emotions are involved.

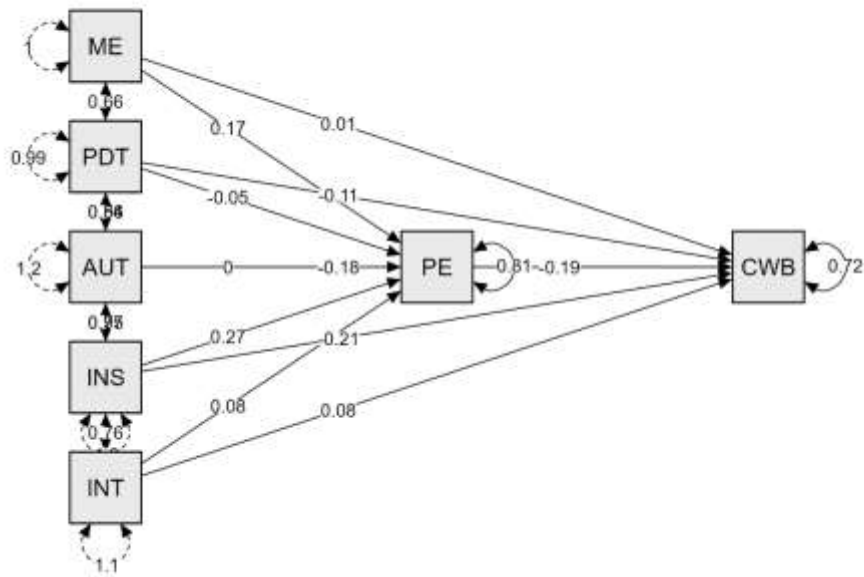


Figure 5. The mediating effect model of positive emotions in the relationship between empowering leadership and counterproductive behavior towards individuals. INT (interaction with supervisor); INS (information-sharing); AUT (autonomy); PDT (participation in decision-taking); ME (management by example); PE (positive emotion); CWB (counterproductive work behavior)

This tendency, previously observed when negative emotions are involved, suggests that the outbreak of emotions in hierarchical relationships favors the inflation of counterproductive behavior towards individuals. In line with the hypothesis of Yzerbyt et al. (2018), these results show that positive emotions completely mediate the effects of empowering leadership on counterproductive behaviors towards individuals.

7. Conclusion

In a nutshell, these results show that emotions only partially mediate the effect of information sharing on the occurrence of counterproductive behaviors towards the organization. It is also found that the inhibiting effects of management by example and interaction with the supervisor on counterproductive work behaviors are reversed when positive and negative emotions are involved. It appears that the display of emotions nullifies the beneficial effects of empowering leadership practices in addressing counterproductive work behaviors. Some leadership practices, such as interaction with supervisors, even lead to an increase in maladaptive behavior when emotions are involved. The interpretation of emotions in hierarchical situations is a problem faced by Cameroonian civil servants. It would seem the expression of emotions fosters maladaptive behavior at work. These results fully support the hypothesis of the catalytic role of ethical breakdown whose emotional drivers mediate the effects of empowering leadership on the occurrence of counterproductive work behaviors.

8. Discussion

From the analyses conducted, it appears that empowering leadership practices increase the opportunities for employees to express positive emotions while reducing the occurrence of negative emotions and counterproductive work behaviors. The emotions felt by employees mediate the effects of perceived empowering leadership on counterproductive work behavior. However, it should be noted that when empowering leadership practices are present, negative emotions maintain their power to drive counterproductive work behaviors. On the other hand, when they are associated with empowering leadership practices, positive emotions enhance their inhibiting power of counterproductive work behaviors. In some cases, the association of empowering leadership practices and positive emotions increases the probability of occurrence of counterproductive work behavior. These include management by example and interaction with the supervisor. Finally, one must keep in mind that the expression of emotions, both positive and negative, is useless in the struggle towards maladaptive work behaviors. As a result, the diversity and severity of transgressions may increase as line relationships become emotionally strenuous. Nevertheless, the result of this study highlights that in a context where line relationships carry more positive than negative emotions, employees engage in less counterproductive behaviors, even though works done by Rein et al. (1995) admit that negative affects tend to be retained longer in memory longer rather than positives affects. However, if positive emotional sequences occur in a

context dominated by negative emotions, there will be an increase in CWB towards the organization and individuals. This finding proves that adaptive skills arise from the evaluation of emotions in interaction contexts. The ability to identify emotions has been associated with social skills in adults (Denham & al., 2015). Previous studies have also found that emotional knowledge predicts peer acceptance and adaptive social behaviors (White & al., 2021). In contrast, difficulties with emotional recognition predict social problems (Nowicki et al., 2019), and internalizing symptoms (Dede et al., 2021). These observations go in line with the *Stressor Emotion Model* (Spector & Fox, 2005). The *Stressor-Emotion Model* establishes a linear causal relationship between lack of autonomy, negative emotions and counterproductive work behavior. This reflects the need to emphasize employees' autonomy and access to information in order to reduce their propensity for theft, embezzlement, corruption, etc., which are rife in the public service today. In his study model, Kelley (1992) points that in leadership practice, the best followers are committed subordinates who are able to courageously state their views. However, in order to achieve this, managers need to create a suitable environment that enables them to become "exemplary co-workers". This can only be possible if the manager sets an example and is a role model for the employees.

Bies and his collaborators have found that employees generally also expect managers to treat them with respect, honesty, courtesy and politeness, to care about their rights and well-being and to observe certain moral standards of interpersonal behaviors (Bies & Moag, 1986; Bies, 2001). In this case, the supervisor appears as a relational partner whose level of respect for the principles of interpersonal behavior constitutes a criterion for employees to judge his or her fairness (Bies, 2001) and loyalty (Tyler & DeGoey, 1996). Moreover, Erhart and Klein (2001) observed in a study that employees would prefer to work with a relationship-oriented leader, as opposed to a charismatic or task-oriented leader.

Previous studies have shown that empowerment leadership leads to the development of positive effect and prosocial behaviors at work. This form of leadership is based on a process of power sharing by formal leaders that improves the autonomy, potential, purpose and impact of employees and work teams (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999). This study follows this trend by noting that the crisis of empowering leadership activates negative emotions in employees and leads them to adopt counterproductive work behaviors in response, which may be targeted either towards the organization that employs them, or towards individuals working there (authorities and colleagues) or those who attend for a service needed (customers).

This study encourages managers to emphasize employee empowerment in order to stimulate positive emotions, which is one of the key factors of commitment and prosocial work behaviors. More importantly, these leadership practices help to avoid tensions and resentments within the organization which can lead to revenge (Fleury, 2020) or counterproductive behaviors (Spector & Fox, 2005).

Similar to previous studies on the model, the emotions felt by the employee are addressed in this study as processes through which certain identified variables contribute to the development of counterproductive behaviors at work. However, Fida et al. (2014) noted the importance of moral disengagement in the process of an employee violating an organizational norm. Bandura (2016) defines moral disengagement as a set of ways in which individuals rationalize their wrong (unethical) actions. It is the propensity of an individual to use cognitions that allow them to restructure their unethical actions so that they appear less cruel, while mitigating the distress that would result from the harm, they cause to others. Future research could further explore this relationship by including this mediating variable in a bid to better explain anti-organizational behaviors.

Authors' contribution and conflict of interest.

1. Nyock Ilouga Samuel was in charge of the conceptual aspects, data analysis and discussion of the results;
2. Djigou Jacques was in charge of the drafting, literature review and data collection;
3. Moussa Mouloungui Aude Carine was in charge of the format, ethical considerations and references.

Declaration of Conflicts of Interests

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