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Power to the people: A social identity perspective on organizational decentralization and employee well-being

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Abstract

Organizational identification underpins a range of important outcomes in the workplace, including workers' well-being. Drawing on the social identity approach to health (SIAH), here we explore whether certain organizational forms—specifically, organizational decentralization—can boost organizational identification and, in this way, employee well-being. We test this possibility in four high-powered samples of workers in the UK, US and Italy (N total = 1960). Results confirm that workers are more likely to identify with an organization when they perceive power to be decentralized. Importantly, we find the expected indirect effects between increased decentralization perceptions and ratings of improved well-being (including job satisfaction, work engagement and reduced burnout) through organizational identification. These results were consistent across samples, proving the generality of the findings across different cultural contexts. Empirical and practical implications of shared decision-making power to increase workers' well-being are discussed. Please refer to the Supplementary Material section to find this article's Community and Social Impact Statement.

KEYWORDS
decentralization, identity, power, well-being

1 | INTRODUCTION

There is strong evidence that employees' identification with their organizations matters for a wide array of positive organizational outcomes. That is, the more employees see themselves as members of their organization and incorporate this perception into their sense of self, the more likely they will prioritize their organizational goals over their own self-interest (Ellemers, De Gilder, & Haslam, 2004; for a meta-analytical review see Lee, Park, & Koo, 2015). Importantly, the benefits of organizational identification have also been shown to extend to workers themselves. Specifically, a growing body of work shows that organizational identification can also boost employee well-being (Haslam, 2004; Haslam, Jetten, Postmes, & Haslam, 2009; Knight & Haslam, 2010, for a review see Steffens, Haslam, Schuh, Jetten, & van Dick, 2017). Notwithstanding this, there is very little evidence that can speak to the impact of different forms of organizing on employee identification. In this paper, we aim to take a first step in this direction by examining whether employee perceptions of the degree to which their organization decentralizes (versus centralizes) power are associated with their tendencies to identify with their organization. Applying a SIAH (SIAH; Haslam, Jetten, Cruwys, Dingle, & Haslam, 2018; Jetten et al., 2017), we also examine whether this translates into improved employee well-being.

1.1 | Decentralization and organizational identification

One of the fundamental tasks for organizational leaders is to adopt a form of *organizing* that will allow them to solve the core challenges of the division of labour and integration of effort in ways that secure high levels of performance (Martela, 2019). The efficacy of any particular form of organizing can be expected to be highly dependent on an organization's specific goals and the characteristics of its competitive environment (Alexy, 2022). At the same time, large-scale changes in the characteristics of contemporary organizational environments—including the rise of automation, the introduction of new communication technologies, and changes in the demographic and other characteristics of the workforce—have been accompanied by changing trends in the adopted forms of organizing (Bailey, Faraj, Hinds, Leonardi, & von Krogh, 2022).

One of the most notable contemporary trends has been a shift from more traditionally bureaucratic forms of organizing—characterized by tall hierarchies and centralization of control (Monteiro & Adler, 2022)—to more decentralized forms (Daft & Lewin, 1993; Malone, 2004; Martela, 2019; see, for example the cases of Zappos, Valve, Semco, Morning Star, or Buurtzorg; Lee & Edmondson, 2017; Bernstein, Bunch, Canner, & Lee, 2016; Gino, Staats, Hall, & Chang, 2013; Puranam & Håkonsson, 2015). Organizational decentralization is associated with the distribution of decision-making power to workers at lower levels of the organization and (in some cases) with a flatter organizational structure. To date, researchers have given little attention to the investigation of alternative approaches to organizing and their socio-psychological outcomes. This is somewhat surprising, when we consider that studies on power have proliferated in the field of social psychology since its foundation, focusing, for example, on the effect of holding power for decision-making and interpersonal relations, and even personality (e.g. authoritarian personality; Martin, 2001). Attitudes toward social hierarchies have also attracted the attention of social psychologists, including the seminal work on social dominance orientation (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). This field generally envisages power as a negative issue, emphasizing its problematic consequences, as for example, did Kipnis' classic study (Kipnis, 1972) showing that even a temporary attribution of power leads the person in charge to devalue their subordinates (for a review on consequences of power see Guinote, 2017). We here devote our attention to the other side of the power coin, namely its sharing, and the potential that this may have positive implications for employees.

At present, there is very little work that has empirically examined the impact of decentralization on organizational outcomes. Furthermore, the work that does exist appears to have focused exclusively on organizational performance (e.g. Aghion, Bloom, Lucking, Sadun, & Van Reenen, 2021). This means that there is, to our knowledge, very little if any work that can speak to the possibility that organizational decentralization may have implications for

employee psychology more generally, let alone the foundational construct of organizational identification that is our current concern (Lee et al., 2015). Importantly, however, there are several theoretical reasons for expecting that decentralization may boost employees' identification with their organization.

First, in line with a social identity account, equal status (which is highly intertwined with power, see Thye, 2000) among people promotes the development of a sense of common identity (Brown, 2000). Decentralization of power implies that the classic vertical dynamic between leaders and subordinates is somewhat dismantled, instead leaving room for more equal interactions among members of an organization.

Second, according to the group engagement model (Tyler & Blader, 2003), decision-making processes are important antecedents to organizational identification. Following Tyler and Blader (2003; see also Smith & Tyler, 1997; Tyler & Blader, 2003), employees will identify more with their organization if they perceive these decision-making processes to be respectful and to reflect the high consideration with which they are regarded in the organization. It seems reasonable to expect that the decentralization of decision-making power involving employees at lower levels of the organization is perceived as a respectful act; one that communicates the degree to which the organization values an employee's expertise and trusts them to make the right decisions. In line with this, Fuller et al. (2006) report that healthcare employees who perceive that they are (among other things) able to participate in decision-making in their organization feel more respected, and, in turn, more identified with the organization. Also, Neill, Men, and Yue (2020) find that employees' sense of identification is directly influenced by open and participatory communication climates.

Third, according to the self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987), one of the fundamental determinants of an employee's organizational identification is the degree to which they perceive that they fit with the organization and its members. There is empirical backing for this claim, as a number of studies have shown that employees who perceive that there is a good fit between their own values and preferences and those of the organization also report increased organizational identification (e.g., Cable & De Rue, 2002; Demir & Budur, 2019; Saks & Ashforth, 1997, 2002). We argue that by involving employees in shaping organizational decisions, strategies and goals, decentralization allows employees to engineer greater fit between their own values and preferences and those that the organization ultimately pursues. In this way, organizational decentralization can be expected to increase employees' organizational identification.

1.2 | Decentralization and well-being: A social identity approach to health

To the extent that organizational decentralization boosts organizational identification, it should deliver a range of positive implications for workers' well-being.

As extensively studied by the social identity approach to health (SIAH) (Haslam et al., 2018; Jetten et al., 2017), people's health is closely related to their relationships within groups of people, which shapes their self-understanding and behaviour. Thus, one's well-being depends not only on the individual but also on the groups to which the individual belongs: in this context, group identity has the capacity to act as a "social cure" (Haslam et al., 2018; Jetten et al., 2012; Haslam et al., 2009; Jetten et al., 2017), positively impacting well-being. The SIAH has been applied in different contexts, including community (Bowe et al., 2022), family (Stevenson, Costa, Wakefield, Kellezi, & Stack, 2020), and workplace (Alexander Haslam, 2014; Haslam et al., 2017). Concerning the latter, there is a well-established evidence that organizational identification is associated with employee well-being (Haslam, 2004; Haslam et al., 2009; Knight & Haslam, 2010, for a review see Steffens et al., 2017) and their work engagement (Wang, Xu, Zhang & Li, 2020). For example, in the study by Prati and Zani (2013) involving six health organizations and 5,195 employees, the more workers identified with the organization they were working in, the more they felt satisfied with their job and had lower turnover intentions. According to De Giorgio et al. (2022), organizational identification impacts more than just work outcomes but also personal well-being, including levels of stress and happiness. Organizational identity also affects employees' physical health: Van Dick and Wagner (2002) provided evidence of a moderate

correlation between identification and different physical symptoms, such as headaches, neck-and shoulder pain, and weariness. According to Van Dick and Haslam (2012), this positive effect of identification on well-being can be explained by the fundamental human needs group-based identification can satisfy, including safety, belonging, self-enhancement and meaning.

Applied to the organizational context, this work suggests that the well-being of the individual worker is influenced by the organizational context in which he or she is embedded. Capitalizing on the potential of groups, decentralization of power and the consequent shared decision-making can be expected, therefore, to be beneficial for workers' health and well-being.

2 | AIMS OF THE PRESENT WORK

The present work explores the effect of employee perceptions of the decentralization of power in their own organization on organizational identification (*H1*) and, as a result, on well-being (specifically, job satisfaction, work engagement and burnout, *H2*), in four high-powered samples of workers in the UK, US and Italy. As the studies utilize almost identical methods, we will describe them together.

Understanding whether this form of organizing can foster organizational identification and, consequently, worker's well-being, is important. First, this understanding provides crucial insights about the interplay of organizational structure and social dynamics. In this way, it contributes to the growing body that applies a socio-ecological lens to psychological processes (e.g. Uskul & Oishi, 2020). Second, although the organizational outcomes of social identification at work have been widely explored, a great deal is still unknown about the socio-psychological consequences of different organizational structures. Therefore, from a theoretical perspective, an examination of the ways in which organizational structure can affect social identification offers opportunities for the development of new, and potentially generative, hypotheses and theoretical claims. From a practical perspective, this work may provide vital guidance on how organizational leaders can seek to boost identification among their employees. Third, a final contribution of the present study relates to our focus on employees'' well-being. Recommendations for strengthening organizational identification are often described as politically naïve or problematic in the sense that they take a managerial perspective that ignores or harms employees' perspectives and goals (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005; Tyler & Blader, 2003). This can be avoided by focusing on the worker as the final beneficiary of any potential intervention.

3 | METHOD

3.1 | Participants

We administered our survey to samples (500 for each data collection) of part-time or full-time workers on Prolific Academic. As we expected that decentralization may vary with the size of an organization, we systematically targeted employees who worked for three different types of organizations: micro-enterprises, small- and medium-sized enterprises, and large private enterprises or publicly listed/traded enterprises. We requested gender-balanced samples. We excluded participants who did not meet our inclusion criteria, that is, working part- or full-time, and holding the desired nationality (British, North American or Italian, as appropriate for the study). We additionally excluded participants who may have provided low quality data as indicated by their failure to correctly answer two attention checks ("Answer 6 to this question to prove you are paying attention"; "Answer 4 to this question to prove you are paying attention") and/or who completed the survey very fast (<4 min) or very slow (>2 h; Buchanan & Scofield, 2018; McGonagle, Huang, & Walsh, 2016). After exclusion, the final sample for analytic purposes consisted of 1960 workers (UK1 $N = 499$; UK2 $N = 493$; USA $N = 487$; Italy $N = 481$; see Table 1 for complete demographics of the samples).

TABLE 1 Demographics characteristics of the four samples.

Variable	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4
Location	UK	UK	USA	Italy
Gender				
Women	*N* = 249	*N* = 249	*N* = 220	*N* = 230
Men	*N* = 247	*N* = 243	*N* = 225	*N* = 247
Non-binary	*N* = 3	*N* = 1	*N* = 5	*N* = 4
Age *M* (*SD*)	38.91 (11.40)	38.22 (11.39)	31.95 (9.08)	31.90 (8.85)
Seniority *M* (*SD*)	3.68 (1.48)	3.88 (1.46)	3.55 (1.54)	3.29 (1.51)
Political orientation *M* (*SD*)	40.55 (22.61)	41.01 (22.30)	36.52 (30.97)	35.82 (19.34)
Subjective SES *M* (*SD*)	53.54 (18.15)	54.76 (17.48)	55.52 (21.69)	56.02 (16.42)
Organization type				
Micro	*N* = 49		*N* = 50	*N* = 66
SME	*N* = 251	*N* = 493	*N* = 244	*N* = 168
Large	*N* = 199		*N* = 143	*N* = 176
Other				*N* = 71

Note: Age measured in Years, political orientation measured on a scale from 1 = extreme left to 100 = extreme right; subjective SES measured of scale from 1 = much worse than the average; 100 = much better than the average; seniority measured on scale from 1 = bottom of the ladder; 7 = top of the ladder.

The data that we report here were collected as part of a larger project whose main scope was to develop and validate a scale of *perceived organizational decentralization* (https://osf.io/36ker/?view_only=b0643a7a3af24d39a80d1 e66d0230638). The findings that we report in this paper have not been previously published.

3.2 | Procedure

Participants were recruited to take part in a study on organizational structure, and were asked to reflect on their own organization before responding to the scales assessing organizational decentralization of power, identification with the organization, job satisfaction, burnout, work engagement and some demographic characteristics. As part of a broader project aiming to validate a scale of organizational decentralization and assess organizational outcomes, we also measured a number of other variables, which are not reported here but can be provided by the authors upon request. For Samples 1 and 2 (UK), we assessed only job satisfaction as a well-being outcome. For Samples 3 and 4 (USA and Italy), we also included work engagement and burnout.

3.3 | Measures

3.3.1 | Perceived organizational decentralization

Perceived organizational decentralization was assessed through the 10-item scale by [blinded for peer review]. This scale measures the degree to which decision-making authority is decentralized to employees in different aspects of organizational functioning. Participants responded to all scale items on 7-point Likert scales (where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree): "In my organization, employees often decide what tasks to do through a group discussion with peers"; "All employees have a say in what tasks are needed in my organization at any particular point in

time"; "All employees have a say in who is responsible for particular tasks in my organization at a particular point in time"; "Employees can all have a say in what goals my organization should pursue at any particular point in time"; "All employees can be part of the process of deciding what my organization's goals are"; "All employees can influence my organization's goals"; "The methods that employees use to do their work are often determined through a group discussion with peers"; "All employees can have a say on how to go about getting their job done inside my organization"; "In my organization, employees often determine their working schedules through a group discussion with peers"; "All employees can have a say on how to arrange working schedules inside my organization" ($\alpha = .92$ [UK1]; $\alpha = .93$ [UK2]; $\alpha = .95$ [USA]; $\alpha = .92$ [Italy]).

3.3.2 | Organizational identification

Organizational identification was measured through an adapted version of the 4-item scale of Postmes and colleagues (2013); for example, "I identify with my organization", "I feel committed to my organization"; "I am glad to be a member of my organization"; "Being a member of my organization is an important part of how I see myself"; ($\alpha = .96$ [UK1]; $\alpha = .94$ [UK2]; $\alpha = .95$ [USA]; $\alpha = .94$ [Italy]).

3.3.3 | Job satisfaction

We used a single item to assess job satisfaction "Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your current job?" (from 1 = extremely dissatisfied to 7 = extremely satisfied; Scarpello & Campbell, 1983), since a single-item approach has been shown to compare favourably with other measures of job satisfaction in the past (see for example Nagy, 2002; Scarpello & Campbell, 1983).

3.3.4 | Burnout

Burnout was measured through the 16-item scale by Demerouti and colleagues (2010); $\alpha = .94$ [USA]; $\alpha = .89$ [Italy]. Example items include "It happens more and more often that I talk about my work in a negative way"; "Lately, I tend to think less at work and do my job almost mechanically"; "There are days when I feel tired before I arrive at work"; "During my work, I often feel emotionally drained".

3.3.5 | Work engagement

To assess work engagement we used the short version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9; Schaufeli, 2013; $\alpha = .96$ [USA]; $\alpha = .94$ [Italy]). The UWES-9 includes three dimensions that reflect the underlying dimensions of engagement: vigour (3 items; e.g., "at my work, I feel bursting with energy"); dedication (3 items; e.g., "my job inspires me"); and absorption (3 items; e.g., "I am immersed in my work"). The shortened version (using 9 of the original 17 items) of the UWES has proven to be a valid measure, and the three scale scores have good internal consistency and test–retest reliability (Schaufeli, 2013; Seppälä et al., 2009). For the Italian sample, we used the Italian validation by Balducci et al. (2010). Total mean scores (range 1–7) were calculated.

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | Decentralization and organizational identification

First, we tested our claim that organizational decentralization would increase organizational identification. To do this, we ran two regression analyses: the first with organizational decentralization as predictor and identification as dependent variable, and the second also adding demographic characteristics (position in the organization, age, educational level, political orientation, subjective socioeconomic status and income) as covariates. In the first regression, organizational identification was linked to identification in all the samples analysed (UK1 $t = 14.04$, $SE = .049$, $p < .001$; UK2 $t = 16.06$, $SE = .035$, $p < .001$; USA $t = 15.67$, $SE = .042$, $p < .001$; Italy $t = 17.65$, $SE = .044$, $p < .001$). In the second regression, the relationship remained statistically significant after adding demographics (Table 2).

4.2 | Indirect effects analysis

Next, we tested our claim that if decentralization affected organizational identification, it could be expected to also (and for this reason) affect employee well-being. To test this possibility, we used the software JASP (Love et al., 2019) to examine the indirect effects of perceived decentralization on the well-being outcomes through organizational identification. First, we reported the correlations between perceived decentralization, identification and organizational identification for the 4 samples in the open material on OSF (https://osf.io/36ker/?view_only= b0643a7a3af24d39a80d1e66d0230638) as part of the scale validation project. Organizational decentralization, identification, and outcomes related to well-being were strongly correlated. Second, we tested indirect effects for each sample, involving as outcome variables job satisfaction, burnout and work engagement, and as mediator organizational identification, with bootstrapping for 5,000 resamples and 95% confidence intervals (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) for each of the samples. Results were consistent across samples (see Table 3 and Figures 1 and 2).

5 | DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTION

The importance of shared identity in organizations has been stressed in several applications, domains, and for different outcomes (Millward & Postmes, 2010), including workers' well-being (De Giorgio et al., 2022; Dick and Wagner; 2002; Haslam, 2004; Van Dick & Haslam, 2012). In this paper, we set out to investigate the role of organizational power structure in predicting identification with the organization, ultimately affecting workers well-being. Specifically, and in line with our first hypothesis, we provided initial evidence that perceptions of organizational decentralization of power are linked with identification with the organization. That is, employees will identify more strongly with the organization if they perceive that its power is shared among all the employees. In line with the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1979), which emphasizes the importance of group identity in overcoming challenges and functioning well in life, we here posit that sharing power within an organization makes workers feel a part of the decisions made, which facilitates the emergence of a shared identity. Our work validates past literature on social identity, taking it a step further and considering shared decision-making power as one of the factors underpinning the creation of a sense of belonging inside organizations in a domino effect. The present work not only contributes to the literature on the underpinnings of shared identity formation within organizations, but also demonstrates that promoting shared decision-making power within companies has beneficial effects for workers. In line with a social identity approach to health, we found that the impact of decentralized power on shared identity turns into beneficial outcomes for the work-related individual dimensions, protecting workers from burnout and promoting their engagement

TABLE 2 Regression table for each sample including demographics.

	Factor	Standardized estimates	Standard error	p-value
UK1	Decentralization	.48	.051	<.001
	Seniority	.20	.050	<.001
	Months worked in the organization	−.03	.011	.53
	Age	.08	.006	.07
	Education	−.04	.059	.31
	Political orientation	.05	.003	.20
	Subjective SES	.06	.004	.17
	Income	−.03	.031	.46
UK2	Decentralization	.57	.036	<.001
	Seniority	.12	.035	<.001
	Months worked in the organization	.02	.009	.59
	Age	.08	.004	.05
	Education	.004	.043	.92
	Political orientation	.02	.002	.56
	Subjective SES	.09	.003	.04
	Income	−.06	.022	.14
USA	Decentralization	.48	.045	<.001
	Seniority	.22	.047	<.001
	Months worked in the organization	.10	.010	.011
	Age	−.01	.006	.84
	Education	.01	.078	.82
	Political orientation	−.03	.004	.48
	Subjective SES	−.04	.004	.41
	Income	.05	.029	.33
Italy	Decentralization	.59	.044	<.001
	Seniority	.16	.043	<.001
	Months worked in the organization	−.03	.013	.59
	Age	.05	.009	.30
	Education	.04	.047	.24
	Political orientation	.03	.003	.39
	Subjective SES	.02	.004	.56
	Income	.05	.031	.28

and satisfaction with their job. Results were consistent across countries and samples, ensuring the robustness of the effect.

Our work has a number of strengths, including multiple data collections across countries, high-powered samples, and different facets of workers' well-being analysed. Our findings do, however, suggest some potential constraints on their generalizability. First of all, the cross-sectional nature of our design makes it impossible to determine the direction of our results. In line with this, a recent line of research also emphasizes that statistical models cannot provide evidence for causality per se where the mediator and outcome are measured simultaneously (see, for example, Fiedler et al., 2018). Second, despite analysing different working outcomes, others remain unaddressed. We

TABLE 3 Indirect effects for each sample.

	Sample	Job satisfaction	Burnout	Work engagement
Indirect effect	UK 1	$b = .27$ $SE = .024$ 95% CI = [.22; .32] $p < .001$	-	-
	UK 2	$b = .28$ $SE = .02$ 95% CI = [.23; .34] $p < .001$	-	-
	USA	$b = .26$ $SE = .02$ 95% CI = [.21; .31] $p < .001$	$b = -.25$ $SE = .02$ 95% CI = [−.30; −.21] $p < .001$	$b = .29$ $SE = .02$ 95% CI = [.25; .34] $p < .001$
	Italy	$b = .30$ $SE = .03$ 95% CI = [.02; .36] $p < .001$	$b = -.21$ $SE = .03$ 95% CI = [−27; −.16] $p < .001$	$b = .34$ $SE = .03$ 95% CI = [.29; .39] $p < .001$
Direct effect	UK 1	$b = .028$ $SE = .04$ 95% CI = [−.15; .091] $p = .16$	-	-
	UK 2	$b = .11$ $SE = .030$ 95% CI = [.05; .18] $p < .001$	-	-
	USA	$b = .11$ $SE = .02$ 95% CI = [.05; .18] $p < .001$	$b = -.09$ $SE = .02$ 95% CI = [−.16; −.03] $p < .001$	$b = .04$ $SE = .02$ 95% CI = [−.002; .09] $p = .040$
	Italy	$b = .06$ $SE = .03$ 95% CI = [− .01; .13] $p = .063$	$b = -.05$ $SE = .04$ 95% CI = [−13; −.02] $p = .19$	$b = .03$ $SE = .03$ 95% CI = [−.03; .09] $p = .25$
Total effect	UK 1	$b = .31$ $SE = .030$ 95% CI = [.24; .37] $p < .001$	-	-
	UK 2	$b = .40$ $SE = .03$ 95% CI = [.34; .46] $p < .001$	-	-
	USA	$b = .37$ $SE = .02$ 95% CI = [.32; .42] $p < .001$	$b = -.34$ $SE = .02$ 95% CI = [−39; −.29] $p < .001$	$b = .34$ $SE = .02$ 95% CI = [.28; .39] $p < .001$
	Italy	$b = .36$ $SE = .03$ 95% CI = [.39; .42] $p < .001$	$b = -.26$ $SE = .03$ 95% CI = [−34; −.19] $p < .001$	$b = .37$ $SE = .03$ 95% CI = [.31; .44] $p < .001$

Path model for job satisfaction (Samples 1 and 2, UK) with standardized coefficients. Asterisks indicate statistically significant effects (p <.001).

FIGURE 1 Path model for job satisfaction (Samples 1 and 2, UK) with standardized coefficients. Asterisks indicate statistically significant effects (p < .001).
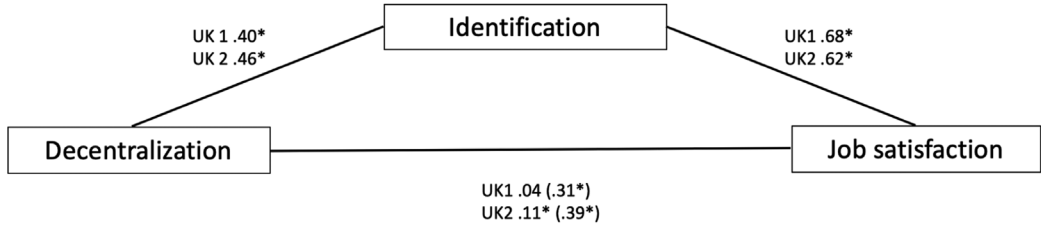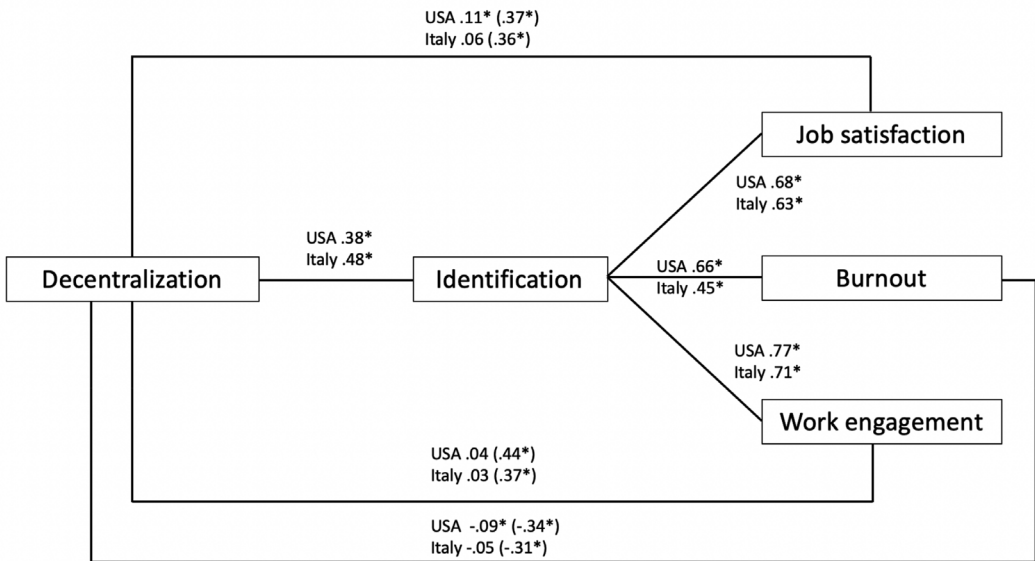
Path model for job satisfaction, burnout, and work engagement (Samples 3 and 4, USA and Italy) with standardized coefficients. Asterisks indicate effects with p <.001.

FIGURE 2 Path model for job satisfaction, burnout, and work engagement (Samples 3 and 4, USA and Italy) with standardized coefficients. Asterisks indicate effects with p < .001.

encourage future work to move beyond what we have here measured, reaching organizational productivity or involving different components of well-being (e.g. differentiating between hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, Lent, 2004; Thorsteinsen & Vittersø, 2020 or analysing the impact of decentralization on individuals' ability to balance working activities and life). Moreover, our research calls for future studies addressing the chain here proposed with empirical strategies that could attest for causal relations (e.g. experimental or longitudinal paradigms) and that bring a step forward on the path we have here initiated.

5.1 | Theoretical and practical implications

From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to our understanding of the nomological network of underpinnings associated with identification with the organization and workers' well-being. Building upon the nascent body of research investigating how structural variables play a role in shaping workers' well-being (Jiang & Probst, 2017; Debus et al., 2012), our studies offer yet another piece of evidence that structural variables, such as the distribution of power inside the organization, can influence well-being outcomes. Indeed, organograms frequently stress a hierarchical organization, with a few people in charge of the decisions affecting the majority of the subordinates. However, this shape -albeit the most frequent- is not the only possible (Martela, 2019; Martela, Kostamo, & Mäkkeli, 2022). Organizational diagrams spreading power among all workers are not only imaginable but also performed worldwide (see the already mentioned Zappos, Valve, Semco, Morning Star or Buurtzorg; Bernstein et al., 2016; Gino et al., 2013; Lee & Edmondson, 2017; Puranam & Håkonsson, 2015). Hence, it is crucial to investigate whether and how these new organizing possibilities have an impact on employees' work outcomes.

From a practical standpoint, companies and leaders interested in promoting employee well-being can take a cue from our research and seek to develop not only organizational contexts in which decision-making power is shared among all workers, but also procedures to allow the voices of individual members to be heard, considering specific decisions. Since we believe that a radical change in organizational governance is not always possible, we urge organizations to look for specific decisions in which to involve workers, for example during the process of deciding on working hours and working arrangements, and not necessarily on all business decisions, such as setting strategic goals or making decisions with respect to salaries. Along this line, we have here conceptualized decentralization as developing on a continuum and encouraged companies to consider which elements of this continuum are most relevant to their particular case. Regardless of the degree of decentralization that individual organizations may adopt, we believe that creating work contexts in which individuals feel part of decisions is effective in promoting the emergence of a common identity and self-definition of the individual from an "I" "me" to a more inclusive "we", "us".

Despite this evidence, there are strong reasons to think that many leaders would not be willing to make this choice, especially if we focus on traditional models where the differences between the leader and their followers are highly emphasized and legitimized in terms of power and status. The sharing of decision-making power impairs the perception of the leader and the followers as two distinct entities, therefore reducing the recognition of roles and de-legitimizing the leading ability ascribed to the leaders (Haslam and Peters, 2018). Here, we argue that it may also harm the well-being of employees (in line with Steffens, Yang, Jetten, Haslam, & Lipponen, 2018). The social identity approach to leadership takes an alternative perspective, highlighting that to be effective, leaders need to build a sense of shared identity. One way of doing this is through identity entrepreneurship that shapes the environment in ways that build, rather than destroy, this shared identity (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011; Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005).

6 | CONCLUSIONS

Our research focused on the role of organizational structure in shaping workers' well-being. Our findings suggest that perceptions of decentralized power inside the organization enhance workers' identification with the organization, ultimately affecting their job satisfaction, work engagement and burnout symptoms. Besides the theoretical and practical implications for organizations, our work calls for future research on the path we have initiated here, in order to understand the benefits, limitations and complexities of this form of organizing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest. Studies were approved by the institutional IRB board and all participants consented to study protocols and data use online. The present manuscript follows ethical guidelines specified in the APA code of conduct and follows the authors' national ethics guidelines.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in OSF at https://osf.io/36ker/?view_only=b0643a7a3af24d39a80d1e66d0230638.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.