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**Research Article**

# Empowering Leadership as A Catalyst for Knowledge Sharing: Evidence from North India

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| Abstract |
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| This study examines the impact of empowering leadership on knowledge sharing, emphasizing the mediating role of employee quiet. A total of 430 participants from various organizations across North India engaged in the data collection procedure and data is further analysed using SPSS and AMOS 21. The findings reveal that empowering leadership is negatively correlated with employee silence while showing a positive correlation with knowledge sharing. Moreover, there is a negative relationship between employee silence and the knowledge sharing. These findings underscore the importance of leadership in creating an open communication atmosphere that promotes information sharing while reducing employee silence. The study has theoretical and practical implications for improving organizational performance using effective leadership tactics. |

**KEYWORDS:** Keywords empowering leadership, employee silence, knowledge sharing

## INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving and fiercely competitive business landscape (Lang *et al.*, 2022), employees serve as the cornerstone of organizational success by offering valuable insights, opinions, and solutions to pressing issues (Liu *et al.*, 2020; Song *et al.*, 2021). Employees draw upon existing knowledge to produce innovative insights, potentially leading to a competitive edge (Bierly & Chakrabarti 1996). Employees are the important resource of an organization. Employees often have ideas,

information, and opinions for constructive ways to improve work and work organizations. Despite this, many employees hesitate to voice their thoughts and instead choose to remain silent (Milliken *et al.*, 2003; Prouska & Psychogios, 2018), creating a critical barrier to innovation and progress. Dyne et al. (2003) describe silence as when employees have pertinent ideas, information, and opinions but choose not to communicate them. Classical theory of organization contemplated human being as an economic man but it is not pertinent to the current work environment. People are expressing their perception, thoughts, experience, emotions, and attitudes about the work and organization through divulging using multimedia and other gadgets (Beheshtifar *et al.*, 2012). At the same time, many employees in an organization may be incapable of expressing their feelings or emotions in any manner, due to its management policies or other reasons. Organizational members can suppress their concerns about difficult or unpleasant personal or organisational issues by remaining silent.

Organizational silence can significantly hinder effectiveness; however, it is notable that there has been limited research on its underlying causes or strategies for mitigation. Recent research on empowering leadership indicates that supportive managers extend their roles beyond task assignment; they provide active support to staff during challenging periods and promote initiative in addressing organizational issues (Miao *et al.*, 2013; Hassan, Park, & Raadschelders, 2018; Park & Hassan, 2018). This leadership style fosters a collaborative environment that encourages staff to address concerns and demonstrate initiative. Innovative organisations have a realistic outcome by improving the way people and staff work, promoting greater self-esteem and value for themselves (Xue *et al.*, 2011). The capacity to assess and take action is empowerment. Empowerment allows employees to effectively carry out desired activities rather than simply raise their expectations for positive outcomes. Empowering leader serves as a catalyst for knowledge sharing behaviour (Tung *et al.*, 2011). The leaders have the ability to improve the self-efficacy of individual and have influence on team members in an empowering organizational structure. If teammates will make decisions on their own, they must provide ample knowledge to ensure that decisions taken by them are fair and justifiable. They are therefore more likely to share information before and during the decision-making process with one another (Xue *et al.*, 2011). They withdraw themselves from commenting about the function or drawbacks of the organization in which they are working. Sometimes these employees exercise voice and express their ideas, information, and opinions; and other times they engage in silence and withhold their ideas,

information, and opinions. In many cases, they choose the safe response of silence, withholding input that could be valuable to others or thoughts that they wish they could express. Researchers have referred to this as employee silence (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Pinder & Harlos, 2001). When the system reinforces silence, the diverse viewpoints, opinions, preferences, and goals that may exist within the organization are not likely to be given voice and, hence, will not enter into the processes by which the organization establishes objectives, decides on appropriate courses of action, and attempts to learn from experience (Morrison & Milliken, 2000).

Empowering leadership practices are significantly linked to behaviors that mitigate employee silence, including improvement-oriented voice (Park & Hassan, 2018) and an increased sense of personal agency (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Randolph & Kemery, 2011). The findings offer important insights for public managers, providing strategies to enhance open communication and mitigate silence within their organizations.

In order to address deficiencies, present in the existing silent literature and the absence of empirical research regarding the impacts of empowered managerial practices, we put forth a conceptual model. This model clarifies how empowering supervisory methods can decrease the chances of public employees withholding essential organizational information, while also fostering a culture of knowledge sharing.

The subject of why employees either decide to speak or not in an organizational situation is of monumental significance. In the 1990's, scholars continued to focus on voice mechanisms and it was not until the year 2000, as a result of Morrison and Milliken's highly publicized article in the Academy of Management Review, that scholars began to focus on the relation between management practices, organizational policies and silence and other antecedents to a "climate of silence" (Bagheri *et al.*, 2012).

**Objectives of the study**
- To study the effect of empowering leadership on employee silence
- To study the effect of employee silence on knowledge sharing.
- To study the effect of empowering leadership on knowledge sharing.

**Figure 1:** Conceptual model of the study
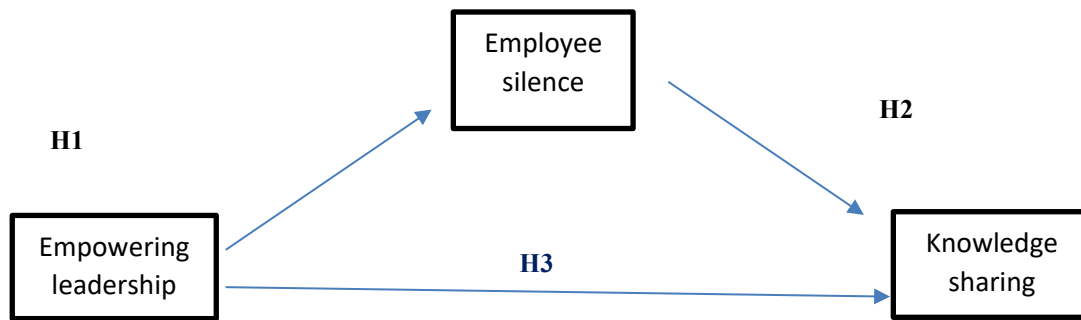


## LITERATURE REVIEW

Empowering leadership and Employee Silence Empowering leadership has a direct relation with silence of employees. By increasing confidence, allowing workers more control over their work, and strengthening their identity or emotional connection with their organisations, empowering leadership action: s of frontline supervisors will minimise public employee silence (Hassan *et al*., 2019). Empowering leadership has significant impact on constructive voice behaviour of employees (Jada et al., 2018). Results also demonstrate the negative link between transformational leadership and defensive and pro social silence by PTMs (Zhu *et al*., 2019).

**H1:** Empowering leadership have negative and significant relationship with employee silence.

Employee silence and knowledge sharing

Employee silence negatively impacts the creative and innovative capacities of employees and hinders efficient communication and smooth organizational operations (Bari *et al*., 2020). Studies demonstrate that fostering mutual participation and communication among employees improves positive behaviors and diminishes negative tendencies, such as knowledge-hiding behaviors (KHBs) (Boz Semerci, 2019). According to Joseph and Shetty (2022), silent employees intentionally refrain from sharing knowledge and information, adopting a passive position that implies a conscious decision to disengage from disseminating useful knowledge.

**H2:** *Employee silence has positive and significant relationship with knowledge sharing.*

Empowering leadership and knowledge sharing

According to Wu et al. (2017), the knowledge sharing behavior of individuals within a work group is directly affected by empowering leadership, with this connection being partially mediated by psychological resources. The findings of (Lee *et al*., 2014) confirm that the empowerment of leadership by team leaders increases the level of information sharing among team members. Leadership empowers individuals to share information dramatically by shifting their mind set towards sharing knowledge. The enzyme that facilitates and encourages information sharing is motivated leadership. (Xue *et al*., 2011).

**H3:** *Empowering leadership has positive and significant relationship with knowledge sharing.*

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Participants

Data was obtained from employees in organizations located in North India. We distributed a self-administered questionnaire via Google Forms to 500 employees. The employees submitted 443 questionnaires. Following the screening process, we identified some incomplete questionnaires, resulting in a total of 430 for subsequent analysis. A total of 430 employees including 274 male and 156 male, participated in the survey. Most of the respondents are married (59.3%) and majority of employees holding graduation degree (54%).

### Instruments

The self-reported questionnaire contains 15 questions designed to measure empowering leadership, employee silence, knowledge sharing behaviours and demographics.

Empowering leadership is assessed using a 5-point Likert scale developed by Vecchio *et al*. (2010). The scale comprised ten statements "my leader advises me to address issues as they arise without consistently seeking approval", "my leader encourages me to seek solutions independently." Knowledge sharing is assessed using a 5-point Likert scale developed by Hooff and Ridder (2004). The scale comprised five statements, such as "I willingly share the information I have with colleagues w ithin my department", "I voluntarily share my skills with colleagues outside my department." Employee silence is assessed utilizing a five-point Likert scale established by Brinsfield (2013). The scale comprised five statements, such as "I often remain silent at work because the issues do not personally affect me" and "I often remain silent at work because I believe that nothing will change." Demographics as age, education qualification, gender, marital status and job experience, were also included in the survey.

### Results

To assess the validity of the constructs of Empowering Leadership (EL), Employee Silence (AS), and Knowledge Sharing (KS) for measurement, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) model was implemented. The unidimensionality of the data is supported by the connection between each latent variable and its corresponding observable indicators. These indicators

are specifically designed to load exclusively onto the constructs they represent. The factor loading of all the three constructs are within acceptable range as shown in figure 1.

**Figure 1:** AMOS Output for the Measurement Model
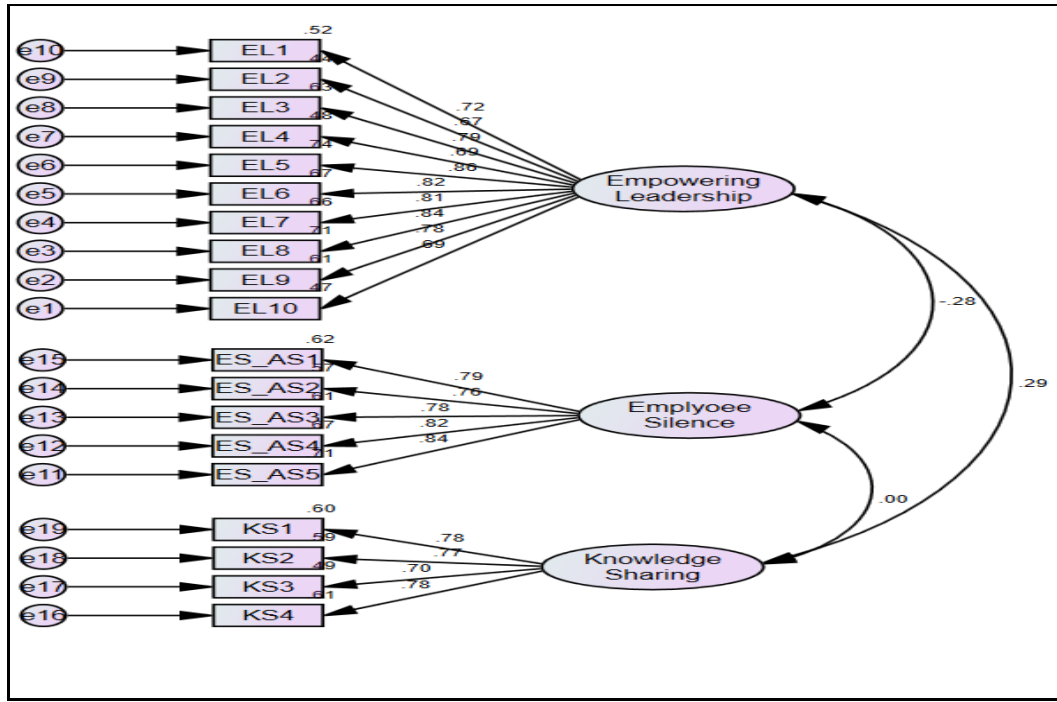


**Source:** Primary Data

The established construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity are presented in the table above.
All values exceed the acceptable threshold limits (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The model fit indices indicate an overall excellent fit, with all values falling within the acceptable range (Hair *et al*., 2010). The specific indices are as follows: CMIN/DF = 3.062, GFI = 0.928, AGFI = 0.924, TLI = 0.953, RMSEA = 0.056, and RMR = 0.075.

**Table 1:** Construct Validity and Reliability

|  | CR | AVE | MSV | Max R(H) | EL | AS | KS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EL | 0.935 | 0.594 | 0.329 | 0.942 | **0.770** | | |
| AS | 0.898 | 0.637 | 0.078 | 0.901 | -0.279*** | **0.798** | |
| KS | 0.870 | 0.626 | 0.329 | 0.873 | 0.574*** | -0.262*** | **0.791** |

**Source:** Primary Data

**Figure 2:** AMOS Output of Structural Model
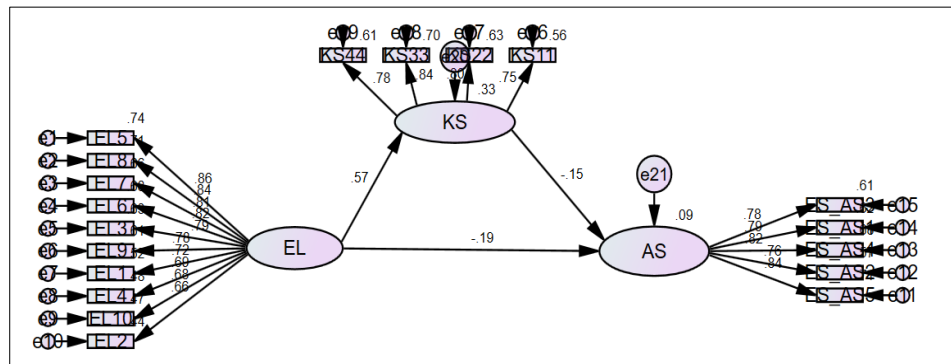


**Source:** Primary Data

The SEM results indicate that empowering leadership significantly predicts increased knowledge sharing ($\beta = 0.57$) and decreased employee silence ($\beta = -0.19$). This finding suggests that empowering leadership helps to lower employee silence within organizations while fostering knowledge sharing. Furthermore, there is a negative association between knowledge sharing and employee silence ($\beta = -0.15$), indicating a partial mediating effect. All measurement items demonstrated satisfactory loadings ($\geq 0.66$), which confirms the reliability of the constructs.

## CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the relationship between empowering leadership, employee silence, and knowledge-sharing behavior. The findings indicate that empowering leadership negatively correlates with employee silence and positively correlates with employees' knowledge-sharing behavior. This suggests that leaders should adopt an empowering leadership style to reduce employee silence and enhance knowledge sharing within the organization. Employee silence hampers the exchange of knowledge among staff, leading to a decline in knowledge-sharing behavior. Such a reduction in knowledge-sharing behavior can stifle innovation within the organization and result in decreased cooperation among staff members.

Employee silence promotes unethical behavior, inhibits innovation, delays organizational transformation, and allows mistakes to go unreported, putting organizations at considerable danger. The results of this study indicate that by building trust, increasing job autonomy, and strengthening employees' sense of organizational identity, frontline supervisors can significantly reduce silence.

### Implications

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on leadership as it shows that how empowering leadership leads to enhance innovation and knowledge sharing behaviour among employees and how it reduces atmosphere of employee silence in organization. Empowerment decreases the feelings of helplessness, vulnerability and tension among the staff. By exerting empowering leadership by frontline managers can helps employees to inculcate an attitude of enquiry and circumvent silence behaviour as they feel more comfortable about sharing information regarding work issues (Hassan *et al*. 2019). It promotes the knowledge sharing behaviour of employees and inspires them to inculcate new skills and information and trigger employees' creativity. Empowering leadership builds an atmosphere that involves employees in decision-making and therefore magnifies inbound open innovation performance of organizations (Naqshbandi et al., 2019). Empowering leadership of team leader that elevates the magnitude of knowledge sharing among employees and ultimately improves the performance of project teams (Lee *et al.,* 2014).

The existing research on employee silence in organizations does not include experimental studies that examine these three factors together. This study aims to deepen understanding of how empowered leadership affects employee silence, clarifying the effectiveness of different approaches.

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