The Empowerment Bridge: Assessing the Role of Employee Empowerment in Transmitting the Impact of Servant and Transformational Leadership on Creativity and Team Innovation

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Abstract

Creativity and innovation is the most needed attributes of any organization as only these respective characteristics can ensure a long term growth and glory of a firm. Such behaviours can easily be obtained through transformational and servant leadership as both the above mentioned styles care for the growth of employee with a sense of empowerment. This study is also aimed to find out the impact of servant and transformational leadership on employee creativity and team innovation respectively in the mediating role of employee empowerment. The sample of respondents was collected from telecom sector of Pakistan as 265 employees take part in survey through simple random sampling. The results have predicted that both servant leadership and transformational leadership have significant influence on employee creativity and team innovation respectively. Empowerment is also found a strong mediator in this regard. This study is significant as it is testing some unrevealed relations by putting servant leadership and empowerment in a model of creativity and innovation.

Key Words: *Employee Creativity, Team Innovation, Servant Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Empowerment and Telecom Sector of Pakistan*

1. Introduction

Technological advancements are currently reshaping the global economic landscape, transforming the way businesses conduct their operations, engage in trade, allocate investments, and develop novel products. In today's business environment, the capacity for creative and innovative thinking has become indispensable for

enterprises aiming to sustain their relevance and thrive (Chen et al., 2020; Christensen-Salem et al., 2021).

Transformational leadership actually plays the role of transformational build-up in the individuals to bring them to the point where they could become effective leaders themselves. That is why it is considered as the most effective type of leadership because it brings the most productive results as compared to all other kinds of leadership (Avolio et al., 2008).

On the other hand, servant leadership, the leader always serves the co-workers or team members as a first priority. The needs of team members are given more importance as compared to personal needs. (Greenleaf, 1977) Servant leadership is very much similar to transformational leadership because both aim at motivating and boosting up the team members' abilities and performance. Here the leader always tries to involve all the team members in discussions and decision making to build a relationship with them. Team members are not merely considered as workers, they are given almost an equal status as the leader himself tries to be at their place to know about them much closely (Graham, 1991).

Such effective leadership styles are vital to induce creativity and innovation in organization. Innovations and creativity are the teams' collective efforts to make the organisation stand firmly in the competitive market (Dayanti & Yulianti 2023). It gives the organisation a pace to use their resources more effectively than their competitors. Innovation is always an intentional change that aims at winning a greater repute for the organisation. Legrenzi, 2010 and Shaw (2006) The two major factors that can make team innovation and creativity better are intra-group safety and strong group integration process. Such creativity and innovation can't be fully accessed until an environment of empowerment is induced. Employee empowerment is considered as the best way to get the most out of employees at workplace so it can help to enhance the creativity and innovation at workplace (Honold, 1997).

Absence of team innovation and creativity has been noticed in organisations. The innovation and creativity is diminishing within the organisations due to which the ratio of profit and revenue is also decreasing. Many past researches have tried to

analyse the relationship between team innovation and creativity with the organisations. There are various factors that influence the creativity and innovation on personal as well as on organisational level. Scholars have suggested that creativity and innovation are inwardly linked to each other. Creativity is the thought of a new modified idea and innovation is the practically applying that idea. The organisation on the whole relies on team innovation because of the rapidly increasing dynamic demands of the competitive market. Amabile (1998) suggested various dimensions of creativity and innovation which include encouragement of the employees and their mutual participation in developing the creative ideas for the organisational manufacturing. Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, (1996) On the other hand Ramus (2001) believe that employees' creativity can be enhanced by giving them certain incentives and rewards. Moreover some scholars have also suggested that the amount of resources provided is directly proportional to the ratio of creativity. If the employees are being provided with a huge range of resources, the creativity will automatically increase because he will be having a larger spectrum to spread his ideas of innovation. According to Amabile and Gryskiewicz (1987), challenging work always have positive influence on the creativity (Schawlow, 1997).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Servant Leadership and Transformational Leadership

Servant leadership was firstly proposed by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970 in which he termed the leader as a servant. According to Greenleaf the servant leader tends to make serving others as his first and the most important objective within an organisation. (Greenleaf, 1977) According to the scholars, the servant leadership is a way to adopt, understand and fulfil responsibilities as well as a way of leadership. Many studies have proposed that a servant leader is both task-oriented and people oriented at the same time.

Servant leadership plays a crucial role in enabling employees to access resources (Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2021). Servant leadership actively encourages employees to seek answers, tackle challenges, and even rewards them with promotions for their proactive engagement (Karatepe et al., 2019). On the other hand

transformational leadership theory was founded by Burns (1978) and Brass (1985, 1998) enhanced it later. It is defined as the style of leadership in which the leaders play transformational roles. Scholars have suggested that due to the internalised vision of the leaders in transformational leadership, the organisations achieve heights of success. The transformational leadership consists of several patterns such as charismatic abilities, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration (Avolio, 2007). Researchers and analysts consider another style of leadership as the most applicable style because of its positive contribution towards the growth of organisational development. It is the transformational style of leadership. Transformational leadership is considered by many scholars as a helping hand for the individuals of any organisation to lead them to the way of achieving their goals.

The transformational leader has been seen as transformer by many scholars because he always innovates and induce uniqueness of progress and efficiency into his followers and tend to bring them to the status where they find leadership qualities developed in them in the due course of their learning. (Jung, Chow, & Wu, 2003)

The transformational style of leadership is further divided into four other dimensions regarding its role and applicability. These are mainly intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, inspirational motivation and idealized influence. All these dimensions have been seen overlapping on each other in many studies but they do not cancel or diminish each other's impact rather they work for the enhancement and progression of each other's effectiveness. (Hartog, Muijen, & Koopman, 1997)

Scholars define intellectual stimulation as the way of guidance given to the followers by their leader to induce creativity in them. On the other hand, in individual consideration, the individual needs and existence of the team members is given priority. Inspirational motivation is defined by scholars same as the idealised influence. This also gives the followers to get inspire of the skills, values and behaviour of their leader. In the idealised influence the leader is an ideal for the followers. He provides them with the knowledge, skills, broader vision and inspiration that leads them towards the achievement of their goals.

Scholars term transformational leadership as charismatic style of leadership because the outcome of the transformational leadership is unique to it. According to Shamir, the self-concept theory could be used to explain the impact of transformational leadership on employees' activity. Analysts suggest that a transformational leader always contain persuasive qualities that make him appealing to the followers and the team members and they willingly accept him as their leader. (Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992) The behaviour, attitude, communication style, skills and abilities make a transformational leader a motivator for the employees. The way a transformational leader leads his followers dwell a positive effect on the employees' efficiency and it also generates motivation in them.

2.2 Employee Creativity and Team Innovation

According to scholars, there are certain other variables acting dependently, independently or as mediating factors within any organisation such as team innovation, creativity and employee empowerment. Innovation is an integral part of an organisation. Innovation is the vital for long-term growth and profits of organisations. According to the scholars like Tidd and Bessant (2009), innovation always help the organisation to stand in the competitive market ahead of all other competitive organisations in the target market. Innovation always need new and raw ideas to be implemented to create unique and innovation in the product (Tidd, Pavitt, & Bessant, 2001). Scholars have suggested many ways to create innovation in teams working under an effective leader. Some of those ways are self-acknowledgment, collaboration with team members, communication for learning, courage etc (Edquist & Hommen, 1999).

Many researches proposed that for conducting an innovative activity first of all one has to trust one's own self. Trust and confidence are the keys that can lead a person to innovate things more effectively. On the hand many analyst take collaboration as an effective factor of innovation. According to studies collaboration is not only taken as being together but developing faith in each other too. (Hesselbein, Goldsmith, & Somerville, 2002) A team should be having faith in each other to make the process of creation effective and efficient. Before collaboration there is another progressing step

i.e. more important to reach to the status of highly innovative productivity. Scholars say that communication among the team members as well as communication among the leader and his team members is very important because this communication allows a process to take place at a dynamic level. Communication allows everyone to share the ideas and such kind of discussions and sharing lead to the formation of an innovative idea. There is another important factor in the process of innovation i.e. courage. Scholars suggest that courage and self-trust are co-related with each other as they both require confidence and faith on one's own self. (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) It is evident from many studies that innovation has its roots in the creativity process. Many researchers termed both of them interlinked and overlapping with each other because they has the same objective i.e. to produce something new and unique as compared to all others of the same category. According to scholars, creativity is the outcome of many basic needs whether biological, physical, aesthetic, intellectual or psychological. When an individual needs to fulfil any of the desires, it results in creativity. Creativity can be cognitive, spontaneous, and emotional or deliberate (Reid, King, & DeLorme, 1998).

2.3 Relationship of Servant Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Employee Creativity and Team Innovation

Servant leadership is pivotal in facilitating employees' access to resources (Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2021). This leadership style actively promotes and incentivizes employees to proactively seek solutions, confront challenges, and even offers rewards such as promotions for their active engagement (Karatepe et al., 2019).

In relation to the servant leadership, the effect of leadership on the creativity and innovation has been studied by many scholars. Their studies define that the relationship between the leader and its followers directly influence the quality of the work being done within the domains of the organisation along with its market value. Scholars suggest that a positive relation between the follower and the leader focuses on the personal, social, psychological, mental needs of the followers because they are vital parts of the organisation (Greenleaf, 2002; Isaksen & Lauer, 2002). In various models defining the relationship between organisations and its members, it has been

made evident that the work environment and the behaviour of the leader are two factors that influence the rate of creativity and innovation in the productivity of the organisation. The literature written by many scholars about impact of servant leadership explains the theory that the behaviour and way of a leader in providing guidance to the followers, his ethics, values and intentions are the way to generate loyalty among the team members (Dayanti & Yulianti 2023). According to Cooper & Thatcher and Fredrickson, a servant leader does not always tend to take out creativity form the followers, rather he tries to put them at ease within the organisation in such a way that they automatically put their efforts for more and more creativity to pay back for what has been given to them.

On the basis of above discussion, following hypothesis are going to be presented;

H1: Servant leadership has a significant impact on employee creativity.

H2: Transformational leadership significantly influences team innovation.

2.4 Mediating Role of Employee Empowerment Between Servant leadership and Transformational leadership and Employees creativity and Innovation

Along with creativity and innovation employee empowerment is also one of the pillars on which any organisation stands. Scholars define employee empowerment in both psychological and structural ways. According to Patah, in psychological terms employee empowerment is self-efficiency. On the other hand Kanter gives structural definition of employee empowerment that it is the factor that directly influences the behaviour of employees' activities, efficiency and behaviour within the organisation (Mustafa & Bon, 2012; Patah, Zain, Abdullah, & Radzi, 2009). As described earlier that researchers have evaluated certain variables in their researches that play an important role in any organisation. Among them one is always a mediating variable which totally and strengthen changes the whole scenario of the organisational activities. According to managerial scholars one of the most important mediating variable is employee empowerment which has a vital role in the leadership management and productivity of the organisation.

Previous literature suggests that employee empowerment has been taken as a management technique that is more effective than any other management technique.

This is the reason that employee empowerment got scholarly attention in every decade. Studies suggests that empowerment is of two types mainly. On is psychological empowerment and the other is motivational empowerment. (Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000) Psychological attention is when the employees are given with the psychological satisfaction within the domains of their workplace. Whereas the motivational empowerment is the incentives given to the employees by the leaders that generate motivation in them to act more efficiently and to do work with more enthusiasm.

Studies suggest that organisational structure directly influence the empowerment of the employees. Through careful observation scholars have found that social structures like self-esteem, information sharing, power distribution, rewards, culture and transformational leadership all are the determinants of employee empowerment. (Seibert, Silver, & Randolph, 2004) Scholars have always favoured the transformational style of leadership because transformational leaders always enhance the abilities and effectiveness of their followers by encouraging them to take initiatives in different tasks. In transformational leadership when the employees are empowered it ultimately results in the organisational commitment. (Jung & Sosik, 2002) Researches and case studies have suggested that supporting attitude of the leaders in a transformational leadership and the individual considerations are also the determinants of organisational development and commitment.

Various scholars have suggested the models for the influence of servant leadership on employee empowerment too. Various studies have been done to have in-depth view of the relationship between servant leadership and the employee empowerment. (Russell, 2001) It has been found in many researches that a transformational leader focuses on achieving the goals for the organisation while a servant leader focuses on the development of the individuals. Empowerment given in the servant leadership allows the individuals to learn, grow and progress in the concerned fields. Greenleaf proposed his research to describe the relation between empowerment and servant leadership. According to him a servant leader always use

his skills and abilities to contribute to the well-being and upheaval of the organisation as well as of the whole society outside the organisation.

The empowerment of employees has been seen as a consistent factor influencing the organisational development. Previous literature proposes that both formal and informal sharing of power by the leader gives motivation and structural empowerment to the employees. (Chebat & Kollias, 2000) In any organisation mangers seek the effectiveness of employees by giving them empowerment in various ways. It is evident through many factors that the employee empowerment has been proved as a positive factor in the development of any organisation.

In terms of the dependant and independent variables within any organisation, it has been studied that dependant and independent variables directly influence each other's role. As in the above discussion servant leadership and transformational leadership have been taken as independent variables while creativity and team innovation have been taken as dependant variables. Scholars have portrayed the creative organisation as a combination of innovation, commitment, loyalty and better leadership. All these factors together make any innovative production happen or formulated. So following hypotheses are going to be assumed ;

H3: *Employee empowerment significantly mediates the relationship between servant leadership and employee creativity.*

H4: *Employee empowerment significantly mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and Team Innovation.*

Theoretical Framework
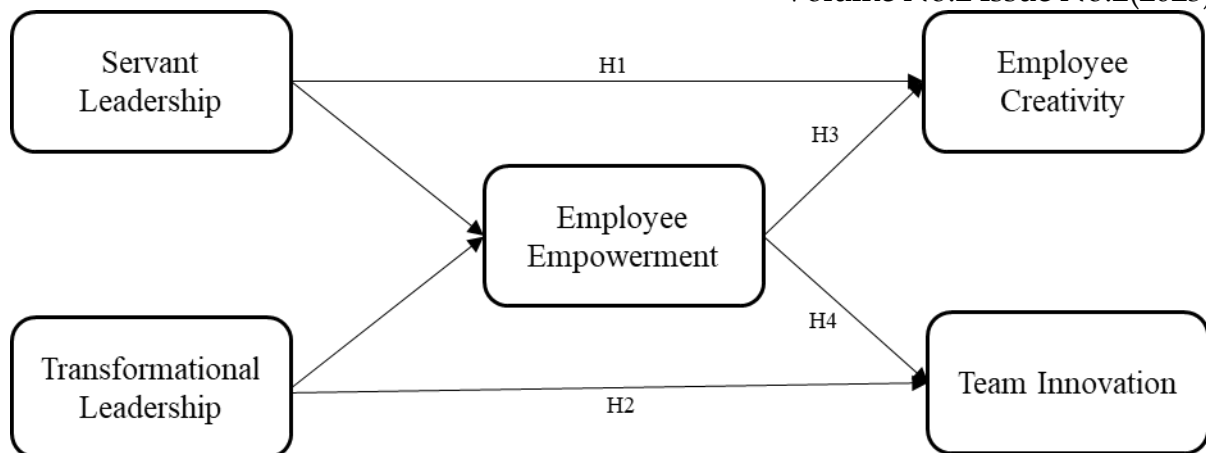
3. Methodology

This is an empirical cross sectional research which has been conducted to check the relationship among servant leadership, transformational leadership, employee creativity and team innovation in the mediating role of employee empowerment.

3.1 Sample

In the current study simple random sampling has been used to get the most feasible sample for this study. As it is not a simple process to apply and evaluate theories and models on the whole populations or all the concerned organisations so a small sample of 265 individuals linked with telecom sector has been taken. The sample was chosen by the random sampling technique which is considered as the best techniques because it provides an unbiased ground to select and evaluate population from every unit equally.

3.2 Data Collection

To progress with the evaluation of the study the survey technique was adopted. The survey was done with the help questionnaires. Overall there were 265 questionnaires that were distributed among the sample and all were perfectly received back. So the sample for the study remained 265 on the whole i.e. n=265. Questionnaire was comprised of 37 items in all in which all the variables of the model were included according to importance and need of the study.

3.3 Procedure

For the data collection of the current study, the employees of the telecom sector were targeted. Telecom franchises of Gujranwala were selected in this regard as data was

collected from the employee of Telenor, Zong, Mobilink, Ufone and Warid. The objective lying behind the selection of telecom sector was its competitiveness in today's cotemporary market. All the questionnaires were got filled under self-supervision as it is the most effective way of taking out a questionnaire survey. Under self-supervision the sample can be guided easily regarding queries about the questions or items included in the concerned questionnaire. It also allows the surveyor to guide the sample about the theme of the questions and research model so that they could be at ease to give answers to the questions and the findings would be more be much accurate. Confidential assurances were also given to the sample because some of the questions of the survey were of sensitive nature and after confidential assurance the individuals were as ease to give their answers.

3.4 Measures

All the responses were measured on 5 point likert scale in which 1 was represented strongly disagree while 5 were for strongly agreed. The reason of using such scale is to ensure flexibility for respondent.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

The aim of this research study was to examine the influence of Servant Leadership on Employee Creativity and Transformational Leadership on Team Innovation, with a particular focus on assessing the mediating role of Employee Empowerment. To accomplish this research objective, various statistical tests were employed, including reliability analysis, correlation analysis, regression analysis, assessments of collinearity, examination of residual statistics, and the utilization of the Andrew F. Hayes test for investigating mediation and moderation effects. The study findings were subsequently summarized and presented in tabular format for a more concise representation.

Table-1 Reliability Analysis

S. No	Variable	N	Cronbach alpha
1	Servant Leadership	265	0.957

2	Transformational Leadership	265	0.976
3	Employee Creativity	265	0.785
4	Team Innovation	265	0.821
5	Employee Empowerment	265	0.917

Table 1 provides an overview of the reliability assessment of the variables utilized in this research study. Specifically, the Cronbach alpha coefficients for Servant Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Employee Creativity, Team Innovation, and Employee Empowerment are reported as 0.957, 0.976, 0.785, 0.821, and 0.917, respectively.

Regression Analysis

Table-2

Regression Analysis of Servant leadership and Employee creativity

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.679ᵃ	.462	.459	1.12271
a. Predictors: (Constant), ServLead				

To assess the influence of Servant Leadership on Employee Creativity, a linear regression analysis was conducted, and the outcomes are presented in Table-2. The table indicates that the overall variation in the dependent variable, Employee Creativity, can be explained by the independent variable, which is Servant Leadership, as indicated by the R-squared value.

Mediating Role of Employee Empowerment in between Servant Leadership and Employee Creativity

Total effect of X on Y

Effect	SE	t	p
.8178	.0545	15.0140	.0000

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	SE	t	p
.7801	.0572	13.6381	.0000

The table presented above reveals the mediating role of Employee Empowerment in the relationship between Servant Leadership and Employee Creativity. Specifically, the details provided in the table indicate that Employee Empowerment serves as a mediator in the relationship between Servant Leadership and Employee Creativity. This is supported by the fact that the p-values associated with both the total effect and the direct effect are found to be statistically significant.

Mediating Role of Employee Empowerment In between Transformational Leadership and Team Innovation

Total effect of X on Y

Effect	SE	t	p
.5039	.0449	11.2332	.0000

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	SE	t	p
.3973	.0438	9.0655	.0000

The table presented above indicates the mediating role of Employee Empowerment in the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Team Innovation. The details provided in the table suggest that Employee Empowerment acts as a mediator in the connection between Transformational Leadership and Team Innovation. This is substantiated by the fact that the p-values associated with both the total effect and the direct effect are statistically significant..

5. Discussion

The proposed hypothesis was tested on various statistical analysing formulas and the data and findings was evaluated carefully. The influence of all the variables like transformational leadership, servant leadership, creativity, team innovation and employee and all the existing relations among them were found positive. Various tests were applied on the data to conclude the results.

H1 has been accepted as Pearson correlation signalled a significant correlation between servant leadership and employee creativity which is 0.679 along with a p-value which is less than 0.05. Standardized beta has indicated that servant leadership

brings 67% positive increase in employee creativity and values for t-test and f-test are also in the acceptable range. H2 has also been accepted as 0.569 value of correlation between transformational leadership and team innovation is quite significant. Regression test also indicated that transformational leadership increases the team innovation by 56%. H3 and H4 have also accepted as the total effect was greater than the direct effect in Andrew F. Hayes test.

After the commencement of the evaluation tests it has been found that servant leadership effects the creativity and team innovation and the servant leader leads his followers towards the perfection of their efficiency. (Farling, Stone, & Winston, 1999) Moreover it has also been found that transformational leaders always motivate the employees to excel in their organisational activities and also empower them by giving them a certain place on decision making table.

The analysis of the data collected from the telecom sector showed that the dependent variables i.e. team innovation and creativity and the independent variables i.e. transformational leadership and servant leadership are positively linked to each other. And the mediating variable i.e. employee empowerment has been found the most significant variable playing a vital role and also influencing the organisational developmental processes in many ways. (Schneider & George, 2011)

6. Conclusion

Creativity and team innovations are the things that are dreamed by any organisation to gain market benefits. Dedication, loyalty, attitude and behaviour of leaders are the spices that add to the productivity and profits of the organisation. Along with these factors employee empowerment has also been proved as the most significant element in enhancing the market value of any organisation because empowerment generates motivation in the employees to give more efforts towards the betterment of the organisation. Therefore, the Employee empowerment has been found the most significant mediator for developing the strong positive relation between all the dependent and independent variables.

In the current study the servant leadership and the transformational leadership both have been found positively effective styles of leadership that are preferred by

every organisation to have better production and to compete against various rival brands in the competitive market. Thus, an industry needs a powerful and follower oriented leadership and a loyal, competitive, creative and innovative team to make a strong and effective position.

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