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Effect of Ethical Leadership on Knowledge Sharing: A Mediating Model of Moral Efficacy and Positive Reciprocity

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Abstract: *In the banking industry of Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the current study examined the direct and indirect effects of EL on employees' KS through positive reciprocity and moral efficacy. The study used G*power analysis to determine an acceptable sample size in order to meet its objectives. Based on power, effect size, and significant level, G*Power was used to determine that the sample size of 291 is suitable for this investigation. A survey questionnaire was used to gather information from the intended respondents. It was verified that the scale was reliable. It was discovered that EL and employee KS have a strong correlation. It implies that if a business has EL, then its personnel will exhibit high levels of KS behaviors. Furthermore, it was discovered that the association between EL and KS is partially mediated by moral efficacy and positive reciprocity. Because of this, the link between EL KS and moral efficacy is not entirely direct; rather, some effects flow directly through moral efficacy and positive reciprocity. Future research directions and implications were also emphasized.*

Key Words: EL, KS, Positive Reciprocity, Moral Efficacy

Introduction

Many studies demonstrate the advantages of knowledge sharing among employees in an organizational context (e.g., Bhatti et al., 2020; Muhammad and Zaim 2020; Lin et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2018; Su et al., 2021; Xia and Yang 2020; Bhatti et al., 2020). This is because it fosters innovation and creativity among team members as well as individuals and the organization as a whole (Park et al., 2017; Song et al., 2017; Wang and Noe 2010). According to Faraj and Sproull (2000) and Renzl (2008), "sharing work-related knowledge with other organizational members" is what is meant by knowledge sharing, or KS. According to Su et al. (2021), Xia and Yang (2020), and Yi (2009), knowledge sharing (KS) enhances team performance in a group context by fostering the creative and original thinking of team members. This, in turn, helps firms gain and maintain a competitive edge. Although Knowledge Sharing (KS) offers gradual advantages to the person, group, and company, it also poses a moral conundrum for specific staff members because it necessitates a significant investment of time and energy in order to learn. Conversely, information that is shared with others loses its original value and special advantage (Liu et al., 2018; Park et al., 2017). A team member may have to choose between withholding information to maintain their competitive advantage over others or disclosing it for the sake of the group as a whole.

Accordingly, KS is a situation when a great deal of risk, sacrifice, and unique donation may be made (Yuan et al., 2018). From the

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standpoint of the organization, previous studies have highlighted a number of KS antecedents that support members of the organization in voluntarily sharing their knowledge (Su et al., 2021; Bhatti et al., 2020; Kim and Yun 2015). These kinds of activities promote creativity, improve organizational innovation, and enable quick responses to a changing environment. Rosendaal and Katinka (2013) and Hu and Randel (2014) both looked at social capital as a precondition for knowledge sharing.

Individual characteristics and cultural influences are the primary antecedents of KS, as demonstrated by Lui et al. (2018). But the majority of recent studies (e.g., Su et al., 2021; Xia and Yang 2020; Bhatti et al., 2020; Muhammad and Zaim 2020; Lin et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2018) have shown that leadership is crucial to KS activities. According to Kim and Yun (2015), the KS was directly impacted by leadership. Previous research has indicated that different leadership styles, such as transformational leadership (Son et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2020; Park and Kim, 2018; Mohammadi and Boroumand 2016), shared leadership (Vandavasi et al., 2019; Yuan et al., 2018), empowering leadership (Tang et al., 2016; Srivastava et al., 2006), and ethical leadership (Su et al., 2021; Bhatti et al., 2020; Lu et al., 2019; Bavik et al., 2017) have a significant impact on KS. Still, quite

Knowledge sharing has attracted a lot of attention from academics and practitioners in the last ten years because of its increasing advantages. Some examples of these include (Su et al., 2021; Bhatti et al., 2021; Bhatti et al., 2020; Erkutlu and Chafra 2020; Kim and Vandenberghe, 2020; Lu et al., 2019; Su et al., 2018; Bavik et al., 2017). Although there are advantages to knowledge sharing, KS also poses a moral conundrum for individual workers because it is very different from other resources in that it takes a significant amount of time and effort to obtain information. However, when knowledge is shared, it loses its original value and special benefit (Liu et al., 2018; Park et al., 2017)

The individual in a team may face a dilemma of whether to share knowledge for the welfare of the team as well as the organization or hide knowledge to strengthen their competitive edge over others. So, KS is a situation where a lot of risk, sacrifice, and unique donations are possible (Yuan et al., 2018). Knowledge sharing among organizational members is essential for organizational innovation and creativity in the context of today's fierce competition and knowledge-based businesses. Investigating the causes of employee knowledge sharing is so crucial. The current study therefore anticipates that EL may have a positive impact on KS behaviors based on earlier research (Su et al., 2021; Bhatti et al., 2020).

In many respects, the current research investigation is highly distinctive. First, this study looks into how EL and KS are related to the banking industry in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The EL and KS interaction has received relatively little attention in the past (Bhatti et al., 2020; Bhatti et al., 2021), especially when it comes to the banking industry. In order to close this contextual gap, the current study looks at the link between EL and KS in the banking industry of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Second, this work contributes to the body of knowledge by outlining potential avenues for moral efficacy and positive reciprocity to influence the interaction between KS and EL.

As a result, by expanding our knowledge of and application for social learning, this study makes theoretical advances. Social exchange theory and social learning theory in relation to the link between KS and EL. Third, by selecting the sample size using Power Analysis, this work also makes a methodological addition. The subject of how big the sample size will be remains a baffling occurrence, despite the fact that many previous research have calculated sample sizes using tables, sampling algorithms, and rules of thumb. Newer research suggests using Power Analysis

for sample size selection in order to provide an answer to this question, determine a suitable sample size, and reduce the likelihood of Type I and Type II errors. As a result, the current study contributes to methodology by choosing a sample size using Power Analysis. Lastly, this research will provide some management consequences as well as future research objectives.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Ethical Leadership and Employee Knowledge Sharing

Employees who share information, skills, and abilities with other members of the organization voluntarily engage in knowledge sharing (Su et al., 2021; Yang and Li 2017). The definition of knowledge sharing is "a channel of behaviors in the workplace where employees selectively transfer certain professional skills or knowledge." Research has shown that KS is moral and pragmatic in nature and that it improves individual, team, and organizational effectiveness (Tang et al., 2015). It took a lot of time and effort to acquire both explicit and implicit information. On the other hand, implicit or invisible knowledge is extremely valuable from an individual perspective. Individuals could hold onto their authority, status, pay, and power within the organizations through tacit knowledge (Su et al., 2018). Consequently, Wang and Noe (2010) expounded on the idea that, within organizational contexts, knowledge sharing (KS) is a moral act of "donating," whereby members provide their expertise and information to benefit their peers and organizations. However, knowledge hiding is the opposite of knowledge hiding (KS), in which people conceal their information for their own purposes. Because of the negative effects on people's capacity for innovation and creativity, this behavior not only organizations but also their constituents (Isaac et al., 2010).

There was very little evidence in the body of current literature to examine the relationship between ethical leadership and employee knowledge sharing. The social exchange theory and social learning theory are cited in this study because it looks at how moral leadership can inspire followers to share information while taking into account the dual-mediating effects of moral efficacy and positive reciprocity. According to research, there is a considerable correlation between coworker information sharing and organizational success, including financial and innovative performance (Muhammad and Zain, 2020; Lin et al., 2020). Although sharing knowledge has many advantages, some employees are hesitant to share their expertise because they believe that their important information will be shared for the benefit of the public.

Acquiring knowledge is a challenging endeavor. It takes more time and effort to acquire knowledge. The reason why intangible knowledge is particularly valued is that it benefits workers. It aids in preserving their resources within their own companies, such as their position, benefits, and authority (Su et al., 2018). Because of this, knowledge has a "sticky" quality (Szulanski, 2000). In previous literature reviews on team performance, information exchange between team members has been identified as a significant determinant. According to researchers, a group's interaction among its members is its fundamental component. In essence, this type of interaction between two or more individuals is known as social interaction (Shin, Kim, Choi, & Lee, 2020).

Knowledge sharing is not the same as concepts like knowledge transfer and exchange. Acquiring and sharing knowledge sources are both included in the process of knowledge transfer. On the other hand, while information sharing and communication are somewhat related, they are not the same. Knowledge sharing is connected to cognition. Staff members' conduct and behavior need to be rebuilt in order to learn from others. Because one of the two parties holds the knowledge and the other side acquires it, the relationship between at least two parties is one of knowledge sharing (Zheng, 2017).

It is through the process of sharing knowledge that people's private knowledge is

comprehended, assimilated, and applied by others, according to research findings. The performance of the company is positively impacted by information sharing at the individual level. This includes enhanced organizational capability, innovation in the workplace, connection in team performance, knowledge integration, and satisfaction with decisions. This demonstrates that sharing knowledge is essentially an individual activity, where knowledge need not be attributed to the source (Güver & Motschnig, 2017). Rather, sharing is their behavior.

Ethical Leadership is Significantly Related to Knowledge Sharing

The Mediating Role of Moral Efficacy

Self-efficacy, or the "individual belief in his or her ability to do a certain task successfully," is a key concept in the social learning theory (Bandura 1977). According to May et al. (2013) and Hannah and Avolio (2010), moral efficacy is the unique concept of self-efficacy that refers to a person's "individual belief in his or her ability to behave ethically." According to Kim and Vandenberghe (2020), the notion of moral efficacy is highly distinctive since it persuades both ethical orientation and motivating mechanism, resulting in an appropriate process that is convinced by EL. According to Hannah et al. (2011), when faced with moral hardship, people would use their beliefs as leverage to mobilize their motivation, strategies, and behaviors to attain moral practices. According to the social learning hypothesis, subordinates will imitate the actions of their superiors. So, during the process of learning and intimation, an employee's self-efficacy is quite important. According to Brown et al. (2005), moral leaders set an example of moral behavior in the workplace, which can influence the interactions and choices made by subordinates.

Furthermore, ethical leadership integrity can improve followers' moral efficacy and moral identity in the workplace, as observed correctly by Erkutlu and Chafra (2020). For instance,

followers can acquire new skills, strengthen existing ones, and increase their collective moral efficacy by seeing their leader's moral behavior, which includes punishing transgressors and placing a strong emphasis on morality in the workplace. Hannah and colleagues (2011) contended that an increase in moral effectiveness leads to an improvement in the intention of moral activity. Higher moral efficacy will translate employees' moral judgment and tendency into pro-social conduct, according to Fan and Zhou (2018). According to Huang and Paterson (2017), pro-social acts increase people's moral efficacy. People are therefore anticipated to share more. Therefore, it is expected that individuals will share more knowledge whose moral efficacy is at a higher level.

Moral Efficacy mediates the link between Ethical Leadership and Knowledge Sharing

The Mediating Role of Positive Reciprocity

The study of interpersonal connections is the main goal of social exchange theory. According to SET, a process where different groups share resources and knowledge is necessary for people to behave in mutual interactions and partnerships (Miles et al., 2017). People strive to build social relationships in accordance with the SET principle of positive reciprocity, which is predicated on reciprocal norms and positive interpersonal communication. As correctly pointed out by Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), workers will reimburse the company for any financial or intangible gains they obtain. Eisenberger et al. (2001) were the first in the field of organizational behavior to introduce the study of reciprocal norms. According to their findings, employees' work behaviors will be impacted by the activities of their leaders. It is evident from the literature on organizational management that leadership influences employees' work behaviors, making a thorough examination of leadership traits necessary. Researchers also discovered that the moral principles and virtues of leaders play a critical role in their performance as leaders (Lu and Guy 2014; Hassan 2015). Moral leadership demonstrates the virtues that

their followers observe in them through their behavior as leaders. Additionally, a number of studies have shown that moral leadership significantly affects work outcomes.

When managers act morally, staff members will gladly repay their leaders' assistance. As a result, moral leaders typically build close social relationships with their followers, which motivates followers to return the favor by adopting respectable attitudes and acts. However, followers may react badly by adopting attitudes and actions that are inappropriate for the workplace if they believe their leader is unethical.

Positive Reciprocity Mediates the link between Ethical Leadership and Knowledge Sharing

Methodology

The population of the present study is employees of the banking sector of Pakistan. Through simple random sampling and using the G*Power technique, the present study selected 291 sample sizes from the selected population. This study is quantitative and hypothesis testing in nature. This study is non-contrived and non-experimental in nature. The present research is based on the positivism research philosophy.

Measurement

Ethical Leadership

The present study assessed ethical leadership using the Brown et al. (2005) scale. This scale has 10 items.

Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing was assessed using a five-item scale developed by Connelly et al. (2012).

Moral Efficacy

Moral efficacy was assessed using a five-item scale developed by Hannah and Avolio (2010).
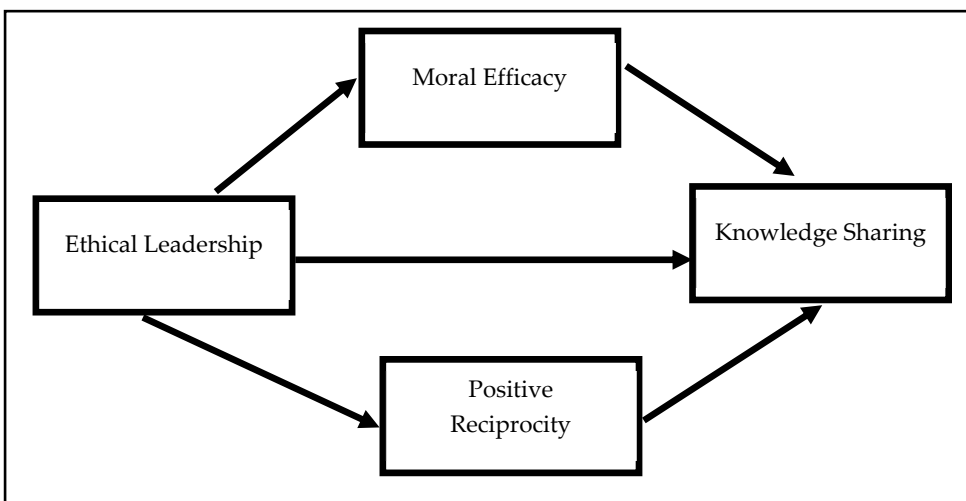
Positive

Reciprocity

To assess positive reciprocity, the present study adopts the scale from Perugini et al. (2003). This scale has six items.

Conceptual Framework

The present research tested a mediation model where moral efficacy and positive reciprocity mediate the relationship between EL and KS.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model of the present research

Results

Table 1

Scale Reliability

Variable	Alpha Value	No. of Items
Ethical Leadership	0.858	10
Moral Efficacy	0.960	05
Positive Reciprocity	0.923	06
Knowledge Sharing	0.945	05

The reliability of all the scales used in the current research is reported in the above table. As illustrated, the value of alpha is more than 0.70 for all variables, confirming the reliability of the scales used in the current research.

Mediation Analysis

The Mediating Role of Positive Reciprocity

Table 2

Regression Coefficients of EL and PR with KS

	Coeff.	S.E	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	.508	.259	1.95	.052	-.004	1.02
EL	.623	.065	9.59	.000	.495	.751
PR	.271	.037	7.29	.000	.198	.344

The table above reports the predictor variable's regression coefficients on predicted or outcome variables. Regression coefficient values for both EL and PR are positive, suggesting that increases in EL and PR will likewise lead to increases in KS in the same manner. Because the value of t (9.59, 7.29) exceeds the suggested threshold of +_ 2, it is considered significant. In a similar vein, smaller p values for both predictors (.000) support the significance of the association between EL and PR with KS. It implies that KS will alter in response to changes in EL and PR. Without including a mediating variable in the model, the link between EL and KS was determined to be significant, as indicated in the preceding table. However, the significance of the link between KS and EL persisted once PR, the mediator, was included in the model. Furthermore, there is significance in the link between PR and KS. It follows that PR partially mediates the link between EL and KS based on these findings. This indicates that while some effects travel directly from EL to KS, others do so indirectly through mediator PR.

Table 3

Total Effect, Direct Effect, and Indirect Effect of PR

	effect	S.E	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Total Effect	.842	.064	13.17	.000	.716	.968
Direct Effect	.623	.065	9.59	.000	.495	.751
Indirect Effect	.218	.061	3.574	.000	.121	.357

The mediation model's total, direct, and indirect effects are displayed in Table 3. The table shows that the direct effect of EL on KS is 0.623 (t = 9.59), the indirect effect of EL on KS via PR is 0.218 (3.57), and the total effect of EL on KS is 0.842 (t = 13.17). The sum of the direct and indirect effects is known as the total effect. The fact that each of these effects is noteworthy suggests that PR mediates the link between KS and EL. Mediating Role of Moral Efficacy.

Table 4

Regression Coefficients of EL and ME with KS

	Coeff.	S.E	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	.471	.199	2.36	.02	.078	.865
EL	.340	.055	6.21	.000	.232	.448
ME	.556	.035	15.69	.000	.487	.626

The table above reports the predictor variable's regression coefficients on predicted or outcome variables. Regression coefficients for KS and EL have positive values, suggesting that rising EL and ME will likewise raise KS in a comparable manner. Because the values of t (6.21, 15.69) exceed the suggested threshold of +_ 2, they are considered significant. Comparably, smaller p values for both predictors (.000) support the significance of the connection between EL and ME with KS. It implies that KS will alter in response to changes in EL and ME. Without including a mediating variable in the model, the link between EL and KS was determined to be significant, as indicated in the preceding table. However, the significance of the link between EL and KS persisted once the mediator, or ME, was included in the model. Furthermore, there is significance in the link between ME and KS. Thus, it may be concluded from these results that ME mediates the link between EL and KS to some extent. This indicates that while some effects travel directly from EL to KS, others do so indirectly through mediator ME.

Table 5

Total Effect, Direct Effect, and Indirect Effect of ME

	effect	S.E	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Total Effect	.842	.064	13.17	.000	.716	.968
Direct Effect	.340	.055	6.21	.000	.232	.448
Indirect Effect	.502	.084	5.976	.000	.355	.686

The mediation model's total, direct, and indirect effects are displayed in Table 5. The table shows that the direct effect of EL on KS is 0.34 (t = 6.21), the indirect effect of EL on KS via ME is 0.502 (5.98), and the total effect of EL on KS is 0.842 (t = 13.17). The sum of the direct and indirect effects is known as the total effect. These effects are all substantial, suggesting that ME mediates the link between KS and EL.

Table 6

Total Effect, Direct Effect, and Indirect Effect of ME

	effect	S.E	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Total Effect	.842	.064	13.17	.000	.716	.968
Direct Effect	.340	.055	6.21	.000	.232	.448
Indirect Effect	.502	.084			.355	.686

The mediation model's total, direct, and indirect effects are displayed in Table 6. The table shows that the direct effect of EL on KS is 0.34 (t = 6.21), the indirect effect of EL on KS via ME is 0.502 (5.98), and the total effect of EL on KS is 0.842 (t = 13.17). The sum of the direct and indirect effects is known as the total effect. These effects are all substantial, suggesting that ME mediates the link between KS and EL.

Conclusion

This study aims to explore the connection between information sharing among banking personnel and ethical leadership. Additionally, the mediating roles of moral efficacy and positive reciprocity in the link between KS and EL are also tested in this study. Significant correlations between EL and KS were discovered by the investigation. It is also discovered that ME mediates the link between EL and KS to some extent. Furthermore, it is discovered that the relationship between EL and KS is partially mediated by positive reciprocity. Based on the study's findings, it can be inferred that banking businesses' top management fosters an ethical culture in which staff members receive respect, cooperation, assistance, honesty, and dignity from their superiors. This will ultimately have an impact on workers' behavior and enable them to mold it to fit the demands of the company or adhere to moral standards like sharing knowledge inside the workplace. Additionally, it is concluded that moral principles should guide employees' decisions within the company. The study also found that while good reciprocity influences knowledge-sharing behaviors, top management actions will all elicit similar responses.

Recommendations

Several significant recommendations were made to the banking firms based on the study's findings. These recommendations will assist businesses in improving their work environments and encouraging workers to voluntarily share and spread their knowledge and skills with one another. The following are the precise recommendations that top management of banking organizations should implement:

- Establish a culture of trust, honesty, dignity, cooperation, and support for employees from both top management and their peers. When requested by other members of the organization, this culture will allow all members of the organization to contribute their knowledge.
- The study suggested that moral principles should guide employees' behavior. This will establish a culture of moral behavior. Employees who engage in unethical behavior, such as knowledge concealment, will therefore feel ashamed in such a culture, although they ought to be proud of their knowledge-sharing efforts.
- Given that every action has a reaction, it is also advised. As a result, any immoral move by the top management will provoke a response from their supporters. Employee responses like this have a detrimental effect on the profitability of the company as a whole.
- The financial organizations were also advised by this study to make every effort to cultivate a culture of information sharing because it offers numerous benefits to their institutions.

Limitations and Future Directions of Research

As previously said, the study at hand makes numerous significant contributions to the body of literature on ethical leadership and information sharing, but it also has certain possible drawbacks that should be taken into consideration. Initially, a cross-sectional research design was employed in this study, which collected respondents' data only once. This might restrict the study's ability to produce thorough findings. In order to provide reliable results, research in the future may employ time lag or longitudinal research design to address this issue. Second, because other types of organizations were not included in this study

and only banking firms were, it is impossible to extrapolate the study's conclusions to other types of organizations.

In order to generalize the study findings, future researchers are invited to replicate the study model utilizing a variety of organizational types. Third, moral efficacy and positive reciprocity were the two potential mediators that this study examined; however, other mediators, such as psychological safety and trust, may also have an impact on this relationship. It is therefore advised that when examining the link between EL and KS, researchers employ these mediators. Thus, the relationship between EL and KS is tested in this study, and variables that either strengthen or diminish the relationship are disregarded. As a result, moderating variables that affect the link between KS and EL may be used by future researchers. Lastly, Peshawar banking institutions hosted this investigation. Researchers may carry out similar studies in other fields in the future.

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