

Ethical Leadership and Project Success: Mediating Role of Leader-Member Exchange and Knowledge Sharing

Sohail Ahmad¹, Muhammad Waseem^{1,}, Khuram Shafi¹, Muhammad Fahad Sattar², Samina Nawab¹*

Affiliations

1. School of Economics,
COMSATS University
Islamabad, Wah Campus
2. Kunming University of
Science & Technology, China

*Corresponding Author Email:

mwaseem@ciitwah.edu.pk

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Abstract

Ethical leadership is vital in enhancing project success by fostering trust, and integrity within teams. The main objective of this research is to examine how ethical leadership influences project success by mediating the effect of leader-member exchange and knowledge sharing. Data were collected from 335 respondents in the IT industries of Pakistan using a multistage sampling technique using a well-structured questionnaire methodology. The hypotheses were tested on Smart PLS 4, and the descriptive statistics were evaluated on SPSS 29.0. The results suggested that ethical leadership has a practical impact on project success. This study also determined that knowledge sharing and leader-member exchange both potentially mediate this relationship. The results highlight the dominance of fostering ethical leadership practices in project environments. Escalating leader-member relationships and promoting knowledge sharing can significantly improve project performance. The study implies that organizations can enhance project success by promoting ethical leadership that strengthens leader-member exchange and encourages knowledge sharing among team members.

Keywords: Project Success, Ethical Leadership, Knowledge Sharing, Leader-Member Exchange

JEL Classification: D23, L26, M12, M14, O15

1. Introduction

The success of any project depends on the team orientation, object-focused activities under the governance of an ethical and cooperative leader (Littman and Littman, 2022). Ethical leadership (EL) is defined as the “demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making” (Bhal and Dadhich, 2020). A project manager acts as a leader in a project for its completion on time and ensures it is a successful product. According to the PMI, having a humane attitude toward your team members will enhance the project success rate (Littman and Littman, 2022). Teams are considered the “core building block of the organization” when sorted out correctly because they have the strength to produce something productive and innovative (Bhatti et al., 2021). The project managers operating in the industry require some specific kind of leadership style. EL is the emerging style in which the employees and managers work together toward the project success (Maqsoom et al., 2022). A leader who practices EL upholds the norm of proper conduct through their conduct and interactions with others while promoting fair behavior through dialogue, reinforcement, and decision-making (Arshad et al., 2021). According to SET by Bandura, the communication and quality of the relationship between co-workers, employees, and supervisors affect the job attitude, productivity, functionality, and success criteria in the organization (Jung et al., 2021).

As the studies conducted in the past, and in the light of LMX theory, it is highlighted that “quality of the social relationship between the leader and their subordinates improves the production and the success rate in the organization” (Arshad et al., 2021). In recent times, very little work is been done on the

leadership style for project success in the field of Information Technology. Many types of research are conducted to discuss the project manager competencies, and the implications of any leadership style require all the competencies at some point in the project life cycle (Bhatti, Vorobyev, et al., 2021a). The recent studies conducted in the hospitality industry came up with the results that “the ethical leadership style in the work environment lowers the work ambiguity and job stress.” (Schwepker & Dimitriou, 2021). In the studies conducted in the past, some of the leadership styles, such as paternalistic, have a positive relationship with LMX, which improves the rate of success in the organization (Maqsoom et al., 2022).

It is stated and demonstrated that EL influences followers by modeling ethical behavior, fostering dual-way communication, defining success not just by the final product but also by the process by which it was achieved, and fostering trust and positive reciprocity norms within a team (Martin et al., 2022). David Gergen, the director of Harvard's Center for Political Leadership, asserts that in this new difficult climate "riding waves" rather than "rising ladders" is the metaphor for managers and leaders (Gu et al., 2015). Researchers have found that senior leaders have an impact on their subordinates' civic conduct. The direct supervisor represents the organization to the subordinates and has a significant impact on how they behave as citizens (Bhal and Dadhich, 2020).

The term "leader-member exchange" (LMX) describes the standard of relationships of trade between managers and subordinates. Existing research has shown that LMX is highly predictive in organizational contexts (Liao and Hui, 2021). Each project's success depends on how well the project manager manages it. To that end, these leaders are responsible for encouraging and inspiring the people who work for them (Sandra et al., 2023). According to Davis (2017) four project success (PS) criteria: time, communication, cost, and stakeholder satisfaction. The plurality of these success criteria intensely depends on the project team's contribution as well as the project manager's interpersonal skills. It is additionally argued that the personnel factor significantly affects PS. Since effective leadership and employee commitment are identified as the fundamental conditions for PS. This emphasizes the significance of the relationship between PM and project personnel. According to the leader-member exchange paradigm, the peculiar nature of this interaction between project staff (followers) and project managers (leaders) leads to the development of opposing relationships (Utama, 2020).

Organizations must combine and use a variety of human capital knowledge (Latif et al., 2021). Knowledge sharing (KS) is seen as a crucial component for businesses to acquire a competitive advantage. KS is the act of imparting information so that people may work together to solve issues, develop new ideas, or carry out plans of action (Rajabion et al., 2023). Resources of significant significance in strengthening particular facets of innovation include leadership and knowledge. Successful KS methods allow businesses to increase knowledge capital, use all resources, and transform those resources into dynamic competencies like innovation and ultimately project success (Lei et al., 2020).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Ethical Leadership

Project management (PM) aims to efficiently use resources, including people, equipment, and finances, to start and finish a project on schedule, budget, and quality standards (Mishra et al., 2023). Ethical Leadership (EL), which upholds moral principles, promotes proper social behavior, and is crucial for businesses due to its benefits in fostering positive attitudes and behaviors among employees (Nguyen et al., 2021). According to Cuilla (2004), “Ethics is at the heart of leadership”. Leadership plays an important role in managing the human element of a project, as it involves planning, organizing, and regulating (Yang et al., 2023). Leaders in a workgroup develop unique connections with various subordinates, leading to different degrees of quality connections between the leader and each follower

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(Bhal and Dadhich, 2021) . Strong LMX relationships can lead to success due to additional assistance provided by managers, including resources and opportunities (Obeng et al., 2021).

Managing the human element of a project requires more than just management. Such as planning, organizing, and regulating. Leaders play an important role in projects with an unpredictable environment, project performance, and improving teams (Dadhich & Bhal, 2008). The culture of knowledge is the most crucial success component in project-based companies (Bhatti et al., 2021) , but information and communication technology solutions must be combined with “soft” characteristics like top management culture and dedication for successful knowledge transfer (Emiliano de Souza et al., 2022) . In multi-project companies, the function and arrangement of project management offices are also essential for successful knowledge transfer between projects and within them.

2.2 Project Success

An organization's goal to complete their planned interconnected tasks with a team structure that frequently consists of various groups with varying levels of skill sets and specialties, within a decided amount of time and allocated money, is achieved through a project (Mishra et al., 2023) . Success is defined as completing the assigned task or operation with the help of people, organizations, or teams while maximizing the utilization of the resources at hand (Latif et al., 2021) . According to researcher Dewitt (1998), PS details the project's general goals, the value it promises to provide, as well as all the advantages.

The idea of PS is now a subject of discussion in management writing and has been essential to the literature on PM (Mishra et al., 2023) . According to Cooke-Davies (2001), PS is determined by success criteria, which are overall based on the project's objectives. Lim and Zain Mohamed (1999) identified effective time, cost, and quality management as the three most crucial factors influencing PS, and Chan and Tam (2001) revealed customer satisfaction in a quantitative assessment of information technology projects in Hong Kong.

2.3 Knowledge Sharing

The culture of knowledge is by far the most crucial success component in project-based companies. However, information and communication technology solutions that efficiently enable knowledge exchange, storage, and retrieval in a temporary design context must be added to "soft" characteristics like top management culture and dedication to ensure a successful knowledge transfer (Engelbrecht et al., 2020). The third crucial element of success is seen in multi-project companies, particularly in the function and arrangement of project management offices. To put it briefly, a successful transfer of knowledge between projects, inside them, and from the temporary to the permanent organization is the result of the interplay between several elements (Emiliano de Souza et al., 2022).

Organizational performance and success are correlated with employees' willingness to participate in knowledge sharing, which is the "act of making information available to others inside the business." Information sharing may improve critical outcomes, such as performance, creativity, and decision-making, according to research (Gerpott et al., 2020; Rajabion et al., 2019; Su et al., 2021).

2.4 Leader-Member Exchange

Green and Uhl-(1995) Bien's Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory emphasizes the interaction between the members and leaders, stating that leadership emerges when leaders and followers form strong bonds resulting in mutual influence, with the quality of these ties influencing outcomes (Babič, 2024) . Since 2000, the idea of leader-member exchange (LMX), a subfield of leadership theory, has received a lot of attention. It affects member competence, organizational citizenship behavior, safety citizenship behavior, work engagement, and job performance (He et al., 2021).

According to ideas and studies now in existence, a project's leadership position and type of leadership backing are both essential for the project to perform well (Ali et al., 2021). According to past literature, High-quality LMX, workers' self-efficacy, and affiliation with the company are all improved by ethical leadership conduct. Employee performance is therefore enhanced by high-quality LMX, self-efficacy, and organizational identity (Walumbwa et al., 2022).

According to past research, the knowledge of the leadership style used by Gerstner at IBM is improved in several ways by LMX and ethical leadership theories. Effective leader-member exchange is a prerequisite for effective leadership, according to the LXM theory, which emphasizes the dyadic exchange connection as the primary leadership process (Babič, 2024). Enhancing employee ethical behavior is likely to depend on ethical leadership, but how this happens is a topic that requires more research. Other organizational processes could act as a mediator in this connection. The ideal mechanism for underpinning the link between ethical leadership and ethical employee behavior has been discussed (Al Halbusi et al., 2021).

Table 1:Constructs Definition

Constructs	Definition
Project success	“Achieving the goals and objectives described in the project plan is a definition of project success” (Ellahi et al., 2022; Mishra et al., 2021).
Ethical Leadership	“The exhibition of normatively right behavior via personal acts and interpersonal interactions, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" are the definitions of ethical leadership” (Lei et al., 2020; Mishra et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2024).
Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)	“The theory investigates the interactions between leaders and their followers based on their unique requirements, qualities, resources, knowledge, and emotional support. LMX is a dynamic interaction used to trade resources between leaders and followers”(Calen et al., 2021; Shin and Park, 2021; Yang et al., 2023).
Knowledge Sharing	“Individuals sharing organizationally relevant information, ideas, suggestions, and expertise”(Bavik et al., 2018; Su et al., 2021).

2.5 Ethical Leadership and Project Success

Over the past ten years, scandals involving corporations like Enron, WorldCom, Nortel, AIG, and Lehman Brothers have attracted a lot of attention. The 2008 subprime mortgage crisis brought corporate excess and greed to light, as well as the need for ethical leadership (Bedi et al., 2023). Leaders choose supervisory or leadership influence on their subordinates based on their connection (Utama, 2017). However, unlike leadership interactions that are based on influence, even beyond such requisites from the job, such as open communication, latitude from the job, and support of the actions undertaken by the members, supervisory influence relations are based on authority that strictly adheres to job requirements with merely a little opportunity for social interaction.

Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen (2005) found that leadership-based connections lead to high LMX or high-quality exchanges, while supervisory effect interactions produce low LMX or low-quality exchanges. The quality of LMX relationships significantly impacts employee satisfaction, independence of work, and rewards. High LMX relationships lead to increased happiness, freedom, and rewards as compared with low LMX relationships (Sandra et al., 2021).

Project managers who want to influence members of their project teams should use ethical leadership as a strategy. "Demonstrating normatively suitable behavior by one's actions and interpersonal

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interactions, and promoting such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" are the definitions of ethical leadership and decision-making, respectively (Bhatti et al., 2021). Ethical leadership is a great strategy for project managers to use when trying to persuade team members to work toward a common goal. The ELS is a unidimensional assessment that looks at a variety of ethical leadership behaviors, including making morally sound judgments, engaging followers in two-way dialogue, setting an example of ethics, and punishing dishonest behavior (Bedi et al., 2023). As rational people, ethical leaders show that they are dependable, honest, and deserving of emulation. As managers, EL show that the process is more significant than the result. To understand why ethical leadership ought to be closely associated with project success, we look at two meditations. The first strategy is called leader trust, which is measured by how much a follower respect and adheres to the leader (Bhatti, Vorobyev, et al., 2021a; Nguyen et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2016).

H1: Ethical leadership has an impact on project success.

2.6 Mediating role of LMX

The leader-member exchange (LMX) suggests that workers are always expected to turn to managers for guidance. Job performance can be enhanced by acting ethically as leaders do, alongside knowledge exchange between the leader and the subordinate (Khan et al., 2022). Since 2000, the idea of leader-member interchange, a subset of leadership theory, has been investigated for its impact on member competence, organizational citizenship, work obligations, voice behavior, and job productivity (Arshad et al., 2021).

The leader-member interaction mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and the success of IT projects. This study investigates the relative influence of ethical leadership and LMX on the outcomes of subordinates and adds to the body of knowledge on leadership in numerous ways. No studies have compared the effects of one-on-one exchange-based relationships (LMX) and moral leadership on employee outcomes (Wadei et al., 2021). Second, we have defined, such as extra effort made by the effectiveness of the subordinate, subordinate, and satisfaction with the leader, or normative (ethics-related) outcomes, such as the leader's honesty, willingness to report issues, affective trust, idealized behavior, and idealized attribute (Dadhich & Bhal, 2020).

H2: Leader-member exchange mediates between ethical leadership and project success.

2.7 The mediating role of knowledge sharing

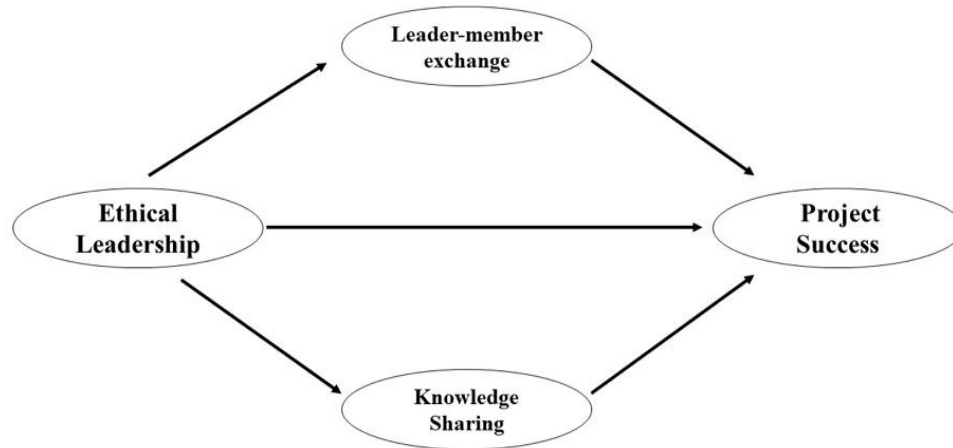
Knowledge is defined as "information that has been interpreted by a person and comprises concepts, knowledge, skills, and opinions crucial to an individual's, a team's, or an organization's performance." (Su et al., 2021). Knowledge sharing is the practice of transferring tacit knowledge through social and collaborative processes, according to Nonaka's definition from 1994. Environmental factors, including autonomy, competence, and relatedness, can have an impact on the SDT, which is closely related to one's well-being and motivation (Emiliano de Souza et al., 2022). According to the hypothesis, when people's fundamental needs are met, their motivation will grow and their performance levels will improve (for example, projects will succeed). The assumption made in this article is based on the SDT, which states that when workers feel empowered at work, they share information with their coworkers, which leads to project success (Gerpott et al., 2020).

H3: Knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between ethical relationships and project success.

2.8 Research Framework

To examine and evaluate the impact of EL on project success. The model also determines the mediating role of knowledge sharing and leader-member exchange between ethical leadership and project success.

Figure 1: Research Model



3. Methods and Materials

3.1. Research population

The term population refers to the group of subjects that interests the researcher in a particular study (Ali et al., 2021). To gather our data, the research questions of this study concentrate on Pakistan Information Technology.

3.2. Sampling size and sampling technique

Sampling represents the process of choosing an adequate number of components from the specified population size to make it simpler to generalize the sample's characteristics to the complete population (Mishra et al., 2021). To provide the widest possible representation of the total population, this study employed multistage sampling as part of a probability sampling technique. In Pakistan, the population of working age has sometimes been described as being between the ages of 20 and 64. This definition is proposed by Lappalainen, Kearney, and Gibney (1998), who employed samples of people 20 and older as part of their study's national adult sample. As a result, only individuals who were at least 20 years old were considered, since it was thought that they were old enough to answer. Worldwide, a broad variety of research methodologies and data-gathering approaches are employed.

3.3. Operationalization and Measurement of Variables

In this part, all research variables were quantified, and we attempted to find appropriate, validated, and suggested measurements for each of them in the prior literature. The dependent, independent, and moderating factors were evaluated using reflective measures that had been adapted or modified from other investigations. Following is a list of the scale's items in brief:

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Table 2: Scale Items Description

Constructs	Items	Reference
Ethical leadership	5	(Bhal and Dadhich, 2011; Kerse, 2021; Mishra et al., 2021)
Project success	7	(Ali et al., 2021; Bhatti et al., 2021a; Mishra et al., 20)
Leader-member Exchange	7	(Bhatti et al., 2022; Liao & Hui, 2019)
Knowledge Sharing	5	(Bhatti, Vorobyev, et al., 2021b; Duodu & Rowlinson, 2021; Slimene et al., 2022)

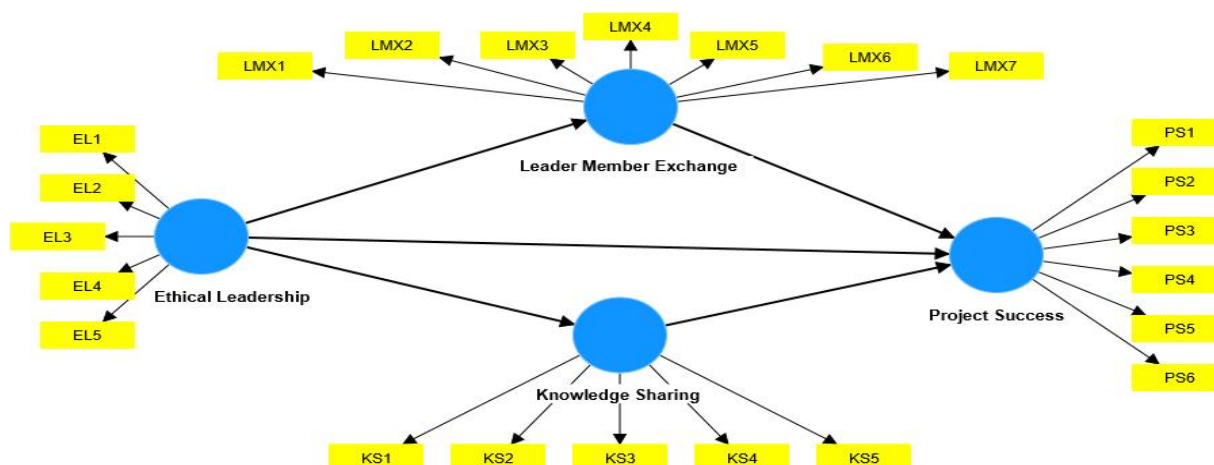
3.4. Data analysis

The information from the received surveys was examined using IBM SPSS Statistics 29.0.0.0, which processed the descriptive statistics, conducted a reliability study of the data, and confirmed the internal consistency of the survey. Internal consistency reliability of a survey may be used to assess how effectively it is designed and, consequently, if it obtains the necessary data. Cronbach's coefficient is one of the most used techniques for determining how consistently the survey is conducted.

3.5. Structural Equation Model (SEM)

The prime objective of SEM is to describe how a set of contemporaneous, linked dependent connections emerge between latent or invisible variables, where each relationship is quantified by an observed variable (Bhatti, Vorobyev, et al., 2021a; Obeng et al., 2021; Rajabion et al., 2019). To establish a quantitative validation of a theoretical model that the researcher has provided, structural equation modeling (SEM), which uses various models to explain connections between observable variables, has as its primary goal (Calen et al., 2021; Wadei et al., 2021).

SEM is frequently considered a confirmatory approach as opposed to an exploratory one. In addition to the study of latent components, SEM intends to facilitate other sorts of investigations, such as estimate of variance and covariance, linear regression, testing of hypotheses, and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Ahmad et al., 2022; Ali et al., 2021; Schwepker & Dimitriou, 2021). According to Chin (1998), it offers a thorough assessment of the model's fitness and examines every parameter concurrently to produce the model that fits the study's data the best. As a consequence, SEM and CFA were both employed in this investigation. Additionally, two approaches—variance- and covariance-based SEM (also known as CBSEM and VBSEM, respectively)—are available for 32 structural equation modeling (Rajabion et al., 2019).



Smart PLS version 4.0 was chosen to analyze the data using the Partial Least Squares approach (PLS-SEM) due to the small sample size and easiness of the model. The PLS technique is frequently used in management to identify route coefficients in structural models. According to a new recommendation, the optimum strategy for detecting causal links when constructs are present is a PLS approach to SEM. Furthermore, SEM has been shown to outperform other multivariate approaches such as multiple regression, and factor analysis, route analysis. PLS's modeling capability for latent components in non-normality contexts, as well as its suitability to small data sets, are two of its major characteristics.

3.6. Research reliability and validity

In contrast to validity, which is defined as correctly using instruments, reliability is defined as consistently getting the same results (Schwepker & Dimitriou, 2021). A pilot study is carried out to assess the reliability and validity. The use of units of analysis makes the questionnaire easier for respondents to grasp. The measurement model stage will employ PLS-SEM to validate the accuracy and dependability of the scales.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Response rate

The response rate may be calculated by dividing the total number of survey respondents by the sample size chosen (Bavik et al., 2018). To collect data for this study's research design, 335 employers from Pakistan's IT industry were surveyed. Even though the sample size was chosen to be sufficient to account for issues like measurement error, etc., efforts were made to gather a few more data points than the careful and scientific sampling strategy chosen for this investigation. However, it was revealed that many respondents were hesitant to invest the time required to complete the survey. The researcher reviewed the questionnaires as the individuals replied, and they were quickly examined for any errors or unchecked boxes.

4.2. Internal Consistency Reliability

The first part of the reflecting model's examination is its internal consistency reliability (Berssaneti & Carvalho, 2015). Cronbach's alpha has traditionally been used to assess internal consistency. It takes into account the reliability of each indication. PLS-SEM prioritizes the indicators based on their unique dependability. Cronbach's alpha's constant dependability is overstated, and the amount of indicators is also considered. Cronbach's alpha was thus proposed as a measure of internal consistency (Kerse, 2021). If Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability values are above the 0.70 thresholds, it means that all construct measurements are reliable (Gu et al., 2015).

Table 3: Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)
EL	0.717	0.706
LMX	0.774	0.787
KS	0.781	0.789
PS	0.784	0.789

4.3. Measurement Model (Outer Loading) Evaluation

The loadings of the indicators (items) on the relevant theoretically generated constructs were studied using Smart PLS in the initial stage of the measurement model analysis (outer model). It is possible to assess the instrument's dependability by inspecting the outer model to ensure that the items measure the construct intended to be studied. The outer model also aims to find the links between the

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observable and underlying structures. Identifying the relevant indicators is critical for ensuring that a certain concept is correctly operationalized (Martin et al., 2022).

The examination of concept validity is required, which is supported by the SEM's content validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Outside loadings in the 0.40 to 0.70 range should normally be reduced only if doing so boosts CR and AVE. Outside loadings of less than 0.40 should be avoided (Latif et al., 2021). As the values of outer loading are 0.55 the data is impermissible.

Table 4: Outer Loadings of Items

	EL	KS	LMX	PS
EL1	0.677			
EL2	0.772			
EL3	0.77			
EL4	0.78			
EL5	0.703			
KS1		0.655		
KS2		0.734		
KS3		0.72		
KS4		0.635		
KS5		0.553		
LMX1			0.722	
LMX2			0.521	
LMX3			0.706	
LMX4			0.64	
LMX5			0.602	
LMX6			0.639	
LMX7			0.717	
PS1				0.786
PS2				0.834
PS3				0.761
PS4				0.692
PS5				0.897
PS6				0.851

4.4. Convergent Reliability

Convergent validity refers to elements that have a positive correlation with other items of the same concept (Calen et al., 2021). The recovered average variance is used to demonstrate convergent validity. It is described as constructs with a mean square relationship. The worth of loadings. As seen in the table, values more than 0.5 reflect 50% of the indicator variance, while values less than 0.5 indicate more errors in the indicators.

Table 5: Convergent Reliability

Construct	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
EL	0.656
PS	0.587
LMX	0.642
KS	0.539

4.5. Collinearity Assessment

It has a strong relationship with the model's variables. Before evaluating the model's path coefficients and prediction skills, it is necessary to analyze collinearity problems (Khan et al., 2022b). This is because "in structural models, the path coefficient approximation is based on the OLS regression of each endogenous variable," as stated by (Latif et al., 2021). If collinearity between components is taken into account during estimation, path coefficients may be biased in general, as with multiple regressions. All formation and reflection measurement models adhere to the collinearity process.

Table 6: Collinearity Assessment

ITEMS	VIF
EL1	1.047
EL2	1.087
EL3	1.202
EL4	1.356
EL5	1.227
KS1	1.243
KS2	1.401
KS3	1.35
KS4	1.241
KS5	1.208
LMX1	1.108
LMX2	1.172
LMX3	1.442

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LMX4	1.346
LMX5	1.199
LMX6	1.318
LMX7	1.184
PS1	1.229
PS2	1.258
PS3	1.207
PS4	1.329
PS5	1.24
PS6	1.255

4.6. Hypothesis Testing and Path Coefficient for Direct Hypothesis

The structural model's final results are displayed in Table 5 (outer model). Table 5 shows that, at the 0.05 level of significance, hypothesis H1, expressing validated ethical leadership has a positive significant relationship with project success at the value of ($t=6.805$, $p=0.000$).

Table 7: Hypothesis Testing

Hypo no	Hypothesis effect	Sample	Mean	STDEV	b-value	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	EL -> PS	0.429	0.428	0.063	0.429	6.805	0.000***	Supported

4.7. Results of Mediating Effect

The indirect effect is used to describe the mediating effect. The mediating effect in the research studies are defined as “two variables of interest are associated via a third variable” (Lei et al., 2020). According to the information given in Table 8, Hypothesis H2 leader-member exchange has a mediating effect between ethical leadership and project success at values of ($t=3.589$, $p=0.000$). Additionally, H3 is also valid and supported as it was stated that knowledge sharing has a mediating effect between ethical leadership and project success at the value of ($t=2.563$, $p=0.010$).

Table 8: Hypothesis Testing of Mediation Effect

Hypo no	Hypothesis effect	Sample	Mean	STDEV	b-value	t-value	p-value	Decision
H2	EL -> LMX -> PS	0.103	0.106	0.029	0.103	3.589	0.000***	Supported
H3	EL -> KS -> PS	0.096	0.099	0.038	0.096	2.563	0.010***	Supported

5. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This study examined the influence of EL on PS, emphasizing the mediating roles of leader-member exchange (LMX) and KS. The findings confirm that EL positively impacts project outcomes by fostering trust, respect, and open communication within project teams. Furthermore, LMX and KS were

found to significantly mediate this relationship, highlighting the importance of strong leader-subordinate relationships and collaborative knowledge-sharing culture in achieving successful project delivery.

The results of this study contribute to both theory and practice by demonstrating that EL is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic enabler of project performance. Organizations aiming to enhance project success should prioritize the development of ethical leadership behaviors, invest in strengthening leader-member relationships, and promote mechanisms that encourage the free flow of knowledge across teams. Moreover, this research study confirms that knowledge sharing play a vital role through which the Ethical leadership increase the possibility of positive project outcome, motivate to employees to exchange novel ideas, and provide a friendly work environment. These findings are consistent with prior research suggesting that leadership behavior significantly shapes team dynamics and knowledge-related behaviors in project-based organizations.

This research study has a few limitation regardless of its contributions. First, in this research study the cross sectional design was used to establish the relationship between knowledge sharing, LMX, ethical leadership and project success. Second, questionnaires a tool of primary data collect method was used to collect the data that leads to social desirability bias. Third, the data was collected from Pakistan's project based organizations, which may leads to non-generalizability of the findings to organizational contexts and other cultural. Future research could explore this framework in diverse industries and cultural settings to validate and extend the current findings.

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Data Availability Statement

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Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement

There is no conflict of interest among the authors of the study.

Ethical Approval

This research article has not violated any ethical standards.

Author Contributions

Sohail Ahmed: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Curation, Software, Writing – original draft preparation, Writing – reviewing and editing.

Muhammad Waseem: Conceptualization, Software, Writing – reviewing and editing.

Khuram Shafi, Muhammad Fahad Sattar, Samina Nawab: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Writing - reviewing and editing.

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