

ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF EMPLOYEES' PROACTIVE BEHAVIOR-A STUDY OF HEALTH SECTOR IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Purpose: The proposed study's goal is to identify the consequences and antecedents of employees' proactive behavior in Pakistan's health sector. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory delves into the workplace environment's impact on both employee productivity and well-being. This study aims to explore the ramifications of empowering leadership within the framework of the JD-R Theory. Our investigation centers on scrutinizing the interplay between the proactive behavior of employees and empowering leadership, considering the influence of psychological capital as a mediator. Moreover, we endeavor to shed light on the outcomes that materialize when employees exhibit proactive behavior within the context of the healthcare sector. **Design/methodology/approach:** The research data was gathered from various healthcare facilities through the administration of surveys. To conduct various statistical analyses, we employed SPSS as our primary tool. In order to scrutinize the data comprehensively, regression analysis was conducted with the assistance of SPSS. Additionally, to examine our hypotheses, we employed the SPSS process macro for both Model 1 and Model 4. **Findings:** In our research, we have discovered a robust and constructive connection between employees' proactive behavior and empowering leadership. Empowering leadership serves as a catalyst, facilitating and nurturing employees' proactive tendencies. This symbiotic relationship is pivotal for organizations striving to secure a competitive edge in their respective industries. Proactive behavior emerges as a pivotal factor in this equation, as it is directly and positively linked to employees' task performance and their potential for career success. Individuals with a penchant for proactive traits consistently outperform their more passive counterparts. Their proactivity is marked by behaviors that significantly contribute to the overall success of work-related tasks. In our study, we have identified an intriguing moderator, psychological capital, which exerts a positively influential effect on the relationship between the proactive behavior of employees and empowering leadership. This intriguing moderator acts as a powerful enhancer, further fortifying the connection between proactive behavior and empowering leadership. **Originality/value:** This model will help employees to attain proactive

behavior. In the realm of healthcare, the presence of proactive employees holds the key to bestowing a distinctive competitive edge upon organizations within the sector. Their proactive disposition and actions become instrumental in setting them apart from their industry rivals.

Keywords: Empowering Leadership, Psychological Capital, Proactive Behavior, Task Performance, Career Success Potential.

1. INTRODUCTION

Proactive employees exhibit a propensity to take the initiative in shaping their careers and carving out their own roles in a globalized, flexible workplace that operates in a rapidly evolving labor market (Kim & Beehr, 2021). The proactive behavior of employees is a pivotal indicator of organizational performance, especially in a decentralized corporation. Taking a proactive approach delivers numerous benefits for both entities and individuals, fostering an improved sense of employee welfare (Singh & Rangnekar, 2020).

The existing literature widely regards proactive behaviors as a positive organizational trait, given their beneficial impact on both firms and employees (Kanten & Alparslan, 2015). Consequently, organizations increasingly expect their employees to exhibit proactive conduct. In the contemporary work landscape, employees are expected to demonstrate extra-role and innovative behaviors, adopting a future-oriented mindset that extends beyond their formal job descriptions (Kanten & Alparslan, 2015). Proactive employees are highly esteemed by organizations for their ability to transcend situational constraints and actively seek opportunities to effect significant changes in their surroundings (Z. Wang et al., 2017). We can describe these individuals as proactive individuals seeking to proactively change existing conditions or forge new paths, disrupting the conventional rather than simply responding to events (Crant, 2000). Proactive behavior in the workplace is linked to a host of potential benefits, including increased creativity and efficiency. It assumes particular importance in unforeseen organizational situations where forecasting and planning the contributions of individuals to organizational performance is challenging (Strauss & Parker, 2018).

In the healthcare sector, the traditional management style that demands unquestioning obedience from employees is no longer suitable. Instead, a new management approach encourages employees to generate innovative ideas, participate in decision-making processes, and introduce novel approaches (Parker & Bindl, 2017). Recent research underscores the importance of employees cultivating "self-leadership" competencies, including the ability to instigate change and foster innovation, assume ownership and responsibility for decision-making, and effectively manage ambiguity and unpredictability (Dondi et al., 2021). Proactive work behavior, defined as conscientious, proactive, and future-oriented actions aimed at improving the existing situation before problems arise, is seen as essential in this context (Smithikrai, 2022).

Proactive employee behavior in the healthcare sector contributes to effective and efficient task performance. The intricate and ever-evolving healthcare landscape within hospitals is shaped by a set of nine primary factors. These include the evolution of treatment approaches, the rising standards of patient expectations, the recognition that high-quality

care can extend to community settings, the demand for extensive healthcare facilities and self-contained specialized services, advancements in medical science and technology, the transformative influence of digital technology on healthcare delivery, and the complexities inherent to contextual factors (Dash et al., 2019).

The inclination of proactive employees to adeptly navigate work procedures and content, actively engage in endeavors to augment accessible job resources, adapt or explore more streamlined approaches to task completion, and exert influence within their surroundings presents a myriad of benefits (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Thompson, 2005). Consequently, proactive employees tend to outperform their less proactive counterparts, not limited to terms of job performance but proactive employees also often shape perceptions among their superiors, who recognize them as individuals driven and equipped to pave the way for successful career trajectories (Z. Wang et al., 2017).

Over the last 15 years, we have witnessed a noticeable upswing in focus on employee creativity in the literature, recognizing that employee attitudes and behaviors wield a pivotal influence in driving organizational effectiveness while simultaneously fostering a sustainable competitive advantage. The unpredictable and rapidly fluctuating conditions necessitate a new type of employee who excels in their assigned role, goes beyond job requirements, and possesses the initiative, self-starting capability, and adaptability needed for change (Kanten & Alparslan, 2015).

Empowering leadership is characterized by actions that promote increased autonomy by reducing administrative constraints, facilitating more inclusive processes of making decisions, enhancing significance, and nurturing self-confidence in work among individuals in prominent positions. Empowering leadership entails leaders ceding control and authority, nurturing self-leadership capabilities, and entrusting employees with greater responsibilities. This approach emphasizes a collaborative and shared leadership style that encourages individuals to contribute actively to the success of the organization and take ownership of their roles (Kim & Beehr, 2018). Empowering leadership encompasses delegation, encouragement of initiative, development of self-leadership abilities, demonstration of confidence in high performance, the granting of authority, granting of autonomy, role modeling providing support through mentoring, and evaluation (Kim & Beehr, 2018).

Leaders who offer support and engage in developmental actions, such as offering constructive feedback and promoting independent thinking, can create an environment that cultivates active learning. This, in turn, stimulates genuine effort and adaptability in tackling tasks and challenges (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014). Promoting active participation in work processes and fostering open information exchange fosters employees to acquire fresh skills and expand their comprehension of their roles. This engagement-oriented approach contributes to continuous learning and skill development within the workforce (Zhang, 2010).

Employees specifically those who feel empowered at work in the workplace are significantly more likely to experience job satisfaction, career contentment, and occupational fulfillment, making them more engaged in their work. Consequently,

empowered individuals are more inclined to take the initiative in pursuing their goals (Singh & Rangnekar, 2020).

Employees' psychological well-being, often referred to as psychological capital (PsyCap), encompasses 4 personal resources: efficacy, resilience, optimism, and hope (Kim & Beehr, 2021). This Psychological capital can foster a sense of self-assuredness and enthusiasm for contributing ideas to the organization (Hu et al., 2018). Individuals with strong psychological capital feel more secure in their organizational roles, exhibit optimism about the future, and possess greater hope, making them more likely to generate and provide their organization with beneficial proactive strategies (H. Wang et al., 2014). Consequently, PsyCap plays a vital role in promoting proactive behavior among employees.

In developing countries such as Pakistan, proactive employee behavior in the healthcare sector is increasingly essential in the modern era. To remain competitive on the global stage, developing nations like Pakistan must encourage their employees to embrace proactive behavior.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Proactive Behavior and Empowering Leadership

The concept of empowering leadership entails delegating greater responsibility and autonomy to employees, along with providing the necessary resources and support for effectively carrying out these increased responsibilities (Anwar ul Haq et al., 2019). Mentorship and training are provided, knowledge is shared, and PsyCap is offered to the employees by an empowering leader. This collective effort nurtures a profound sense of purpose and significance in their roles, fostering a more engaged and motivated workforce (Fong & Snape, 2015).

Delegating authority stands as a fundamental facet of empowering leadership. When employees are entrusted with delegated powers, they gain the autonomy to take independent actions and exercise sound judgment in their roles. This empowerment not only enhances individual growth but also contributes to a more dynamic and agile organizational environment (Anwar ul Haq et al., 2019). Furthermore, the delegation of authority also leads to the establishment of such an environment at the workplace in which individuals are surely empowered to pursue innovative and non-traditional approaches. With this, in turn, a culture of adaptability and creativity is fostered within the organization (Amabile et al., 2014). In addition, an empowering leader actively works to reduce obstacles that might impede their subordinates' capacity to act autonomously. This dedication to eliminating barriers further strengthens the culture of independence and self-reliance among team members (Ahearne et al., 2005). These contextual elements create an optimal backdrop for the cultivation of proactive behavior. Equivalently, Gkorezis (2016) stated that empowered leaders afford their subordinates ample room and autonomy to carry out their tasks effectively. This approach not only fosters a sense of trust but also encourages individual ownership and accountability within the team.

The job demands-resources hypothesis proposes that job demands encompass various pressures arising from physiological, sociological, or organizational aspects within the workplace. On the other hand, job resources comprise elements and conditions that facilitate employees in their pursuit of achieving work-related goals and tasks. To exhibit proactive behavior, employees make effective use of the resources available in their workplace to address and adapt to the challenges posed by their job requirements. This proactive approach often involves modifying their assigned tasks to enhance efficiency and effectiveness (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Intrinsic work ambition and job resources are interconnected (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008). According to research findings, job resources that contribute to a sense of competence and authority are closely associated with elevated levels of proactivity. These resources have a pivotal role in motivating an individual to engage proactively through a range of psychological and motivational processes (Maden-Eyiusta, 2016). Empowering leadership aligns with this resource theory since Bauer & Hammig (2014) explained that leadership is recognized as a significant job resource, and although researchers may not explicitly mention leadership styles, it's noteworthy that the concept of empowering leadership neatly embodies the notion of interconnected resources. Empowering leadership is inherently focused on developing employees, which distinguishes it from other leadership styles. It encourages freedom, trust in subordinates' abilities, a sense of purpose in one's work, and participation in decision-making (Kim & Beehr, 2021).

Proactive behaviors are widely seen as desirable organizational traits in the literature due to their positive impact on both organizations and employees. Consequently, organizations expect their employees to demonstrate proactive behavior, which contributes to gaining a competitive advantage. In today's work environment, employees are required to exhibit extra-role and innovative behaviors that go beyond their formal job descriptions (Marler, 2008; Sonnentag, 2003). Organizations must create structures and cultures that facilitate employees' proactive behavior or establish conducive working conditions that encourage such behavior willingly. The prosperity of an organization hinges upon the extent to which employees efficiently execute their job responsibilities and demonstrate proactive conduct in their roles (Fuller et al., 2012).

Empowering leadership encompasses a range of actions, including delegating power, actively participating in decision-making processes, and sharing authority. This leadership approach emphasizes collaboration, autonomy, and the distribution of responsibility among team members. A motivating leader also has faith in their staff's capability to handle challenging tasks (Ahearne et al., 2005). These leadership tactics that promote responsibility and competence in others lead to internal motivation and proactivity (Martin et al., 2013). Empowered leaders boost their employees' intrinsic motivation by delegating responsibility, assigning tasks, and providing encouragement and developmental support. Employee proactive behavior is closely linked to intrinsic motivation, which is a key precursor as it fosters role alignment, nurtures a comprehensive sense of role identity, develops critical job competencies, and

encourages proactive pursuit of goals. These facets collectively contribute to the augmentation of employee proactivity within the organization (Ohly & Fritz, 2007).

An empowered leader bestows autonomy upon their subordinates and actively supports them in carrying out their assigned responsibilities. This approach not only fosters a culture of trust but also promotes a sense of ownership and accountability among team members. Parker, Williams, & Turner (2006) indicated the direct impact of the expansion of job autonomy on encouraging employee proactivity by expanding the scope and responsibilities of their roles.

Similarly, empowering leadership expands the scope of roles by enabling individuals, which in turn, predicts a proactive approach to work behavior. Furthermore, determination and dedication are crucial in promoting proactive action among employees (Crant, 2000). An empowering leader motivates their subordinates to set higher goals, design their specific tasks, and achieve significantly better outcomes. This kind of support stimulates the cognition of subordinates, which is closely connected to proactivity. A direct relationship exists between empowering leadership and the proactive behavior of employees (Schilpzand et al., 2018). Within an organization, proactive employees consistently display positive work behaviors, setting them apart from their counterparts who may lack a proactive approach. This proactive stance often translates into more productive, innovative, and engaged contributions to the workplace (Wang, Zhang, Thomas, Yu, & Spitzmueller, 2017). Thus, we formulate the first hypothesis as follows:

H1: Empowering leadership is positively associated with the employee's proactive behavior.

2.1 Role of Psychological capital as a mediator

Positive psychology has experienced a growing prominence, especially in the human resource management (HRM) domain, prompting researchers to delve deeper into the wellspring of individuals' healthy and optimistic internal resources. These collective attributes are referred to as PsyCap (Hu et al., 2018). Within PsyCap, four essential personal resources are recognized: efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience (Kim & Beehr, 2021). Individuals who possess confidence in their abilities tend to anticipate that positive results will be yielded by their efforts, thus, self-efficacy becomes a strong predictor of proactive and independent behavior (Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006).

Managers hold a crucial position in ensuring that their team members consistently achieve success in their professional endeavors. By breaking down complex problems into more manageable components, professionals can provide explicit expectations for their subordinates and empower them with the authority to make decisions that impact their performance (Gupta & Singh, 2014). Through vicarious learning, individuals can draw insights from the successes and setbacks of others, deliberately emulating effective behaviors. Employees working under the guidance of adept leaders are likely to gain a wealth of modeled experience, which, in turn, enhances their proficiency in tackling challenging issues (Gupta & Singh, 2014). The observation of exemplary actions and

psychological attributes in leaders, coupled with receiving feedback and criticism constructively, can bolster the confidence of employees in their goals achieving ability (Rego et al., 2012).

Individuals driven by hope tend to set ambitious yet attainable objectives, as they possess a resolute determination to succeed and a strong sense of personal control (Luthans, Avolio, et al., 2007). The process of breaking daunting tasks into smaller, more manageable milestones can have a positive impact on employee morale (Gupta & Singh, 2014). Leaders can establish an environment characterized by autonomy, support, and constructive guidance, allowing followers to channel their efforts toward targeted activities, explore alternative problem-solving approaches, and seize opportunities (Rego et al., 2012).

Employees having a positive outlook have more likeness to embrace opportunities that have the potential to result in advantageous outcomes (Luthans, Avolio, et al., 2007). Supervisors can encourage staff to focus on the positives, shift their attention away from issues, and view challenges with a constructive perspective by demonstrating confidence in their abilities and providing positive feedback (Gupta & Singh, 2014). Managers can convey to their staff members that failure in the workplace is accepted and not something to take offense at. Support, positive feedback, a heightened sense of purpose and identity at work, practical mentorship, and workplace autonomy can collectively bolster employee initiative (Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007).

Lastly, the resilience component within PsyCap encourages employees to proactively assess potential threats or resources that may impact their performance outcomes (Kim & Beehr, 2021). Supervisors can ensure that their employees have access to necessary resources for both recovery from setbacks and thriving in the face of rapid positive changes (Rego et al., 2012). We assume that the association between empowering leadership and employees' proactive behavior is the presence of PsyCap. Thus, we formulate the second hypothesis as follows:

H2: PsyCap will moderate the association between empowering leadership and the proactive behavior of employees.

2.3 Task performance and Proactive behavior

Proactive behaviors have garnered recognition as a favorable aspect of organizational conduct in various research studies, owing to their myriad advantages for both companies and their employees. It is thus evident that organizations anticipate proactive behavior from their staff, as it affords them a competitive edge. In contemporary work environments, employees are increasingly expected to demonstrate behaviors that transcend their formal job requirements, embracing extra-role and innovative initiatives with a forward-looking perspective (Kanten & Alparslan, 2015). Consequently, organizations must either structure their frameworks and cultures to facilitate proactive conduct or conducive working conditions that inspire employees to willingly engage in such behaviors. The rationale behind this lies in the belief that the achievement of an

organization hinges on how effectively employees fulfill their job roles and display proactive inclinations (Fuller et al., 2012).

Individuals characterized by a proactive disposition are perceived as individuals who in their pursuit of positive change, identify opportunities, seize them, shoulder personal responsibility, and exhibit persistence (J. Michael Crant, 1995). On the flip side, those with a less proactive or passive disposition tend to exhibit a greater inclination toward adapting to changes in their environment, primarily because they are not actively pursuing opportunities to modify their surroundings (Fuller et al., 2010). Consequently, proactive behavior is deemed as an enduring attribute characterized by a predisposition "to take the initiative in various undertakings and circumstances" (Seibert et al., 2001a). It is widely acknowledged that proactive individuals tend to perform exceptionally well, as they engage in activities that make significant contributions to their job responsibilities (Fuller et al., 2010). For instance, proactive individuals are often described as tenacious, a trait that has been linked to enhanced job effectiveness (Barrick & Mount, 1991).

Proactive behavior not only stimulates creativity but also fosters superior performance, enhancing or expanding internal procedures within an organization designed to achieve its goals (Kim & Beehr, 2018). The task performance of employees exhibits a direct correlation with their proactive behavior. Engaging in proactive behavior empowers employees to execute their tasks more effectively and in this way a clear correlation exists between employees' proactive behavior and their task performance in a positive manner (Fuller et al., 2010). Thus, we formulate the third hypothesis as follows:

H3: Proactive behavior is positively related to an employee's task performance.

2.4 Career Success Potential and Proactive Behavior

Proactive behavior is a valuable indicator of employee career success, offering reliable assessments. Proactive employees possess an inherent disposition to shape their work environment, yielding numerous advantages. They are more inclined to engage in negotiations regarding their work processes and responsibilities. This proactivity enables them to exert influence, expanding their access to job resources and driving innovative approaches to their tasks. Proactive individuals also actively participate in managing their careers (Z. Wang et al., 2017). This proactive orientation not only correlates with superior job performance but also results in supervisors perceiving these individuals as highly motivated with greater potential for career success (Z. Wang et al., 2017). Career success potential, as defined by Thacker and Wayne (1995), signifies a manager's assessment of a subordinate's potential to thrive and excel within the workplace.

Proactive behavior, by its nature, remains consistent across various circumstances and is resistant to external influences (Crant, 2000). Empowered employees take deliberate steps to select and shape work environments that align with their personal goals and needs. This alignment enhances their job satisfaction, increases their likelihood of career advancement, and contributes to their overall professional success (Demi Zanen, 2016).

Individuals who exhibit proactive tendencies are much more inclined to participate in various career management activities for instance job hunting, seeking mentorship, and overcoming workplace obstacles (Yang & Chau, 2016). They possess the foresight to adapt to changing environmental conditions and drive positive changes. Proactive individuals actively seek opportunities for self-improvement, acquiring new knowledge and skills that are essential for future development. In contrast, those who are less proactive tend to react to their circumstances and maintain the status quo.

Proactivity plays a pivotal role in constructing an environment conducive to professional achievement (Yang & Chau, 2016). It empowers individuals to shape their work settings in ways that enhance their chances of succeeding in their careers (Seibert et al., 2001b). As per proactive principles, those who actively pursue their goals tend to experience greater happiness and a heightened sense of professional accomplishment (Parker & Liao, 2016). Numerous studies have highlighted the positive association between proactive behavior and career success (Smale et al., 2019).

In summary, employees who embrace a proactive attitude are more likely to achieve career success. Their proactive behavior not only enhances job performance but also positions them as motivated individuals with high potential for career success. Thus, we formulate the fourth hypothesis as follows:

H4: The proactive behavior of employees is positively associated with their career success potential.

2.5 Role of proactive behavior among employees as a mediator between empowering leadership and task performance

Performance is characterized by actions or processes that align closely with an organization's goals and objectives. Organizational missions and supervisor evaluations are commonly used to define these objectives (Daryoush, 2013). For example, in a sales position, aspects of task performance might include Brand Awareness, Making the Sale, and Timekeeping.

Empowering leadership is rooted in authority and collaborative autonomy (Harris et al., 2014). It involves a set of actions by employers to share authority with employees (Ahearne et al., 2005). Leaders who empower their teams often entrust them with authority and responsibilities, emphasize the significance of their contributions, demonstrate confidence in their abilities, supply necessary information and resources, and encourage independent decision-making opportunities (Qian et al., 2018). Empowering leadership is characterized by behaviors like delegating tasks, involving employees in the process of decision-making, and trusting the team's ability to handle challenging tasks (Ahearne et al., 2005). These leadership practices motivate individuals, fostering a sense of competence and confidence, which, in turn, also leads to self-initiation and aspiration (Martin et al., 2013). Moreover, empowering leadership encourages expanded duties and proactive approaches to work, similar to the need for supportive management to promote employee proactivity. Supportive leaders inspire their employees to set higher goals and excel, which enhances employees' cognitive states

related to proactivity (Anwar ul Haq et al., 2019). Empowering leadership plays a significant role in shaping proactive behavior among employees, as research establishes a significant link between empowering leadership and proactive employees (Gupta & Singh, 2014).

Beyond fostering autonomy for employees in performing job tasks, empowering leadership also encourages creativity and active engagement in achieving success (Martin et al., 2013). Transformational leadership behavior influences an individual's job performance because employees find management support engaging and motivating, thereby increasing the likelihood of completing tasks on time (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014).

Proactive behavior involves gathering essential information and enhancing the likelihood of success for employees striving to meet their superiors' expectations (Qian et al., 2018). Proactive actions are part of employees' contributions to the organization, ultimately leading to improved task performance (Sun & Emmerik, 2014). Proactive tendencies are the term for the efforts made by individuals to adapt their work behavior to enhance productivity. As a result, proactivity becomes increasingly crucial in uncertain organizational conditions, where employees must take prudent steps to maintain productivity (Andri et al., 2019). Proactive individuals take deliberate steps to shape circumstances, and the probability of achieving exceptional task performance is enhanced (J. Michael Crant, 1995). Thus, we formulate the fifth hypothesis as follows:

H5: The proactive behavior of employees will mediate the association between empowering leadership and task performance.

2.6 Proactive Behavior's role as a mediator between Empowering Leadership and Career Success Potential

Career success, as discussed by Metelski (2019), signifies the achievement of expected outcomes in one's professional journey. Individuals select careers that hold personal significance for them and assessing one's professional achievements should be tailored to their distinct aspirations, inclinations, convictions, and objectives (Xin et al., 2020).

For organizations to prosper, they must craft structures and cultures that encourage employees to exhibit proactive behavior willingly or establish conducive working conditions (Fuller et al., 2012). An organization's success hinges on the effective performance of employees in their roles and their propensity for proactive behavior. This entails empowering leadership, where managers delegate authority to employees, granting them more control over resources and responsibilities, while offering the necessary support to fulfill these added responsibilities (Martin et al., 2013). Effective empowering leaders distribute responsibilities, involve individuals in the decision-making process, and foster conscientiousness, in contrast to poor empowering leaders who limit employees' flexibility, stifle awareness, and erode their confidence in their abilities. Empowering leadership catalyzes employee proactive behavior (Gkorezis, 2016).

The literature underscores various proactive career behaviors, including career advancement management, career decision-making, and career enhancement approaches, all of which are self-directed activities undertaken by employees to manage

their careers (Smale et al., 2019). Engaging in proactive measures empowers individuals to evaluate their competencies within the context of career opportunities within an organization. These actions encompass concrete steps taken to pursue and achieve these specific goals (Sturges et al., 2001). Workers who possess the capacity to influence their working environment demonstrate a greater readiness to foresee and adjust to shifts in their surroundings. These individuals can adjust work procedures, practices, and task allocations, and also engage actively in decisions affecting their compensation, promotions, and other organizational benefits (Yang and Chau 2016).

Engaging in proactive activities transforms the nature and significance of an individual's job, potentially leading to reduced physical and mental stress indicators, alongside heightened job satisfaction and commitment (Kim and Beehr, 2018). Employees who exhibit proactive tendencies tend to excel in recognizing and actively pursuing opportunities for self-enhancement, acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for future advancements. In contrast, individuals who are less proactive react to their circumstances instead of shaping them, adhering to the status quo. Thus, proactivity plays a pivotal role in achieving professional success by influencing the construction of one's work environment (Yang and Chau, 2016). So, formulate the sixth hypothesis as follows:

H6: The proactive behavior of employees will mediate the association between empowering leadership and career success potential.

The theoretical foundation of this study serves as the cornerstone for guiding the research process. It delineates the intricate interplay among various factors, elucidates the emergence of relationships between them, and posits hypotheses that await empirical validation. In the proposed model, proactive behavior serves as a mediating link between task performance and the impact of empowering leadership. It also serves as a mediating link between empowering leadership and the prospects of career success. Further nuance is introduced by PsyCap's role, which moderates the connection between empowering leadership and employees' proactivity.

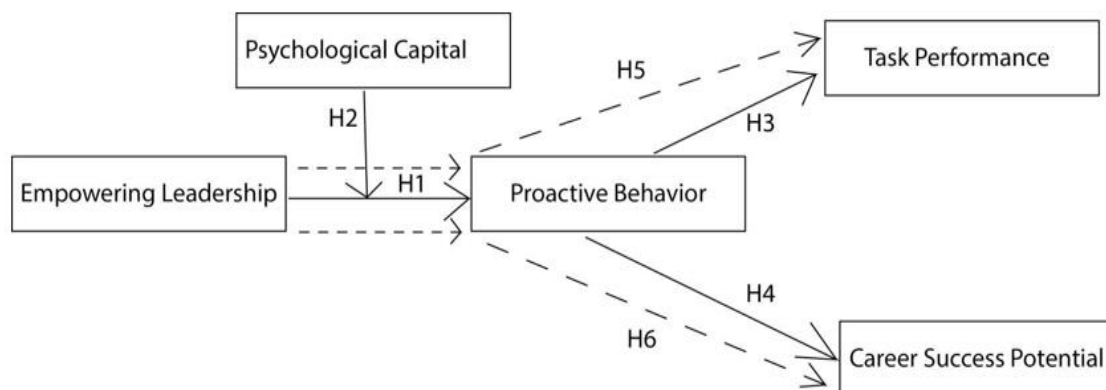


Figure 1: Theoretical framework of the Study

3. METHODS

3.1 Data Collection

Research studies are typically classified into two main categories based on their temporal scope: longitudinal studies and cross-sectional studies. Data is collected at a single point in time in a cross-sectional study, while a longitudinal study involves collecting data at multiple intervals over an extended period. For our current research, we have opted for a cross-sectional study design. To ensure the broad applicability of our findings, we will gather data from employees and their supervisors also within the healthcare sector of Pakistan.

The data pertaining to our variables of interest will be obtained through a structured questionnaire divided into two parts, denoted as T1 and T2. During the initial survey, employees will complete the T1 section, providing information related to empowering leadership, employee proactive behavior, and psychological capital. Subsequently, after a one-week interval, the second survey (T2) will be administered to the employers. This survey will focus on gathering feedback concerning the task performance and the career success potential of their respective employees.

Our questionnaire utilizes a "5-point Likert Scale", which has a range of response options from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The Likert Scale is a widely accepted instrument in research for assessing respondent opinions and attitudes. In this research, we have employed a cross-sectional study approach. For sampling, we have chosen a simple random sampling method, a type of probability sampling that involves drawing samples from the population in a straightforward and unbiased manner, which is both practical and easily accessible.

Out of 280 questionnaires distributed among participants, only 200 were deemed complete and usable, while the remaining 80 questionnaires were discarded due to various issues, such as errors, incomplete responses, and duplicate data entries. This resulted in a response rate of 71.42% among the participants. The gender distribution of responses was as follows: 40% male and 60% female. Participants' ages were categorized into three groups: 20-30 years (36.5%), 30-40 years (29%), and above 40 years (34.5%). In terms of work experience, participants fell into four categories: 1-5 years (28%), 5-10 years (28.5%), 10-20 years (19.5%), and more than 20 years (24%).

3.2 Measurement

Empowering Leadership Transferring authority constitutes a fundamental aspect of leadership that fosters empowerment. When employees are entrusted with delegated responsibilities, they gain the autonomy to perform actions and exercise their judgment independently (Anwar ul Haq et al., 2019). To assess the effectiveness of empowering leadership, we will utilize the Ahearne et al. (2005) 12-item scale as our measurement tool. In the course of our research, we found that the internal consistency (alpha) reliability of this scale is estimated to be 0.740.

Proactive behavior Encouraging proactive behavior motivates individuals to tap into their creativity, enhancing overall performance and facilitating the enhancement or expansion of internal organizational processes. This ultimately aids in the attainment of the organization's objectives (Kim & Beehr, 2018). The assessment of proactive behavior will be conducted through the utilization of Salanova and Schaufeli's (2008) 3-item measurement scale. The reliability of this scale, as measured by internal consistency (alpha), was found to be quite robust at 0.895. This ensures that our evaluation tool is dependable and can yield trustworthy results.

Psychological Capital Efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience constitute the quartet of personal assets or resources that together form an employee's PsyCap (Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). We will assess PsyCap by employing Luthans, Youssef, et al. (2007) 12-item measurement scale. The reliability of this scale, as indicated by internal consistency (alpha), was determined to be 0.788. This underscores the dependability of our chosen instrument for evaluating PsyCap.

Task performance Employees' task performance is intricately linked to their proactive behaviors, which in turn enhances their ability to excel in their responsibilities. To gauge task performance, we will employ the 7-item scale developed by Linda Koopmans, et al. in 2014. The scale has demonstrated commendable internal consistency with a reliability coefficient of 0.776. This attests to the instrument's trustworthiness for evaluating employee task performance.

Career Success Potential People are inclined to participate in various career management endeavors for instance job hunting, seeking mentorship and career support, actively steering their career paths, and addressing workplace challenges (Yang & Chau, 2016). The assessment of career success potential will be determined through the utilization of the Thacker & Wayne (1995) 2-item measurement scale. This scale has demonstrated a commendable level of internal consistency reliability, with a calculated alpha coefficient of 0.759.

3.3 Data analysis

Regression analysis is a statistical method employed to assess the connection between an independent variable and a dependent variable. This analytical approach can be categorized into two primary types: simple regression and multiple regression. Simple regression investigates the relationship between one dependent variable and one independent variable, while multiple regressions involve a minimum of two independent variables. Initially, we used linear regression analysis to examine the correlation between the variables including independent and dependent. In our research, we focus on proactive personality as the independent variable and assess its impact on task performance and career success potential as the dependent variables. This examination aims to validate or refute our research hypotheses.

To ascertain whether specific variables lend support to our hypotheses, we employ linear regression analysis. In addition to linear regression, we also employ Andres F. Hayes' methods for mediation and moderation analysis in our study. Here, proactive behavior is considered the mediator, while psychological capital serves as the moderator.

By employing these statistical techniques, we aim to get a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between the variables under investigation and test the proposed hypotheses in our research.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics provides a concise overview of various aspects within a dataset, offering valuable insights into the collected information. It presents essential details such as the sample size, standard deviation, average value, maximum, and minimum values. These statistical measures serve the purpose of condensing and structuring data, effectively summarizing extensive data sets.

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Min	Max	Std. Deviation
Empowering Leadership	200	3.7463	2.00	4.92	0.4622
PsyCap	200	3.8629	2.42	4.92	0.4687
Proactive Behaviour	200	4.2117	2.00	5.00	0.6947
Task Performance	200	3.9643	2.57	5.00	0.5024
Career Success Potential	200	4.1925	2.00	5.00	0.6867
Valid N (listwise)	200				

Table 4.1 provided here presents a snapshot of the descriptive statistics concerning the research data at hand. The Table comprises six key elements, encompassing variable names, the total sample size represented by 'N,' the minimum and maximum values of response variables, standard deviations, and means. These statistics serve as a quantification of responses using a Likert scale, which spans from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

Within these descriptive statistics, we've computed the variables of proactive personality, psychological empowerment, punitive supervision, and innovative performance. Our sample size stands at a robust 200. In the table, the mean values reflect the overall agreement levels of respondents regarding the various items. A higher mean suggests strong agreement, while a lower mean indicates disagreement among respondents.

Let's delve into the specifics:

Empowering leadership, as an independent variable, boasts a mean value of 3.7463 and a standard deviation of 0.46223. These figures point to a high level of empowerment among employees in Pakistan's healthcare sector. Proactive behavior, acting as a mediator, exhibits a mean value of 4.2117 and a standard deviation of 0.69470. This indicates a proactive disposition among healthcare employees in Pakistan.

Psychological capital, serving as a moderator, presents a standard deviation of 0.46865 and a mean value of 3.8629. These values suggest that employees in Pakistan's healthcare sector are motivated, contributing to their propensity for proactive behavior. Career success potential and task performance, both serving as dependent variables, showcase standard deviations of 0.68670 and 0.5024, and mean values of 4.1925 and 3.9643. These figures suggest that healthcare employees in Pakistan exhibit high levels of task performance and possess significant career success potential.

In summary, these unique descriptive statistics unveil a nuanced picture of employee perceptions and behaviors in Pakistan's healthcare sector, shedding light on their empowerment, proactivity, motivation, and potential for career success.

4.2 Reliability and Validity Analysis

Reliability analysis is a valuable tool for examining the characteristics of scale items, offering insights into the relationships among individual elements. It assesses the consistency of results when an instrument undergoes repeated testing. Cronbach's Alpha was employed to gauge the interconnections among variables in this research. It yields a score between 0 and 1, serving as a measure of reliability. A value greater than or equal to 0.7 signifies a high level of reliability, while a value below 0.7 suggests lower reliability.

Table 4.2: Reliability and Validity Analysis

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Items
Empowering Leadership	0.740	12
Proactive Behavior	0.895	3
Psychological Capital	0.788	12
Task Performance	0.776	7
Career Success Potential	0.759	2

The Table above presents the results of Cronbach's Alpha analysis. These results serve as an indicator of the validity and reliability of the surveyed items. In this table, Cronbach's Alpha value for empowering leadership stands at 0.740, surpassing the critical threshold of 0.7, thereby affirming its high reliability. The proactive behavior dimension exhibits a robust Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.895, further underlining its exceptional reliability. Psychological capital also demonstrates a respectable level of reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.788. Task performance comprising seven items, records a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.776, affirming its reliability. Lastly, Cronbach's Alpha for career success potential is 0.759, indicating its credibility. In summary, all the variables analyzed in this study exhibit strong validity and reliability, as Cronbach's Alpha values comfortably surpass the recommended thresholds.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis stands as an essential method used to determine the significance of associations between variables. This process is applied when there is a potential connection between two variables. In this particular investigation, the examination of association centered on the independent variable of empowering leadership and its

impact on the dependent variables of task performance and potential for career success. Additionally, the study delved into the mediating role of proactive behavior and the moderating influence of PsyCap.

By employing Pearson correlation analysis, the study evaluated the structure and strength of the variables. A correlation value between 0.3 and 0.5 signifies a moderate connection, and a value below the range identifies a weak relationship whereas a correlation value surpassing 0.5 indicates a high correlation level.

Table 4.3: Correlation Analysis

	1	2	3	4	5
1- Empowering Leadership	1				
2-Proactive Behavior	0.146*	1			
3-Psychological Capital	0.626**	0.295**	1		
4-Task Performance	0.149*	0.884**	0.289**	1	
5-Career Success Potential	0.149*	0.987**	0.294**	0.881**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The Table below illustrates the correlations among various variables, with 'r' denoting the strength of the relationships between these variables. The significance levels (p-values) indicate the strength of these associations.

Empowering Leadership and Proactive Behavior: Empowering leadership exhibits a positive association with proactive behavior ($p < 0.05$, $r = 0.146^*$). This suggests that when leadership is empowering, employees are more likely to engage in proactive behaviors.

Empowering Leadership and Psychological Capital: Empowering leadership also demonstrates a positive association with psychological capital ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.626^{**}$). This indicates that when leadership fosters empowerment, employees tend to have higher levels of psychological capital.

Empowering Leadership and Task Performance: Similarly, there is a positive association between empowering leadership with task performance ($p < 0.05$, $r = 0.149^*$). This implies that when leadership empowers the team, their task performance improves.

Empowering Leadership and Career Success Potential: Additionally, there is a positive association of empowering leadership with career success potential ($p < 0.05$, $r = 0.149^*$). This suggests that under empowering leadership, individuals are more likely to perceive a higher potential for career success.

Proactive Behavior and Psychological Capital: Proactive behavior is positively correlated with PsyCap ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.295^{**}$). This indicates that individuals who exhibit proactive behaviors tend to possess higher levels of psychological capital.

Proactive Behavior and Task Performance: Furthermore, There is a positive association of proactive behavior with task performance ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.884^{**}$). This suggests that proactive individuals are more likely to excel in their tasks and responsibilities.

Proactive Behavior and Career Success Potential: There is a positive link between proactive behavior with career success potential ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.987^{**}$). This highlights the substantial impact of proactive behaviors on perceived career success potential.

Psychological Capital and Task Performance: PsyCap is positively associated with task performance ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.289^{**}$). This means that individuals with higher psychological capital tend to perform better in their assigned tasks.

Psychological Capital and Career Success Potential: Additionally, psychological capital exhibits a positive association with career success potential ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.294^{**}$). This suggests that individuals possessing elevated levels of psychological capital are inclined to envision heightened career achievement.

Task Performance and Career Success Potential: Finally, there is a positive correlation between task performance with career success potential ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.881^{**}$). This emphasizes the crucial role of task performance in shaping one's perceived potential for career success.

In conclusion, these correlations shed light on the interplay between empowering leadership, proactive behavior, psychological capital, task performance, and career success potential within the context of this study. These findings provide valuable insights into the dynamics of these variables in place of work.

4.4 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is a fundamental statistical technique employed to assess the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable. Before conducting a regression analysis, it is common practice to perform a correlation analysis to examine the associations between variables. However, it is important to note that while correlation analysis reveals associations, it does not provide insights into causal relationships between variables.

Regression analysis can be categorized into two primary types: simple regression and multiple regression. In a simple regression analysis, the examination is focused on the relationship between a single dependent variable and a lone independent variable.

On the other hand, when the analysis involves multiple independent variables, it is referred to as multiple regression. This advanced form of regression analysis allows for a more comprehensive exploration of how several independent variables collectively influence a dependent variable.

4.4.1 Simple Regression

Hypothesis 1: Empowering leadership is positively associated with the proactive behavior of employees.

Table 4.4: Simple Regression

Explanatory	Proactive Behavior		
	Coefficient	SE	P
Empowering Leadership	0.219	0.106	0.03

The provided Table illustrates the data representing the predictive connection between proactive behavior and empowering leadership. The coefficient value is 0.219, with a standard error (SE) of 0.106, and a significance level of 0.03. These findings strongly support the validation of our initial hypothesis.

It's noteworthy that the coefficient value is positive, aligning with our hypothesis that empowering leadership has a positive correlation with employees' proactive behavior. Moreover, the p-value of 0.03 indicates a statistically significant relationship between the mediator and the independent variable.

Hypothesis 2: Proactive behavior has a positive association with the task performance of employees.

Table 4.5: Simple Regression

Predictor	Task Performance		
	Coefficient	SE	P
Proactive Behavior	0.639	0.024	0.000

The provided Table illustrates the predictive values pertaining to the association between proactive behavior and task performance. The coefficient value stands at 0.639, with a standard error (SE) of 0.024, and an impressively low significance level of 0.000. These findings unequivocally support the acceptance of our second hypothesis.

It's noteworthy that the coefficient value is positive, aligning perfectly with the premise of our hypothesis, which posited a positive correlation between proactive behavior and task performance. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.000 underscores the significance of the relationship between the mediator and the dependent variable, solidifying the conclusion that H2 is indeed substantiated.

Hypothesis 3: The proactive behavior of employees is positively associated with the career success potential of employees.

Table 4.6: Simple Regression

Predictor	Career Success Potential		
	Coefficient	SE	P
Proactive Behavior	0.975	0.011	0.000

The provided Table illustrates the data used to assess the connection between employees' proactive behavior and their potential for career success. The coefficient value is recorded at 0.975, with a standard error (SE) of 0.011, and an associated significance level of .000. These statistical findings strongly support the validation of our third hypothesis.

Notably, the coefficient value is positive, aligning with our initial hypothesis that proactive behavior correlates positively with an individual's career success potential. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.000 underscores the high degree of statistical significance in establishing the relationship between the mediator and the dependent variable.

4.4.2 Regression Analysis for Mediation

Hypothesis 4: Proactive behavior mediates the association between task performance and empowering leadership.

To examine the fourth hypothesis, we performed a mediation analysis through regression. This analysis aimed to investigate the connection between proactive behavior acting as a mediator in the relationship between two key variables: empowering leadership and task performance. We conducted the mediation analysis employing Model 4 from the Andres F. Hayes Process macro. The findings fellow support our hypothesis.

Total Effect of X on Y

Table 4.7: Regression for Mediation

Effect	SE	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
0.1623	0.0764	2.1252	0.03	0.0117	0.3130

Table 4.7 presents an illustration of the direct impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The effect size is determined to be 0.1623, with a statistically significant p-value of 0.03, highlighting the significance of this relationship. The lower limit of confidence interval (LLCI) is calculated to be 0.0117, while the upper limit (ULCI) stands at 0.3130. Notably, both LLCI and ULCI are positive, indicating that the mediation of employee proactive behavior between task performance and empowering leadership, holds substantial significance.

Hypothesis 5: Proactive behavior mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and career success potential.

To evaluate the 5th hypothesis, a regression analysis focusing on the concept of mediation is undertaken. This examination aims to assess the link between proactive behavior acting as a mediator connecting the dependent and independent variables, specifically empowering leadership and the potential for career success.

Total Effect of X on Y

Table 4.8: Regression for Mediation

Effect	SE	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
0.2219	0.1044	2.1259	0.03	0.0161	0.4278

Table 4.8 outlines the portrayal of the direct influence of the potential for career success on empowering leadership. The effect size is recorded as 0.2219, and the associated p-value is 0.03, indicative of the statistical significance of this relationship. Notably, the lower limit of the confidence interval (LLCI) stands at 0.0161, while the upper limit (ULCI) is 0.4278. Both of these values exhibit a positive direction, underscoring the significance of the relationship between proactive behavior as a mediator, empowering leadership, and the potential for career success. Consequently, the overall impact of the mediation in the regression analysis confirms the validity of the fifth hypothesis, which posited that proactive behavior serves as a mediator in the relationship between empowering leadership and the potential for career success.

4.4.3 Regression Analysis for Moderation

Hypothesis 6: PsyCap will moderate the association between employee’s proactive behavior and empowering leadership.

Table 4.9: Regression for moderation

	Coefficient	SE	T	p	LLCI	ULCI
EL	2.4664	0.8419	2.9296	0.003	0.8061	4.1267
PC	2.7115	0.7301	3.7140	0.000	1.2717	4.1513
Int 1	0.6123	0.1988	3.0796	0.002	0.2202	1.0043

We assumed that the association between the proactive behavior of employees and empowering leadership would become stronger in the presence of PsyCap. The findings in the Table above support our hypothesis. In the provided table, we have "EL," which is an independent variable representing Empowering Leadership. The associated numbers depict the impact of proactive behavior on empowering leadership which is statistically significant as the p-value associated with this relationship is 0.003.

Furthermore, we have "PC," which is a moderating variable signifying Psychological Capital. The p-value here is 0.000, underscoring the relationship’s significance. The interaction term values (Int 1) demonstrate the presence of this moderator. Specifically, the p-value associated with Int 1 is 0.002, reaffirming the significance of the relationship between the moderator and both the independent and dependent variables.

The coefficient value for Int 1 is 0.6123, and it is positive, implying a positive influence of the moderator. Additionally, the lower limit value is 0.2202, while the upper limit value is 1.0043. These values align in the identical direction, reinforcing the moderator effect’s existence.

5. DISCUSSION

The investigation into the interconnections among various variables had not been previously explored in this particular study, which was conducted within the Pakistani context. This research endeavor forged a novel association between these variables by drawing upon existing literature, formulating hypotheses, and subsequently subjecting them to rigorous evaluation.

Previous research endeavors primarily focused on the correlation between the proactive behavior of employees and empowering leadership, thereby limiting the scope of their investigations (Singh & Rangnekar, 2020). In addition to the emphasis on the connection between the presence of empowering leadership and an employee's proactive engagement, this study also elucidates the moderating influence of PsyCap between them. Additionally, this research underscores the importance of proactive engagement in influencing both an employee's career potential and task performance.

Our study reveals a positive correlation between the existence of empowering leadership and employee proactive engagement. Empowering leadership fosters an environment in which employees can cultivate proactive behaviors, thereby contributing significantly to an organization's competitive edge. Proactive behaviors exhibit a favorable association with both an employee's task performance and their potential for career success. Individuals who display proactive tendencies are more likely to surpass their more passive counterparts because they actively engage in activities that substantially contribute to their job responsibilities.

Furthermore, the findings of this study suggest that PsyCap plays a pivotal role in moderating the connection between an employee's proactive engagement and empowering leadership. In the healthcare sector, the presence of proactive employees can bestow a competitive advantage upon organizations, enabling them to outperform their competitors.

6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

In all research endeavors, limitations are an inherent part of the process. During our current study, we encountered certain constraints, despite our concerted efforts to adhere to established standards and address identified gaps. Regrettably, due to constraints such as time limitations and resource shortages, we were unable to address all of these gaps comprehensively.

Our research methodology relied on the administration of a quantitative survey questionnaire within the healthcare sector in Multan, Punjab. To gauge responses, we employed a five-point Likert scale. A total of 280 survey questionnaires were distributed to various healthcare facilities, with 200 respondents ultimately participating. It's worth noting that our survey was exclusively conducted within the confines of Multan due to resource constraints.

Consequently, it is imperative to acknowledge that the findings derived from this research may not be readily generalized on a global scale. The data collected is geographically limited to a single country. As a result, it is plausible that the outcomes of our proposed model may vary significantly when applied in diverse cultural settings and different countries due to inherent cultural differences.

In the forthcoming years, scholars are advised to adhere to the following recommendations to enhance the precision of their evaluations:

- 1) Future investigators should place a greater emphasis on exploring moderating variables and conducting thorough investigations to identify potential factors that may influence the observed relationships. For instance, the incorporation of variables like psychological empowerment could offer valuable insights into the dynamics under investigation.
- 2) It is imperative for researchers to acknowledge the limitations of their studies. In the case of this study, its scope is limited to one city. To ensure the reliability and generalizability of findings, future inquiries should consider expanding their focus to encompass other cities or even the entire nation of Pakistan, thereby producing more dependable results that are reflective of broader contexts.
- 3) Recognizing that the present study utilized a relatively modest number of questionnaires, researchers should strive to enhance the robustness of their investigations by expanding their participant pool. A larger sample size can enhance the statistical power and reliability of the study, leading to more meaningful conclusions.
- 4) To gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under examination, it is essential for future researchers to explore the relationship in various cultural contexts. Expanding the scope of research to include Western cultures, for instance, would enable a more comprehensive assessment of the universality or cultural specificity of the observed connections.

Incorporating these recommendations into future scholarly endeavors will contribute to a more comprehensive and precise assessment of research inquiries, ultimately advancing our collective knowledge and understanding of the subjects under investigation.

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