

# The Impact of Empowering Leadership on Job Performance of Higher Education Institutions Employees: Mediating Role of Goal Clarity and Self-Efficacy

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**Purpose:** The main objective of existing research is to assess empowering leadership effects on employees' job performance at the academic level through mediating variables' goal clarity and self-efficacy.

**Methods:** Data were congregated from 400 employees belonging to higher education institutions of Pakistan through research assistants, hired for data collection. Statistical procedures, such as factor analysis via statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS 23), structural equation modeling with bootstrapping via statistical tool analysis of moment structures (AMOS 24), were used to evaluate data and assess the relationship among the constructs.

**Results:** The structural equation modeling analysis uncovered several results. For instance, it shows the positive influence of empowering leadership behaviors on goal clarity, self-efficacy, and employees' job performance. Moreover, the bootstrap investigation showed that goal clarity and self-efficacy mediate empowering leadership behaviors' influence on workers' job performance. Therefore, conferring to existing study results empowering leadership is significantly associated with employees' job performance in the presence of mediators goal clarity and self-efficacy at the academic level of higher education institutions of Sindh, Pakistan.

**Conclusion:** The main research question of existing research is to assess empowering leadership effects on employees' job performance through mediating variables' goal clarity and self-efficacy. To investigate this research question, we have conducted this study and empirically established that empowering leadership can affect employees' job performance with and without mediation. We have also shown empowering leadership as collaborative effects produce advanced levels of self-efficacy, goal clarity, and employees' job performance than either leadership behavior could accomplish by itself.

**Keywords:** empowering leadership, job performance, goal clarity, self-efficacy, higher education institutions

## Introduction

Organizational performance and development depend upon employees' efficiency and competence. Higher performance encourages strategic human resource techniques and expands strategic tactics of human resource management.<sup>1</sup> In particular for service-oriented organizations, where the employees' performance is considered an influential factor for higher growth.<sup>2</sup> However, in competitive global economic conditions, all service organizations including educational sectors are emphasizing more on empowering employees and necessitating supportive behavior with subordinates.<sup>3</sup> It encourages participating in decision-making and also frees from indolent mentalities.<sup>4</sup>

Empowering leadership is described as a leadership method demarcating performances for power-sharing with subordinates. It is a method of making a conceivable environment to distribute the authority with workers. Power-sharing through highlighting the worth of worker's responsibility, assigning decision-making autonomy, showing belief in worker's capability, and giving autonomy to act according to the condition.<sup>3</sup> Nowadays, the age of outmoded classified structures, directing as well as controlling employees disappeared; it is time to permit and authorize the workers. High

empowering leaders give authority, include workers in decision-making, and encourage self-management. While low empowering leaders offer limited chances for autonomy to workers and discourage their self-management.<sup>5</sup> Empowered personnel have advanced capability to acquire a higher level of efficiency because they feel the wisdom of control over their job.<sup>6</sup> Empowering leadership is observed as an interpersonal link between leaders and subordinates specifically of educational sectors like higher education institutions where empowerment involvements flow from the top order. Some pragmatic studies supported the opinion that the effect of leadership styles and empowering leadership leads to enhance significantly employees' job performance of educational sectors containing higher educational institutions (HEIs).<sup>7,8</sup>

Goal clarity is the degree to which a supporter identifies accurately what targeted goals are and what they should achieve. Given high goal clarity, followers identify regarding assigned tasks as well as responsibilities, what objectives they should seek and what is expected from them.<sup>9</sup> Empowering leadership generates an understanding of ownership and autonomy that should foster more vigilant team attention and organizational objectives.<sup>10</sup> Empowering leadership adapts goal clarity through maximizing psychological ownership and intrinsic motivation of partially self-determined goals.<sup>4</sup> Goal clarity guides followers' consideration and supports the emphasis on what is appropriate. Without goal clarity, supporters can become unfocussed through inappropriate activities towards inclusive goals, and their allotted job responsibilities do not contribute to the performance.<sup>11</sup>

Enhancing the meaningfulness of work, fostering participation in decision-making, expressing confidence in high performance, and providing autonomy from bureaucratic constraints are major elements of empowering leadership.<sup>7</sup> It is believed that these specified empowering leadership features would accelerate supporters' self-efficacy level, denoting enabling procedure of empowering leadership. According to Bandura, self-efficacy is described as one's trust in one's capability to be successful in particular circumstances for completing a job responsibility. Self-efficacy (as social cognitive theory and social learning theory hypothesized) is an individual's belief in completing a specific task effectively.<sup>12,13</sup> The social cognitive theory is a person's activities and responses, with social activities and cognitive procedures, in all situations influenced by the activities that an individual has perceived in others. Social learning theory states the acquirement of abilities that are recognized entirely or mainly within a social group. Social learning is based on how individuals either succeed or fail in groups with self-motivated collaborations and encourage the growth of an individual's demonstrative and practical abilities.<sup>12,13</sup> Conferring to Bandura's concept, high self-efficacy people are those who believe in performing difficult tasks in a well-organized way as something to be mastered instead of something to be evaded.<sup>13</sup>

The concept of empowering leadership and employees' job performance has not been researched in the context of higher education institutions of Pakistan till now. Therefore, we found a research area gap. Previous studies mostly focused on commercial industrial sectors,<sup>10</sup> banking sectors,<sup>14,15</sup> metropolitan municipal corporations,<sup>16</sup> health-care industries,<sup>6</sup> schools of European countries,<sup>17</sup> business firms with research centers<sup>18</sup> and IT sectors<sup>19</sup> but ignored academic institutions. Thus, we found a population gap. Presently in empirical research, several researchers have used regression analysis;<sup>20</sup> however, it does not provide valid results as compared to the structural equation model. We have identified this empirical gap. After a detailed literature study, we realized that research literature is very limited on this relationship. Therefore, we are conducting this research to further enhance the existing literature gap. As compared to previous studies, we have employed a large sample size to get more generalized results. Consequently, we filled this methodological research gap.

The association between empowering leadership and employees' job performance is a unique concept that is mostly ignored as mentioned above and requires more investigation. Hence, we found a conceptual research gap. This study is based on the academic staff perspective which is not found in previous studies. Thus, we found a perspective research gap. As we mentioned above, researchers only focused on commercial sectors and ignored academic institutions. Hence, results of commercial sectors cannot be employed in academic institutions. So, we found an implication research gap. To fill all these research gaps, we have conducted this research study.

## Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

According to the management literature, the empowering leadership notion stated higher consideration. Empowering leadership persists categorically recognized through the existing process of offering self-sufficient and managerial staff.<sup>21,22</sup>

Bestowing to initiate advisors' view it is stated empowering leadership enthusiastically regarding innovative employees through increasing freedom sense between employees.<sup>23</sup> Empowering leadership needs employees in facts sharing and exploration for the data.<sup>24,25</sup> We can say that empowering leadership means assigning employees additional autonomy.<sup>26</sup> Several researchers confirmed empowerment leadership perception according to the authority distribution process, passing self-sufficiency with a commitment to supporters.<sup>3,7,27-30</sup>

The management, as well as applied psychology literature normally describe the concept of goal clarity as "the extent to which the result goals, as well as job objectives, are specified and well-defined".<sup>9</sup> Stated description delivers significant flexibility for operative goal clarity in both laboratory and field setting. The effect of goal clarity and work sovereignty always predict supporters' work performance.<sup>31</sup> Goal clarity is a collaborative function of empowering leadership with a clear understanding of organizational goals. Empowering leadership develops goal clarity through increasing supporters' intrinsic motivation and psychological ownership with hard-working exertions. Such leader behaviors are expected to encourage supporters to involve and adopt their objectives.<sup>9</sup>

The worth of self-efficacy is contained in its capability to enhance worker performance as workers use extra hard work, become more determined, and study how to handle task-oriented complications.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, self-efficacious personnel should be proficient to accomplish well when challenging conditions increase throughout an employee-customer meeting. Self-efficacy is the "confidence in one's capacities to establish and implement the course of actions desired to generate specified accomplishments".<sup>33</sup> The more advanced self-efficacy is, the more likely he or she is to be involved and persevere in work-oriented behavior.<sup>13,34</sup> Higher levels of mastery, oral persuading, and indirect experiences are associated with positive evolving routes of self-efficacy.<sup>35</sup> According to Bandura<sup>33</sup> self-efficacy could be affected by optimistic emotive support, arguments of motivation, encouraging persuasion, model of success, and experience understanding a task.

The empowering leadership element of participation in decision-making and associated responsibility increase employees' sense of meaning and provide chances to learn leading to succeeding at work.<sup>36</sup> Conferring to the reported statement that employees cannot execute at their best level lacking complete control or self-sufficiency over their jobs.<sup>37</sup> Too much obedience to the official procedure has an opposing outcome on employees' service excellence.<sup>38</sup> In this background, empowering leadership can occur as a significant variable that can vigorously develop the modifications in the organization, through expressing beneficial concepts from the subordinate side. Furthermore, we contend that empowering leadership is granting self-sufficiency, increasing leaders' trust in the team, power shifting, fostering team innovation through team cooperative orientation. It means that responsibilities from the leader to the supporters are a perfect instantiation of shared leadership.<sup>5,18,28,39-41</sup>

## Empowering Leadership and Job Performance

To investigate employees' work performance two strategies are used. The first is an objective method focused on job outcomes and the second is a subjective method focused upon the job task performance through employees.<sup>42</sup> It has been originated that occasionally, workers only have control over the job task performance, not on job results. That is why the subjective method is further appropriate than the objective method work performance.<sup>42</sup> Given this, the current study is based on subjective measures of job performance. Numerous studies analytically supported the direct or indirect impact of empowering leadership on workers' job performance.<sup>2,7,43,44</sup> Though empowering leadership is positively related to subordinates' work performance, it is proposed that leaders should be careful while showing empowering behaviors. Trained employment observes authorization as a positive inventiveness to expand their self-sufficiency, however, untrained employment tends to observe it as a deficiency of direction from leadership.<sup>45</sup> According to Wörtler employees' efficacy can be increased if their leaders use an empowering leadership style.<sup>46</sup>

Empowering leadership may have a significant, impartial, and occasionally, insignificant effect on worker performance according to the level of empowering behavior exposed through the leader. Although a higher level of empowering leadership behavior leads to advanced in-role performance, a lower level of empowering leadership behavior can create an undesirable influence on employees' work performance.<sup>43</sup> Empowering leadership has a direct significant impact on in-role and associated extra-role performances of service-oriented staff. Whereas empowering leadership has an indirect impact on thought-provoking extra-role performances through the intervention of psychological

empowerment.<sup>44</sup> Likewise in South African municipality workers' study, empowering leadership is originated to be nearly related to job determination and workers' performance.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Chow<sup>23</sup> has specified that empowering leadership increases imagination between followers that expand their work performance. Enhancing the meaningfulness of work (EMW), fostering participation in decision-making (FPDM), expressing confidence in high performance (ECHP), and providing autonomy from bureaucratic constraints (PABC) are four behavior alliances of empowering leadership.<sup>7</sup> Empowering leadership increases the meaning of work, denotes self-assurance within associate's capability, delivering freedom, self-sufficiency along with promoting employee's contribution within decision-making.<sup>4</sup>

So, according to the above research study, the following hypotheses are projected to be verified:

- H1. Empowering leadership has a positive impact on EMW.
- H2. Empowering leadership has a positive impact on FPDM.
- H3. Empowering leadership has a positive impact on ECHP.
- H4. Empowering leadership has a positive impact on PABC.
- H5. Empowering leadership has a positive impact on Employees' job performance.

## **Empowering Leadership, Self-Efficacy and Employees' Job Performance**

Empowering leadership uses impact on employees' job performance through growing supporters' self-efficacy to establish and implement the development activities mandatory to generate specified achievements".<sup>33</sup> Bestowing to empowerment theory, Conger and Kanungo<sup>47</sup> worried the perception on empowerment as a motivational concept, signifying empowerment specifies a "method whereby person's trust in his or her self-efficacy is increased". In detail, they proposed five phases of empowerment development illuminating how this motivational concept is linked and how it works. The first phase is based on the judgment of situations in the organization accountable for inability feelings between supporters. The second phase is based on the incorporation of empowerment policies through supervisors, ensuing from the situations of the first phase. In the third phase, the policies are applied to deliver self-efficacy data to supporters. Accordingly, in phase four supporters reinforce work-oriented performance anticipation or increase their certainty in their efficacy. Phase five is the social effect that results from supporters' increased self-efficacy. This five-phase model of empowerment development recommends a hypothetical origin for illuminating the significant relation between empowering leadership and supporters' work performance through their amplified level of self-efficacy. Generalized self-efficacy is the trust that one can accomplish wanted results crosswise variation of tasks and circumstances.<sup>13</sup> According to social cognitive theory, self-efficacy can be enriched through spoken persuading (encouragement), direct control experience of completing tasks or abilities, and experimental learning. In the workplace, empowering leadership for instance coaching (vocal encouragement) along with modeling (experimental learning) may make subordinates feel further self-confident in their competencies to accomplish their jobs. Because they could learn how operative performance can be achieved through leaders' direction and advice, and by perceiving the work of their supervisors (eg, indirect learning).<sup>13,33</sup> When empowering leaders reassure workers to participate in their work-oriented decision-making and intensify their participation, they have chances to increase their knowledge and acquire from each other through exchanging information.<sup>48</sup> All of these procedures subsidize promoting self-efficacy. Further directly, empowering leaders should be aware of their subordinates' abilities and boost the use of their proficiencies, which contributes to the growth of subordinates' self-efficacy views.<sup>27</sup> Self-efficacy is associated with self-assurance in one's capability. It is workers' trust or anticipation that can effectively accomplish responsibilities if they exercise struggle, a feature of the expectancy theory of motivation, and motivation should lead to improved performance.<sup>49</sup> Workers who see themselves as efficient and feel improved regarding their job through the positive experiences of work are probable to apply significant determination on their responsibilities, leading to positive in-role performance. As one would imagine, consequently, meta-analyses have recognized the positive relationship between self-efficacy and job performance.<sup>50,51</sup> Enhancing the meaningfulness of work, fostering participation in decision-making, expressing confidence in high

performance, and providing autonomy from bureaucratic constraints are the main features of leader empowering behaviors.<sup>7</sup> These features would intensify employees' self-efficacy levels.

So, according to the above research study, the following hypotheses are projected to be verified:

**H6a:** Empowering leadership has a positive and significant impact on self-efficacy.

**H6b:** Self-efficacy has a positive and significant impact on employees' job performance.

## **Empowering Leadership, Goal Clarity and Employees' Job Performance**

The collaborative effect of empowering leadership is the beginning of goal clarity and directing effect on employees' job performance. Goal clarity captures the level to which supporters are focused regarding everyday hard work related to higher objectives.<sup>9</sup> Individuals employed to accomplish actual explicit goals tended to assign extra work time toward the particular micro-tasks connected to their goals.<sup>52</sup> Likewise, obviously stated goals assist supervisors in assessing performance and then condense response,<sup>9</sup> and support workers self-regulate determination.<sup>53</sup> Assumed high goal clarity, workers identify their duties and responsibilities, evaluating expected as well as attempting goals.<sup>9</sup> Empowering leadership produces wisdom of ownership that should adopt the extra vigilant attention of the team and organizational goals (ie, that are extra skilled as personal objectives with advanced empowerment). Furthermore, empowering leadership might nurture goal clarity through increasing supporters' intrinsic motivation, which would persuade them to extra sensibly reflect their responsibilities and goals. Such leader actions are probable to persuade supporters to involve with and include their goals. If leaders shortsightedly recommend self-sufficiency and support self-government, they execute the risk of generating or increasing coordination difficulties.<sup>54</sup>

So, according to the above research study, the following hypotheses are projected to be verified:

H7a: Empowering leadership has a positive impact on goal clarity.

H7b: Goal clarity has a positive impact on employees' job performance.

## **Empowering Leadership and Employees' Job Performance Mediated by Goal Clarity**

Goal clarity is a work source that creates work that is vibrant and further inclusive for workers. Conferring to the job features model through Hackman and Oldham,<sup>55</sup> goal clarity denotes significant work characteristics having a positive impact on motivation as well as security of workers.<sup>56,57</sup>

Supervisors making use of production-oriented leadership try to initiate a clear structure at work to ensure workers' goal accomplishment.<sup>58</sup> This may include supervisors collaborating desired expectations from their workers, areas of workers' responsibilities, and achieving workers desired goals. After clarity of stated parameters, employees have full opportunity to respond and act according to these goals and expectations; henceforth, it is conceivable for them to deal with conditions and enhance their sensation of control.<sup>59</sup>

Goal clarity controls supporters' dedication and supports them emphasis on relevant constraints.<sup>11</sup> Deprived of goal clarity, supporters can become stunned or unfocussed by actions that are inappropriate towards complete objectives and do not make a contribution to performance on their allocated tasks.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, researchers have originated the positive effect of goal clarity on individual follower decisions.<sup>11,60</sup>

Based on detailed understanding, we recommend that goal clarity is a particular managerial tool that benefits to elucidate how empowering leadership behaviors accompany each other in estimating workers' job performance. Especially, we contend that goal clarity mediates the collaborative effect of empowering leadership on workers' job performance.

So, according to the above research study, the following hypothesis is projected to be verified:

H9: Goal clarity mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and employees' job performance.

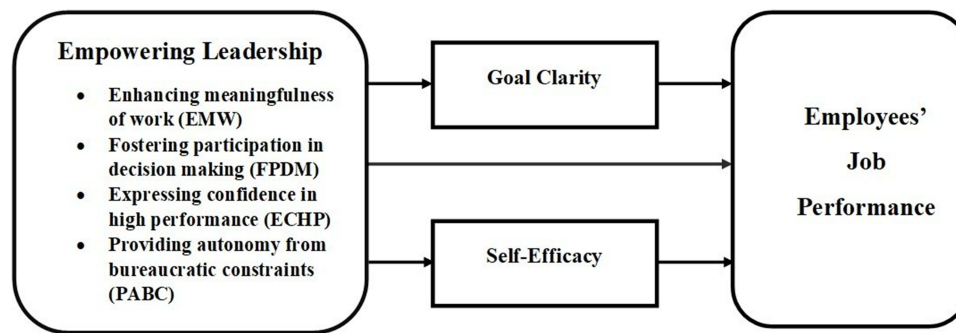


Figure 1 Proposed research model.

## Empowering Leadership and Employees' Job Performance Mediated by Self-Efficacy

Conferring to Bandura,<sup>12</sup> self-efficacy denotes a person's self-assurance within his/her capability to execute a specific behavior effectively or to control one's environment. Based on this perception, empowerment is permitting procedure instead of delegation process, which is the only single condition for empowering workforces.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, permitting procedures comprising of generating situations for indorsing job motivation through a progression of increasing self-efficacy. Empowerment is demarcated as "a procedure of increasing self-efficacy feelings between administrative associates".<sup>47</sup> Therefore, empowered workers feel that they can accomplish their work proficiently, which sequentially impacts their job instigation and determination. Bandura<sup>33</sup> recommended that people's self-efficacy can be improved through positive emotive support, urgings of inspiration, positive influence, models of achievement, and the experience of understanding a task. Previous work empirically supported those particular empowering behaviors of leaders that are positively associated with workers' self-efficacy (eg, self-efficacy,<sup>7</sup> team efficacy,<sup>62</sup> creative self-efficacy,<sup>4,63</sup> and career self-efficacy.<sup>64</sup> Sequentially, this improved supporter self-efficacy possibly will initiate an upsurge in their work role performance. Preceding research confirmed that self-efficacy has vigorous and optimistic relationships with successive performance variables containing task performance.<sup>51</sup>

Bestowing to previous literature, moreover to our specific hypothesizing, a leader's empowering leadership is disposed to intensify the workers' self-efficacy that can upsurge workers' job performance. Therefore, empowering leadership is probable to have an optimistic indirect effect on work role performance over its positive influence on supporters' self-efficacy.

So, according to the above research study, the following hypothesis is projected to be verified:

H10: Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and employees' job performance.

Given the above-stated variables, the proposed research model is presented in Figure 1.

## Methodology

### Pilot Study

According to Connelly,<sup>65</sup> we have conducted pilot testing on 40 respondents. After getting responses from respondents we have modified the language of the questionnaire.

### Sample and Data Collection

According to given data for the year 2014–15 on the official website of the higher education commission (HEC) of Pakistan, there are a total of 8994 employees<sup>66</sup> working as faculty members containing lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors in 67 higher education institutions of Sindh, Pakistan.<sup>67</sup> For this research, we have focused on only 12 higher education institutions of Sindh, Pakistan, with 3994 full-time faculty members<sup>68</sup> containing lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors. For conducting this study we have used a simple random sampling

**Table 1** Respondents' Demographics (N = 400)

S. No	Demographic Variables	Classification	Frequency	(%)
1	Gender of the Respondents	Male	290	72.5
		Female	110	27.5
		<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>
2	Age of the Respondents	20–30	40	10
		31–40	110	27.5
		41–50	160	40
		51 and above	90	22.5
		<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>
3	Highest Qualification of the Respondents	Masters	40	10
		M.Phil	150	37.5
		PhD	210	52.5
		<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>
4	Experience of the Respondents	01–10 years	90	22.5
		11–20 years	210	52.5
		21 and above	100	25
		<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>
5	Designation of the Respondents	Lecturer	90	22.5
		Assistant Professors	130	32.5
		Associate Professors	90	22.5
		Professors	90	22.5
		<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>

**Note:** Source: Survey.

technique. According to Yamane (1979), the sample size of this study is 400.  $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$ . We tried to contact 700 employees in 12 higher education institutions of Sindh, Pakistan, through phone numbers and e-mails to participate in the survey. Out of these, 422 employees replied. Then, we distributed questionnaires to 422 employees through research assistants. Employees finalized their investigations through evaluating their supervisors' empowering behaviors along with the personal level of goal clarity, self-efficacy as well as job performance according to a 7-point Likert scale. Afterward, 22 questionnaires were excluded from the study due to incomplete information. The final sample contained responses of 400 employees, with an effective response rate of 57.14%, which is appropriate for social sciences research.<sup>69</sup>

The respondents' demographics can be seen in Table 1.

## Measurements

For aggregating the data, a method of the survey questionnaire was used. All items were measured by a 7-point rating scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

## Empowering Leadership (Independent Variable)

A twelve-item reflecting four empowering leadership constructs developed by Ahearne et al.<sup>7</sup> was applied for the existing study. Employees were enquired to evaluate supervisors' empowering leadership behaviors wherever advanced grading specifying positive observations of employees concerning empowering behaviors of leaders. In the current study, four constructs contain enhancing the meaningfulness of work (EMW), fostering participation in decision-making (FPDM), expressing confidence in high performance (EHP), and providing autonomy from bureaucratic constraints (PABC) measure empowering leadership. Each construct has three items. We have calculated Cronbach's alpha to find out the reliability of each construct. Cronbach's alpha of each construct is greater than 0.7 which indicates all constructs of the scale are reliable. For example, Cronbach's alpha of EMW was 0.971, Cronbach's alpha of FPDM was 0.970, Cronbach's alpha of EHP was 0.977, and Cronbach's alpha of PABC was 0.970.

## Goal Clarity (Mediating Variable)

The current study used four items created by Sawyer<sup>9</sup> to measure goal clarity. Respondents were enquired to respond on goal clarity items including: "my tasks and obligations;" "the goals and purposes for my work;" "how my work relates to superordinate objectives;" and "the projected outcomes of my work." We have calculated Cronbach's alpha to find out the reliability of goal clarity. Cronbach's alpha of goal clarity is greater than 0.7 which shows that the goal clarity scale is reliable. For example, Cronbach's alpha of this scale was 0.957.

## Self-Efficacy (Mediating Variable)

Self-efficacy was evaluated through an eight-item scale organized by Chen, Gully, and Eden.<sup>5</sup> The self-efficacy portion was established to emphasize the degree to which supporters felt self-assured concerning their work abilities and proficiencies. We have calculated Cronbach's alpha to find out the reliability of self-efficacy. Cronbach's alpha of self-efficacy is greater than 0.7 which shows that the self-efficacy scale is reliable. For example, Cronbach's alpha of this scale was 0.947.

## Job Performance (Dependent Variable)

To evaluate the workers' job performance, the scale was originated by Yilmaz.<sup>42</sup> Job performance is very important for the growth and development of organizational performance. In particular for service-oriented organizations, where job performance is considered an influential factor for higher growth.<sup>2</sup> The scale had four declarations to measure observations of workers concerning their job performance. It was a self-report measure where the workers valued their performance instead of an outdated method within which supervisors rate workers' performance.<sup>70</sup> We have calculated Cronbach's alpha to find out the reliability of job performance. Cronbach's alpha of job performance is greater than 0.7 which indicates that the job performance scale is reliable. For example, Cronbach's alpha of this scale was 0.976.

## Empirical Analysis

Tests of the normality of data distribution were conducted using two statistical techniques, namely skewness and kurtosis. It is found that there is no issue of normality. After that, we performed a correlation analysis. In the following [Table 2](#)

**Table 2** Correlation and Reliability

	Cronbach Alpha	Emp_Lead	GC	SE	EJP
Emp_Lead	*	I			
GC	0.957	0.327**	I		
SE	0.947	0.477**	0.368**	I	
EJP	0.976	0.488**	0.449**	0.475**	I

**Notes:** \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \*As mentioned above Empowering leadership reliability is calculated through four constructs containing EMW, FPDM, EHP, and PABC. Cronbach's alpha of EMW is 0.971, Cronbach's alpha of FPDM is 0.970, Cronbach's alpha of EHP is 0.977, and Cronbach's alpha of PABC is 0.970.



smallest value of correlation is 0.327 and the highest value of correlation is 0.488 which indicates a moderate type of correlation. In the following Table 2 reliability values are also given. Empowering leadership reliability is calculated through four constructs containing enhancing meaningfulness of work (EMW), fostering participation in decision-making (FPDM), expressing confidence in high performance (EHP), and providing autonomy from bureaucratic constraints (PABC). Each construct has three items. Cronbach's alpha of each construct is greater than 0.7 which indicates all constructs of the scale are reliable. For example, Cronbach's alpha of EMW is 0.971, Cronbach's alpha of FPDM is 0.970, Cronbach's alpha of EHP is 0.977, and Cronbach's alpha of PABC is 0.970. Cronbach's alpha of goal clarity is greater than 0.7 which shows that the goal clarity scale is reliable. Cronbach's alpha of this scale is 0.957. Cronbach's alpha of self-efficacy is greater than 0.7 which shows that the self-efficacy scale is reliable. Cronbach's alpha of this scale is 0.947. Cronbach's alpha of job performance is greater than 0.7 which indicates that the job performance scale is reliable. Cronbach's alpha of this scale is 0.976.

## Common Method Variance Testing

Meanwhile, through a single questionnaire, the data were congregated from employees, the risk of common method variance could not be disregarded. Meanwhile, safety measures in the form of promising the confidentiality of the accumulated responses, consciously placing the dependent variables before the independent variables, were acquired during the process of data collection. Before the final data analysis, it looked appropriate to execute Harman's<sup>71</sup> single-factor test. For this, all the 28 measurement items of the study variables were checked for biases via SPSS 23. It has been found that a single factor explained 45.583% variance which is less than the cut-off value of 50%.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, there are no biases in this study.

## Data Analysis and Hypotheses Testing

### Exploratory Factor Analysis and Reliability of Scales

Firstly, for recognizing the pattern of loadings of all the constructs' items, the study data was exposed to EFA (exploratory factor analysis). The outcomes of EFA generated a 7-factors result that satisfy the study requirement. The developed 7 constructs were EMW, FPDM, EHP, PABC, GC, SE, and EJP. Together, these seven factors reported for 86.62% of the variance, signifying the unidimensionality of the study constructs. Barlett's test of sphericity is significant and Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) of sampling adequacy is 0.932 which is greater than 0.70 indicating that the sample size is appropriate. The estimated values of Cronbach  $\alpha$  for these factors ranged between 0.947 and 0.977, offering support for better inner reliability.<sup>73</sup>

### Measurement Model (Structured Equation Modeling)

In this study, for evaluating a casual relationship, structured equation modeling is used; therefore, for performing structured equation modeling, AMOS is one of the major tool. That is why we have used AMOS software. Using AMOS 24, we then estimate the convergent and discriminant validity through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for all the constructs. The 28 items were loaded to their well-matched latent constructs and allowed to correlate. The model fit indices confirmed the best fit. The results were:  $\chi^2/df = 4.031$  which is below five;<sup>74</sup> CFI = 0.942 and TLI = 0.933 which are greater than the threshold of 0.9;<sup>75</sup> and RMSEA = 0.08 which is below 0.1. The factor loads were statistically significant with p-value equals 0.001 and regression weights is above 0.40. The smallest value of standardized factor loading is 0.422 and the largest value of standardized factor loading is 0.969. These values are mentioned in Table 3. The findings stated in Table 4 confirm the discriminant validity of the seven constructs. All bold values indicate that values are higher than their corresponding values which indicates that discriminant validity is established.<sup>76</sup> For all the 7-factors, the composite reliability (CR) was above 0.70 and the average variance extracted (AVE) was more than 0.50.<sup>73</sup> Together, these statistics created a good convergent validity for our latent constructs. Moreover, average shared variance (ASV) and maximum shared variance (MSV) were analyzed to evaluate the discriminant validity. The value of AVE was found to be greater than MSV and ASV for each of the constructs, therefore, supporting the discriminant validity.<sup>73</sup>

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was also evaluated to assess the dimensional nature of empowering leadership, which comprises EMW, FPDM, EHP, and PABC subscales. According to Hair et al.<sup>77</sup> convergent validity can be

**Table 3** Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Study Variables	Standardized Factor Loadings	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
<b>(EMW) Enhancing Meaningful of Work</b>		0.971	0.919	0.600	0.270
EMW1	0.968***				
EMW2	0.940***				
EMW3	0.967***				
<b>(FPDM) Fostering Participation in Decision Making</b>		0.971	0.919	0.737	0.299
FPDM1	0.960***				
FPDM2	0.953***				
FPDM3	0.963***				
<b>(ECHP) Expressing Confidence in High Performance</b>		0.977	0.934	0.495	0.237
ECHP1	0.966***				
ECHP2	0.965***				
ECHP3	0.968***				
<b>(PABC) Providing Autonomy to Beurocratic Constraint</b>		0.971	0.918	0.737	0.336
PABC1	0.965***				
PABC2	0.952***				
PABC3	0.957***				
<b>(GC) Goal Clarity</b>		0.959	0.855	0.207	0.108
GC1	0.861***				
GC2	0.969***				
GC3	0.928***				
GC4	0.939***				
<b>(SE) Self-Efficacy</b>		0.949	0.706	0.269	0.146
SE1	0.780***				
SE2	0.777***				
SE3	0.788***				
SE4	0.953***				
SE5	0.939***				
SE6	0.966***				
SE7	0.956***				
SE8	0.422***				
<b>(FJP) Employees Job Performance</b>		0.976	0.911	0.260	0.188
EJPI	0.955***				

(Continued)

**Table 3** (Continued).

Study Variables	Standardized Factor Loadings	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
EJP2	0.954***				
EJP3	0.958***				
EJP4	0.950***				

**Note:** \*\*\*Denotes the p-value significant as 0.001.

**Table 4** Discriminant Validity

	EMW	FPDM	ECHP	PABC	GC	SE	EJP
EMW	<b>0.958</b>						
FPDM	0.681***	<b>0.958</b>					
ECHP	0.551***	0.619***	<b>0.966</b>				
PABC	0.775***	0.859***	0.704***	<b>0.958</b>			
GC	0.285***	0.313***	0.251***	0.314***	<b>0.925</b>		
SE	0.518***	0.320***	0.368***	0.327***	0.349***	<b>0.84</b>	
EJP	0.307***	0.488***	0.435***	0.510***	0.455***	0.403***	<b>0.955</b>

**Notes:** \*\*\*Denotes the p-value significant as 0.001 (Bold values indicate higher than corresponding values indicating established discriminant validity).

assessed via three ways: standardized factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and construct reliability, where standardized factor loadings should be 0.50 or higher and AVE should be 0.50 or greater whilst construct reliability should be 0.70 or more for adequate internal consistency. Based on these statistics, we calculated the convergent validity of four factors of empowering leadership. Standardized loadings of four factors of empowering leadership and AVE of all these factors are greater than 0.5. The smallest value of standardized factor loading is 0.940 and the largest value of standardized factor loading is 0.968. Likewise, the smallest value of average variance extracted (AVE) is 0.918 and the largest value of average variance extracted (AVE) is 0.93. Similarly, the smallest value of construct reliability is 0.971 and the largest value of construct reliability is 0.977 and construct reliability, which can be seen in Table 3. Also, Cronbach alpha is also greater than 0.7 for example Cronbach's alpha for EMW was 0.971, FPDM was 0.970, EHCP was 0.977 and PABC was 0.970. The model fit indicators confirmed a good fit ( $\chi^2/df = 3.552$ ; CFI = 0.984; TLI = 0.978; RMSEA = 0.08). Based on the above discussion, the constructs empowering leadership, goal clarity, self-efficacy, and employees' job performance have been used at the time of analysis.

## Hypotheses Testing (Structural Model)

It can be seen in the following Table 5, the empowering leadership factors enhancing meaningfulness of work (EMW), fostering participation in decision-making (FPDM), expressing confidence in high performance (ECHP), and providing autonomy to bureaucratic constraints (PABC) have significantly estimated empowering leadership. Among all the factors, PABC was the strongest estimator of empowering leadership with a 0.988 estimate rate. Other estimators with their regression weights are FPDM with 0.871, EMW with 0.78, and ECHP with 0.714. Empowering leadership has also significantly estimated the employees' job performance with a regression weight of 0.518. Thus, all stated hypotheses mentioned in Table 3 including H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5 are successfully accepted.

As can be seen in Table 6, empowering leadership has significantly estimated self-efficacy with a regression weight of 0.398. Self-efficacy has also significantly estimated employees' job performance with a regression weight of 0.165. Similarly, empowering leadership has equally significantly estimated goal clarity with a regression weight of 0.353. And

**Table 5** Results of Direct Relation

Hypotheses				Estimate	C.R	S.E	p	Results
H1	EMW	<—	Emp_Lead	0.78				Accepted
H2	FPDM	<—	Emp_Lead	0.871	18.231	0.063	***	Accepted
H3	ECHP	<—	Emp_Lead	0.714	14.613	0.064	***	Accepted
H4	PABC	<—	Emp_Lead	0.988	20.364	0.056	***	Accepted
H5	EJP	<—	Emp_Lead	0.518	10.277	0.058	***	Accepted

**Note:** \*\*\*Denotes the p-value significant at 0.001.

**Table 6** Results Before Mediation

Hypotheses				Estimate	C.R	S.E	P	Results
H6a	SE	<—	Emp_Lead	0.398	8.679	0.043	***	Accepted
H6b	EJP	<—	SE	0.165	3.864	0.052	***	Accepted
H7a	GC	<—	Emp_Lead	0.353	7.541	0.045	***	Accepted
H7b	EJP	<—	GC	0.278	6.649	0.050	***	Accepted
H8	EJP	<—	Emp_Lead	0.385	8.548	0.052	***	Accepted

**Note:** \*\*\*Denotes the p-value significant as 0.001.

Goal clarity has also significantly estimated employees’ job performance with a regression weight of 0.278. Lastly, empowering leadership has also significantly estimated employees’ job performance with a regression weight of 0.385. Hence, all mentioned hypotheses including H6a, H6b, H7a, H7b, and H8 are successfully accepted.

While evaluating indirect relationships, the researcher found Self-Efficacy and Goal Clarity significant in the relation. In the following Table 7 the mediating variable self-efficacy between empowering leadership and employees’ job performance has a significant relationship with P-value 0.001 and standardized estimate rate 0.066. Also, The mediating variable goal clarity between empowering leadership and employees’ job performance has a significant relationship with P-value 0.001 and standardized estimate rate 0.098. Thus, all mentioned hypotheses including H9 and H10 are successfully accepted. From analysis, it is evident that goal clarity has a stronger standardized estimate rate of 0.098 signifying that goal clarity can better enhance employees’ job performance through empowering leadership.

Hypothesis testing results are presented in Figure 2.

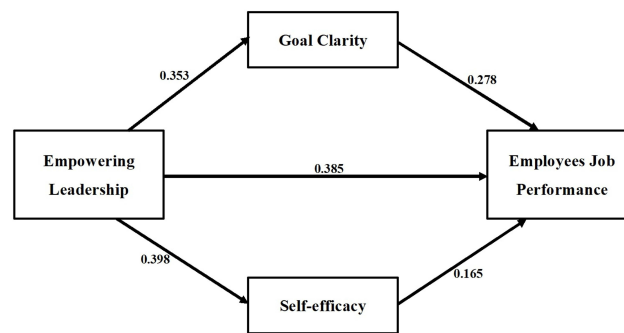
## Discussion

Academic employees in Pakistan are not fully empowered because they are still following traditional approaches: autocratic, laissez-faire, transformational, and transactional approaches, etc. As a result, employees’ job performance is decreasing continuously. The success of any organization largely depends on the performance of its employees. That is why to increase employees’ performance in academic institutions of Pakistan it is essential to empower employees. Keeping this in mind, to empower the employees at the academic level specifically in higher education institutions of

**Table 7** Results After Mediation

Hypotheses		Unstandardized Estimate	Lower	Upper	P-value	Standardized Estimate	Results
H9	EJP <— SE <— Emp_Lead	0.075	0.037	0.118	0.001	0.066***	Accepted
H10	EJP <— GC <— Emp_Lead	0.113	0.079	0.153	0.001	0.098***	Accepted

**Note:** \*\*\*Denotes the p-value significant as 0.001.



**Figure 2** Hypothesis testing results.

Sindh, Pakistan, the existing study has been performed to analyze the impact of empowering leadership for increasing employees' job performance. Through the sample of 400 respondents from 12 higher education institutions of Sindh, Pakistan, approved by the HR committee of Higher education commission of Pakistan after getting permission from the management committee of Kunming University of science and Technology, China the study approves that supervisors/leaders can increase the employees' job performance by demonstrating empowering behaviors. The first result of the study highlighted that the factors of empowering leadership have significantly estimated empowering leadership behavior. It means that according to the results of the existing study, factors of empowering leadership can be more operational. From all the factors of empowering leadership, providing autonomy to bureaucratic constraints (PABC) is the strongest estimator showing that empowerment can be enhanced by providing more autonomy to subordinates. After PABC, fostering participation in decision-making (FPDM) is a strong estimator that employs that empowerment can be increased by encouraging subordinates to participate in decision-making. Later enhancing meaningful of work (EMW) is a strong estimator that employs that empowerment can be increased by helping subordinates to understand the relationship of employees and organizational objectives to increase the importance of work. Subsequently, expressing confidence in high performance (ECHP) is a strong estimator that employs that empowerment can be increased by showing confidence in the skills of subordinates for improving organizational performance.

Another result of the study specifies that empowering leadership has also significantly estimated employees' work performance. It means that the employees use their supervisors' empowering behavior as a point of reference to execute that helps them in accepting a comparable kind of empowering thought. It specifies that employees are applying all required empowering thoughts of their supervisors. Along with leaders, employees are also using four elements of empowering leadership in a specified manner. It means they understand the meaningfulness of their job with organizational objectives. Employees are fully satisfied and motivated regarding the trust and confidence of their supervisor and work with full determination for high performance. Employees are also fully encouraged by their supervisors to participate in decision-making and also take their own decisions for growth and high performance. This means employees are fully autonomous to perform their work without the interference of a third party because their supervisors provided them full autonomy.

Rothman and Melwani<sup>78</sup> have also stated that the leader's flexibility and sincerity to accepted wisdom highlight the significance of relevant intellectual flexibility. So, growing the chances of workers' emotions should be further involved and empowered.

One more empirical result has shown that mediating variable self-efficacy is also conceived as a significant and positive estimated mediator between empowering leadership and employees' work performance. It employs that for enhancing employees' job performance through empowering leadership, employees' self-efficacy is considered as a self-motivated tool. We can say that empowering leadership is disposed to intensify the workers' self-efficacy that can foster workers' job performance. Self-efficacy creates internal capabilities and skills of subordinates to increase workers' job performance. Because through self-efficacy workers work very hard, become more determined and committed and also handle the task-oriented complications with an entrepreneurial approach. Thus, empowering leadership is expected to

have a positive indirect impact on job performance through its optimistic influence on followers' self-efficacy. Leaders representing empowering behaviors related through

the evolution of executing conditions that intensify workers' self-efficacy along with control feelings, as well as eliminate situations that foster inability wisdom.<sup>3</sup>

Individual self-efficacy can be improved through optimistic demonstrative sustenance, constructive influence, models of achievement, and the understanding of developing proficiency at the task.<sup>33</sup>

Another empirical finding has shown that mediating variable goal clarity is also considered as a significant and positive estimated mediator between empowering leadership and employees' work performance. It means that for increasing employees' job performance through empowering leadership, employees' goal clarity in a detailed manner is very important. Because through goal clarity subordinated will be attentive from targeted goals of the organization. After capturing the clarity of organizational goals, subordinates will be more focused regarding everyday task-oriented hard work concerning achieving higher organizational goals. With a committed determination for acquiring goals with full intrinsic motivation subordinates use the extra time, extra efforts with full inner commitment. Thus, we endorse goal clarity as an explicit tool benefiting to elucidate empowering leadership behaviors to balance each other within forecasting workers' job performance. So, we contend that goal clarity mediates the collaborative influence of empowering leadership on employees' work performance. Goal clarity leads followers' commitment and supports them to emphasize related constraints. The followers, deprived of goal clarity, can become stunned or unfocused through actions that are inappropriate to complete purposes and do not subsidize to perform assigned job responsibilities.<sup>11</sup> Hence, researchers have devised positive goal clarity effects on distinct follower decisions.<sup>11,60</sup>

## The Implication of the Study

### Theoretical Implications

There are some theoretical implications of the study. Firstly, the theoretical framework of the existing study produces a unique contribution to the empowering leadership literature as descriptive theories along with investigating the mediational relationship of goal clarity and self-efficacy on workers' work performance. Secondly, the existing research studies the unique mediational role of goal clarity and self-efficacy for empowering leadership results. There is a research gap in the empowering leadership literature concerning the mediational impacts of goal clarity and self-efficacy with empowering leadership results on employees' job performance. Hence, this study expands current literature that considers empowering leadership as an independent variable and employees' job performance as the dependent variable. Thirdly, from the perspective of social cognitive theory, social learning theory, expectancy theory of motivation and intrinsic motivation theory, self-efficacy and goal clarity based on a worker's self-reliance in completing a specific task meritoriously according to identified organizational goals and recommends the emergence of the influence of empowering leadership on employees' work performance. Finally, goal clarity and self-efficacy are managing strategic approaches that may enable a deeper understanding of the proposed theoretical framework for empowering leadership and employees' work performance at the academic level of higher education institutions of Sindh, Pakistan.

### Practical/Managerial Implication

There are numerous applied practical and managerial implications of the study. The first implication is for the higher education institutions of Sindh, Pakistan, regarding the leaders' selection and training. The organization's responsibility is to incorporate those leaders who have confidence in power-sharing with subordinates instead of recollecting whole authority with them.<sup>62</sup> Empowering leadership trainings must be offered to managers or leaders, consequently, they can empower their followers efficiently. Supervisors must realize that the performance of the higher education institutions employees can simply be improved through the development of goal clarity and self-efficacy among employees. It is only possible by providing them sensible work and eliminating the unnecessary restrictions. Kim and Beehr<sup>79</sup> have proposed that higher education institutions can encourage their leaders to work out on empowering behaviors through allocating rewards and inducements. Rewards and inducements particularly lead to enrichment in the job importance and extra sovereignty to the subordinates

from bureaucratic constraints. Empowering leadership behaviors exposed by top management to progress goal clarity and self-efficacy among subordinates, consecutively, feeling enthused to work on empowering activities with their subordinates. The top management leadership style is used at the middle and the lower level of management. So, top management executives of higher education institutions must “walk the talk”. They work as role models and pledge in evolving the executive values through the reliable demonstration of empowering leadership style. The same strategy can be applied to lower-level management who are in direct relationship with frontline workers. Managers have to understand that their actions are important according to the job performance of subordinates. Higher education institution leaders should act as factual leaders rather than performing same as outmoded managers and deliver work sovereignty to workers.<sup>80</sup> Through evolving an advanced goal clarity wisdom and self-efficacy among workers they can progress the level of workers’ work performance by showing empowering behaviors to their followers.

In the existing extremely enthusiastic environment, job responsibilities fluctuate continuously. So, through each modification in the work responsibilities, managers assign training to workers for development, which produces feelings capable to complete their work efficiently. Managers can also integrate the goal clarity and self-efficacy among workers. Kundu et al.<sup>81</sup> have advised that organizations should be more vigilant in executing empowerment actions in Asian values because here workers are wanted of ensuring the instructions organized by the organization. So, before empowering them, leaders must reflect the enthusiasm or boldness of dependents.

## Limitations and Direction for Future Research

The first limitation relates to the research design. We implemented a cross-sectional design data collection. Preceding researchers have specified that it is difficult to create causal relations between variables in cross-sectional designs.<sup>44</sup> So, upcoming studies should effort to implement a longitudinal research design to observe the relationship between our study variables. One more limitation of this study is that qualitative data can also be collected to determine the perceptions of how leadership empowers workers.<sup>82</sup> One more limitation is that for measuring employees’ performance instead of objective measure subjective measure was used. Upcoming studies can focus the influence of empowering leadership and goal clarity along with self-efficacy on results of the work responsibilities instead of the performance of the work responsibilities themselves. In the existing study, goal clarity and self-efficacy mediate partially the relationship between empowering leadership and job performance. So, more studies can analyze this relationship with the presence of further mediating variables such as knowledge sharing, structural empowerment, team cohesion, and psychological empowerment.

## Conclusion

Empowering leadership and employees’ job performance are unique concepts at an academic level. For filling all research gaps mentioned above, we have conducted this research to elucidate the relationship of empowering leadership on employees’ job performance at the academic level through mediating variables’ goal clarity and self-efficacy with positive results.

The main research problem of existing research is to assess empowering leadership effects on employees’ job performance through mediating variables’ goal clarity and self-efficacy. Existing research highlighted empowering leadership factors including EMW, FPDM, ECHP, and PABC have estimated empowering leadership with a positive impact on employees’ work performance. It also confirmed the mediating relationship of goal clarity and self-efficacy between empowering leadership and employees’ work performance.

## Ethics Statement

We have followed the exact course of actions concerning dealing with humans in research and fulfilled the Helsinki Declaration on informed consent and human rights. Informed consent from all the participants was received before conducting the survey. In addition, the Research Ethics Committee of the Kunming University of Science and Technology, China has acknowledged and permitted the ethical standards used in this study. After getting permission from the management committee of Kunming University of Science and Technology regarding data collection from 12 higher education institutions of Pakistan, I have been permitted from the HR committee of higher education institutions of Pakistan regarding the data collection process for my research study.

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## Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest for this work.

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