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**TÍTULO:** Exploración de la influencia del empoderamiento psicológico en el compromiso laboral entre los empleados que trabajan en organizaciones basadas en el conocimiento: un análisis intermedio del silencio del empleado.

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**RESUMEN:** El estudio examina el efecto del empoderamiento psicológico en el compromiso laboral con la intervención del silencio de los empleados entre los profesores y doctores de las universidades y hospitales del sector público en Sindh. Las influencias relacionales e intermedias se han probado utilizando procedimientos de mediación establecidos por (Baron y Kenny, 1986). Los resultados sugieren que el empoderamiento psicológico tiene una relación positiva y significativa con el compromiso laboral. Los resultados establecen que el silencio de los empleados media por completo la relación entre el empoderamiento psicológico y el compromiso laboral. La gerencia puede usar los hallazgos para mejorar el empoderamiento psicológico y reducir el silencio de los empleados, y hacerlos más comprometidos en universidades y hospitales específicamente y en otras organizaciones del sector público en general.

**PALABRAS CLAVES:** empoderamiento psicológico, silencio del empleado, compromiso laboral, mediación.

**TITLE:** Exploring the influence of psychological empowerment on work engagement among employees working in knowledge-based organizations: An intervening analysis of employee silence.

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**ABSTRACT:** The study examines the effect of psychological empowerment on work engagement with intervention of employee silence among faculty members and doctors of public sector universities and hospitals in Sindh. Relational and intervening influences have been tested using mediation procedures laid down by (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Results suggest that psychological empowerment has positive and significant relation with work engagement. Results have established that employee silence fully mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and work engagement. Management can use findings of this study to enhance psychological empowerment and reduce employee silence to create more engaged employees in universities and hospitals specifically and in other public sector organizations generally.

**KEY WORDS:** psychological empowerment, employee silence, work engagement, mediation.

**INTRODUCTION.**

Psychological empowerment is a key construct associated to work engagement of employees and is largely focused nowadays to encounter the terrific pressure on organizations to improve their output

and performance. Employee silence is another significant occupational psychology behavior which may act as an intermediary between psychological empowerment and work engagement.

The study is an attempt to comprehend the impact of psychological empowerment on work engagement with mediation of employee silence in public sector organizations of services sector (part of knowledge-based organizations) in Sindh.

Statistical exploration on the relationship between psychological empowerment and engagement among employees revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship exists between both occupational psychology variables (Nawrin, 2016; Akharaiyi & Dina, 2018).

Employee silence is significantly and negatively influenced by psychological empowerment and is significantly and negatively influencing work engagement probably assuming a role of mediator between psychological empowerment and work engagement (Nafei, 2016; Zikai, 2018). In this study relationship of psychological empowerment with work engagement in presence of a mediating variable employee silence is explored in public sector organizations in Sindh.

Public sector organizations are generally preferred by people to work in because of long term beneficial policies but they avoid getting services from same sector. Public sector organizations are considered as institutions dealing with public at large with substantial potential to serve them (Hadiyati, 2006; Bakhshandeh et al, 2015; Sakthive et al, 2019). This study includes public sector universities and hospitals.

Education at public sector is considered as primary source of imparting education in any country as it is owned by government. Public sector universities are engaged directly with students in general as they are state owned institutions obliged to render services. Another important public sector, which has great impact on people at large, is health sector. Public sector hospitals render services to people who cannot afford to be treated at private hospitals. Public sector organizations principally operate to serve general public directly in comparison to private organizations which are mainly

operated to suck the profit. In an anticipation of novel outcomes, this study has chosen public sector universities and hospitals (Kodekova et al, 2018; Haghshenas et al, 2015; Alizadeh & Lahiji, 2018).

## **DEVELOPMENT.**

### **Significance and Scope of study.**

Nowadays trends regarding occupational environment has changed as more opportunities are knocking the doors so the challenges. So, opportunities and challenges have become reality for organizations. In this challenging environment organizations with better proactive mechanisms have greater tendency to remain successful because they are active and watchful in grabbing the opportunities and coping the challenges. These significant mechanisms are vital for present day organizations as they can earn competitive advantage and grab maximum benefits.

One of the major factors responsible for creating and maintaining these complex mechanisms is environment that organizations have because it may directly impact the effectiveness of these mechanisms. In anticipating this need organizations are now concentrating on human resources and creating better working environment. Realizing the usefulness of occupational environment researchers have started considering occupational psychology as an essential area capable of impacting organizations in specific and society in general.

This study is significant because it has been conducted realizing the utility of occupational psychology as findings would add into existing literature. This study assumes significance as it has filled the gap because it has attempted to explore impact of psychological empowerment on work engagement followed by mediating impact of employee silence between psychological empowerment and work engagement for which very limited studies are available generally and in Asia particularly as researched by (Anuradha & Opatha, 2017; Jinadu et al, 2017).

Services industry in public sector is highly imperative because it adds and helps the economy in significant quantum. Another aspect which makes this study unique and significant is that this study has been conducted in public services sector for which limited studies are available. Findings of this study are helpful to employees working in the organizations, management governing the helm of affairs with a wish to use employees effectively, and public services sector at large scale. Findings can also guide policy makers to adopt those policies helping them achieve objectives at all stages making this study more important and significant. Occupational psychology research notable scope in current scenarios and in future because its findings are expected to benefit services industry of public sector in Sindh as this sector is growing and becoming an important sector of economy. New researchers will get many leads for research, also architects' significant scope for this study.

**Objectives:**

- To assess relationship of psychological empowerment, work engagement and employee silence in public sector universities and hospitals Sindh.
- To estimate mediating effects employee silence between psychological empowerment, and work engagement among employees' public sector universities and hospitals in Sindh.

**Research problem.**

Unpredictability of human behavior in working atmosphere is a significant issue and happens to be the exhibition of several latent and observed factors. This study has attempted to explore few significant factors like cognitive authority, non-resilient attitude and engagement in work.

Ideally organizations and servicing organizations particularly try to induce positive work attitude among employees by creating a favorable employee-oriented environment to gain competitive advantage but practically some counter work behaviors are always seen particularly in public sector

servicing organizations due to their direct dealings with public at large. So, existence of gap between ideal conditions and practical reality cannot be ignored.

Considering the outcome of detailed exploration of available literature it was found that there are merely few narrowed and limited studies in which psychological empowerment and work engagement have been tested with mediation of employee silence in public sector organizations of servicing industry generally and specifically in Pakistan, making it a research gap for this study.

Anuradha and Opatha (2017) also supported this research gap by saying that there is shortage of research work in which psychological empowerment has been studied with work engagement with intervention of employee silence in public sector organizations of servicing industry generally and specifically in Asia making it a big research gap. The behavior and attitude of employees if continuously ignored then it will intensify the threat of poor performance and failure of organization in particular and society in general. So, research problem is that there exists a perception that psychological empowerment increases work engagement but whole relation is intervened by employee silence resulting in poor performance in services sector of Sindh.

## **Literature review.**

### ***Psychological Empowerment.***

Psychological empowerment was originally identified by (Conger & Kanungo, 1988) and was taken forward with dimensional perspective by (Spreitzer, 1995) and defined it as cognitive state of employee considering him or herself in total control in all aspects. Nassar (2018) concluded that psychological empowerment is cognitive perception in which a person believes to be in a decisive position with worthy opinion in an organization. Psychological empowerment is a psychological understanding of an individual in which person perceives oneself with utmost power to remain in charge and in command in organization (Jordan et al., 2017; Marques et al., 2018). They debated in their research findings that psychological empowerment is a construct giving an employee the

required strength of perception of being at governing role. They advanced the definition with an addition that this perception is both internal and external enabling a person to feel in a position from he or she can control the helm of affairs. Spreitzer (1995) identified four dimensions of psychological empowerment as meaningful work, competence and authority.

### **Dimensions of Psychological Empowerment.**

Dimensions associated with psychological empowerment are discussed below.

#### *Meaning.*

Meaningful work is involvement of an employee in a task which is completely relevant to beliefs that he or she possesses ultimately giving meaning to assigned task (Amenumey & Lockwood, 2008). It is basic dimension of psychological empowerment recognized as compatibility of work, duty and obligation with ethos, values and rituals of employee (May et al., 2004).

#### *Competence.*

Competence is a credence and trust that employees assumes to have for fulfilling a particular task, work or responsibility commendably (Quiñones et al., 2013). Taylor (2013) established that competence from is a self-belief of having all required abilities to complete task efficaciously.

#### *Self Determination.*

Self-determination is a feeling of sovereignty and significant participation in decision making related to assigned task (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Tsemach, 2014). Self-determination is a perception of being in command in decision making (Goodale et al., 1997).

#### *Impact.*

Impact is a positive belief of an employee to effect on different occasions and proceedings in an organization (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Tsemach, 2014). Taylor (2013) determined that impact is a degree to which an employee can assert his or her opinion.

**Work engagement.**

Occupational psychology research has gained substantial importance in academics and organizations. Anticipating this need and importance researchers have started to give attention on research related to work engagement. Kahn (1990) originally coined and used the term work engagement and considered it as a behavior of full concentration and loyalty for work. Work engagement research has vividly increased in last ten years as it has become imperative to keep employees engaged in organizations to achieve required benefits (Pollak et al., 2017). Work engagement is a state in which employee remains thoroughly involved in assigned work and brings required outcomes and results in the organization (Chandani & Mehta, 2016). Schaufeli et al. (2002) concluded that work engagement is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption.

**Dimensions of Work Engagement.**

Vigor, dedication and absorption are described below.

*Vigor.*

Vigor is considered as a cognitive and mental viewpoint in which employee is fully determined to complete work and task effectively (Chughtai & Buckley, 2011). Vigor is an optimal level of effort, vitality and spirit given by an employee in an organization (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

*Dedication.*

Dedication is long and durable psychological affection in assigned task or work (Chughtai & Buckley, 2011). Dedication is an overall attachment with job and organization as employee strives to put all effort in completing job and benefitting organization. (Mauno et al.,2007).

*Absorption.*

Absorption is an important dimension of work engagement responsible to create charm and attraction in assigned task (Chandani & Mehta, 2016). Absorption is defined as robust and strong concentration

and fascination in assigned task ultimately creating strong attachment benefitting both employee and organizations (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

### **Employee Silence.**

Hirschman (1970) developed the basis for work on employee silence and considered it as behavior to remain silent with wish that things would be better in future. Employee silence is a behavior in which employees lack their own actions, apprehensions and recommendations relating to their assigned work (Bastug et al., 2016). Employee silence is a behavior in which employee opts to remain quiet and stops giving opinion in an organization in order to remain safe from consequential outcomes (Nafei, 2016). Van Dyne et al. (2003) classified employee silence in three dimensions as Pro-social silence, acquiescent silence and defensive silence.

### **Dimensions of Employee Silence.**

Dimensions of employee silence are discussed below.

#### *Pro-social silence.*

Pro-social silence is holding and not disclosing information with a general view that it may benefit employees and organization (Van Dyne et al., 2003). Employee in Pro-social silence does not voice information of data for general benefit of organization (Podsakoff et al., 2000).

#### *Acquiescent Silence.*

Acquiescent silence occurs when employee opts to remain silent and passive regarding any change in organization (Nafei, 2016). Acquiescent silence is stoppage of opinion regarding resignation (Van Dyne et al., 2003).

*Defensive Silence.*

Defensive silence is a preemptive attempt to hide and not to disclose any information because of fear of consequences (Van Dyne et al., 2003). In defensive silence an employee remains in fear of negative consequences if information is not stopped (Pinder & Harlos, 2001).

**Psychological Empowerment and Work Engagement in Services sector.**

Psychological empowerment enhances level of work engagement among employees in service sector (Hashish et al., 2018). Their findings supported to get benefit of work engagement by increasing psychological empowerment.

Nowadays organizations in services and manufacturing sectors have developed a resolve to have vibrant, active and psychologically empowered employees who remain highly engaged in organization suggesting a positive and direct relationship among psychological empowerment and work engagement (Nawrin, 2016). Impact of psychological empowerment on engagement of employees is positive and significant in services sector (Jose & Mampilly, 2014).

**Mediation of Employee Silence between Psychological Empowerment and Work Engagement.**

Psychological empowerment being an effective tool to raise engagement levels among employees can be mediated if employees opt to remain silent as indicated by (Avan et al., 2016). They further narrated that strength and direction of relationship between psychological empowerment and work engagement can be altered with inclusion of psychological empowerment assuming a role of intervening variable. Nafei (2016) confirmed that employee silence can mediate relationship between psychological empowerment and work engagement.

## Conceptual Framework.

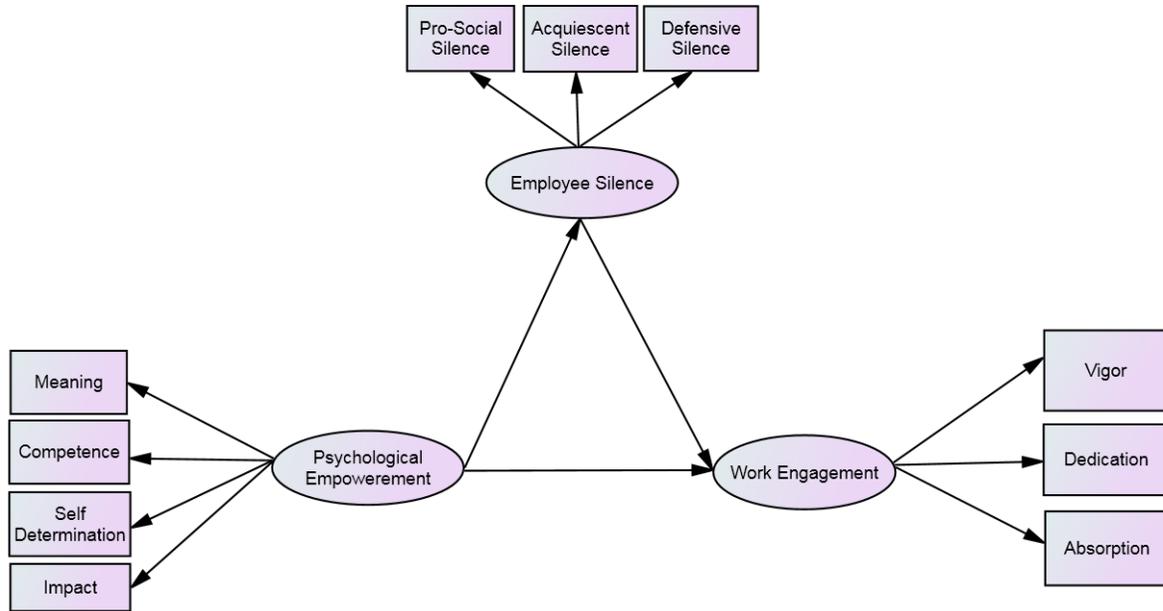


Figure 01: Model.

Literature review and past research work became the foundation for developing this model. Model explains that psychological empowerment acts as an independent variable and work engagement as dependent variable. Employee silence plays a role of intervening variable between independent and dependent variables.

## Hypotheses Development.

Based on literature following hypotheses have been developed:

*H:1: Psychological empowerment is positively and significantly related to work engagement.*

*H:2: Psychological empowerment is negatively and significantly related to employee silence.*

*H:3: Employee silence is negatively and significantly related to work engagement.*

*H:4: Relationship between psychological empowerment and work engagement is fully mediated by Employee silence.*

### **Research methodology and design.**

Study has causal design because influence of psychological empowerment is shown on work engagement with an intervening effect of employee silence between them.

Data is collected through questionnaires and analyzed quantitatively. Population for study is faculty members working in those public sector universities of Sindh having 200 or more faculty and doctors from one largest hospital (mostly civil hospital) of each of five divisions of Sindh.

There are 2200 faculty members as per concerned universities and 3450 doctors as per concerned hospitals and health department of Sindh constituting total population size of 5650. Population was divided in separate categories of Lecturers (BPS-18), Assistant Professors (BPS-19), Associate Professors (BPS-20) and Professors (BPS-21) for faculty of universities and Medical Officers (BPS-17), Senior Medical Officers (BPS- 18), Senior Medical Officers (BPS- 19) and Senior Medical Officers (BPS- 20).

Separate population frame for each category was provided by concerned universities, hospitals and health department. All male and female faculty members and doctors became the sample for this study. Sample size of 365 calculated following the sample size table of (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

Response has been placid by means of proportionate stratified random sampling technique frame for each category was available. Psychological empowerment, work engagement and employee silence has been measured using embraced and altered questionnaire of (Spreitzer, 1995), (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) and (Van Dyne et al.,2003) respectively.

## Results and hypotheses testing.

### *Reliability Static.*

Table 1: Reliability Value.

Variable	Reliability Value	Variable	Reliability Value
Meaningful Work	.84	Acquiescent Silence	.81
Competence	.82	Defensive Silence	.82
Authority	.86	Vigor	.88
Impact	.81	Dedication	.85
Pro Social Silence	.83	Absorption	.86

Above reliability coefficients are well within range of  $\Rightarrow .70$  as suggested by (Nunnally, 1978).

### Demographic Profile based on proportionate Stratified Random Sampling.

Table 2: Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling.

S.NO	Category	Frequency	Ratio	Sample Size
<b>Faculty (39%)</b>				
01	Lecturers (BPS-18)	858	15%	55
02	Assistant Professors (BPS-19)	770	14%	51
03	Associate Professors (BPS-20)	132	2% %	7
04	Professors (BPS- 21)	440	8%	29
<b>Doctors (61%)</b>				
01	Medical Officer	1138	20%	73
02	Senior Medical Officer (BPS18)	1035	19%	70
03	Senior Medical Officer (BPS19)	759	13%	47
04	Senior Medical Officer (BPS20)	518	9%	33
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5650</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>365</b>

Above table signifies different categories and their quantum of participation in sample size. Total ratio for faculty members of universities is 39% and doctors of hospitals are 61% in sample size. Sample size has been divided on the basis of identified ratios for each category.

### Descriptive and Correlation Analysis.

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Static.

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	PE	ES	WE
PE	3.9	0.61	1.0	-.71*	.70**
ES	2.1	0.52		1.0	-.52*
WE	4.1	0.78			1.0

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

**PE**=Psychological Empowerment, **ES**= Employee Silence, **WE**=Work Engagement.

The results also show that psychological empowerment has negative significant relation with employee silence ( $r = -.55, p < .05$ ) and positive significant relation with work engagement ( $r = .61, p < .01$ ). Employee silence is found to have negative significant relation with work engagement ( $r = -.52, p < .05$ ).

### Hypotheses testing using Mediation Analysis.

Three analysis used in mediation procedure suggested by (Baron & Kenny, 1986) have been used to test following hypotheses.

Analysis 01 for Path C to test H: 1

*H: 1: Psychological empowerment is positively and significantly related to work engagement.*

Analysis 02 for Path A to test H: 2

*H: 2: Psychological empowerment is negatively and significantly related to employee silence.*

Analysis 03 for both Path B and Mediation to test H: 3 and H: 4

*H: 3: Employee silence is negatively and significantly related to work engagement.*

*H: 4: Relationship between psychological empowerment and work engagement is fully mediated by Employee silence.*

Analysis 01 for Path C to test H: 1.

*H: 1: Psychological empowerment is positively and significantly related to work engagement.*

Table 04: Path (C) Exploration.

Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	B	Sig
	.70	.50	.49		
Psychological Empowerment				.45	.000

### **Dependent Variable: Work Engagement.**

Regression shows a strong relationship between psychological empowerment and work engagement ( $r=.70$ ) and 50% of variation in work engagement is caused by psychological empowerment ( $R^2=.50$ ). Findings further submit that psychological empowerment is positively and significantly related to work engagement ( $\beta = .45$ ,  $p < .01$ ) meeting the primary condition for path (c) advocated by (Baron & Kenny, 1986) and accepting the hypothesis.

Analysis 02 for Path A to test H: 2

*H: 2: Psychological empowerment is negatively and significantly related to employee silence.*

Table 05: Path (A) Exploration.

Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	B	Sig
	.71	.50	.49		
Psychological Empowerment				-.46	.001

***Dependent Variable: Employee Silence.***

Regression conclusions demonstrate high association between psychological empowerment and employee silence ( $r=.71$ ) and 50% of deviation in employee silence is produced by psychological empowerment ( $R^2=.50$ ). Outcomes portray that psychological empowerment is negatively and significantly related to employee silence ( $\beta = -.46, p < .01$ ) fulfilling the second situation for path (a) given by (Baron & Kenny, 1986) and confirming the hypothesis.

Analysis 03 for Path B and Mediation to test H: 3 and H: 4.

*H: 3: Employee silence is negatively and significantly related to work engagement.*

*H:4: Relationship between psychological empowerment and work engagement is fully mediated by Employee silence.*

Table 06: Path (B) and Mediation Exploration.

Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	B	Sig
<b>First Model (Path C)</b>	.70	.50	.49		
Psychological Empowerment				.45	.000
<b>Second Model</b>	.74	.55	.54		
Employee Silence ( <b>Path B</b> )				-.52	.010
Psychological Empowerment				.21	.067

**Dependent Variable: Work Engagement.**

Above table contains two models. First model is analysis of (path c) which was already done at first step and same results have been carried here for comparing it with second model with a view to specify impact of mediation. Second model contains outcomes of regression analysis having work engagement as dependent variable and psychological empowerment (actually independent variable) and employee silence (actually mediating variable) have been taken as independent variables as

suggested by (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Results of second model specify that 55% change in work engagement is caused by psychological empowerment and employee silence. Further outcomes indicate that employee silence is negatively and significantly related to work engagement ( $\beta = -.52$ ,  $p < .01$ ) fulfilling third condition for path (b) suggested by (Baron & Kenny, 1986) ending in accepting hypothesis 3.

Psychological empowerment which was significant in first model (path c) ( $\beta = .45$ ,  $p < .01$ ) is no longer significant with considerable decrease in  $\beta$  value ( $\beta = .21$ ,  $p > .05$ ) with inclusion of mediating variable employee silence fulfilling last condition described by (Baron & Kenny, 1986) and indirect effect ( $-.46 * -.52 = .24$ ) is greater than direct effect (.21) displaying full mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986) and (Sobel, 1982). So, it can be concluded that employee silence fully mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and work engagement culminating in accepting the hypothesis 4.

### **Discussion.**

Study was an empirical endeavor to explore upshot of psychological empowerment, work engagement with mediation of employee silence in public sector organizations. We devised based on previous studies available that psychological empowerment positively and significantly effects work engagement (Hashish et al., 2018; Nawrin, 2016) and study established the same results which are in line with previous studies (Hashish et al, 2018; Nawrin, 2016; Jose & Mampilly, 2014). Further, it was framed that employee silence mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and work engagement (Avan et al., 2016) and (Nafei, 2016) and study confirmed same outcomes and results supported previous studies of (Avan et al., 2016; Nafei, 2016).

## **CONCLUSIONS.**

Results generated through this study have verified that psychological empowerment positively and significantly effects work engagement.

Findings have further verified that relationship between psychological empowerment and work engagement in faculty and doctors in public sector universities and hospitals of Sindh is completely mediated and intervened by employee silence.

Policy makers, management and concerned quarters are recommended to use findings of this research with a view to make their employs more engaged by making them psychologically empowered and diminish the silence behavior to gain maximum benefits. Researchers are also recommended to further take this study to other sectors of economy with addition of more important occupational psychology constructs as to make this area of research richer in literature and findings.

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