



## Empowering Leadership and Career Future Inventory: Mediated-Moderated Model

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### Abstract

This study aims to investigate the relationship between empowering leadership and followers' career future inventory (career adaptability and career optimism) using a moderated mediation model through psychological empowerment with the contextual role of core self-evaluation. Data was collected from 276 teachers in the higher education sector in Pakistan using a survey questionnaire. Analyzing data through SPSS®24, the findings indicate that empowering leadership helps the individuals to portray themselves with hopeful and positive concerns and possibilities of career growth and to work optimistically.

**Disciplinary:** Management Science (Leadership), Psychology and Professional Development.

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## 1. Introduction

Business organizations show constant attention to empowerment to strengthen their competitive edge (Maynard et al., 2012). Empowering leadership was predominantly connected to

particular organizational results comprising creativeness, job performance work efforts citizenship behavior, and turnover in the previous studies (Amundsen and Martinsen, 2015; Fong and Snape, 2015; Zhang & Bartol, 2014). To increase efficiency, employees take initiative actions and take part in process of decision-making in a work environment by behavior (Zhang & Bartol, 2014).

For instance, transformational leaders surely impact devotees' work-related achievement through the commitment of work (Vincent-Höperet & Janneck, 2012) or psychological empowerment (Joo & Lim, 2013). Organizations sometimes embolden workers to proactively achieve their careers by look searching for mentorship, training, and new undertakings (Kraimer et al., 2011). There is a need to further differentiate the special effects of various types of empowering leadership on employee performance, and to explore the precursors of empowering leadership for example, psychological or structural empowering leadership (Wallace et al., 2011). In today's competitive surroundings empowerment is unavoidable as societies are embracing decentralized and flat hierarchy (Baird and Wang, 2010). Empowering leadership could affect individual career outcomes (Raghuram, Gajendran & Somaya, 2017). It is advantageous to find out empowering leadership more essentially (Beimann et al., 2015; Li et al., 2015).

This study emphasizes examining the ability of individuals to deal with existing or upcoming career assignments and job-related changeovers. This study will resolve the problem regarding career future inventory by highlighting the need for empowering leadership that will help individuals to cope up with changing work demands and in general hold constructive hopes for their upcoming future through psychological empowerment.

In this study, the constructs and are explored to study the relationship between empowering leadership and career future inventory (career adaptability and career optimism) and psychological empowerment. Also, this study finds the mediating effect of psychological empowerment between empowering leadership and career future inventory (career adaptability & and career optimism). also, this study explores the moderating relationship of core-self-evaluation between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypothesis**

### **2.1 Empowering Leadership**

Empowering leadership has been defined as pioneer practices that include imparting capacity and power to followers, enhancing their level of intrinsic motivation, making a comfortable atmosphere for employees to utilize power (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Empowering leaders endeavor to authorize their employees. With empowering leaders, employees are leading themselves and leaders influence their followers (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014).

When workers are engaged to settle down on business-related decisions all alone, they should have acceptable evidence to make sure that the decisions are practical and justifiable. Fong & Snape (2015) demonstrate that empowering leadership has five aspects, i.e., leading, coaching, participative decision-making, showing concern, and information sharing.

## 2.2 Career Future Inventory

A career future inventory (CFI) estimates the career plan. CFI comprises optimism and adaptability that relates to circumstances including the study of careers and career choice status and career development behaviors (Rottinghaus et al., 2005).

### 2.2.1 Career Adaptability

Today, the careers are more assorted, worldwide, and boundaryless (Biemann et al., 2015; Sullivan and Arthur, 2006) and are considered expanded adaptability (Hirschi et al., 2014). Rottinghaus et al. (2005) described career adaptability as “capacity to adjust to and gain by change, later on, measurement of relief with new task commitments, or capacity to show signs of improvement when unanticipated events modify career designs.”

In recent years, the idea of career adaptability has often been famous as an essential source for effective career advancement positively reacting to various difficulties in the area of career (Johnston et al., 2015; Zacher, 2015).

### 2.2.2 Career Optimism

Extant literature describes that optimistic leaders are likely to encourage organizations, motivate individuals, and fascinate fresh investors which affect the firm. Optimism is a quality that creates confidence. Optimists have a positive point of view towards life (Wong and Zhang, 2014).

### 2.2.3 Core Self-Evaluation

Core self-evaluation (CSE) is a higher-level make that catches positive self-sees, including self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and neuroticism/enthusiastic steadiness (Judge, 2009). Positive Core self-evaluation supports people's flexibility, capacity to adapt to unpleasant life occasions after some time, and generally alteration ability (Bakker et al., 2014).

People with high CSE are highly efficient and self-controllers are ready to gain by their benefits because they (a) evaluate circumstances more positively; (b) see the conditions reliable with their optimistic self-images (c) are more engaged recommendations (Johnson et al., 2008; Judge & Hurst, 2007).

### 2.2.4 Psychological Empowerment

The strategy of enhancing the emotional state of self-efficacy between followers of the organization is known as empowerment, a long way from 'control' to commitment-oriented techniques. It is characterized as intrinsic undertaking inspiration showed in following discernments: four components (Li et al., 2015)

The theory of empowerment includes both processes and outcomes (Zhang & Zhou, 2014). The theory suggests that actions, activities, or structures may be empowering, and the result of such procedures result in a dimension of being empowered. Both strengthening and empowerment procedures and results change in their outward structure because no single standard can completely catch its importance for all individuals in all specific circumstances (Li et al., 2015).

In the current study, empowerment theory is focused on the Pakistani context. Bakker et al. (2012) proposed that people can undertake the responsibility of their changing circumstances

because of strengthening and empowerment while based on empowerment theory, consistent with an idea of a protean career by which he anticipates future developments or adapt easily.

### **2.2.5 Empowering Leadership and Psychological Empowerment**

The connection of empowering leadership is probably going stronger with psychological empowerment than with different types of authority. Empowering leaders represent as good examples for their followers. They can acquire by perceiving their leaders and can be encouraged by them how to complete their task successfully. Some earlier studies have effectively upheld the primary connection in the model (e.g. Amundsen and Martinsen, 2015; Raub and Robert, 2010). Hence, it is proposed that

*H1: Empowering leadership is positively related to psychological empowerment.*

### **2.2.6 Psychological Empowerment and Career Future Inventory (Career Adaptability & Career Optimism)**

Many researchers agreed that optimism is linked to the individual's ability to adjust to changes. The need to respond fully to differences through optimism is regarded as a significant mechanism, as the working environment of today is characterized by uncertainty and difficulties (Gu et al., 2015). Individuals within the modern world are facing various challenges, like fewer job openings, unclear career pathways, reduced job security, rapidly changing technology, and increased personal accountability to reassess and adapt their careers commonly (Chabault et al., 2012; Potgieter, 2012).

In light of this perspective by Gu et al. (2015) that organizations are required to likewise acknowledge a motivational construct relates to self-determination and self-efficacy. Psychological empowerment has been appeared to be insistently identified with worker results, for example, job satisfaction, supervisor satisfaction, and nature of association with pioneers (Kristof-Brown et al. 2005). Hence, it is proposed that

*H2(a): Psychological empowerment is positively related to career adaptability.*

*H2(b): Psychological empowerment is positively related to career optimism.*

### **2.2.7 Empowering Leadership and Career Future Inventory (Career Adaptability & Career Optimism)**

CFI emphasizes empirical measurement of career domain and adaptability narrates a person's career objectives and present self-idea. CFI identifies an objective of accomplishing career positions, characteristics like standards, and worldwide self-idealized. Empowering Leadership is related to Career Future Inventory (career adaptability & career optimism). Sharing authority with team members will also provide a supportive atmosphere empowering leadership seems, by all accounts, to be particularly appropriately colleagues meet the requirements of working together in a dispersed teamwork environment (Srivastava et al., 2006).

Empowering leadership spotlights on possibly career upgrading factors, for example, giving individual workers the certainty, capacity, motivation, and acceptance authority of their work (Ahearne et al., 2005). Employees are given front-line authority to make decisions and can easily adjust themselves. These individuals can recover from unforeseen events and get more support and confidence to work in a challenging world. Individuals who are not optimistic towards their career would shatter their confidence and will not be successful in different situations.

For the individuals who are optimistic about their career, positive outcomes will occur in the future while having the support and edge of their leaders and supervisors. Empowering behaviors of the leader increase followers' positive influence on their work and when the new and changing environment occurs. Followers can authority to adapt their career in certain situations where adaptation is required in their career and learn how to accomplish their tasks effectively by perceiving their leader while getting confidence, ability, and inspiration (Potgieter, 2012). Hence, it is proposed that

*H3a: Empowering leadership is positively related to career adaptability.*

*H3b: Empowering leadership is positively related to career optimism.*

### **2.3 Psychological Empowerment as a Mediator**

Employees with psychological strength feel self-effective, and previous research indicates that self-efficacy influences the extent to which people undergo self-management or changes. (King, 2004). A recent study demonstrated the perceived psychological empowerment brought about a facilitative atmosphere for work full of consideration and trust (Abbasi et al., 2020).

The sense of empowerment enhances the pioneer's strength, group efficiency, and raises the importance of the group. At the point when workers are reliable and engaged, they have a feeling of pride in their activity and feel certain to speak with others (McMillan et al., 2011), and probably give better services to the organization (Abbasi et al., 2020). All of these directed that psychological empowerment could benefit staff in developing the future career inventory.

Employees with psychological abilities feel self-efficient and prior research has shown that self-efficacy influences the degree to which individuals participate in self-administration or changes. (Abbasi et al., 2020). An empirical study demonstrated the perceived psychological empowerment brought about a facilitative atmosphere for work full of consideration and trust (Fong & Snape, 2015).

The sense of empowerment enhances the pioneer's strength, group efficiency, and raises the importance of the group. At the point when workers are reliable and engaged, they have a feeling of pride in their activity and feel certain to speak with others (McMillan et al., 2011). Empowering leaders support people to become aware of their most extreme limit and urge them to have faith in their capacities and serves as a role model that improves the level of competency. Similarly, through empowering leader's enthusiastic and positive expressions of confidence, followers feel skilled in their capacity to execute errands (Fong & Snape, 2015). Individuals with a feeling of

psychological empowerment can solve issues and navigate through difficulties and barriers in building their future (Abbasi et al., 2020). Hence, it is proposed that

*H4a: Psychological Empowerment mediates the relationship between empowering leadership & career adaptability.*

*H4b: Psychological Empowerment mediates the relationship between empowering leadership & career optimism.*

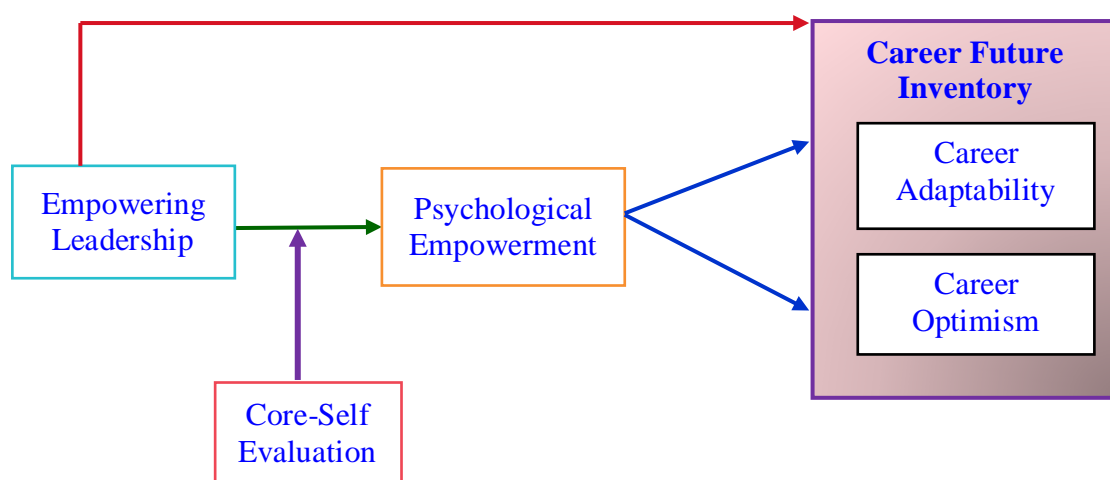
## 2.4 Core-Self Evaluation as a Moderator

Core self-evaluation concludes how differently a worker reacts to the work which relies on how much they see themselves as capable (Volmer, 2015). Even though an empowering leader makes a domain of psychological empowerment with the expectation of a complimentary stream of thoughts, the workers who see themselves high on core self-assessment may express while people with low core self-evaluation may stop to express (Fong & Snape, 2015). Persons with constructive core self-evaluations constructively evaluate themselves through circumstances; such people consider themselves to be capable, and responsible for their lives (Piccolo et al., 2005).

Core self-evaluations have been used to assess individual attributes that influence career decision-making and achieve accomplishment in their professions (Judge and Hurst, 2007). A few studies deal with a positive connection between core self-evaluations and enthusiasm prompt choices to take part in decisions and engross themselves in the activity (Piccolo et al. 2005).

Workers who are high on core self-evaluated are more confident and emphasize on positive traits of their career (i.e. meaning). Bandura (1997) suggests that employees with a high level of self-efficacy incline to have a preference for more challenging activities when it is required to adapt their future career path (i.e. competence). Hence, it is proposed that

*H5: Core self-evaluation negatively moderates the relationship between empowering leadership & psychological empowerment.*



**Figure 1: Theoretical framework**

### 3. Methodology

Pakistan's education sector was the target population for this research, specifically academic institutions located in twin cities i.e., Islamabad and Rawalpindi were considered to collect the data through structured questionnaires (Table 1). They were chosen because they do not have any rigid and structured pattern for their employees and which is more relevant to the study. After the pilot testing of 45 participants, it was shown that the research study was understandable and clear to the respondents. Respondents are requested to react to items utilizing a 5-point Likert-type scale. (where 1 = strongly disagree, and 5 = strongly agree). Using a convenient sampling technique, data was collected from teachers of the universities, with a sample size of 276.

**Table 1:** Construct and example items used in this study.

Construct	No of items	Source	Example items
Empowering Leadership	24	Amundsen and Martinsen, (2015)	My leader gives me authority over issues within my department. My leader conveys that I shall take responsibility.
<b>Career Futures Inventory (CFI)</b>			
Career adaptability	11	Rottinghaus et al. (2005)	I am good at adapting to new work settings. I can adapt to change in my career plans.
Career optimism	11		I can adapt to change in my career plans. Thinking about my career frustrates me.
Core-Self Evaluation	12	Judge (2003)	I am confident I get the success I deserve in life. Sometimes I feel depressed.
Psychological Empowerment	12	Spreitzer (1995)	The work I do is very important to me My job activities are personally meaningful to me

### 4. Results

Demographics Table 2 includes a breakup of gender, qualification, and experience.

**Table 2:** Demographics of the respondents.

	N	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	163	59.1%
Female	113	40.9%
Total	276	100%
<b>Education</b>		
Masters	69	25%
Ms/Mphil	161	58.3%
PhD	46	16.7%
Total	276	100%
<b>Experience (years)</b>		
1-5	103	37.3
6-10	115	41.7
11-15	143	15.6
16-20	15	5.4
Total	276	100%

#### 4.1 Correlation Analysis

The findings of correlation analysis (Table 3) shows that there is a significant and positive connection between Empowering Leadership and Career Adaptability ( $r=.407^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), Empowering Leadership and Career Optimism ( $r=.136^*$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), Empowering Leadership and Psychological Empowerment ( $r=.480^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and Psychological Empowerment and Career Adaptability ( $r=.572^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and Career Optimism ( $r=.402^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), Core Self-Evaluation and Empowerment ( $r=.222^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and Psychological Empowerment ( $r=.331^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics and correlation analysis**

Constructs	N	Mean	SD	$\alpha$	Correlation of construct				
					1	2	3	4	5
1. Empowering Leadership	276	3.644	.672	0.705	1				
2. Career adaptability	276	3.635	.578	0.703	.407**	1			
3. Career optimism	276	3.360	.542	0.733	.136*	.460**	1		
4. Psychological Empowerment	276	3.909	.562	0.862	.480**	.572**	.402**	1	
5. Core-self evaluation	276	3.640	.438	0.750	.222**	.087	.253**	.331**	1

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

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

Table 4 shows the path effects of empowering leadership on career adaptability when mediated by psychological empowerment. The result (Path a) demonstrates the positive and significant effect of psychological empowerment on empowering leadership ( $\beta=0.401$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). The results of Path b demonstrate that psychological empowerment positive and significant effect on career adaptability ( $\beta=0.504$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

Path c results demonstrate a positive and significant effect on career adaptability of Empowering Leadership ( $\beta=0.349$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). It implies that if we boost the Empowering Leadership by one unit, Career Adaptability will result in 0.350 unit change. These findings support H1, H2a, H2b, H3a, and H3b.

The result shows that path 'a' and path 'b' were significant using a bootstrapping method with bias-corrected estimates (Hayes & Preacher, 2014). Results show that there is a mediating role of psychological empowerment on the relationship between empowering leadership and career adaptability ( $\beta=0.147$ ,  $t=3.079$ ,  $p<0.059$ ) c' when controlling psychological empowerment.

**Table 4: Psychological Empowerment mediates the relationship between empowering leadership & career adaptability.**

	$\beta$	t	p
Empowering leadership and psychological empowerment (a)	0.401	9.068	<0.01
Psychological empowerment → career adaptability (b)	0.504	8.805	<0.01
Empowering leadership and career adaptability (c)	0.349	7.368	<0.01
Direct effect (c')	0.147	3.079	<0.05
Bootstrap result (sample size 5000) for Indirect effect with a 95% confidence interval	Indirect effect	.203	<0.05

Table 5 shows the path effects of empowering leadership on career optimism when mediated by psychological empowerment.

Psychological empowerment has a positive and significant impact on Empowering leadership ( $\beta=0.401$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and career optimism ( $\beta=0.422$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). There exists a mediating role of psychological empowerment on the relationship of empowering leadership and career optimism ( $\beta=0.169$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). The direct effect of empowering leadership on career optimism became significant ( $\beta=0.059$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) when controlling psychological empowerment. These findings accept H4(a) and H4(b).



**Table 5:** Path effects of empowering leadership on career optimism when mediated by psychological empowerment.

	$\beta$	T	p
Empowering leadership and psychological empowerment (a)	.401	9.068	<0.01
Psychological empowerment → career optimism (b)	.423	6.953	<0.01
Empowering leadership and career optimism (c)	.109	2.276	.0236
Direct effect (c')	.059	9.178	.0239
Bootstrap result(sample size 5000) for Indirect effect with 95% confidence interval	Indirect effect	0.169	.0239

#### 4.1.1 Moderation Analysis

As seen in the table, the interaction coefficient ( $\beta = -.4775$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) is negative and statistically significant and indicates that the dependent and autonomous variables are not related.

**Table 6:** Empowering Leadership to Psychological Empowerment relationship with Core Self-Evaluation as Moderator

	coefficient	t	p
constant	- 4.626	-4.540	<0.01
Empowering Leadership	2.122	7.378	<0.01
Core Self-Evaluation	1.968	7.133	<0.01
Interaction effect	-.477	-6.199	<0.01

The contextual variable does not moderate the connection between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment, therefore the  $H_5$  has been rejected.

**Table 7:** Conditional effect of Empowering Leadership to Psychological Empowerment on the moderator

Core Self-Evaluation	Effect	t	p
3.250	.570	10.624	$p < 0.01$
3.583	.411	9.776	$p < 0.01$
4.083	.172	3.390	$p < 0.01$

The moderator value at the lower level is 3.250. The influence of the Independent variable on the dependent variable will be .570 that is significant at 0.05. At the medium/average level of moderator value = 3.583, the effect of the Independent variable on the dependent variable will be .411 which is significant at 0.05. At the high level of moderator value = 4.083, the effect of the Independent variable on the dependent variable will be .172 which is significant at 0.05.

## 5. Conclusion

This work underlines singular self-administration and proactive practices, growing the necessity for employees to feel skilled, equipped, and in charge of their work environment to keep up and make themselves. The main objective of the study was to examine the relationship of empowering leadership and career future inventory having the mediating effect of psychological empowerment and moderating variable of core self-evaluation. This study shows that leaders are practicing empowering leadership. The followers who are psychologically empowered by their leaders perform better and are highly encouraged by their leaders and are more confident which in turn motivates followers at work. In this way, employees are more career adaptable and optimistic.

## 6. Availability of Data and Material

Data can be made available by contacting the corresponding author.

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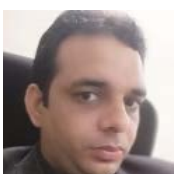
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