

## Empowering Leadership and Employee Performance: A Systematic Review of Multiple Pathways, Boundary Conditions and Research Gaps

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### ABSTRACT

It is a systematic literature review, a compilation of 31 empirical studies, which are peer-reviewed (2018-2025) and aim to examine the impact whose stronger leadership position can have on staff performance in different organizations. According to the PRISMA and rigorous Scopus search criteria, the review will yield the similar positive impacts on task performance (71% of the studies), innovative behavior (16%), work engagement (13%), adaptive performance (6%), and knowledge sharing (10%), which are supported by meta-analysis ( $r = .28$ ). The many intermediating mechanisms of empowering leadership (promotion of autonomy, delegation, coaching, information sharing, and displaying confidence) generate their effect through they are psychological empowerment (10%), work engagement (13%), job crafting (6%), team efficacy and knowledge sharing, largely relying on Self-Determination Theory (12.9%) and Social Exchange Theory (9.7%). High-performance work systems and supportive culture are the factors preceding it (41.9% of the studies). The positive effects (self-efficacy, task interdependence, innovation culture), and negative ones (error aversion culture, low employee readiness), and the too-much-of-a-good-thing effects were present both as moderators in the boundary conditions and as absent. Such pathways are synthesized in a network of nomological. Findings denote a harsh split in antecedents, multilevel analysis, qualitative studies and untyped circumstances (Africa, Latin America). Implication generated advice leads to a practitioner implementation with special emphasis on a contextual readiness assessment, whereas a research agenda in a future is oriented on a longitudinal design, theoretical diversification, and negative effects study..

**Keywords:** Empowering Leadership, Empowering Leader, Empowerment Leadership, Employee Performance, Employee Outcome.

### INTRODUCTION:

#### 1.1 Background and Context

The new conditions of the contemporary organizations demand greater agility, innovation, and engagement of the employees, though, the old types of leadership, being rooted in the traditional perspective, which prioritizes command-and-control and focuses on the top-down levels, is no longer effective to urge the best employees to deliver the best results in the environment in which the company operates (Lee et al., 2018b), as a new organizational environment demands a new type of leadership (Cheong, 2019). Employee performance is a critical indicator of an organization performance, and also the leadership practices can significantly affect the level of influence motivation, engagement, and performance between organizational levels (O'Donoghue & Van Der Werff, 2022).

A certain input to the existing change toward directive management in organizations towards participative empowerment is the fundamental change in leadership norms according to which leadership is dominated by directive management to participative management where people tend to seek more autonomy and promotion of teamwork and initiative in the processes of contributing to the evolution of organizations (Huertas-Valdivia et al.,

2018). The recent advancements in technology, global economies, and the diverse nature of the workforce coupled with the remote working opportunities accelerated by the outbreak of the COVID-19 triggered the addition of an increased strategic significance to the empowerment of leadership, particularly in nature of work in the knowledge-intensive sector of the hospitality industry, technological industry, banking sector, health sector, and educational sector which the discretion of organizational employees makes a direct contribution to the productivity of the organization (Aryee et al., 2019) (Kim & Yoon, 2025).

Despite the fact that the empirical evidence of the positive effect of empowering leadership on its performance in a variety of setting is regular (Lee et al., 2018a), there are a multitude of gaps regarding the underlying mechanism, optimal boundary conditions, and cross-cultural extrapolatability (Faulks et al., 2021). The current literature has not managed to work out the systematic combination of mediating pathways, such as psychological, behavioral, and team-level, to mediate the influence of such factors as individual preparedness and organizational culture, and contextual difference that influence the magnitude of the effects (Hoang et al., 2021). It is based on these gaps that the systematic review seeks to fill current gaps through systematizing up 31 empirical studies (2018-2025) to form an integrated

nomological network in which powerful leadership affects employee performance in a multitude of ways as well as establish boundary conditions and priorities in research.

### 1.2 Definition and Conceptualization of Empowering Leadership

Leadership empowerment can also be defined as a leadership style that assumes a collection of behaviors on the part of the leaders who are trying to empower their junior employees by sharing power and decision-making ability (Arnold, 2000). Empowered leaders demonstrate making trust on the ability of its subordinates, the relevance and importance of their assignments, enables them to engage in the decision-making processes and remove bureaucratic constraints that may impair their effectiveness (Ahearne et al., 2005). The behavioral consequences of empowering leadership are that leaders ought to be capable of being able to lead by example, coach and support other people to grow, facilitate in decision making as well as spread information of relevancy in addition to demonstrating sincerity towards the wellbeing and development of their employees (Arnold, 2000).

The conceptual difference influences this type of leadership in contrast to other positive leadership interventions such as transformational leadership, servant leadership, and authentic leadership, although the points of conceptual overlap may be made in some aspects (Cheong, 2019). Regarding transformational leadership, which aims to influence followers to rise above the self-interest and use visionary ideas to make them act, empowering leadership, in its turn, is concerned with giving workers the opportunity to be more independent in their actions and make any decisions independently (Sharma & Kirkman, 2015). Similarly, servant and empowering leadership give concern to the needs of the followers and organizational stakeholders and emphasis on distributing power among employees and developing agency. The unusual focus of the empowering leadership on the self-decision-making, equal dispensability of power and employee-provided problem-solving is the most applicable to explain the role of organizations in employee performance in the current working environment.

### 1.3 Importance and Relevance of Empowering Leadership for Employee Performance

The applicability of empowering leadership to enhance the performance of employees has become more pronounced in the recent literature on organizations because of various compelling arguments. Firstly, this process is motivated by the dynamism in work which is characterized by increasing cognitive complexity, increasing knowledge intensity and increasing uncertainty which results in the need to accord employees at each organizational level more levels of autonomy and making decisions so that they can effectively cope with dynamism to face the challenges and opportunities in the environment (Humphrey et al., 2007). The archaic directive leadership styles where the decision-making is made by the top levels of the organization, are usually sluggish and inflexible to an extent that they fail to allow

the organization to adapt to the rapid changes in the environment and the development of new competitive forces.

Second, much of the literature on the field of organizational psychology and management supported the assertion that the three fundamental psychological needs as identified in the self-determination theory, autonomy, competence, and relatedness are essential factors of intrinsic motivation, psychological well-being and performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The connection with the supportive management and the peers respond to these psychological needs directly and allow employees to have greater power in their work, opportunities to develop and perform, and constructive relations with their managers and colleagues. By fulfilling these low psychological needs, empowering leadership can enhance the degree of intrinsic motivation and interest of the employees to work and subsequently, the performance outcomes can also improve (Aryee et al., 2019) (Chiang & Chen, 2020).

Three, empirical studies have continually reported positive relationships to empowering leadership and a wide variety of employee performance measures, including (1) task performance, (2) in-role behaviors, (3) extra-role or organizational citizenship behaviors, (4) creative performance, and (5) adaptive performance in a broad assortment of organizational settings, industries, and cultural backgrounds (Lee et al., 2018a)(Qian et al., 2018)(Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2018). In their meta-analysis of 105 samples, (Lee et al., 2018) discovered that empowering leadership would positively affect the individual and team performance of employees. These consistent positive outcomes in the different research backgrounds indicate that enabling leadership is a good and universal practice of leadership in enhancing the performance of employees.

Fourth, due to the new trend according to which the organizational literature and practice nowadays start seeing the promotion of employee engagement, development of human resource and the creation of psychologically health working conditions as a means to achieve the organizational objectives, the empowering leadership has become an indispensable strategic instrument that can be used to stimulate the fulfillment of the organizational objectives (Medhn Desta, 2024). Firms have realized that more highly involved and empowered workers with voice in decision making would be more likely to create discretionary labor, investor dedication to organizational targets, and innovation and receptiveness of organizations (Limpo & Junaidi, 2022).

### 1.4 Research Questions and Objectives

Despite the increase in empirical literature covering the effect played by empowering leadership and employee performance, literature gaps and discrepancies exist, and they will necessitate a systematic review of literature. The enabling leadership in generic management context or specific organizational industry such as the hospitality and tourism, has been reviewed by previous meta-analytic research and narrative studies (Lee et al., 2018)(Cheong, 2019)(Hoang et al., 2021). However, an exhaustive systematic review of literature that selectively synthesizes the study concerning the relationship between

empowering leadership and employee performance with diverse organizational environments, theoretical, and outcomes analysis paths, is non-existent.

The following are the aims of this systematic literature review: (1) To measure and assess empirical studies that are available to investigate the relationship between enabling leadership and employee performance, (2) to measure the conceptual frameworks and points of view that have been used to explain the relationship between enabling leadership and employee performance, (3) to discuss the antecedents, mediating mechanisms, and moderating conditions influencing the relationship between enabling leadership and the performance of employees, (4) to come up with an integrated conceptual perspective, which summarizes the achievements of the various studies and (5) to explain the gaps in the relationship.

In order to serve the objectives of this review, the research takes the following specific research questions as a guide:

What were the definitions and operationalization of empowering leadership as used in empirical studies of employee performance?

What are the theoretical methodologies followed in explaining the impact of empowerment leadership on the level of performance of the employees?

What are the antecedents to empowering leadership in the organization?

What are the mediating processes or how does the performance of the employees realize the effects of empowering leadership?

What are the moderating conditions or the limit or boundary conditions that may influence the efficacy of empowering leadership in enhancing employee working performance?

What are the direct and indirect effects/impacts of empowering leadership in relation to other employee performance dimensions?

what are the consequences of empowered leadership on the performance of employees under varied conditions, cultures and employees population in organisations?

### 3. METHOD

The systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted in order to integrate and synthesize the findings of the research to establish the relationship between enabling leadership and performance of employees in various organizational contexts. This is also objective, replicable, systematic and comprehensive; hence it is unique in contrast to typical literature reviews of narratives (Klassen et al., 1998). This SLR was purely grounded on the five-step execution of systematic reviews as offered by (Khan et al., 2003) and included the following steps, framing research questions, finding out relevant work, assessing the research of quality, summarization of evidence, and interpretation of findings. The current SLR puts an emphasis on peer-reviewed empirical studies which have investigated the relationship between empowering leadership and the performance of the employees.

#### 3.1 Search Methods

The Scopus database, which is the most extensive database going to be utilized, was searched in narrowing peer-reviewed journals in business, management, psychology and social science (Crossan & Apaydin, 2010). The search keywords were as follows: (“Empowering Leadership” or “empowering leader”) and (Employee Performance). The initial search brought 145 documents. It was implemented using a set filtering system which possessed transparent criteria which included and excluded. The inclusion criteria included a requirement that a study: (a) be published in one of the peer-reviewed journals; (b) report the application of empirical research based on primary data collection; (c) be published in English; (d) 2018-2025; (e) be in Business, Management & Accounting (f) investigated the topic of empowering leadership as one of the key constructs; and (g) measured employee performance. It was filtered by the articles being a theoretical paper, not written in English, not a peer-reviewed article, the development of a measurement scale, and empowering leadership was only indicated obliquously.

A final population comprised of 31 empirical studies kept after systematic filtering process that involved temporal filter (2018-2025), subject area filter, document type and language filter, source type filter, publication stage filter, and full-text screening. The included articles were in the range of 2018 and 2025. The peer reviewed articles in question are all scholarly articles and utilized quantitative methods of survey. Figure 1 gives a flowchart of the search process.

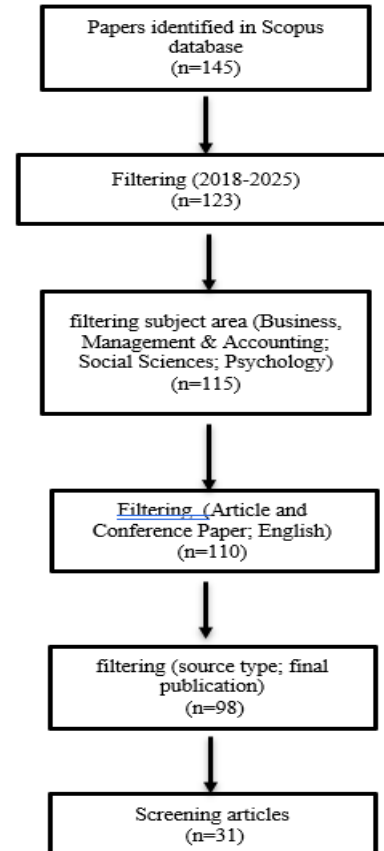


Figure 1. Flow Chart of article

### 3.2 Sample

After the systematic selection process, 145 articles with the identified keywords were obtained in accordance with the search query. It retained 123 documents when the temporal filter (2018-2025) was employed. Another subject area filtering (Business, Management and Accounting; Social Sciences; Psychology) was used, which filtered out 115 articles. Article and Conference Paper; English) Document type and language filtering eliminated 110 documents. The sources filtering (journals only) indicated 107 documents. Filtering on publication stage (final publication) reached 98 documents. The final documents which got retained after full text screening is 31 (see figure 1). All the 31 documents were passed by the full content screening against extensive inclusion and exclusion criteria; all the requirements were met. The analysis of the entire text articles showed that the research was empirical research on primary data collection as the research topic, the research topic being enhanced or empowering leadership and the outcome variable being the performance of employees. The general 31 publications collected are found in different journals and comprise of different organizational situations, industries and cultural background and the research done in various countries including the United States, China, Taiwan, Spain and South Korea among others. Table 1 exhibits the source journals in the sample and the quantity of articles selected in each journal.

Journal	Number of Articles
Frontiers in Psychology	4
Sustainability (Switzerland)	3
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	2
Leadership and Organization Development Journal	2
SA Journal of Industrial Psychology	2
Social Behavior and Personality	2
Acta Psychologica	1
Behavioral Sciences	1
Cogent Business and Management	1
Current Psychology	1
Economies	1
Human Resource Management	1
Humanities and Social Sciences Letters	1
Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business	1
Journal of Business Research	1
Journal of Indonesian Economy and Business	1
Journal of Organizational Behavior	1
Management and Marketing	1
Personnel Review	1
Psychology Research and Behavior Management	1
Quality and Quantity	1
Safety Science	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>

**Table 1. number of Articles shows empowering leadership and employee performance**

### 3.3 Analysis

The content analysis was used to divide and summarized the research findings of the 31 empirical studies (Cummings et al., 2007). Firstly, literature was classified according to their common features in terms of

definitions, conceptual models, the research settings, part of the methodological aspects, and methods of measurement. These categories were then assessed in a bid to establish how the concept of empowering leadership was articulated, theoretical perspectives put into practice, environments in which the empowering leadership had been studied, how it was measured, the antecedents, mediators, moderators and outcomes investigated. Syntosis of the article results was set under emergent themes of definitions, theories, contexts, methods, measures, antecedents, outcomes and mechanisms (see figure 2). To remove the bias, they then included two independent researchers in the process of coding the data and two more reviewers and compare the outcomes of the coding later on. Decision making was concluded with discussions and generating a consensus. The results of the systematic literature review are presented in terms of the research questions that were utilized in the review.

### 4. FINDINGS

The findings of the research are provided by the research questions which resulted in this systematic literature review. The overall summary of all the empirical studies included in the final sample is given in Table 2 (attached). The five major research questions addressed in the analysis have touched on the definition and operational definition of the concepts of empowering leadership, theoretical schools of thought applied, contexts within which the researches take place, methods of research and measurement models, antecedents, mediators, moderators, and effects of empowering leadership.

#### 4.1 Defining Empowering Leadership in Organizational Research

To address the first research question of what empowering leadership has been defined and operationalised, the current review examined the definitions and conceptualisation of empowering leadership in the 31 empirical studies. The analysis has determined that, to the extent that the conceptualization of empowering leadership has been consistent in the study, there are minor responses of the operationization and measurement of the construct. The most common definitions and measurement strategies were that of (Arnold, 2000) where they defined empowering leadership as the leader behaviors included in defining empowering leadership surrounded by the fact that they delegated power to the workers, empowering them in making their own decisions, coaching them, passing information to them and not being bound by the bureaucratic systems gave them meaning in their leadership.

The same in these definitions is that it is sharing power and decision making with his or her subordinates. Leader empowerment shows proficiency among the followers and enhances the relevance and importance of work they engage in, enabling the staff to take part in decision making, eradicating unnecessary bureaucracy and constraints between them, which leads to poor performance by the employees (Lee et al., 2018). The general synthesis of the 31 studies with the assistance of their definition synthesis processes shows that empowering leadership is concerned with five central

behavioral aspects comprising: (1) sharing power and the assignment of authority; (2) facilitating autonomy and independent decision-making; (3) coaching and development assistance; (4) free and clear distribution of relevant information; and (5) demonstrating faith in the ability of the subordinates. All these tendencies are symptoms of a latent philosophy of empowering leadership that attracts employees as active participants committed to judgment and initiative to assume and also part active roles in the overall organizational goals unlike passive receivers of managerial orders.

#### 4.2 Theoretical Perspectives Employed in Empowering Leadership Research

To give the answers to the second research question which concerns the theoretical perspectives adapted to explore empowering leadership and employee performance, this review was systematic searching the theoretical frameworks reported by 31 empirical studies. The empowerment of the research on the topic of leadership, as the analysis indicated, was founded on a number of theoretical approaches, with the apparent grouping around the motivation and social-oriented ones.

Self Determination Theory was the most utilized theoretical perspective which was observed in four studies (12.9% of the sample). This is one of the theories that were developed by (Ryan & Deci, 2000) whereby, the intrinsic motivation and psychological wellbeing of human beings are optimized in terms of their feeling of satisfaction with three key needs in psychology that are autonomy, competence and relatedness. Those researchers who relied on the self-determination theory examined how the empowerment of leadership might facilitate such outcomes to the employees as involvement in work, adaptive performance, and innovative behavior, which come about by satisfaction of the fundamental needs of the employees (Kim & Yoon, 2025)(Xu & Zhang, 2022).

Social Exchange Theory was applied in three studies (9.7% of the sample). This school of thought comes up with a view that is formulated by Blau in his (1964) writing and which presupposes that social relations are defined as an exchange of resources and an obligation mutually. Being a theory of empowering leadership, the social exchange theory elucidates the way in which the behaviors of a leader that lead to a good relationship of social exchange that causes employees to reciprocate the leader's behavior towards them by working more, getting more committed and performing better. The studies that had utilized this school of thought examined the relationship between the empowered leadership and the performance rate of employees through the study of the advantages of enhanced social exchange relationships and the psychological agreement (O'Donoghue & Van Der Werff, 2022).

Conservation of Resources Theory emphasizing the significance of the creation, protection, and safeguarding of the resources that the employees consider important such as psychological health, social support, and meaningful work. The concept of empowering the leadership became as a resource that would assist the employees in protecting and enhancing their

psychological health and productivity (Faulks et al., 2021).

Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) Theory was applied in one of the studies (3.2% of the sample) to explain the empowering leadership results in three explanations through: ability (team efficacy), motivation (team identification), and opportunity (teamwork autonomy) (Zhang et al., 2025).

The other theoretical approaches that were not widely used included the self-efficacy theory, social learning theory and the contingency theory perspectives. The dominance of motivational and social theories is credited to focusing on the perceptions of the enabling leadership studies in the learning as to how the actions of leaders can be employed in triggering the psychological states and social interactions among the employees that in turn affect the attainment of performance outcomes. The findings suggest that the further evolution of the empowering leadership studies theory would involve the enhanced application of organizational theories including the institutional theory, resource-based theory, and complex theory in the further enlightenment of the research regarding the effects of empowering leadership on the organizational level.

#### 4.3 Research Contexts: Geographic and Organizational Settings

This review was also in a position to examine geographic or location and organizational settings of the 31 studies to respond to the third research question that the empowerment of leadership has been researched empirically. The analysis has revealed that the interest in the empowerment leadership research is very strong in different nations, and different organizational backgrounds, which proves the increased interest of different nations in the leadership construct.

Geographic Distribution: The empirical evidence literature on empowerment research on employee performance and leadership has been carried out in the North American setting and the European setting later, and in the East Asian setting. Out of 31 studies, countries that one can identify to be the based location of the research includes; Vietnam (3 studies), China (2 studies), South Korea (2 studies), Spain (1 study), Indonesia (1 study) and Egypt (1 study). The other literature did not mention specific geographical locations in reference. The distribution shows that the empowering leadership study is greatest in the concept of Asian organizational practices since the study was likewise carried out within the North American and European environments. Such a concentration of research on Asian settings could be implied by the fact that organizational and cultural contexts in which the potential of empowering leadership to enhance staff performance and withstand high-stakes operational context is particularly well-timed.

Organizational Contexts: Empowering Leadership Studies have been conducted on an organizational context in different fields. The investigations were conducted within the field of empowering leadership in the hospitality and tourism business (hotels, airlines, restaurants), manufacturing and technology, educational and healthcare organization, telecommunicational, and

professional services organization. Such variety of the sector is prognosticative of the generality of enabling leadership within the settings of different industries. The content of organizational settings, in which the authors conduct their analyses, suggests that the aforementioned empowering leadership influences, on employee performance, are not independent of certain organizational types but can be considered generalization of the leadership concepts that can be applied to other settings.

#### 4.4 Methods and Measures Used to Study Empowering Leadership and Employee Performance

To respond to the fourth research question regarding how the empowering leadership has been studied and operationalized, this review has surveyed each method used and the tools of measurement of the 31 empirical researches.

**Research Design: Military analysis Research Designs** all the 31 articles used a quantitative survey-based research design. The majority of the studies (Approximately 71 percent) were the cross-sectional studies in which data collection was done once among the employee and supervisor respondents. A smaller proportion employed longitudinal designs experiencing multi-wave data collection time-intervals between them that was significant in order to show the precedence in time and reduce the one-sided effect of reverse causation and common method. This methodological trend defines the approach, as the predominance of the cross-sectional type of survey research in organizational behavior study is being overtaken by longitudinal studies, which are significant tools in establishing the presence of the causal relationship.

**Data Collection and Sample Characteristics:** There are various methods employed in the studies to collect information about employees and their bosses. Most of the researches employed self-report surveys, which were completed by employees with or without a companion by the supervisor as a measure of how the employees performed. All the studies had sample sizes ranging between 200-500 employees on average, with most of them investigating 70 to 700 employee-supervisor dyads. Some of the studies adopted the team level analysis that incorporated the aggregation of employee response at the team level to quantify team outcomes.

**Measurement of Empowering Leadership:** There were some scales of measuring the state of empowering leadership which were applied in measurement across the 31 studies. The most used scale was the 15-item scale of (Arnold, 2000) which measures five dimensions, such as leading by example, (1) Leading by example (2) participative decision-making, (3) coaching, (4) informing, and (5) showing concern. This scale is highly effective and Cronbach alpha coefficients ranging between 0.89 and 0.94 have been reported to be substantive in various researches. The second most frequent scale was (Ahearne et al., 2005) 12-item scale that includes four scales (1) enhancing meaningfulness of work, (2) enhancing involvement in decision-making, (3) expressing confidence in high performance, and (4) independence of bureaucratic restrictions. Other scales

undertaken included Srivastava et al (2006) instruments, single-item scales and multi-item scales, which were specific study-specific instruments. The reliability of every scale was found to be acceptable (Cronbach alpha that is more than 0.70) and thus can be said to measure the empowering leadership construct reliably.

**Measurement of Employee Performance:** The topic regarding operationalization of employee performance across the studies has been organized and based around a number of conceptualizations and measurement strategies. The performance measures included: (1) task performance that included self-reported and supervisor reports on role prescribed performance; (2) contextual or organizational citizenship behaviour, measured through self-reported and supervisor ratings of employees; (3) employee self report of creative ideas generated and innovative behavior measured; (4) adaptive performance, self-reported and peer/supervisor report on employee adaptive behavior in response to change in organization; (4) in-role performance that included supervisor reports of task completion and role effectiveness; (5) extra-role or voice performance that included supervisor reports of task completion and role effectiveness. It is this diversity of performance operationalizations that indicator of the complexity of the employee performance as well as the fact that there are myriads of ways through which organizations can use the benefits of empowered leadership.

#### 4.5 Antecedents of Empowering Leadership

With an attempt to respond to the research question which focused on the antecedents of empowering leadership, the antecedents that predict or facilitate empowering leadership behaviors were explored in this review. This analysis reveals that comparatively less literature has been done to study the antecedents of empowering leadership compared to literature which examines impacts. The available literature, however, distinguished a few individual and situational factors, which influence the process of empowering leadership.

**Individual-Level Antecedents:** Leadership integrity and commitment to the quality of the services were the antecedents of empowering leadership at the individual management level. Leaders with high level of integrity of behavior (constancy of the espoused values and behavior) displayed more empowering behavior of leadership. Similarly, the empowering leadership styles were adopted by managers who were more devoted to the quality of services and mission of the organization.

**Contextual Antecedents:** On an organizational-wise, the use of empowering leadership is predetermined by the use of high-performance work practice and organizational culture problems. The more empowering leadership in the managers was associated with companies that incorporated the human resource management systems that emphasized employee development, employee participation, and performance management. The organizational culture that promotes innovation, teamwork and trust also encourages empowering leadership.

The paucity of research on antecedents is also a characteristic of empowering leadership research since

only a small percentage of the extant literature was dedicated to the sources of influence of the application of empowering leadership practices, when and whether. The implication of this gap is that they can conduct potentially useful research in the future to establish organizational, team, and individual-level variables that can enable empowering leadership or make it inaccessible.

#### 4.6 Outcomes of Empowering Leadership on Employee Performance

This review study was chosen to address the research question on the outcomes and consequences of empowered leadership by bearing the impacts of empowered leadership on the performance of the employees and the constructs related to empowered leadership. The outcome of the analysis is that employees have positive constancy relationships between empowering leadership and different employee performance dimensions.

**Direct Effects on Task and In-Role Performance:** Majority of studies (approximately 71%) found that, leadership empowering was positively associated with task performance/ or in-role performance of employees at a significant level. These studies have revealed that employees whose supervisors engage in exercising empowering leadership behaviors depict more levels of accomplishment of tasks, role efficacy and job competence. The meta-analytic techniques managed to synthesize the results of Lee et al. (2018) that established that the positive effect of empowering leadership on task performance was pronounced ( $r = .28, p < .01$ ).

**Effects on Creative and Innovative Performance:** The number of such studies researched on creative performance and innovative behavior as the outcomes of empowering leadership was between 16% studies (5 studies). These works made positive findings regarding the influence of empowering leadership on employee creativity, the generation of new ideas and implementations of innovations. Creative performance may be achieved through empowered leadership that allows employees to think out-of-the-box and take risks on interpersonal relationships in presenting new ideas, and using new ways to challenge problems. In the study of the creativity of teams, research studies which have been carried out have come to find that empowering leadership supported creative team performance that transpired via a framework of team creative efficacy, team identification and psychological security.

**Effects on Work Engagement and Positive Employee Attitudes:** Approximately 13% (4 studies) studies examined the work engagement as an effect of empowering the leadership. In such studies, the empowered leadership was found to have a positive impact on the engagement of the employees in their work in the form of high energy, commitment as well as internalization in the work. Other positive attitudes toward employees that were investigated included an organizational commitment, job satisfaction as well as a psychological ownership. The findings are in line with the theoretical predictions of the self-determination theory that empowered leadership will be able to satisfy the most

basic needs of psychology and give rise to intrinsic motivation.

**Effects on Adaptive Performance:** Two of the studies (approximately 6 percent) examined adaptive performance as an outcome such that, empowering leadership allowed the workforce to adapt to any organizational changes, change their styles to meet new situations and demonstrate elasticity to new situations involving problems. The latter particularly applies in fast changing and uncertain organizations in the modern world.

**Effects on Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration:** 3 of the studies reviewed (approximately 10 percent) were premised on the knowledge sharing and coworking activities. These studies concluded that empowerment of leadership facilitates the voluntariness of the employees in sharing knowledge with their employees, soliciting and utilizing information offered by others and collaborative problem-solving. The result of this nature portrays the relevance of the enabling leadership to the construction of the social capital and common skills of the organization.

The 31-studies review indicated that there were positive effects of empowering leadership in different aspects of employee performance including task performance, creative performance, work engagement, adaptive performance, and collaborative behaviors on the employees. The magnitude of the reviewed performance results demonstrates how empowering leadership affects the performance of several areas of employee performance, such as the main role performance as well as other kinds of contributions beyond the job description.

#### 4.7 Mechanisms: Mediating Processes

To achieve the role played by the enabling leadership to create performance among the employees, the review examined intervening variables that explain the relationship between empowering leadership and performance outcomes.

**Psychological Empowerment:** Psychological empowerment, which is the perception that employees are given in regards to the sense of meaningfulness, ability, control, and influence over the work (Spreitzer, 1995) has been cited in approximately 10 percent of research articles. The researches carried out revealed that, empowering leadership helps in emanating performance of employees by enhancing the psychological empowerment of employees that in turn enhances effort, perseverance and performance. This mediation process is a pointer of theoretical expectations that exist through the self-determination theory that anticipates that external empowering behaviors achieve internal psychological empowerment.

**Work Engagement:** Work engagement, a character of high energy and dedication to work, and immersion in work was discovered to mediate in an estimated 13% of the researches. Empowering leadership in these studies was discovered to elevate the performance of employees because the leadership impacts on work engagement and it is suggested that an empowering leadership provokes the employees to dedicate more discreted efforts and psychological resources to the work.

**Job Crafting:** 6% of the studies identified a median pressure on job crafting which is the proactive action of employees to actively regulate their job demands and resources as an intermediary process. These studies found that the strength of leadership makes the employees work since they can redefine their role, do developmental work, negotiate resources, and reduce inhibiting pressures and, therefore, offer an even more personally meaningful and manageable work opportunity.

**Knowledge Sharing and Information Access:** About 10% of the studies referred to the knowledge sharing and information access as the mediating variables. According to these studies, empowering leadership also improves the performance since it will result in sharing information within the team, increasing the availability of expertise and information among the team members, and collaborative problem-solving.

**Organizational Climate:** In the studies, where the average was about 13 percent, the variables of organizational or team climate (e.g., climate for innovation, cooperative climate, initiative climate) were used as mediators. The results of these researches established that empowered leadership promotes the establishment of such climates that would facilitate the qualities of individual initiative, psychological safety and collaborative problem-solving which would in turn enhance the performance outcomes.

**Team Efficacy and Collective Efficacy:** Team efficacy and collective efficacy beliefs have been found to mediate the outcomes of the literature on the team results of particular teams that have had the effect of empowering leadership on the performance of teams. When leaders are empowered, they build more beliefs in the team on their capabilities, which increases Team motivation and coordination, and therefore, the more the team performance.

The mediating mechanisms that were indeed identified in the 31 studies operate on diverse levels (individual, team, organizational level), and they are both motivational (engagement, empowerment) and cognitive-social (efficacy beliefs, availability of information) mechanisms. This variety of mechanisms means that the performance-status can be impacted by the empowering leadership in complementary pathways and the relative importance of the different mechanisms can vary in organizational context and performance outcomes in question.

#### 4.8 Boundary Conditions: Moderating Factors

To provide the answer to the research question on the conditions which influence any impact on enhancing leadership effectiveness, the review concentrated on the moderating variables that facilitate, deduct or counteract the correspondence between empowering leadership and employee performance.

**Employee-Level Moderators:** At the employee level, many moderating variables were established. The fact that the better-confident employees receive greater benefits of empowering leadership via empowering leadership performance relationship together with self-efficacy reinforcement helped in the same direction. Conversely the low self-efficacy workers may be terrified or terrorized by the empowering leadership. The promotion

and prevention focus (regulatory focus theory) mediated the relationship between the effects of empowering leadership and performance with the employees who were interested in growth and advancement (promotion-focused) showing greater power performance increase through empowering leadership.

**Team-Level Moderators:** These are the team level moderating variables that moderated the empowering leadership impacts of team task interdependence and team composition. The empowerment leadership practice was particularly successful in highly-task interdependent teams in which one of team members requires coordinating such that team members can operate jointly to attain the objectives. The other issue that influenced the effectiveness of the empowering leadership is the diversity and the distribution of the skills of the team members.

**Organizational-Level Moderators:** Organizational culture aspects moderated the moderating effect of the empowering leadership in terms of the aspects of the organization level. Businesses with cultural orientation towards psychological safety, innovation, and trust yielded more beneficial effects of empowering the leadership on the performance of the employees. Conversely, the influence of the empowerment of the leadership is not as effective within the organizations with the culture oriented to the emphasis of hierarchy and control. The organizational human resource management systems that aligned with the organizational goals in empowering individuals to lead them were complemented by the organizational human resource management systems that concentrate on the employee development and performance management systems.

**Too-Much-of-a-Good-Thing Effect:** One of the studies (Hoang et al., 2021) examined the potential negative effects of overempowering leadership, and, based on it, revealed that there is some curvilinear-shaped (inverted U-shaped) relationship relating the empowering leadership and innovation performance in a specific organizational context. This fact is a pointer that there are optimum levels of empowering levels of leadership and sub- and over-empowerment can be non-optimal concerning performance outcomes.

The fact that it is possible to single out several moderating variables means that the effectiveness of the empowering leadership can be dependent on the personal characteristics of the employees, as well as the team structure and composition, and the variables of organizational context. These findings permit defining the significance of the context-related knowledge regarding the concept of empowering leadership and realizing that the success of leadership depends on the correspondence and consistency of leadership style and organizational and team characteristics.

## 5. DISCUSSION

It was a methodological literature review that combined the findings of 31 empirical studies on the theme of empowering leadership and the performance of employees. The discussion includes key findings, summarizes past meta-analytic results, offers a synthesized approach, identifies the gaps in the research

and establishes future research agenda with reference to the existing facets of the organization.

### 5.1 Integrated Framework

This SLR tried to collect and compile empirical findings on the empowerment of leadership and its multi-faceted integrative relationship with employee performance. Based on the 31 papers that we have analyzed, we are suggesting a composite nomological network that summarizes the key empirical data of the focal constituents of empowering leadership antecedents, mediating processes, moderating variables and different performance results at organizational level (see figure 3). The framework reveals that the ways of operation of empowering leadership are several, which are: (1) a direct effect on task performance (71% of the studies), (2) a mediated one and the operations occur through the psychological effect of empowerment and work engagement, (3) a conditional effect predetermined by the individual (self-efficacy, regulatory focus) or team (task interdependence) and organizational (culture, HRM systems) factors, and (4) cascading effects at individual, team, and organizational levels. This complex knowledge suggests that leadership empowerment cannot be considered as a one-dimensional notion, on the contrary, it is a complex management tool whose effectiveness depends on its adaptation to the situation and the level of personal readiness of a single employee. Nevertheless, like the earlier research, which dwells on the positive effects, the discovery of the non-positive effects in 9.7 percent of the literature (particularly the too-much-of-a-good-thing effect of the Vietnamese SMEs) adds to the significance of defining the conditions of existence and the optimal levels of empowerment.

**Key Theoretical Contributions:** When we state that the Self-Determination Theory (12.9% of the studies) and the Social Exchange Theory (9.7% of the studies) are the dominant within the set of the empirical studies, we mean that conceptualization of empowering leadership is based on motivational and the relational aspects. The Self-Determination Theory assists in comprehending the role of the empowering leadership that satisfies the fundamental psychological needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness) which enhances the intrinsic motivation and performance at that point. The Social Exchange Theory explains the reciprocity exchange process whereby empowering leadership actions make possible development of positive relationship that result into employee reciprocation. These complementary theories include powerful definitions of essential empowering leadership effects, yet the apparent gap in the contingency theory (0% of the studies), institutional theory (0%), resource-based theory (0%), and dynamic capabilities perspectives (0%) is an enormous gap in theory. Future research would apply these unexplored theories to fill gaps of possessions concerning the most satisfactory period of empowering leadership, effect of the institutional pressures on the organization of enabling leadership adoption, competitive advantage the enabling leadership facet creates, and the strategies of companies to enable dynamic capabilities of enabling empowerment in dynamic situations.

### 5.2 Research Findings in Context of Meta-Analytical Evidence

The current study findings are fully compatible and complementary to the most conclusive meta-analytic synthesis that was performed by (Lee et al., 2018a) and included analysis of 35 studies in which strong positive effects of empowering leadership will be identified ( $r = .28, p < .01$ ). The crucial conclusion made in the current sample is that as of now 71 percent of the studies have discovered that there was a strong positive correlation between task performance and empirical evidence to this effect is extensive. The reason why the meta-analysis finding that leadership empowerment is a psychological determination to influence the performance is justified is the choice of psychological empowerment as a commonly studied form of mediation (included in 10% of studies).

However, what is observed in the current review literature is that there is a substantial progress in the research after the meta-analysis coverage. The more current work (2024-2025, 22.6% of the sample) is considering more the outcomes that were not so prominently addressed in the earlier studies: job crafting as a mediating factor (6% of the research), hybrid work adaptive performance, and team level improvisation based on AMO theory frameworks. This kind of growth is indicative of the timeliness of research based on up-to-date organizational requirements, namely the requirement to work remotely, the requirement of organizational nimbleness and organizational having capacity to respond to a workforce, which was not notably salient when the meta-analytic reports under consideration were finished. The correspondence of the former meta-analytical findings to the evidence of the existing systematic reviews offers considerable arguments of the universality of empowering leadership in different contexts and at different periods of time and the development progresses again proving the field extension and entering the new organizational phenomenon.

### 5.3 Theoretical Advancement and Research Gaps

Though the theory of Self-Determination and Social Exchange theory provide clear explanation of how the effect of empowering leadership can be explained, the review under consideration denotes considerable opportunities of developing the theoretical explanations. It was also found by 3.2% of the studies that mentioned the Conservation of Resources Theory despite its hypothetical ability in the explanation of empowering leadership antecedents and boundary conditions. The resource spirals and resource caravan concept of a COR theory may contribute to the comprehension of how organizational resource availability (HRM systems, favorable culture) predicts the adoption of empowering leadership and how the empowering leadership can preserve psychological and social resources and cause virtuous circles of resource increase.

Contingency and situational strength theories yet they have a strong potential to be incorporated in the context of the explanation of why the outcomes of leadership empowering are different in various circumstances. Such theories could help find contextual conditions (strength of the organizational culture, the complexity and uncertainty

of the environment) suggesting the best possible levels of empowerment. There is an untapped potential of merging the dynamic participatory of empowering leadership of a situational-appropriate directive leadership into an effective one through the paradox theory. The reasons behind the empowerment of leadership adoption and expression according to the institutional settings of the organization (industrial norms, regulatory forces, professional values) may be expounded by the institutional theory. Absence of these theoretical perspectives portends some core deficits on direction of deficiency of gains in cohortating the theory of leadership.

#### 5.4 Contextual Multiplicity: Geographic, Sectoral, and Cultural Dimensions

High geographic concentration in Asian settings (of 9.7, 6.5, 6.5 percent), high geographic representation of the North American and European studies and high degrees of underrepresentation of African, Middle Eastern and Latin American settings are all included in the 31 articles. This geographic effect triggers crucial matters regarding cultural contingency of empowering leadership influences. The individual agency and autonomy encouraged by the self-determination theory suits well with the Western individualist cultures, but might need to undergo modification in collectivistic cultures where the emphasis is put on group harmony and relational harmony. This is also applicable to organizational power distance or degree of hierarchical inequality condoned, as again, this is highly differentiated in different cultures and presumably mitigates the success of empowering leadership. In the future study, the clear cross cultural comparative research design would be used, and the effects of culture would be studied in aspects of the power distance, individualism/collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance, on the empowerment of leadership adoption, expression and results.

The analysis of the sector proves that the studies of empowering leadership are done in a great variety of industries (hospitality, manufacturing, education, healthcare, telecommunications) and foster the virginity. However, certain areas appear to be too large (the hospitality and tourism are emphasized in the 25-studying sample of base paper), and other areas are not thoroughly studied. Particular focus is to be placed on the investigation of the authority's sector organizations, non-profit organizations, creative industries, and strongly regulated (pharmaceuticals, financial services). The grounded research reflected on industry peculiarities, such as the profession-specific standards, regulation necessity, customer interface, or crisis susceptibility would also further advance knowledge in empowering the leadership boundary conditions.

#### 5.5 Methodological Patterns and Future Research Design Imperatives

The approaches employed by all 31 of the studies were the quantitative ones requiring complete survey (0% of researches). The methodological gap limits the use of how implementing empowering leadership is operationalized, how employees experience and perceive empowering leadership practices through the mechanism perceptions in blocking the organizational factors by implementing

empowering leadership and how the effects of empowering leadership are time-specific. Interviews, ethnography and case studies based qualitative research framework would provide deep descriptive explanations of the processes of empowering leadership that otherwise could not have been arrived at as a result of a survey. Quantitative and qualitative methods of research Mixed methods research Mixed methods research that combines quantitative and qualitative research methods can help illuminate cases of mechanistic situations and contingencies on the situation that neither of the two methods can capture.

The prevalent design (71% of articles) research makes it impossible to draw causal arguments concerning the impact of empowering leadership. Only 29% of the studies used longitudinal designs that enabled them to make more powerful causal claims and also to be temporally sequenced. The second implication to follow in future study would be to apply longitudinal (Multi lagging measures) design, cross lagged (Does empowering leadership cause performance improvements, or high performers elicit more empowering leadership) design and quasi experimental (can provide better causality evidence than surveys) design.

Correlated threats Inflated correlations and mono-method bias exists because of common method variance and self-report dependence (100% of the studies were based on self-report surveys). This is partial offsetting although 45 percent of the research had multi-source data collection or supervisor ratings. Objective measure of performance (customer satisfaction rating, sales number, patent of the innovation) should also be used in future research as well as 360 ratings of who rate people and archives of the organization to enhance triangulation of outcomes and reduce self-reporting.

#### 5.6 Multilevel Analysis and Cascading Effects

In the review, it is observed that only 19 percent of the studies had considered a team-level outcome and no research is conducted on the impact of organizational level. It constitutes a desperate gap in knowledge regarding the mechanism by which the empowerment of leadership influences spread in the organizational levels and manifest themselves on the aggregate level. Concurrently acting effect-approaches at the individual, team and organizational ranks are demanded. The research questions that should be examined are: How does CEO empowering leadership drip and down through middle and frontline managers into affecting the employee outcomes? How is it connected to the behavior of individual empowering as compared to the phenomenon in a team level? Which are the organizational-level effects of popular adoption of empowering leadership (firm innovation, financial performance, and organizational learning)? How does cross-level bitar interact (i.e. individual empowering leadership x organizational climate)?

Besides, the present sample does not address the trickle-down approach either, yet it has much potential. Research studies that examine the impact of empowering leadership that trickles down to the leaders and consequently to the

front teams of employees would help the body of knowledge of the mechanism of empowerment at the level of the organization. The other gap is the empowering aspect of the co-worker groups and peer to peer empowerment, the leaders can indirectly influence the employees through peer empowerment and organizational results are either multiplier.

### 5.7 Antecedents and Negative Effects: Addressing Critical Gaps

In spite of the fact that much research has been conducted in relation to the results of the empowering leadership, only 41.9% of the studies examined antecedents which predicted the empowering leadership adoption and expression. This recent review has discovered that the anticipation of empowering leadership depends on its leadership integrity, commitment to service quality, high-performance work practices; although the antecedents have not been effectively explored. Such interrogative research questions are: (1) What are the personal manager characteristics (personality traits, values, experience, self-efficacy) that empower leadership? (2) In what organizational conditions (strategy, HRM systems, culture, top management support) is empowering leadership adoption supported or constrained? (3) Take the emergences of empowering leadership, the question is, why these emergences are conditioned by person-situation interactions? (4) What work developmental measures (training, mentoring, coaching) work in the accomplishment of capabilities that enable the empowerment of managers?

In addition, negative offsets or boundary conditions limiting the empowering leadership efficacy were also examined in 9.7% of the studies. The finding of one study that has had negative effects (too-much-of-a-good-thing relationships with innovation performance) does reveal the applicability of a study of excesses of empowerment and unintended effects. The research questions that will be required to be carried out are as follows; in what situations can over empowerment cripple employees, provide role ambiguity, or damage coherence in companies? What are the predictors of negative empowerment experience, among factors of employee vulnerability (low self-efficacy, external locus of control, high anxiety)? Which organization variables (weak culture, high political conflict, crisis situations) prevent the performance of empowering leadership?

### 5.8 Practical Implications and Implementation Guidance

To call such an ultimate decision, the review under consideration offers some pieces of implementation codes that should be considered by those practitioners who intent to implement the concept of empowering leadership. It is assumed that the empowering the leadership implementation is preceded by the assessment of the organizational readiness: organizations should estimate the condition of the organizational culture (Is it autonomy-supportive, trust-supportive, psychologically-safe?), the condition of the current HRM systems (Are organizational systems compatible with the principles of participative and developmental leadership?), the condition of the employees (Do they have self-efficacy and motivation to participate in empowerment?), and the

task-design (Does the work demand autonomy and interdependence?). That is where organizations without cultural- structural fit should start organizational change programs or during the empowering leadership implementation process.

Contextual customization is critical: empowering leadership implementation should be oriented towards specific situations in the organization. Firms that emphasize on innovation tend to spend a lot of money empowering their leaders; firms, which are more emphasized on accomplishment in their operations tend to balance empowering and directive leadership approaches. Team interdependence Task-based teams with empowering leadership style create highest value; other leadership styles may be used with interdependence that is lower. This involves development and training of managers and aims at behavioral expressions of empowering leadership (delegation of power, coaching, information sharing, seek feedback and request) and customizing empowerment to employee readiness and organisational environments and needs of alignment towards the organisational systems. Extensive Performance measures which capture diverse enabling leadership results (task performance, innovation, engagement, collaboration, learning) have more comprehensive evaluation compared to one measure techniques. Finally, organizing the organizational systems (enabling the organizational culture, the HRM practices, the compensation systems, the decision-making structures etc. to be aligned and supportive of the empowering leadership) is the secret of the long-term efficiency.

### 5.9 Limitations and Methodological Quality Considerations

Even though this SLR was made in a rigorously fastidious manner, there are some weak points that ought to be cited. Publication and indexing bias: The review had the potential of being restricted to English and Scopus peer reviewed articles, thus may not have included non-indexed journals, dissertation and non-English articles that provide conflicting or complementary results. Methodological limitations of reviewed studies: The results of this review has limitations which are associated with methodological limitation of reviewed studies, most of them being high number of cross-sectional and self-report survey designs. Sample composition: The majority of the studies discussed white-collar or white-collar service organizations, and very little research involved the study of manual workers, so-called technical specialists, or distributed (spatially) virtual teams. Outcome variable coverage: outcome variables Numerous outcome variables (outcome results at the organizational level (firm financial performance, innovation output, market share), outcome results at the customer front (customer satisfaction, customer loyalty), sustainability-related outcome results (environmental responsibility, social impact) received little attention and made it hard to see how a higher level of organizational value was generated by increasing empowerment of leadership.

### 5.10 Future Research Agenda: Synthesized Priorities

This systematic review identifies the following research agenda priorities:

1. **Theoretical Diversification:** Theories like the contingency theory, institutional theory, resource-based theory, dynamic capabilities perspective and the paradox theory should be used to expand the knowledge on how to empower leadership to transcend the existing theories on motivation and social aspects.
2. **Contextual Expansion:** Go to unexplored geographical regions (Africa, Middle East, Latin America), occupational sectors (public sector, non-profit, creative, technical) and organizational forms (remote, distributed, gig-economy) to illuminate the contextual cultural constraints.
3. **Longitudinal and Causal Research:** The longitudinal designs involving measurement waves, cross-lagged research, and quasi-experimental field designs to discover the impact of empowered leadership causal and understand the dynamics of time.
4. **Qualitative and Mixed Methods:** Continue to use qualitative research (interviews, ethnography, case studies) and mixed methods with a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to understand better how to empower the leadership enactment, the issue of implementation, and the employee experience.
5. **Multi-Level Analysis:** Track the empowering leadership at individual, dyadic, team and organizational levels in models using multi-level analysis and examining how the effects propagate, and occur through organizational ranks.
6. **Antecedent Research:** Considerably, determine the antecedents (individual (personality, values, self-efficacy, developmental history), contextual (strategy, HRM systems, culture, support of the top management) antecedents) predicting the adoption of empowering leadership.
7. **Negative Effects and Boundary Conditions:** circumstances in the research in which the empowering leadership will not be impactful, or the impact of this leadership will be negative, or the impact of this leadership will be different in subgroups of employees (personality, demographics, cultural values).
8. **Implementation and Intervention Research:** Collaborate with organizations to practice empowering leadership training and assess outcomes, using results of research and devising intervention development strategies.

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## 6. CONCLUSION

This had to be an empirical literature review that covered such empirical studies as 31 studies examining the influences of empowering leadership and employee performance and discovered plenty of evidence to confirm the positive influence relating to empowering leadership in different aspects of performance. The review provides a great support to the empowering leadership as the evidence-based leadership strategy which demonstrates the success in different organizational environments. Among the major revelations, there is: (1) consistent positive influence on task performance (71% of the studies), (2) existence of multiple mediating mechanisms through creative performance, engagement, and collaboration, (3) psychological empowerment and work engagement, (4) existence of key boundary conditions (self-efficacy, task interdependence, and organizational culture) and (5) the ongoing maturation of research in to emerging organizational circumstances. It is on the basis of this organized approach that the findings are integrated within the suggested integrated framework in order to realize how to empower the antecedents of leadership, mechanisms, moderators and the outcomes.

However, it has many prospects that can be used to close the gaps of the recognized gaps in preceding studies, detrimental effects insight, multi-level researches, theory diversification, and context elaboration in geographic regions, industries, and cultures. Future studies will rely on the use of longitudinal designs, qualitative methodology, and multi-level to develop the empowering leadership theory and practice. Institutions employing empowering kind of leadership have to critically assess readiness of context, implementation strategizing within strategy specifications and self-sufficiency of organization system to empower leadership. The field is at the correct location of the advancements as it systematizes research on the open matters about the antecedents, boundary conditions, the implementation of leadership empowerment, and implications of the empowerment of leadership at organizational levels in diverse global environments.

Authors' Contributions

All the Authors have contributed equally.

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