

An Effectiveness of Empowering Leadership on Employees and their Productive Voice Behavior: Empirical Study on Mediating role of Psychological safety and Leader Member Exchange

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ABSTRACT--*The relationship between empowering leadership and employee voice behavior and the role of psychological safety and LMX (Leader member exchange) as mediators is the same. The study utilizes structural equation modeling for analyzing the data collected from Indian service industry employees through the questionnaire developed for the study. The study demonstrates the significant impact of empowering form of leadership on employees' constructive voice behavior. By supporting results were observed for the mediating impact of leader member exchange (LMX) and psychological safety between empowering leadership and employees' constructive voice behavior. Intervening mechanisms by linking leaders' empowering behavior with employees' constructive voice, while also highlighting the potential importance of LMX relationship in organizations and psychological safety in context of constructive voice behavior. The piece of work is assumed to benefit the leaders in organizations by providing them the basis for adopting empowering form of leadership in light of results displayed and its revealed impact on the constructive voice behaviour. The study brings forth the relevance of quality LMX for promotive constructive voice behaviour in the organization. The study establishes the new form of leadership, 'empowering leadership' for fostering the better exchange of ideas, opinions, and suggestions between leaders and followers which tend to benefit the organization, providing empirical evidence of the sequential mediation of LMX and psychological safety.*

Keywords --Constructive Voice, Empowering Leadership, Leader Member Exchange (LMX), Psychological Safety, Sequential Mediation

I. INTRODUCTION

Employee voice contributes to organizations by involving their discretionary effort to express ideas, concerns, and suggestions related to the work issues. It is regarded as the most valuable behavior for organizational progress and development in today's highly competitive and complex environment (Gao *et al.*, 2012; Wang *et al.*, 2016). Past researchers have indicated that employee voice leads to improved error detection (Morrison and Milliken, 2000), organizational enactment (Frazier and Bowler, 2015), and improved organizational performance (Janssen and Gao, 2015). Thus, the importance of each member's contribution of ideas, suggestions, insights and feedbacks

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for organizational improvement is being witnessed and rising up across organizations (Fuller *et al.*, 2007). The management is encouraging their employees to communicate their views and opinions on work-related and employment issues, as these contribute towards the improvement of productivity and innovation (Edmondson, 2003; Morrison and Milliken, 2000). But the crucial concern for the researchers in the field of voice behavior is about finding ways to promote employee voice in the organization because of its paradoxical nature. This is because, however employee voice is beneficial for an organization but is perceived to be risky by the employees, if it suggests changes in prevailing rules, procedures, and policies (Burris, 2012; Detert and Edmondson, 2011). Generation of ideas and suggestions can be promoted only when the subordinates feel empowered to offer their opinions and observations (Dvir *et al.*, 2002) without any hesitation which implies a psychologically safe environment (Van Dyne *et al.*, 2003). Specifically, when employees are voicing for some changes in status quo, influential and supportive nature of supervisors plays a major role in encouraging them (Glauser, 1984). In this regard, researchers have examined that leadership not only creates opportunities for voicing, but also shapes the cognitive actors to make constructive voice (Ashford *et al.*, 2009). The way a leader acts is assumed to be of paramount importance in encouraging employees and making them employees active in giving their inputs (Ashford *et al.*, 2009; Morrison and Rothman, 2009).

Although the leader encourages an employee towards offering constructive suggestions, but the influence of relationship between leader and follower cannot be undermined. Therefore, our study considers empowering leadership which has not been given much attention by the researchers (Hassan *et al.*, 2013) with psychological safety and LMX as potential catalysts between empowering leadership and employee constructive voice. The conception is majorly premised on the grounds that a quality LMX in an organizational space is marked by mutual trust and loyalty exchanges between the leader and the follower, respect for each other, and a sense of reciprocity and liking towards the leader by the followers (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005; Dulebohn *et al.*, 2012) which is expected positively influence the employees constructive voice behavior.

To understand the robust mechanism as proposed in **Figure 1**, our study proposes sequential mediation (i.e. mediation role of psychological safety and LMX between empowering leadership and constructive voice) by integrating all the above discussed variables in to one model. Firstly, the existing literature on EL, employee voice, and employee PS has been reviewed, and hypotheses have been developed with respect to the proposed relationships. Secondly, the process of data collection and methodology used for the study has been discussed. Third section consists of the results followed by the discussion in the fourth section. Theoretical and practical implications have been presented in the fifth section. The final section of the article provides an overview of the study's limitations and areas for future research.



Figure 1: Proposed Research Model

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS

2.1 Empowering Leadership and Constructive Voice

Empowering Leadership (EL) occurs when a leader focuses on encouraging his followers to express their ideas freely and to be innovative and creative in thinking (Arnold *et al.*, 2000; Spreitzer, 2008 and Srivastava, Bartol and Locke, 2006). An empowering leader shares power with his followers and gives them autonomy to take decisions by showing trust in them and encourages participative decision-making (Ahearne *et al.*, 2005; Chen *et al.*, 2011; Cheong *et al.*, 2016, Greasley and Bocârnea, 2015; Zhang and Bartol, 2010). In EL, followers are motivated to take risks (Zhang and Bartol, 2010) and come up with suggestions and ideas that often challenge the status quo (Gao *et al.*, 2012). In an empowering leadership environment, the leader concentrates on goals concerned with learning rather than mere performance-oriented ends (Lorinkova, 2013), which gives a free hand to followers to think and act innovatively and take risks (Bass and Riggio, 2006). EL also boosts the self-efficacy of the members (Zhang and Zhou, 2014) which motivates them to think and act artistically by giving them confidence (Biemann *et al.*, 2015). Cheong *et al.*, (2016) empowering leadership to be an exceptionally strong supporting process in getting most looked-for results from the employees by facilitating participative decision-making and increasing their work engagement. Thus, EL creates an environment of openness which acts as a signal for followers to express themselves freely and makes them more willing to speak up even if it challenges the status quo. As giving suggestions and ideas that challenges status quo would require supervisor's support and employees' participation, the study considers participative decision-making and concern for subordinates as prime factors of EL. On the basis of the above discussion, the study proposes a positive association between empowering leadership and constructive voice.

Hypothesis1: Empowering Leadership is positively related to Constructive Voice

2.2 Empowering Leadership and Psychological Safety

Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) have argued that when leaders acknowledge their failures and proactively look for productive inputs, it positively affects the psychological safety (PS) in organizations (Nembhard and Edmondson, 2006). PS is greater when leaders or supervisors keenly reduce the status gaps between themselves and followers or subordinates respectively (Nembhard and Edmondson, 2006). If the leaders and lower-level employees maintain mutual respect and support (Singer *et al.*, 2015), it automatically tends to increase confidence among employees. Hence, a subordinate's PS depends majorly on the leadership styles of his supervisor (Nemanich and Keller, 2007). If the leader makes his team members more collaborative and responsive and encourages them to participate and take initiatives within the team (Srivastava *et al.*, 2006), that helps build self-efficacy among his team members and provides them with autonomy, resulting in high performance. In their study, Ahearne *et al.* (2005) found that positive relationship between the behavior of an empowering leader and his followers' performance which is attributable to increased confidence and adaptability arising out of an empowering leader's behaviour. An empowering leader nurtures an employee's involvement in the decision-making process (Manz and Sims, 1987; Pearce *et al.*, 2003), which gives an employee a more opportunistic feeling at various work situations.

Above theoretical arguments suggest that the possibility that leader effectiveness affects perceptions of psychological safety. Hence we propose:

Hypothesis2: Empowering Leadership positively affects psychological Safety

2.3 Empowering Leadership and LMX

Numerous researchers in the past have endorsed the notable impact of the type of leadership style adopted on the quality of the Leader member exchange (LMX). Mahsud *et al.* (2010) propagated that one of the significant antecedents to high quality LMX is the leaders' behaviour. A high quality LMX in an organizational space is marked by mutual trust and loyalty exchanges between the leader and the follower, respect for each other, and a sense of reciprocity and liking towards the leader by the followers (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005; Dulebohn *et al.*, (2012). Dulebohn *et al.*, (2012) argued that it is not just the leaders' behavior but the relationship that exists between the follower and the leader which dominantly determines the quality of the LMX. Scholars have further proposed the need for replacing the transactional form of leadership style with the new forms of behaviours for maintaining the high quality leader member exchanges. Researchers in the past have however addressed the relationship between transformational leadership and LMX (Wang *et al.*, 2005) but empowering leadership has not been given much attention (Hassan *et al.*, 2013).

The essence of empowering leadership lies in the delegation of authority with extended support to employees, promotion of autonomous decision making and consultation by the leader before taking important decisions (Hollander, 2009; Martin and Lia, 2013). Authority delegation which lies at the core of empowering leadership has been found to positively affect LMX (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2012; Yukl *et al.*, 2009). Likewise, consultation with the followers before taking crucial decisions has also been found to positively impact high quality leader member exchanges (Yukl *et al.*, 2009). Ahearne *et al.*, (2005) have argued that an empowering leader stimulates participation at work, provides scope for extra role behaviour, fosters confidence for high performance and minimizes the bureaucratic constraints. Coaching and mentoring assume an important aspect of the empowering leadership behaviour (Gao *et al.*, 2012) which leads to affective bonding between the leader and follower and which in turn builds the ground for the high quality leader member exchanges (Uhl-Bien and Maslyn, 2003; Ferris *et al.*, 2009). Technically, conceptual overlapping between high quality LMX and empowering leadership behaviour can be observed but the study contends that empowering leadership comprises a set of leadership behaviours which is expected to positively influence the maintenance of a high quality LMX.

Hypothesis3: Empowering Leadership positively affects LMX

2.4 Mediating role of Psychological Safety

Employees may refrain from expressing themselves if they feel fearful or sense adverse consequences of expressing themselves freely (Liang *et al.*, 2012; Walumbwa and Schaubroeck, 2009; Zhao and Olivera 2006). Zhang *et al.* (2010) proposed that employees often estimate costs and benefits before voicing up in the organization and always speak up when they feel psychologically safe. In an environment of fear and harm, employees may adopt self-protective muteness (Dyne *et al.*, 2003) and important decisions may be taken on the basis of inaccurate feedback (Adelman, 2012) occurring on account of reluctance in employees to speak up. PS has been found to be an essential requirement for employee voicing in an organization (Nembhard and Edmondson, 2006). Leadership

behaviors have also been found to be relevant in shaping PS perceptions in an organization (Schaubroeck *et al.*, 2011). It may be understood that a leader who supports and encourages his employees may create an environment where employees can speak freely and voice their concerns and suggestions. More specifically, PS has been found as an essential precursor of voice and learning behavior (Nembhard and Edmonson, 2006). Further, Zhang and Bartol (2010) confirmed that EL boosts employee innovativeness through psychological empowerment while extending extensive motivation. Above theoretical base shows the role of PS needs to be tested further between EL and CV. Accordingly, we propose

Hypothesis 4: Psychological Safety mediates the relationship between Empowering Leadership and Constructive Voice

2.5 The Mediating role of Leader – Member Exchange

The study aims at examining the mediating impact of the LMX between the empowering form of leadership and the employees' constructive voice behaviour. The conception is majorly premised on the grounds that a quality LMX in an organizational space is marked by mutual trust and loyalty exchanges between the leader and the follower, respect for each other, and a sense of reciprocity and liking towards the leader by the followers (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005; Dulebohn *et al.*, 2012) which is expected to positively influence the employees constructive voice behavior. The study argues that empowering leader through his conduct of delegation and sharing authority, coaching and mentoring followers, and two way communication with the followers nurtures high quality leader member exchanges in the organization. The evolvement of the relationship from just an acquaintance to a partnership level for achieving high organizational outcomes under empowering leadership (Ahearne *et al.*, 2005) is also expected to nourish and build up for high LMX in an organization. Loyalty and high organizational citizenship behaviour have also been endorsed as the outcomes of empowering leadership behaviour (Van Dijke *et al.*, 2012). We assert that empowering leadership behaviour will provide facilitating conditions for high quality LMX which eventually will encourage the employees to freely express their ideas, opinions and suggestions for achievement for higher organizational outcomes.

Hypothesis 5: LMX will mediate the relationship between Empowering Leadership and Constructive Voice

2.6 Mediating role of Psychological safety and LMX

In present piece of research, we propose that both psychological safety and LMX will display the positive sequential mediating mechanism between EL and CV. Researchers in the past have however proposed the individual positive impact of empowering leadership on psychological safety (Gao *et al.*, 2012) and also of empowering leadership on quality exchanges between the leader and the follower (Hassan *et al.*, 2013). Frazier *et al.*, (2015) have endorsed the notable influence of empowering leadership on psychological safety and of psychological safety on LMX. The sequential mediation is proposed on the grounds that empowering leaders create an environment where employees feel psychologically safe (Gao *et al.*, 2012; Frazier *et al.*, 2015). But it is the quality of exchanges between leader and follower that determines their voice behavior. It is the high quality exchange between the leader and the follower which will help employees to come over the resistance that employees may feel in expressing themselves freely and reach a position of comfort in expressing ideas and

suggestions that often also challenge the status quo. The proposed relationship has not been tested by the previous researchers but on the ground of the justification given above we propose:

Hypothesis 6: Both ‘psychological safety and LMX’ mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and constructive voice.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample design

We have considered a field study to examine the proposed assumptions. We concisely educated respondents that the objective of the research was to understand the dynamics of supervisory behavior and employees' behavior at work place and participation was fully voluntary. The research hypotheses were tested using information obtained by means of a questionnaire that was distributed to a sample of 450 employees working with Indian service industry like IT firms, banking, transportation and hotels. Out of 450 distributions, 311 responses were returned (response rate of 69.11%). This sample consisted of 68.96% males and 31.04% females from lower (57.57%), middle (34.42%) and senior (8.01%) managerial levels. The respondents had an average age of 38.10 years and an average tenure of 4.2 years.

3.2 Measures

Self-report measures were adopted in order to validate the measures of the five central latent constructs which were proposed as part of the proposed research model. Self-report measures aim to capture the perceptions of study respondents, despite external or objective ratings. Responses were taken on a five point Likert scale indicated as 1–Strongly disagree, 2–Disagree, 3–Neutral, 4–Agree and 5–Strongly agree.

Empowering Leadership

10 items scale developed by Vecchio et al. (2010) was employed to measure supervisors empowering behavior. Sample items are “My supervisor encourages me to find solutions to my problems without his/her direct input” (Independent action). “My supervisor advises me to look for the opportunities in the problems I face” (Opportunistic thinking) and “My supervisor encourages me to work together with other teachers who work at the school” (Cooperative action).

Psychological Safety

For this construct, we have adopted five items from the questionnaire on PS scale given by Edmondson and Moingeon (1999). Sample items are: ‘it is difficult to ask other members of this organization for help’ (reversed), and ‘members of this organization are able to bring up problems and tough issues’.

Constructive voice

We have measured this construct using items from promotive voice and prohibitive voice proposed by Liang et al., (2012). Sample item are promotive voice : I Proactively develop and make suggestions for issues that may influence the unit, Prohibitive voice: I Dare to voice out opinions on things that might affect efficiency in the work unit, even if that would embarrass others.

Leader-member exchange (LMX)

We assessed the quality of exchange with a ten-item quality of interaction scale (Bhal and Ansari, 1996, 2000). The scale consisted of two dimensions: contribution and affect, based on the conceptualization made by Dienesch and Liden (1986). Each dimension of LMX consisted of five items. Two sample items included, “How much responsibility does the leader take for the jobs that are to be done together by you and him/her?” (LMX-Contribution), and “How much do you help each other in personal matters?” (LMX-Affect).

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The study used 10 observed variables and four factors in a maximum likelihood covariance structure analysis to test the hypotheses.

To test the hypotheses authors have used correlation and multiple regression techniques. Further Hayes (2013) technique was used to test mediations. Table 1 below displays the correlation coefficients, means, and standard deviations for all the variables under study. Cronbach’s alpha for all the study variables were found to be in acceptable range (>.7) (Nunnally 1978).

4.1 Examination of common method variance

As the data for all the scales were collected from a single source, this study might contain potential common method variance. The authors used Harman’s one factor test to determine the presence of common method variance. To achieve this objective, the authors loaded all variables of the current study into an exploratory factor analysis and restricted the number of factors extracted to one. The authors examined the un-rotated factor solution and found that one factor solution accounted for only 34.51 % explained variance which was significantly lesser than 50 % i.e. minimum threshold to test for common method variance as per Harman’s one factor test (Podsakoff *et al.* 2012), thereby indicating that common method variance is not a potential threat for the current study.

4.2 Hypotheses testing

The means, standard deviations, correlation coefficients and inter-correlations among all the variables under study are shown in Table 1. Additionally authors have tested measurement model with the help of confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS 20 to ensure the goodness of fit across the variables of present study. The proposed four-factor model comprising Empowering leadership, psychological safety, leader member exchange and constructive voice was found to be fit in the study according to statistical analysis carried out by the authors yielding the following results: ($\chi^2=570.021$, $df=390$, $pb.01$; $RMSEA=.041$; $GFI=.981$; $AGFI=.958$; $CFI=.981$; $TLI=.979$), and all the estimated parameters were statistically significant ($pb.05$).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

			2	3
	Mean	SD	1	4
Empowering				
Leadership	3.64	0.86	1	

Psychological safety	3.97	0.80	.259**	1		
LMX	3.81	0.83	.295**	.270**	1	
Constructive voice	3.60	1.06	.305**	.214**	.306**	1

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

Source: Author's

Compilation

Results indicated that each item saturated in its corresponding scale. However, the two factor model and single-factor model did not show such a good fit. Results showed that a single-factor model did not explain our data as well as the predicted model (four factors), in which our variables were considered different constructs. All the goodness of fit indices are satisfactory for the four-factor model, whereas the single factor model shows a poor fit to data. Moreover, the fit indices indicated significant differences between the three tested models. In sum, the four-factor model was chosen as the best model. Results for alternative models have been summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Results of Alternative models

	CMIN	DF	CMIN/d.f	GFI	AGFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
1 factor	666.576	432	1.543	0.888	0.684	0.983	0.979	0.072
2 Factor	712.355	394	1.808	0.871	0.846	0.976	0.974	0.051
4 factor	570.021	390	1.462	0.981	0.958	0.981	0.979	0.041

*2 factors (employee voice and psychological safety) and (empowering leadership and LMX)]

***4 factors (empowering leadership, constructive voice, psychological safety, LMX)

The correlation coefficients of all the variables under study displayed in Table 1 above indicate a positive association between empowering leadership style and constructive voice ($r = .305, p < .01$), providing support for hypothesis 1. The relationship between empowering leadership and psychological safety was found to be significantly positive ($r = .259, p < .01$) providing support for hypothesis 2. Also, the relationship between empowering leadership and leader member exchange was associated thereby ($r = .295, p < .01$) providing support for hypothesis 3.

5.4 Sequential multiple mediation analyses

In order to test the hypothesis whether psychological safety and leader member exchange sequentially mediate the impact of empowering leadership on constructive voice, the authors performed a sequential mediation analyses (Model 6 as described in PROCESS) with bootstrap methods (Hayes 2013) as displayed in Table 3. Figure 2 describes all the paths for the full process model and the associated coefficients. The direct effect of empowering leadership style on constructive voice was found to be significant ($\beta = .3034, p < .05$) supporting hypothesis 1. Further, the specific indirect effect through psychological safety was non-significant ($\beta = .21$; CI = .01 and .49); but specific indirect effect through leader member exchange only was significant ($\beta = .25$; CI = .81 and .19) indicating that hypothesis 5 is supported and hypothesis 4 is not supported. However, while

testing for sequential multiple mediation, the specific indirect effect of empowering leadership on constructive voice through both psychological safety and LMX was found to be significant with point estimate of .33 and a 95 % confidence interval .43 and .27, providing full support for hypothesis 6. Thus, the proposition that empowering leadership is a unique aspect that might lead to an individual's sense of psychological safety, which in turn might increase the level of close association between leader and employee in terms of quality LMX, and the quality exchanges between supervisor and employee might facilitate an employee to constructive voice was supported fully by the statistical analysis carried out by the authors. Hence, the study shreds clear evidence that employee psychological safety and the quality relation between employee and supervisor (LMX) sequentially mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and constructive voice.

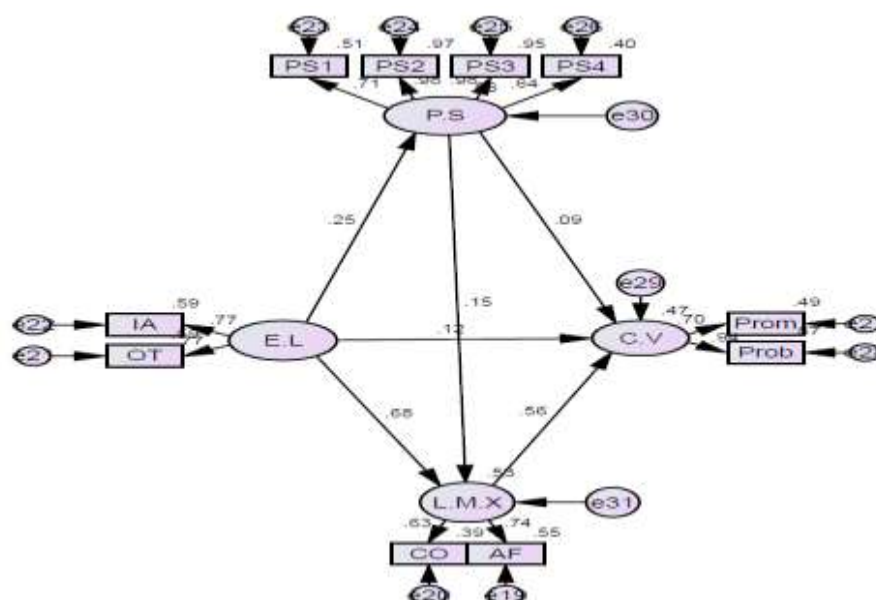


Figure 2: Structural Model

V. DISCUSSIONS

The present study aims to understand employee constructive voice - a premise that has attracted great attention and gained much significance in recent times, and its important precursors at different levels. From the view point of social exchange relationships (Blau 1964), the authors have conceptualized a model that explores the effect of employee psychological safety and quality relationship between supervisor and employee i.e. LMX as two underlying mediating mechanisms establishing the relationships between empowering leadership and employee constructive voice behavior. The results of the study indicated the significant influence of empowering leadership (independent variable) on constructive voice (dependent variable) in respect to Indian service organizations. This lies in agreement with the study of Gao *et al.* (2012) who also proposed the positive impact of empowering leaders on employee's constructive voice behaviour. The reasons for the positive impact can be attributed to the fact that

Table 3: Path analysis and Process Results

Model 6						
Y = CV						
X = EL						
M1 = PS						
M2 = LMX						
Sample size: 311						
Outcome: PS						
Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.21	0.46	0.59	14.38	1.00	0.031	0.001
Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
	3.39	0.15	21.99	0.000	3.08	3.69
	0.16	0.04	3.85	1.000	0.77	0.24
Outcome: SMLX						
Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.52	0.27	0.52	57.85	0.000	308.00	0.000
Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
	1.56	0.23	6.69	0.00	1.10	2.17
	0.21	0.05	3.91	1.00	0.10	0.32
	3544	0.39	8.94	0.000	0.28	0.43
Outcome: SCV						
Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.54	0.29	0.50	41.23	3.00	307.00	0.000
Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
	1.42	0.24	5.85	0.00	0.94	1.90
	0.13	0.05	2.49	0.01	0.28	0.24
	0.37	0.05	6.58	0.00	0.26	0.48
	0.14	0.04	3.21	0.00	0.54	0.23
Total effect of X on Y						
	0.30	0.04	7.35	0.00	0.22	0.38
Direct effect of X on Y						
	0.14	0.04	3.21	0.00	0.54	0.22
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y						
			effect	se	LLCI	ULCI

Total					0.16	0.28	0.11	0.22
EL	->	PS	->	CV	0.21	0.11	0.01	0.49
EL	->	PS	->	LMX	0.12	0.54	0.43	0.27
EL	->	SMLX	->	CV	0.13	0.27	0.81	0.19

***Number of bootstrap samples: 1000, Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output: 95**

empowering leaders promote an easy exchange of ideas opinions and suggestions. The conduct of the empowering leaders has also been found to positively affect psychological safety which stands in consistency with (Cheong *et al.*, 2016) this mainly occurs because empowering leaders creates such an environment which employees find less threatening at workplace. With respect to results of the study positive association observed between empowering leadership and high quality LMX. An empowering leader promotes participative decision making and grants sufficient autonomy to the employee at workplace. The progression to the partnership kind of relationship between the leader and the follower lays down a strong foundation for the quality exchanges.

The authors have further proposed and empirically investigated the mediating effect of employee psychological safety (*Empowering leadership - Psychological safety - Constructive voice*), the quality LMX (*Empowering leadership – LMX - Constructive voice*) and sequential mediating (*Empowering leadership - Psychological safety – LMX-Constructive voice*) as important mediating mechanisms explaining these relationships. To our amazement, the results of the study indicated that psychological safety was not found to be a significant mediator between empowering leadership and constructive voice which stands contradictory to the findings of (Zhang *et al.*, 2010). However, LMX was found to significantly mediate the proposed relationship. Past researchers have asserted that empowering leadership nurtures high quality exchanges between the leader and the follower which provides justification for the positive influence of empowering leadership on LMX. There also exists sufficient empirical evidence for the positive impact of employee voice (Botero and Dyne, 2009) which extends support to the proposed mediating mechanism. We argue that the possible explanation as to why psychological safety is not functioning as mediating role is because even though empowering leaders is creating psychologically safe environment but yet employees are not feeling that comfort in raising voice unless they mutually share high quality exchange relationships which in turn influences follower's positive attitude i.e. employee constructive voice behavior. This assumes huge importance for Indian service organizations the implications for which have been discussed in the next section.

VI. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Theoretical implications

Present study provides exceptional contributions to prevailing literature on empowering leadership, psychological safety, Leader member exchange, constructive voice in following ways: First, a dearth of existing framework establishing the connection between the variables under study influenced the researchers to theoretically establish and empirically examine a theoretical model that interconnected empowering leadership with psychological safety, Leader member exchange to deal with employee attitude at work. This study adds further the concept of EL to understand its impact on employee voice behavior. Results revealed that our study empirically confirmed for the first time that empowering leadership with employee psychological factors i.e. employee

psychological safety, predisposed employee perception psychologically safe and this perception in turn, influenced the positive leader follower relationship i.e. LMX, which in turn, enhanced their attitude towards work in terms offering constructive voice.

Second, drawing on the social exchange theory, the authors found that quality leader member exchange was a solid factor that mediated the empowering leadership-constructive voice relationship significantly and psychological safety was a factor that may enhance quality relationship between leader and follower in the organization. Furthermore present study adds to existing literature on empowering leadership, psychological safety, LMX and Constructive voice by exploring and reporting PS and LMX together as an important underlying mechanism influencing empowering leadership-constructive voice relationship.

6.2 Managerial implications

The theoretical model proposed and its empirical findings of this study provide important implications for managers of Indian service-sector organizations. For many decades, employee voice is unheard at workplace and subject of significant focus for researchers. Vital role of employee inputs organizational success is witnessing in present competitive market. In a scenario like this, it becomes important for organizations to understand the influence of empowering leadership style on employee constructive voice behavior. Our study seeks to attract the attention of top management to instill empowering leadership behavior in their leaders by imparting training and counselling to develop an organizational culture such that employees are encouraged to demonstrate positive attitudes. This might help organizations to deal with employee positive attitude at today's competitive workplaces.

Managers working in Indian service-sector need to confront highly dynamic and competitive work environment for which efficient and enthusiastic workforce is required. Human resource is considered as the most tactical resource in organizations. Managers have to influence employees psychologically to unearth their hidden creativity and talent, which would be beneficial for the overall growth of the firm. Past studies showed that people analyze the potential advantages and expenses before taking part in voice behavior (Detert and Burris, 2007; Morrison and Rothman, 2009), which often caused loss of valuable ideas. However, if the leader is transparent enough in sharing relevant information, has an approaching nature towards the voice of his followers and is open to feedbacks, then it helps in shaping employees' psychological aspects (Vogelgesang, 2008) as well makes them realize the benefits of voice behavior. In this regard, our findings suggest that managers of service organizations need to be well trained and motivated so that they can bring out the positive psychology within the employees to keep them free from any risk and threat, which may cause hesitation in constructive voicing.

Our study evidenced LMX as mediating mechanism between empowering leadership and constructive voice. In fact this finding offers an important implication for managers and organizations, if managers follow empowering leadership style which creates quality relationship with followers which in turn creates more trust and comfort between manager and employee. Organizations need to have well-defined action plans for retaining proactive employees, focusing on identifying the policies which maximize individual initiatives and modifying those which tend to discourage employees' participation (Crant, 2000). These plans can initially comprise of the organizational reward system and incentive system. Parker *et al.*, (2010) suggested that contextual variations in factors like work design or interpersonal climate can influence employees' motivational status which in turn, can stimulate or inhibit their proactive processes.

VII. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

We acknowledge certain limitations for the study. Self-reporting data has the major limitation of the study, In future studies, researchers may cross check the inputs provided by employees collecting data from supervisors as well (Dyadic studies). The cross-sectional research design did not permit us to regulate causality orders among the variables, future researchers may collect the data from different time points, and further experimental study may also be beneficial to derive valid results. Third, the results of the study cannot be generalized because of the small sample size of employees working in Indian service organizations. Despite these limitations, the study has opened new avenues for further research: this study investigated only employee constructive voice intentions, so apart from analyzing only the such positive intentions, researchers may explore the reasons behind why employee will raise voice and what are the factors that inhibits employees from being silent. Finally, researchers can as well consider different geographical regions for study and compare the results.

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