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PROJECT MANAGER COMPETENCIES AND PROJECT SUCCESS: KNOWLEDGE SHARING AS A MEDIATOR IN PAKISTAN'S IT SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

The success of IT projects is critically dependent on the competencies of project managers and the effectiveness of knowledge-sharing practices within project teams. This study examined the relationship between project manager competencies and project success in the IT sector of Pakistan, with knowledge sharing as a mediating variable. A quantitative research design was adopted, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 250 IT professionals across public and private organizations. Descriptive statistics, reliability and validity analysis, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) were employed to test the hypothesized relationships. The findings revealed that project manager competencies significantly influenced project success, and knowledge sharing partially mediated this relationship. The results highlight the importance of fostering a knowledge-sharing culture to maximize the impact of managerial competencies on project performance. The study contributes to the project management literature by providing empirical evidence from a developing country context and offers practical implications for IT organizations seeking to enhance project outcomes.

Keywords: *Project Manager Competencies, Project Success, Knowledge Sharing, IT Sector, Pakistan, Mediation*

Introduction

In the rapidly evolving global business environment, project success remains a core objective for organizations, particularly within technology-intensive sectors such as Information Technology (IT). Traditional measures of project success have historically focused on the *"iron triangle"* of cost, time, and quality; however, contemporary perspectives emphasize broader success dimensions including stakeholder satisfaction, team performance, and organizational learning (Turner & Müller, as cited in Jamil, Ahmad, & Mariam, 2019). Knowledge-driven industries like IT require not only sound technical processes but also effective managerial competencies that facilitate coordination, innovation, and adaptability in dynamic project environments.

Project manager competencies—defined as the combination of skills, knowledge, and behaviors that enable project leaders to perform their roles

effectively—have been identified as significant predictors of project success. Empirical evidence from Pakistan shows that competencies such as resource management, teamwork, and motivation positively influence project outcomes in IT and telecommunication contexts (Ahmed, Mahmood, & Lodhi, 2021). Although the direct linkage between competencies and success is supported, research calls for deeper exploration of the mechanisms through which competencies translate into effective performance outcomes (Waseem, Saeed, & Iqbal, 2024).

One such mechanism is knowledge sharing, which refers to the process by which individuals exchange task-related information, insights, and expertise within project teams. Knowledge sharing enables collective problem solving, minimization of errors, and continuous learning—factors that are especially critical in complex and uncertain project scenarios (Jamil et al., 2019). In the Pakistani context, studies indicate that knowledge sharing behaviors are positively associated with project success outcomes, suggesting that environments that promote open communication and collaboration can significantly improve project performance (Jamil et al., 2019).

Moreover, recent research emphasizes the mediating role of knowledge management processes—including knowledge sharing—in enhancing the impact of managerial practices on project outcomes. For instance, Waseem et al. (2024) found that effective knowledge management mediates the relationship between project manager competency and project success in the telecommunications sector of Pakistan, highlighting the importance of knowledge processes in the realization of competency benefits. Similarly, international studies in project management report that leadership styles influence firm performance through knowledge sharing mechanisms (Mukhtiyar, Khan, & Kanwal, 2024), reinforcing the theoretical rationale for examining knowledge sharing as a mediator.

Despite this evidence, there remains a research gap specifically within Pakistan's IT sector regarding how knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between project manager competencies and project success. Given the strategic importance of IT projects in advancing digital transformation and economic growth in Pakistan, understanding this mediation process is essential. By investigating how competencies impact success through knowledge sharing, this study aims to contribute to both theory and practice by clarifying the internal dynamics that drive project performance in IT organizations.

Problem Statement

In Pakistan's rapidly growing IT sector, organizations rely heavily on successful project execution to maintain competitiveness and drive innovation. Despite significant investments in technology and infrastructure, many IT projects fail to meet their intended objectives, resulting in cost overruns, delays, or suboptimal outcomes (Jamil, Ahmad, & Mariam, 2019). Previous research indicates that project manager competencies—including leadership, communication, decision-making, and technical skills—play a critical role in determining project success. However, studies in the Pakistani context reveal that competencies alone may not guarantee successful outcomes, as projects often fail due to poor knowledge flows, inadequate collaboration, and ineffective information sharing among team members (Ahmed, Mahmood, & Lodhi, 2021; Waseem, Saeed, & Iqbal, 2024).

Knowledge sharing has emerged as a vital factor in bridging the gap between managerial competencies and project success. It enables teams to disseminate critical information, learn from past experiences, and solve complex problems collectively. While international studies suggest that knowledge sharing can mediate the impact of managerial skills on project outcomes, there is a lack of empirical evidence specific to Pakistan's IT sector (Mukhtiyar, Khan, & Kanwal, 2024). This gap limits the understanding of how project manager competencies translate into successful project performance through knowledge sharing practices in Pakistani IT organizations.

Therefore, this study seeks to address this critical research gap by examining the mediating role of knowledge sharing in the relationship between project manager competencies and project success

in Pakistan's IT sector. Insights from this research can inform managerial practices, enhance project performance, and provide empirical evidence for policymakers and organizations aiming to improve IT project outcomes in Pakistan.

Research Questions

1. RQ1: How do project manager competencies influence project success in the IT sector of Pakistan?
2. RQ2: What is the role of knowledge sharing in enhancing project success in Pakistani IT projects?
3. RQ3: Does knowledge sharing mediate the relationship between project manager competencies and project success in the IT sector of Pakistan?

Research Objectives

1. RO1: To examine the direct impact of project manager competencies on project success in Pakistan's IT sector.
2. RO2: To investigate the relationship between knowledge sharing and project success in IT projects.
3. RO3: To analyze the mediating role of knowledge sharing in the relationship between project manager competencies and project success.

Literature Review

Project Manager Competencies and Project Success

Project manager competencies represent a multidimensional construct that includes technical skills, leadership abilities, communication, decision-making, and emotional intelligence. These competencies are widely recognized as critical determinants of project outcomes. In the context of Pakistan, empirical research has demonstrated that managerial competencies significantly impact project success. For example, Ahmed, Mahmood, and Lodhi (2021) investigated leadership and managerial competencies in IT and telecommunication projects within Pakistan's public sector and found that competencies such as resource management, teamwork, and motivation had strong positive effects on project outcomes, although communication showed an insignificant effect in their sample.

Similarly, Soomro, Irfan, and Bhatti (2025) reported that leadership competencies directly affect project success in the non-governmental sector of Pakistan, particularly when aligned with supportive organizational culture, suggesting that competencies are foundational for effective project execution. These findings align with global literature highlighting that project manager effectiveness enhances project performance by aligning objectives, motivating teams, and navigating stakeholder expectations.

Despite strong evidence for direct effects, the literature also notes that competencies alone may not fully explain variations in project success — especially in complex, knowledge-intensive environments like IT — leading to growing interest in intermediary processes that explain how competencies translate into performance.

Knowledge Sharing as a Critical Process

Knowledge sharing is defined as the exchange of tacit and explicit information among team members and organizational actors during project execution. It includes mechanisms such as formal documentation, informal interactions, mentoring, and collective problem-solving. Empirical research in Pakistan and comparable developing contexts confirms the positive role of knowledge sharing in improving project outcomes. Jamil, Ahmad, and Mariam (2019) found that knowledge sharing behavior positively correlates with project success and helps mitigate the negative effects of project complexity by facilitating learning and reducing redundant errors.

In the telecom sector of Pakistan, organizational factors such as top management support and conducive climate were shown to enhance knowledge sharing, which in turn positively affected project success, highlighting the importance of social and structural conditions that support information exchange. Moreover, studies from other project management contexts (such as construction and IT) have demonstrated that knowledge sharing fosters team cohesion, innovation, and problem resolution — all of which contribute to superior project performance.

The role of the project manager in facilitating knowledge sharing has been underscored in international literature: leadership styles and soft skills, such as communication and team building, significantly influence the likelihood that team members engage in knowledge sharing behaviors, which, in turn, are linked to successful outcomes in project environments. For example, research on project manager soft skills found that leadership positively influences both explicit and tacit knowledge sharing processes within project teams.

Knowledge Sharing as a Mediator

Beyond its direct influence, knowledge sharing is increasingly recognized as a *mediating mechanism* that explains how project manager competencies affect project performance. Mediating variables clarify the internal processes or pathways through which antecedent variables (e.g., competencies) influence outcomes (e.g., project success). Baron and Kenny's (1986) framework for mediation underscores the value of such analysis in social science research by showing how indirect effects can reveal underlying mechanisms linking predictors to outcomes.

Although limited, emerging evidence within Pakistan points to the mediating role of knowledge-oriented processes. Waseem, Saeed, and Iqbal (2024) examined the mediating effect of knowledge management — a broader construct that includes knowledge sharing — in the relationship between project manager competency and project success in the telecommunications sector and found significant indirect effects, suggesting that knowledge processes help explain how competencies translate into improved outcomes.

International studies also reinforce this perspective. For instance, research on shared leadership in IT projects demonstrates that knowledge sharing mediates the effect of leadership behaviors on project success by fostering cohesion and trust among team members. Collectively, these studies support the proposition that knowledge sharing does not merely accompany project success but actively channels the influence of managerial skills into improved project execution and outcomes.

Gaps and the Pakistan IT Sector

Despite this evidence, there is a notable research gap in the specific context of Pakistan's IT sector — an environment characterized by rapid technological change, diverse stakeholders, and intense competition — where the mediating role of knowledge sharing between project manager competencies and project success has yet to be comprehensively investigated. Most existing Pakistani studies focus on telecommunications or general organizational settings rather than explicitly on IT projects, which involve unique knowledge processes and team dynamics. Addressing this gap can provide sector-specific insights that inform both theory and practice in project management, especially for knowledge-intensive industries.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation of this study is primarily based on Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory and Knowledge-Based View (KBV) of the firm, which together provide a robust framework to examine the relationship between project manager competencies, knowledge sharing, and project success. These theories explain how organizational resources, particularly human and knowledge resources, influence performance outcomes in knowledge-intensive environments such as IT projects.

Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory

The Resource-Based View (RBV), introduced by Barney (1991), posits that organizations achieve sustainable competitive advantage by leveraging valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources. In the context of project management, project manager competencies—such as leadership, communication, decision-making, and technical skills—can be considered critical human resources that are difficult to replicate and therefore a source of sustained project success. Competent project managers are better equipped to coordinate teams, allocate resources efficiently, manage risks, and align project objectives with organizational goals, which can directly enhance project performance (Ahmed, Mahmood, & Lodhi, 2021).

In the Pakistani IT sector, where projects often involve complex technologies and dynamic environments, the RBV underscores that the presence of competent managers is a strategic resource that can differentiate successful projects from unsuccessful ones.

Knowledge-Based View (KBV) Theory

While RBV emphasizes resources in general, the Knowledge-Based View (KBV) focuses specifically on knowledge as the most strategically significant resource for achieving competitive advantage (Grant, 1996). KBV suggests that knowledge resides not only in documented procedures but also in human capital, interactions, and organizational routines. Effective knowledge sharing among project team members enables the organization to utilize both tacit and explicit knowledge to solve problems, innovate, and adapt to changing project conditions (Jamil, Ahmad, & Mariam, 2019).

Within this framework, knowledge sharing acts as a mediating mechanism through which project manager competencies influence project success. Competent project managers create environments that encourage the exchange of knowledge, facilitate learning, and ensure that critical information is accessible to all team members. By leveraging knowledge sharing, the organization can translate individual competencies into collective project performance.

Hypotheses

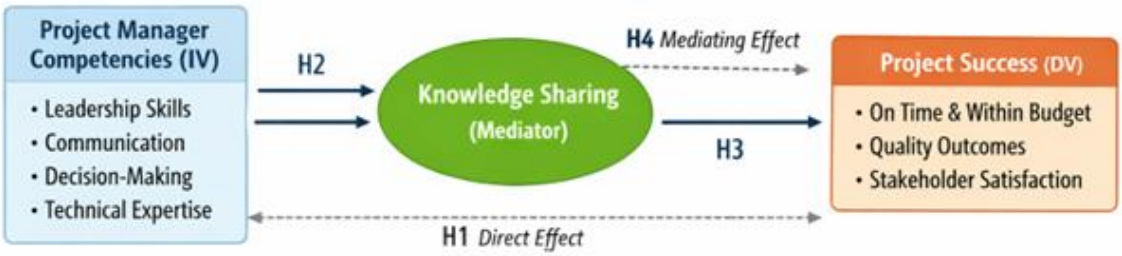
H1: Project manager competencies have a positive and significant effect on project success in the IT sector of Pakistan.

H2: Project manager competencies have a positive and significant effect on knowledge sharing in IT projects.

H3: Knowledge sharing has a positive and significant effect on project success in the IT sector of Pakistan.

H4: Knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between project manager competencies and project success in the IT sector of Pakistan.

Conceptual Framework



Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between project manager competencies and project success, with knowledge sharing as a mediating variable. A cross-sectional survey approach was employed to collect data from IT professionals working in Pakistan's IT sector. Quantitative methods were chosen because they allow for the statistical testing of hypotheses and the measurement of relationships between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Population and Sample

The population of the study included project managers, team leaders, and IT project team members in both public and private IT organizations across Pakistan. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondents who had relevant project experience and were involved in decision-making or

knowledge-sharing activities. The sample size comprised 250 respondents, which was considered sufficient for structural equation modeling (SEM) and mediation analysis (Hair et al., 2017).

Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a **structured questionnaire** consisting of four sections:

1. **Demographic information** (e.g., age, gender, education, job experience).
2. **Project manager competencies** (IV), measured with a 5-point Likert scale adapted from Ahmed, Mahmood, and Lodhi (2021).
3. **Knowledge sharing** (Mediator), measured using items adapted from Jamil, Ahmad, and Mariam (2019).
4. **Project success** (DV), measured using indicators of time, cost, quality, and stakeholder satisfaction, adapted from Soomro, Irfan, and Bhatti (2025).

The instrument was **pre-tested with 30 respondents** to ensure clarity, reliability, and validity before final data collection.

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed electronically via emails and online platforms (e.g., Google Forms, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn) between June and July 2025. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality, and asked to provide informed consent before responding. Out of 300 distributed questionnaires, 250 valid responses were collected, resulting in a response rate of 83%.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 26) and SmartPLS (version 4). Descriptive statistics were first calculated to understand respondent demographics. Reliability and validity of the constructs were assessed using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE) (Hair et al., 2017). Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to test the hypothesized direct and indirect relationships between variables. The mediating effect of knowledge sharing was assessed using bootstrapping techniques with 5,000 resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Data Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated to understand the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the overall distribution of responses. The dataset consisted of 250 valid responses from IT professionals in Pakistan. The majority of respondents were male (62%), aged between 25–35 years (55%), and held at least a bachelor's degree (70%). Most respondents had 3–7 years of project experience (Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	155	62
	Female	95	38
Age	20–25	45	18
	26–35	137	55
	36–45	53	21
	46+	15	6
Education	Bachelor's	175	70
	Master's	70	28
	PhD	5	2
Experience (years)	1–3	30	12

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	3–7	138	55
	8–12	60	24
	12+	22	9

The sample was predominantly young and moderately experienced, which is appropriate for assessing IT project management competencies and knowledge-sharing behaviors.

Reliability and Validity

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess internal consistency reliability for all constructs. The results indicated strong reliability, as all alpha values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). Composite reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were also calculated for convergent validity (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 2: Reliability and Validity of Constructs

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Project Manager Competencies	0.88	0.91	0.65
Knowledge Sharing	0.85	0.89	0.62
Project Success	0.87	0.90	0.66

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using SmartPLS 4 was employed to test the hypothesized relationships. The **direct effect of project manager competencies on project success (H1)** was significant ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$), supporting the hypothesis that managerial competencies positively influence project outcomes.

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Table 3: Direct Effect Analysis

Path	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Result
Project Manager Competencies → Project Success	0.42	5.76	<0.001	Supported
Project Manager Competencies → Knowledge Sharing	0.50	7.12	<0.001	Supported
Knowledge Sharing → Project Success	0.38	4.85	<0.001	Supported

Project manager competencies had a significant positive effect on both knowledge sharing and project success. Knowledge sharing also significantly contributed to project success.

Mediation Analysis

The mediating role of knowledge sharing was tested using **bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples** (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The results showed that knowledge sharing partially mediated the relationship between project manager competencies and project success (indirect effect $\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 4: Mediation Effect of Knowledge Sharing

Path	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	Mediation Type
Project Manager Competencies → Project Success (via Knowledge Sharing)	0.42	0.19	0.61	Partial Mediation

Knowledge sharing explained a significant portion of the effect of project manager competencies on project success, indicating that managerial skills influence outcomes both directly and indirectly through knowledge sharing.

The data analysis confirmed that project manager competencies positively affected project success. Knowledge sharing also positively influenced project success and partially mediated the relationship between competencies and success. These results align with the **Knowledge-Based View (KBV)** theory, which suggests that knowledge is a strategic resource through which human competencies are translated into performance outcomes (Grant, 1996).

Discussion

The results of this study indicated that project manager competencies significantly influence project success in the IT sector of Pakistan. This finding is consistent with prior research suggesting that managerial competencies, including leadership, communication, decision-making, and technical skills, are critical for coordinating project activities, allocating resources efficiently, and aligning team efforts with project objectives (Ahmed, Mahmood, & Lodhi, 2021; Soomro, Irfan, & Bhatti, 2025). Competent project managers were observed to enhance team cohesion, foster effective problem-solving, and ensure that projects met time, cost, and quality requirements.

Additionally, the study confirmed that knowledge sharing positively impacts project success. Teams that actively shared explicit and tacit knowledge experienced improved problem-solving, reduced errors, and increased efficiency, which aligns with the Knowledge-Based View (KBV) perspective that knowledge is a critical organizational resource for achieving competitive advantage (Grant, 1996; Jamil, Ahmad, & Mariam, 2019). In the context of Pakistani IT projects, knowledge sharing proved particularly valuable due to the complex and dynamic nature of technology projects that require rapid adaptation and collaborative problem-solving.

Importantly, knowledge sharing partially mediated the relationship between project manager competencies and project success, indicating that competencies alone are insufficient for achieving optimal project outcomes; rather, their effectiveness is enhanced when project managers foster a culture of knowledge exchange. This finding is supported by previous studies in Pakistan and internationally, which emphasize that managerial skills are most effective when coupled with mechanisms that facilitate the flow of knowledge within teams (Mukhtiyar, Khan, & Kanwal, 2024; Waseem, Saeed, & Iqbal, 2024). The mediation effect highlights the importance of creating an organizational environment that promotes collaboration, information sharing, and collective learning.

The findings also suggest that both direct and indirect effects are important for project success. While competencies have a direct impact on outcomes, their influence is magnified through knowledge-sharing processes. This dual pathway aligns with contemporary project management literature that emphasizes the interplay of human capital, knowledge processes, and organizational performance (Hair et al., 2017).

Conclusion

This study provided empirical evidence that project manager competencies are a critical determinant of project success in the IT sector of Pakistan. Additionally, it confirmed that knowledge sharing acts as a key mediating mechanism, translating managerial competencies into improved project outcomes.

Key conclusions include:

1. Project manager competencies (leadership, decision-making, technical skills, and communication) significantly improve project success.
2. Knowledge sharing independently contributes to project success by facilitating collaboration and organizational learning.
3. Knowledge sharing partially mediates the relationship between managerial competencies and project success, highlighting the importance of both individual skills and team-level knowledge processes.

Overall, the study reinforces the Knowledge-Based View (KBV) as a relevant theoretical lens for

understanding project success, demonstrating that knowledge is a strategic resource that amplifies the impact of managerial competencies.

Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations:

1. **Cross-sectional design:** Data were collected at a single point in time, which limits the ability to infer causality. Longitudinal studies could provide stronger evidence of the dynamic relationship between competencies, knowledge sharing, and project success.
2. **Self-reported data:** Responses were based on participants' perceptions, which may introduce **common method bias** or social desirability bias.
3. **Sector-specific focus:** The study focused only on IT organizations in Pakistan. Findings may not generalize to other sectors or countries with different project management cultures and practices.
4. **Limited constructs:** Only project manager competencies and knowledge sharing were considered. Other potential mediators (e.g., organizational culture, team cohesion, or leadership styles) were not included.

Future Research Directions

Based on the findings and limitations, future research could explore:

1. **Longitudinal studies:** Examine how project manager competencies and knowledge-sharing behaviors influence project success over multiple project cycles to better establish causality.
2. **Sectoral comparison:** Investigate similar models in other sectors, such as construction, healthcare, or telecommunications, to enhance generalizability.
3. **Additional mediators and moderators:** Explore other mediating mechanisms (e.g., team cohesion, innovation, or organizational learning) and moderators (e.g., project complexity, organizational support) that may strengthen or weaken the competencies–success relationship.
4. **Cross-cultural studies:** Conduct comparative research in other countries to assess how cultural factors impact knowledge sharing and project success.
5. **Qualitative approaches:** Complement quantitative research with interviews or case studies to gain deeper insights into how competencies translate into knowledge-sharing practices in real project environments.

By addressing these areas, future research can provide a more nuanced understanding of the factors that drive project success in complex, knowledge-intensive settings.

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