

# LEADERS MAKES THE PROJECT GO: AN INCLUSIVE FRAMEWORK OF SHARED LEADERSHIP, INTERNAL MARKETING, INTERNAL COMMUNICATION, AND THRIVING

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This study intends to propose and test an inclusive framework of shared leadership, internal marketing, internal communication, thriving, and project success.

**Design/Methodology:** Using an online survey tool, the study collected time-lagged data from 256 employees of four insurance companies. The subjects were selected using a convenience sampling technique. The theorized relations were examined using structural equation modeling in AMOS.

**Findings:** All the theorized relationships were supported except the direct effects of internal communication and project success. In addition, thriving and project success were not found to be significant, and the mediation of thriving between shared leadership and project success was not supported. When leadership is shared among group members, it is more likely that projects will be successful.

**Originality:** The study contributes supplementary insights to project management and leadership literature. Scholars in this domain will benefit from these findings and develop better models for projects.

**Keywords:** *Internal marketing, internal communication, project success, shared leadership, thriving*

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## INTRODUCTION

Despite a bulk of investigations on project management, many studies in recent years have reported a high rate of project failure (Daniels & Whitney, 2013; Garizy, Neumeier & Radszuwill, 2018). This ratio of failure is significantly greater in developing nations (Gazder & Khan, 2018). Project failures cost millions per annum (\$13.7 million per annum in the Asia Pacific), due to which the region lags behind counterparts in other parts of the world (IDM Magazine, n.d.). A large number of project failures indicate a lack of project management. Research suggests that project failure shuts down employment opportunities and causes loss of revenue and withdrawal of empowerment (specifically for the local community) in addition to setbacks for suppliers and service providers, procurement forfeitures of contractors and loss of investment (Eja & Ramegowda, 2019). Many researchers (such as Chen & Wang, 2012; Imam & Zaheer, 2021; Imam, 2021) attribute such failure to the oversight of the human element in project management.

Research (e.g., Clarke, 2012; Chen, Wang & Yang, 2012; Love, 2021) has highlighted the critical role of leadership in achieving project outcomes. In addition to its strategic relevance, leadership is a contributing factor in project-based organizations. It is argued that project success depends on an appropriate leadership style (Castellano, 2021; Huang & Yang, 2011; Jiang, 2014; Lee, 2021). In an assessment of the current studies on the effect of leadership on project outcomes (Ali, 2021; Bartol & Lorinkova, 2021; Imam & Zaheer, 2021; Imam, 2021; Lorinkova, 2021), several scholars (for example, Klasmeie & Rowold, 2022; Liang & van Knippenberg, 2021; Peng & Wang, 2022) have stressed the usefulness of shared leadership. Shared leadership denotes leadership whereby responsibilities and leadership roles are shared between team members (Conger & Pearce, 2003). Functional or technical team leaders are selected for a project and then tasked to organize project teams and assign roles. To transform them into effective leaders, team leads are guided and coached on how to accomplish the project work. Working as team, such employees develop skills over a period of time.

Such an ongoing process of employee development relates significantly to the company's internal marketing effort (Foreman & Money, 1995). With reference to internal marketing, Berry (1981) describes the approach to consist of viewing team members as internal customers and considering their work as internal products that fulfill organizational objectives and meet employee needs. Companies constantly realize employees' needs and provide jobs that fulfill their needs. Essentially, this mindset views employees as customers and tailors products (jobs) to meet human requirements (Berry & Zeithaml, 1991; Ozuem et al., 2018). In a manner, internal marketing is about educating employees to behave in more client and service-oriented ways (Grönroos, 1994). Hwang & Chi (2005) observe that leadership can be considered as an antecedent of internal marketing.

Shared leadership involves the circulation of overt and unstated information throughout the company (Lings & Greenley, 2005). This is about the communication of the organizational vision to all employees. Insofar as internal marketing is considered, internal communication is significant. Ali et al., (2021) suggest that internal communication plays a key role in internal marketing. It is an interdisciplinary function that integrates components of marketing, communication, and human resources management (Sriramesh & Veri, 2012). Internal communication is about believing in your team members, communicating project objectives, asking for members' opinions or suggestions, and including them in decision-making.

Furthermore, shared leadership, internal marketing and internal communication pertain to communicating the organization's vision and providing opportunities to the team members to learn learning new things, adding positive energy, and turning the project into a success. In a learning environment, team members develop a mindset of dynamism and learning. Such a "psychological state [comprises] the combined experience of liveliness and learning is termed as a thriving" (Spreitzer & Sutcliffe, 2007). Learning may be thought of as building new competencies while liveliness refers to a sensation of vigor. When members are given the chance to lead others, they tend to become more enthusiastic, and thus more vital. People are enthused by shared leadership since they are able to learn new things on a regular basis (Liu et al., 2014).

Despite the significant linkage among shared leadership, internal marketing, internal communication and thriving, the proposed relationship has been overlooked in the extant body of knowledge. To address the aforementioned gap, we developed a comprehensive model including shared leadership, internal marketing, internal communication, thriving and project success. Specifically, it proposes that shared leadership positively influence project success via the mediating mechanism of internal marketing, internal communication and thriving.

## **THEORY AND HYPOTHESES**

### *Social Exchange Theory*

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964, Homans, 1958; Emerson, 1962; 1972) has been one of the key theoretical viewpoints in social psychology. Social exchange denotes "voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others". Social exchange is about the give-and-take relationship in which one person shares resources with another (Gergen, 1969). It is the exchange of material and immaterial resources between parties that are dependent on one another with the intention of mutual benefit (Homans, 1958). We argue that social exchange occurs in projects in the form of shared leadership, internal marketing, internal communication, and thriving. In shared leadership, the leader shares resources with team members. The team members respond with their expertise and talents in the most effective way possible to the project which benefits all parties. Internal marketing focuses on the development of productive connections between

managers and employees, which is based on the social exchange idea. Shared leadership add to the company's internal marketing which is about attracting, developing, and maintaining competent people by providing products (job) that meet their requirements. When leadership is shared with team members, internal marketing might be effective in that employees will stay with the organization. Staying with organization is the reciprocated response of employees to the leadership-sharing initiative of organization.

Shared leadership and internal communication are also exemplified by social exchange theory in which leaders share a vision of the company with team members, consult them before making any decisions and appreciate their good performance. Internal communication creates understanding by passing on knowledge to other members. Internal communications' knowledge-sharing function is critical, as many academics argue that the ability to effectively exchange knowledge inside is critical for sustaining a competitive advantage make a project success. (Doz, 2020; Spender, 1996; Zander, 1993). Shared leadership add to the company's internal communication, which is about information sharing, removing conflicts, and keeping people update with the organization's product and procedures by communicating all the time and making employee satisfied with the organization which result in better project outcome. Moreover, due to shared leadership function, team members feel vital and alive. They continuously learn and improve their abilities. The proposed relationships are further explained in the next section.

#### *Shared Leadership and Project Success*

Shared leadership (SL) is defined as "a simultaneous, ongoing, collective decision-making process within a team characterized by serial emergence' of official as well as unofficial leaders" (Pearce, 2004). SL is a method of distributing and rotating leadership among project participants based on their most relevant expertise and abilities (Carson et al., 2007). Project success denotes the "on time, within budget, to specification completion; success of the product produced; or success in achieving the business objectives of the project" (Bannerman, 2008). People with various skills and specialties work together in a certain structure to meet the organization's and project's objectives inside the constraints of schedule and costs (Sydow et al., 2004). It is the attainment of the aims and targets with the assistance of a set of people with capacities (Joosten, Basten & Mellis, 2011). It frequently underlines the goals and ideals that a project must deliver, as well as all of the products and their benefits. (DeWitt, 1998). In a project, temporary teams work together to execute a certain goal or project. In that situation, the effective application of talents and knowledge by numerous team members would aid in the project's success (Carson et al., 2007).

Leadership significantly affects project success (Bhatti et al., 2021; Fareed, Su & Awan, 2021; Fareed & Su, 2022; Wang et al., 2022; Zaman et al., 2022). Prior findings demonstrate that shared leadership is an effective management method and project team performance. (Hung, 2013; Novikov, 2022; Scott-Young, Georgy & Grisinger, 2019; Perce & Sims Jr, 2002; Siangchokyoo, & Klinger, 2022). Compared to hierarchical leadership approaches, shared leadership significantly affects team behavior (Carson,

Marrone & Tesluk, 2007; Parce & Sims, 1999), team management (D'Innocenzo, Kukenberger & Mathieu, 2016), employee performance (Wassenaar & Pearce, 2012) and project success (Ahmed et al., 2022). It predicts greater levels of member performance in critical, creative and flexible work environments (D'Innocenzo, Mathieu, & Kukenberger, 2016). Surprisingly, there is a dearth of research on shared leadership in project management (Georgy, Grisinger & Scott-Young, 2019). Accordingly, it was theorized that:

*H1: Shared leadership has positive effect on project success.*

### *Shared Leadership and Internal Marketing*

In addition to appropriate leadership style, an organization needs competent people in its team (Akbari, Foroudi & Rezaeei, 2017; Boukis & Storey, 2022). Companies cannot thrive without members' involvement in the value creation process (Boukis & Kabadayi, 2020). Internal marketing is "any form or marketing within an organization, which focuses on staff and internal activities used to enhance external marketplace performance" (Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006). It assists organization in attaining marketing objectives (Gounaris et al., 2020). Berry, Parasuraman and Zeithaml (1991) view IM as the process that attracts, develops, and maintains competent people by providing those jobs that fulfill their needs and help the project succeed. The primary goals of the internal marketing strategy are to improve corporate culture, forge a competitive advantage, increase market share, build the company's brand, and effectively complete the project. Leadership style influenced internal marketing. (Auh & Menguc, 2008; Beverly, 2010; Kimura, 2012; San et al., 2012). Scholars (such as Hwang & Chi, 2005) consider leadership as antecedent of internal marketing. Previous studies (such as Akbari, Foroudi & Rezaei, 2017; Efstathiades & Pavlidou, 2021) have assessed the influence of leadership on internal marketing. However, research on internal marketing and shared leadership is scarce. Research on shared leadership and internal marketing is also scarce. Thus, we proposed that:

*H2: Shared leadership has positive effect on internal marketing.*

### *Shared Leadership and Internal Communication*

Internal communication in terms of shared leadership is inexorable for project success. Internal communication is "the function responsible for effective interactions among participants within an organization" (Adamu, & Mohamad, 2019). Internal communication has a key capability which plays two fundamental parts: navigating data structures and forming a sense of place within organizations (Friedl & Verci, 2011). Two or more team members may communicate verbally or nonverbally when sharing knowledge (Mesmer-Magnus & DeChurch, 2009). Laying out and maintaining links between an association, employers, and workers is one way to foster a sense of community through internal communication activities. "Leadership is completely a communication-based activity" (Hackman & Johnson, 2014). A leader's

ability to communicate, exchange ideas, read, write, and listen effectively are just a few of the skills required. When communication skills are improved, leadership performance improves. According to Mintzberg (1990), the majority of a leader's or manager's time is spent communicating. Effective and precise communication was a crucial component of becoming a productive, efficient, and effective leader or manager. Project leaders who communicated poorly did not lead well (Clutterbuck & Hirst, 2002). Transformational leadership (Bass, 1985) was found to be linked to communication patterns (Uusi-Kakkuri & Brandt, 2016). Face-to-face interaction (one-on-one meetings, advisory board meetings, and staff mass meetings) and phone contact can improve listening, instant feedback, and discourse, leading to two connectivity across enterprises. Hence, it was posited that:

*H3: Shared leadership has positive effect on internal communication.*

#### *Shared Leadership and Thriving*

Thriving refers to "a psychological state composed of the combined relation of vitality and learning" (Spreitzer & Sutcliffe, 2007). By establishing the policies and practices that encourage individuals to thrive, managers can improve both their own effectiveness and that of the organization. Thriving is a way for an entity's human resource to be sustained, and it's a significant aspect in improving organizational productivity and lowering health-care expenses since thrived employees are high achievers, more creative, devoted and healthier (Porath et al., 2012). Thriving adds to meanings and knowledge (Nissen et al., 2012; Spritzer et al., 2005). People were enthused by shared leadership since they were able to learn new things on a regular basis (Liu et al., 2014). Both learning and vitality are necessary for flourishing. Learning is the potential to build new competencies while vitality refers to a sensation of vigor (Nix et al., 1999). In SET perspective, it is argued that when members are given the chance to lead others, they will become more enthusiastic, and thus more vital. Having the ability to lead fosters a sense of flourishing, which raises team satisfaction. Astonishingly, project management literature does not offer adequate evidence for relationship of shared leadership and thriving (Chen et al., 2021; Wang, Yang, Zhang & Zha, 2021). Thus, we hypothesized that:

*H4: Shared leadership has positive effect on thriving.*

#### *Internal Marketing and Project Success*

Internal marketing has been found to have a direct or indirect effect on certain sections or aspects of the business such as reducing personnel costs, generating consumer conscious workforce, enhancing employee organizational commitment and improving service quality and customer oriented behavior (Gronroos, 1981; Gummesson, 1997; Olorunsola, Saydam, Ogunmokun & Ozturen, 2022; Pfeu et al., 1991; Wasmer & Brunner, 1991). Moreover, service quality, business performance, worker and customer gratification were improved (Capon et al., 1990; Caruana & Pitt, 1998; 1997; Cilliers & Nagal, 1990; Demir, 2022; Heskett et al., 1994). Owing to the fact

that internal marketing significantly affected business performance, we proposed that:

*H5: Internal marketing has positive effect on project success*

#### *Internal Communication and Project Success*

Meeting project objectives involves formal and informal engagements with stakeholders at different stages which requires effective communication. Effective communication is important for stakeholders' cooperation and teamwork (Butt, Naranoja, & Savolainen, 2016). All actions and practices by which ideas are conveyed between the project leader and personnel working on the venture, as well as other shareholders, are included in such interactions. Effective communication with stakeholders can help the project to succeed and finish on time (Greenberger, 2016; Jetu & Riedal, 2012). Poor communication, on the contrary, leads to project failure (Cervone, 2014; Hodgkinson, 2009). Because of the crucial role communication plays in project success, many experts mention it as the "lifeblood" of the project (Awati, 2010). Several studies (Alvarenga, Branco, Guedes, Soares, & Silva, 2019; Bigbee & Stevenson, 2019; Couchman, Kyriazis, Massey & Jhonson, 2017; Tahir, 2019; Udo, 2018) have reported a link among excellent communication and project success. Lack of communication can lead to non-functional effects such as pressure, job dissatisfaction, poor trust, severance, absence, and a reduction in work engagement (Bastien, 1987; Malmelin, 2007) and project failure (Discenza & Forman, 2007). Hence, we hypothesized that:

*H6: Internal communication has positive effect on project success.*

#### *Thriving and Project success*

Being in a condition of learning improves employees' logical skills, resulting in improved performance (Rose et al., 2009). Workplace learning have been found to be linked to productivity, job satisfaction and performance (Arnold & Taneva, 2018; Frazier, Tuppar & Fainshmidt, 2016; Novaes et al., 2017; Walumbwa et al., 2018). Furthermore, positive emotions like vitality construct interpersonal, physiological and emotional means that are necessary for job completion (Beal, Barros, MacDermid & Weiss, 2005; Fredrickson, 2001). Hence, it was hypothesized that:

*H7: Thriving has positive effect on project success.*

#### *The Mediating role of Internal Marketing*

Internal marketing denotes a firm's internal activities which are linked to human resources (Collens & Payni, 1991) and plays an important role in training and development (Davoudi & Kaur 2012). Similarly, several HRM operations, such as workforce planning, enrolment, performance management, incentivizing, training and development, are drivers of internal marketing effectiveness (Bansal et al., 2001).

It is manifested in several forms such as reduced personnel costs, improved service quality, generation of consumer conscious workforce, greater employee commitment, worker and customer satisfaction and superior business performance (Capon et al., 1990; Caruana & Pitt, 1998; 1997; Cilliers & Nagal, 1990; Pfeu et al., 1991; Heskett et al., 1994; Gummesson, 1997; Gronroos, 1981; Wasmer & Brunner, 1991). Furthermore, a bulk of literature revealed the influence of leadership on internal marketing (Auh, 2008; Beverly & Menguc 2010; Kimara 2012; Zhu et al. 2012). Nonetheless, internal marketing in a shared leadership environment is unexplored. Therefore, it was hypothesized that:

*H8: Internal marketing mediates the relationship of shared leadership and project success.*

#### *The Mediating Role of Internal Communication*

Ample communication acts as a bond between management and project success (Ko & Yu, 2017). Project success, leadership and manager soft skills are interrelated (Nguyen, Zuo & Zhao, 2018). A leader's communication skills have a key role in project success (Zulch, 2014). Firm acquire and maintain passionate customer-conscious workforce at all echelons of the firm through effective internal communication (Grönroos 1981). Project managers' leadership abilities and project success are inextricably linked (Haley, Landis & Novo, 2017). Furthermore, communication skills were found to be crucial to the success of a project (Alvarenga, Branco, Guedes, Soares, & Silva, 2019; Bigbee & Stevenson, 2019; Jetu & Riedal, 2012; Couchman, Kyriazis, Massey & Johnson, 2017; Tahir, 2019; Udo, 2018). It is the "lifeblood" of the project (Awati, 2010). Thus, we theorized that:

*H9: Internal communication mediates the relationship of shared leadership and project success.*

#### *The Mediating Role of Thriving*

Employee learning helps achieving personal and corporate objectives (Houghton, Neck, & Manz, 2003). Employee engagement in decision-making has been linked to learning (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Employee job satisfaction is boosted by attaining such goals through workplace learning (e.g., Rowden, 2002). In organizations where leadership role is shared, the team functions as a multidirectional, communal action that allows individuals to make sense of things and is integrated into the project (Fletcher & Kaufer, 2003). Groups are assigned precise goals and scope to fulfill the client's requirements. Project success is based on shared leadership and information exchange. Establishing project scope and group leadership are prioritized through mutual leadership (Chao & Kozlowski, 2018). Employees work in environments characterized by information sharing and reciprocal learning improve their abilities, skills and innovative thinking (Noe & Wang, 2010). Team members that share knowledge are keen to retain project performance (Lee & Park, 2014). There may be a positive correlation between imperativeness and job satisfaction because vitality was connected to well-being, which was connected to job satisfaction (Judge & Klinger,



2008; see, for example, Ryan & Frederick, 1997). People are more likely to be satisfied with their professions if they feel energized and lively while working. In fact, thriving has been linked to greater job satisfaction (Milosavec, Peterson, & Bass, 2014). Positive emotions like vitality help to develop resources necessary for job completion (Barrus, & MecDermid, 2005; Fradrickson, 2001). Furthermore, being in a condition of learning improves employees' intellectual skills, resulting in improved performance (Rose et al., 2009). And having a sense of vigor at work promotes creative performance (Kurk & Carmali, 2009). Furthermore, thriving influenced creative productivity (Carmali & Spreitzer, 2009; Stevens, & Smith, 2016). Employee satisfaction (Rose et al., 2009) and happiness (Klaine et al., 2019) was boosted by achieving organizational goal through workplace learning (Rowden, 2002) and thriving (Klaine et al., 2019). Numerous attributes of organization environment increase vitality and learning that assist employees to use their full capability to add to the organizational success (Rehmat et al., 2021). Thus, it was hypothesized that:

*H10: Thriving mediates the relationship of shared leadership and project success.*

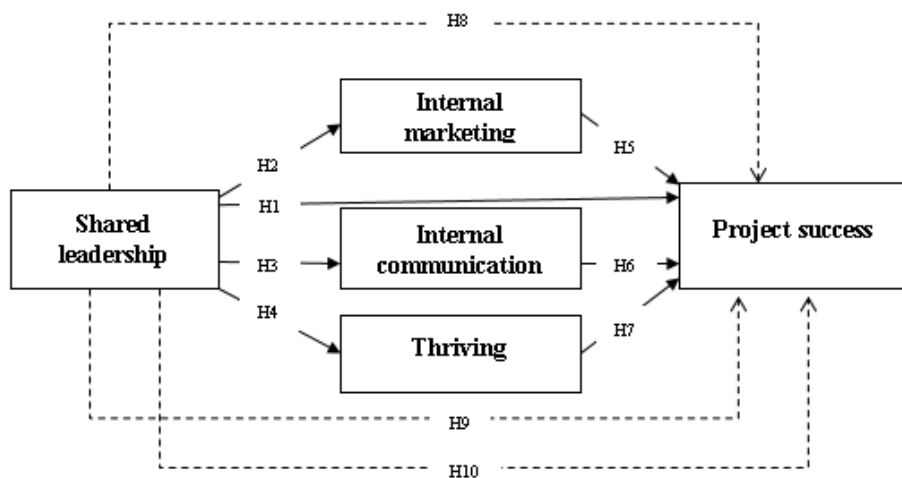


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

*Note: Dotted lines represent mediating effect of shared leadership on project success.*

## METHODS

### Data Collection and Sampling

Informed by positivist philosophy, the study adopted a deductive approach and a mono-method quantitative methodology. We used a survey strategy using structured questionnaire incorporated into a 5-points Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The study population comprised of employees and managers employed in the insurance industry within the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The required sample size was 385 subjects which was computed through online sample size calculator (<https://www.calculator.net/sample-size-calculator>). To avoid common method variance, cross-sectional data were gathered from

respondents in two surveys with one-month time lag (Podsakoff et al, 2003). The survey link (Google form) was delivered online to 400 subjects following convenience sampling procedure. A total of 256 respondents took part in two surveys. The response rate was 64 percent.

#### *Rationale for Selecting Insurance Industry*

The model was empirically tested in insurance industry. Despite numerous other project based industries, there were several reasons for targeting insurance industry. First, a vast majority of studies in project management focus on construction or IT sectors. Very few studies have targeted the insurance industry. Second, there are project based assignments in insurance industry which provides services in the form of insurance plans such as Health insurance, Marriage, Education, Financial insurance). In the insurance industry, different branches /divisions are assigned task to work on specific projects as to sell an agreed number and different types of plans. Then, different team or units such as unit manager and assistant unit managers work on assigned projects including different types of plans. The employees are assigned targets to meet. Though, the plans are long term, the assignments are short term and thus referred to as projects in our study. Third, insurance industry adds to business expansion and protection of projects in case of unforeseen events ( et al., 2001; Melik, 2011). Developing economies are subject to risk in every sector due to natural disasters like flood, hurricane, draught, governmental instability, inflation, elevated interest rate, tax policy, deregulation, etc. However, their insurance sector is not up to the mark to attain good growth (Khan & Uddin, 2013). It is worthwhile to develop and test models for insurance companies which can make them vibrant and serviceable for the economy. Fourth, technological disruption, legal demands, and volatile marketplace characterized by ever-changing consumer behavior are driving companies to reform their existing operating patterns (damcogroup, n.d.). Fifth, lack of appropriate leadership, lack of internal marketing and poor communication in insurance companies (Personal communication, June, 2022). Sixth, delivering value in terms of quality services on time is pressing problem in the insurance industry (Personal communication, June, 2022). Accordingly, we developed and tested a comprehensive model including shared leadership, internal marketing, internal communication and thriving in relation to project success in insurance industry.

#### *Measures*

We measured shared leadership with a 12-item scale (Stagnaro & Piotrowski, 2013). One sample item of this scale is “when faced with a specific problem, I consult with my subordinates”. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability value was 0.76. For measuring internal marketing, a 15-item scale (Foreman & Money, 1995) was used. One sample item of this scale is “our company provides employees with a vision in which they can believe”. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability was 0.80. Internal communication was measured on 9 item scale (Geringer, Colette & Milliman, 2002). One sample item of this scale is “informal communication works better than formal communication here”. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability value was 0.82. Thriving was measured by 7

items scale developed by (Reagans, Argote & Brooks, 2005; Frederick's & Ryan, 1997). One model item of this scale was "I feel alive and vital". One sample item of this scale was "I am experiencing considerable personal growth". The Cronbach's alpha reliability value was 0.75. To measure project success, a 12-item scale (Aga, 2016) was utilized. An example items on the scale comprised "I listen to the special needs of each group member". The Cronbach's alpha reliability value was 0.75. Demographics of respondents (gender, age, work-experience and job nature) were controlled in this study. Measurement scales with associated items are provided in appendix-1.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

### *Demographic Features of the Participants*

Analysis of the demographics (see Table 1) revealed that of the total respondents, 198 (77.3%) were male and 158(22.7%) were female. The female respondents represent nearly one fourth of the target population. Results indicate that 219 (85.5%) respondents had age between 20-30 years and 31(12.1%) respondents have age in between 30-40years and 2(0.8%) respondents have age in between 40-50 years and 4(1.6%) respondents have age above 50 years. Results show that 198 (77.3%) respondents have experience in between 1-5years, 41(16%) respondents have experience in between 5-10years, 11(4.3%) respondents have experience in between 10-15years and 6 (2.3%) respondents have experience above 15 years. With regard to the nature of job, 133 (52.0%) respondents doing managerial job and 123 (48%) respondents doing non managerial job.

*Table 1: Demographic (n=256)*

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percent
1. Gender	Female	58	22.7
	Male	198	77.3
	Total	256	100
2. Age	20-30	219	85.5
	30-40	31	12.1
	40-50	2	.8
	Above 50	4	1.6
	Total	256	100
3. Experience	1-5	198	77.3
	5-10	41	16.0
	10-15	11	4.3
	Above 15	6	2.3
	Total	256	100.0
4. Job Nature	Manager	133	52.0
	Non-Manager	123	48.0
	Total	256	100

### *Descriptive statistics*

Descriptive statistics of means, standard deviation and correlation of shared leadership, project success, internal marketing, internal communication and thriving are shown in Table 2.

*Table 2: Descriptive Statistics (N=256)*

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	1	2	3	4
Shared Leadership	3.7712	.54324				
Project success	3.7933	.59331	.714**			
Internal marketing	3.9302	.58004	.620**	.796**		
Internal communication	3.8559	.57846	.561**	.623**	.748**	
Thriving	3.9699	.66468	.510**	.588**	.701**	.725**

Source: Primary data; Significance level:  $p < 0.001$

### *Measurement model*

Confirmatory factor analysis in AMOS was utilized to validate the measurement model. The factor loadings of items were in the range of .61 to .83. Items having loadings less than .4 were removed (Hair et al., 2014). Model fitness was assessed by determining CMIN/DF, p-value, CFI, IFI, RMSEA and RMR (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The model exhibited a better fit (CMIN/DF = 2.021,  $p < 0.000$ ; CFI = .906, IFI = .907, RMSEA = .063; RMR = 0.040).

Cronbach alpha and CR values were computed to determine construct reliability. Results show that for each construct Cronbach alpha was greater than .70 and CR was greater than .60 (see Table 3). Therefore, the measures demonstrated internal and composite reliability.

The convergent validity of the scales was determined by computing AVE values and an AVE value greater than .50 is recommended (Hair et al. 2014). The discriminant validity through Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria. Table 4 shows that average variance extracted (AVE) is above .5 except shared leadership. AVE is a conventional measure of validity of measurement model, and "on the basis of (composite reliability) alone and content validity, it may be concluded that the measurement model is valid (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Narver et al., 2004), the, even though more than 50% of the variance is due to error" (p. 46). Overall, as a result, we determined that measurement model was valid and we move to hypotheses test.

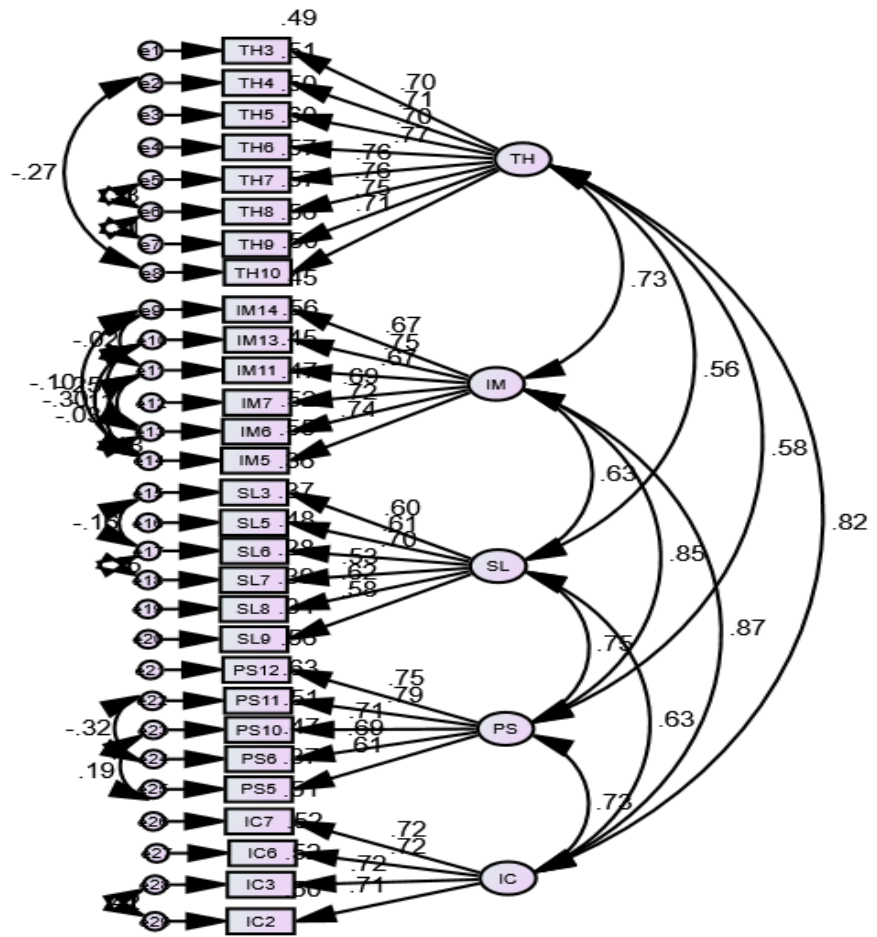


Figure 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Table 3: Reliability, Convergent Validity and Unidimensionality

Variables	Factor loadings	Cronbach Alpha	CR	AVE
Shared Leadership	.64 - .71	.767	.777	0.369
Project success	.61 - .73	.757	.836	0.507
Internal Marketing	.61 - .71	.808	.857	0.501
Internal Communication	.56 - .71	.821	.809	0.514
Thriving	.65 - .83	.752	.902	0.536

Table 4: Discriminant Validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981)

	CR	AVE	MSV	Max R(H)	PS	SL	IC	TH	IM
PS	0.836	0.507	0.729	0.845	0.712				
SL	0.777	0.369	0.568	0.783	0.754***	0.608			
IC	0.809	0.514	0.761	0.809	0.729***	0.632***	0.717		
TH	0.902	0.536	0.666	0.904	0.578***	0.564***	0.816***	0.732	
IM	0.857	0.501	0.761	0.860	0.854***	0.630***	0.872***	0.727***	0.708

Note: Significance Level:  $p < 0.001$

Structural model

Direct effects

The hypothesized relationships were tested using AMOS. We tested seven direct relationships. The result (presented in Table 5) indicated that shared leadership had significant positive effect on project success ( $\beta = .85$ , C.R = 2.66,  $p = .000$ ). Thus, hypothesis H1 was supported. The findings also unveiled that shared leadership had significant positive effect on internal marketing ( $\beta = .878$ , C.R = 7.044,  $p = .000$ ), internal communication ( $\beta = .851$ , C. R = 7.211,  $p = 0.001$ ) and thriving ( $\beta = .774$ , C.R = 6.641,  $p = .001$ ). Consequently, hypothesis H2, H3 and H4 were also supported. Moreover, internal marketing had significant positive effect on project success ( $\beta = .536$ , C. R = 3.192,  $p = .000$ ). However, Internal communication had no significant effect on project success ( $\beta = -.218$ , C. R = -1.427,  $p = .154$ ). Moreover, thriving had significant negative effect on project success ( $\beta = -.322$ , C.R = -3.122,  $p = .000$ ), which does not support the hypothesis. Hence, H5 was supported whereas H6 and H7 were not supported.

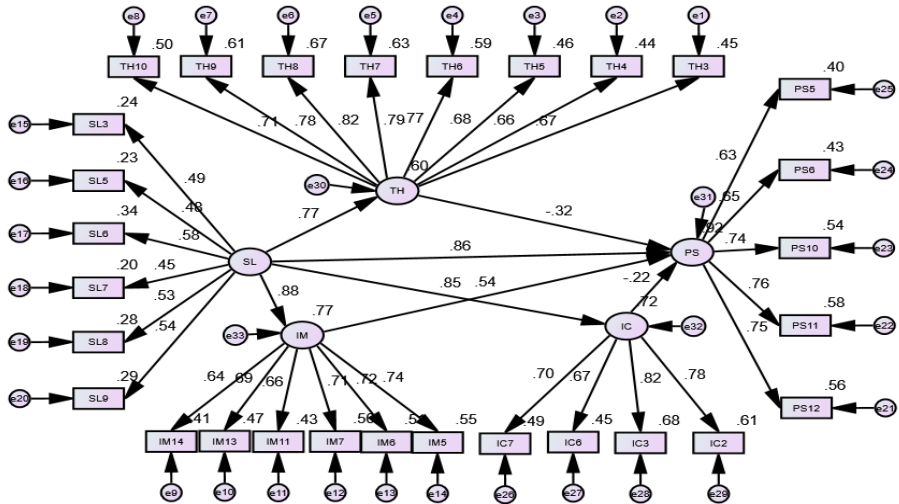


Figure 3: Structural Equation Model

Table 5: Results of Structural Equation Model

Hypothesized Relationships	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	<i>p</i>	Decision
H1: Shared Leadership → Project Success	.857	.460	2.664	***	Supported
H2: Shared Leadership → Internal Marketing	.878	.160	7.044	***	Supported
H3: Shared Leadership → Internal Communication	.851	.181	7.211	***	Supported
H4: Shared Leadership → Thriving	.774	.156	6.641	***	Supported
H5: Internal Marketing → Project Success	.536	.188	3.192	***	Supported
H6: Internal Communication → Project Success	-.218	.142	-1.427	.154	Not Supported
H7: Thriving → Project Success	-.323	.111	-3.122	***	Supported

Note: Significance level:  $p < 0.05$

Table 6: Results of Mediation Analysis (5000 Bootstrapping Procedure with 95% Confidence)

Hypothesized Relationships	Estimate	Lower bound	Upper bound	<i>P</i> -value	Decision
H8: Shared Leadership → Internal Marketing → Project Success (SL→IM →PS)	.673	-.069	1.596	.065	Not Supported
H9: Shared Leadership → Internal Communication → Project Success (SL→IC→PS)	-.265	-2.974	.190	.322	Not Supported
H10: Shared Leadership → Thriving → Project Success (SL→THR→PS)	-.358	-1.025	-.109	***	Not Supported

Note: Significance level:  $p < 0.05$

*Indirect Effects (Mediation)*

A bootstrapping procedure with 5000 sample and 95% confidence level was employed to test the mediating influence of internal marketing, internal communication and thriving between the association of shared leadership and project success. Results (presented in Table 6) illustrated that the indirect effect of shared leadership on project success through internal marketing ( $\beta = -.673$ , LLCI = -.069, ULCI

= 1.596,  $p = .065$ ) and internal communication was not significant ( $\beta = -.265$ , LLCI = -2.974, ULCI = .190,  $p = .322$ ). Thus, hypothesis H8 and H9 were not supported. Moreover, the mediation of shared leadership on project success through thriving indicated negative significant relationship ( $\beta = -.358$ , LLCI = -1.025, ULCI = -1.109,  $p = .000$ ). Hence, Hypothesis 10 was supported.

## DISCUSSION

Leadership has gained traction these days as a factor influencing project outcomes (Lorinkova & Bartol, 2021; Imam & Zaheer, 2021; Imam, 2021). Scholars (e.g., Klasmeie & Rowold, 2022; Liang & van Knippenberg, 2021; Wang & Peng, 2022) have highlighted the value of shared leadership as an effective leadership style. We tested a comprehensive model of shared leadership with project success including internal marketing, internal communication and thriving as mediators.

Findings indicate that direct effect of shared leadership on project success was positive and significant. Previously, studies (such as Fareed & Awan, 2021; Fareed & Su, 2021; Jiang, 2014) suggested that leadership styles had direct link to the success of a project and that shared leadership had a constructive influence on group performance (D'Innocenzo & Mathiau & Kukenbarger, 2016; Manz & Sims, 1987; Mohrman, Cohen & Mohrman, 1995). When leadership is shared, people become more aware of their own leadership potential, take more responsibility for the project, and unite behind its goals. (Daspit, Justice Tillman, Boyd & Mckee, 2013). Collectively establishing goals in a shared leadership environment increased the likelihood of project success (Ahmed et al., 2022; Mach & Baruch, 2015; Slater & Sewell, 1994). When teams are self-managed and empowered enough, similar to flatter organizational structures, the project succeeds, emphasizing the importance of SL within teams (Manz & Sims, 1987; Mohrman, Cohen & Mohrman, 1995). Managing several problems and duties at the same time is challenging for one leader or individual. Shared leadership is particularly useful when tasks are too complicated to be managed efficiently by a single person (Contractor et al., 2012; D'Innocenzo, Mathieu & Kukenberger, 2016; DeRue, 2011).

The direct effect of shared leadership on internal marketing was also significant and supported. Shared leadership is relevant to internal marketing in a sense that both focus on developing competent individuals in organization. Besides, the positive effect of shared leadership has been well recognized (Chu, Owens, & Teslak, 2016; Innocenzo et al., 2016; Akbari, Amiri, Imani & Foroudi, 2017; Auh & Menguc, 2008; Baverly, 2010; Kimura, 2012; Efstathiades & Pavlidou, 2021). The direct effect of shared leadership on internal communication was also significant and supported. The efficacy of leaders is measured by how well they use communication abilities. A leader's ability to communicate and exchange ideas improved leadership performance. Leadership is completely a communication-based activity (Hackman & Johnon, 2014) and has been found to be significantly linked to communication (Brandt & Uusi-Kakkuri, 2016; Lee & Sunny Tsai, 2021; Thelen, 2021; Lee, Tao & Sun, 2020)



which subsequently influenced perceived success of a project (Aziz, 2021; Jaafar, Mohammad & Salman, 2021).

The direct effects of shared leadership on thriving were also significant. People are enthused by shared leadership since they are able to learn new things on a regular basis (Liu et al., 2014). When members are given the chance to lead others, they will become more enthusiastic, and thus more vital. When individuals of a team take on the position of follower, they will learn from those who take on the role of leader. The direct effect of internal marketing and thriving on project success was significant and supported whereas internal communication had no significant direct effect on project success. Past literature (such as Alvarenga et al., 2019; Bigbee & Stevenson, 2019; Tahir, 2019) reported significant effect of internal marketing, internal communication and thriving on project success. However, we could not found support for the significant effect of internal communication on project success.

We also tested the mediation of internal marketing, internal communication and thriving on the link of shared leadership and project success. Several studies previously reported the mediating effect of internal marketing on project success (Auh 2008; Menguc & Beverly 2010; Kimura, 2012; Zhu et al., 2012). However, we could not found support for the indirect effect of shared leadership on project success via internal marketing. The indirect effect of shared leadership on project success via internal communication was also not significant. Effective internal communication serves as a bridge between leadership and project success. (Ko & Yu, 2017; Ma, Nguyen & Zuo & Zhao, 2018). Project managers' leadership abilities and project success are inextricably linked (Haley, Landis & Novo, 2017). Businesses should pay attention to project managers' characteristics and assist them in honing their communication abilities (Zulch, 2014). The mediation of thriving was supported. Establishing project scope and group leadership are prioritized through mutual leadership (Chao & Kozlowski, 2018). Employees work in environments characterized by information sharing and reciprocal learning improve their abilities, skills and innovative thinking (Noe & Wang, 2010). Team members that share knowledge are keen to retain project performance (Lee & Park, 2014). Positive emotions like vitality help to construct physiological, emotional, and interpersonal means that are necessary for job completion (Beal, Barros, MacDermid & Weiss, 2005; Fredrickson, 2001). Furthermore, occupying a condition of learning improves employees' logical skills and results in improved performance (Rose et al., 2009). Workplace learning has been found to be linked to productivity, job satisfaction and performance (Arnold & Taneva, 2018; Frazir & Tuppar, 2016; Novaes et al., 2017).

### *Theoretical implications*

Although shared leadership, internal marketing, internal communication, and thriving are relevant, the relationship among them is unexplored. Findings elucidates the dynamics of shared leadership in the context of projects in a developing countries perspective. Furthermore, the findings will add to existing literature on shared

leadership in project management and will improve understanding of the scholars in this domain who may develop better theoretical models. Moreover, it provides additional insight into the relationship of shared leadership and project success in developing countries perspective. It confirms that shared leadership is effective within project based organizations in developing countries and has significant effect on project success.

### *Practical implications*

We recommend shared leadership for project-based organizations particularly in developing countries. Shared leadership denotes that project managers assign specific tasks to group members and design and execute projects in consultation with group members. Such leaders focus on group member's knowledge and skill development resulting in a superior performance (internal marketing). While sharing leadership the leader asks for ideas and suggestions and appreciates group members who then feel confident to perform certain tasks (communication). Moreover, the members feel alive and vital (thriving) and look for new avenues to improve performance and add to organization growth and strategy. Literature suggests that an organization needs appropriate leadership style and competent people in its team. We proposed that appropriate leadership style is shared leadership.

For every project, specialized team leaders should be selected. Team leaders will then decide team roles. Team leaders should be provided coaching so that they can be effective leaders. Organization should utilize the internal marketing program to develop competencies of employees. Such an ongoing process is termed internal marketing. Sharing leadership in organization can advance internal marketing, while internal marketing provides employees with a vision and focuses on developing their skills, so they will know their roles and improve their jobs. These findings will help to improve decision making while designing and implementing projects. Organizations need to apply appropriate leadership style such as shared leadership and focus on internal marketing.

The findings of the study will also help in developing better and long-lasting policies and the probability of project success will be increased. Instead of being led by a single individual, shared leadership stresses group leadership, which gives the members feeling of leadership, and setting common project goals. Informed policies on internal marketing can influence positive effects on organizational internal performance to gain a competitive advantage. Internal marketing can improve employee's performance and make them understand the organization's products well, in addition to increasing their satisfaction with the organization. Internal marketing can help to improve organizational performance and make projects successful. The study contributes insights for developing better policies on internal communication. Internal communications which promotes effective communications among people within an organization and removes conflicts is essential for improving workplace productivity and morale. Particularly, having positive relationships with coworkers, bosses, and the firm can help employees to succeed at work. Businesses should pay

attention to project managers' characteristics and assist them in improving their communication abilities.

Furthermore, in projects, everyone has a stake in the project success. When leadership becomes a shared phenomenon, everyone's skills, abilities, and expertise are mobilized to carry out the PS. Individuals with diverse leadership styles, for example, may exist in a project. As a result, each team member may endeavor to lead the project using his or her skills and knowledge. Individual autonomy in a team will also assist him in concealing his secret skills and abilities. Because all participants are equally involved in establishing the vision for their project, this empowerment will lead to the project's success (Rogers, 2019). When a transaction occurs in the shape of shared leadership, the resources provided to group leaders are appreciated by team members. Resources are likely to be reciprocated by team leaders (Blau, 1964). They contribute their expertise and talents in the most effective way for accomplishing project objectives. Such as a reciprocal relationship is likely to yield mutual benefit for all parties, thus leading to successful projects.

## CONCLUSION

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that shared leadership has positive and significant relationship with project success. Moreover, internal marketing and internal communication mediate the link of shared leadership and project success. However, thriving could not mediate the relationship of shared leadership and project success.

Shared leadership is appropriate in project based organizations. Sharing leadership in organization improves internal marketing which in due course improves employee jobs and ultimately the company products and services. Internal communication promotes effective communication among people within an organization and removes conflicts. It is essential for improving workplace productivity and workplace relationships which eventually lead to success at work.

There are several limitations of this study. Although, random sampling is more appropriate in quantitative study, t due to unavailability of sampling frame, we used convenience sampling. Second, the self-reported nature of data is another limitation. However, to overcome the issue of common method variance, we utilized time lagged data. Third, future research can test the current model through multisource and multilevel data across multiple sector. Fourth, the technological capability of the firm can be taken into consideration. Fifth, the expansion of the existing model for sustainability should be considered in future research.

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