

THE INFLUENCE OF LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE AND EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT ON JOB SATISFACTION MEDIATED BY KNOWLEDGE SHARING

RESEARCH ARTICLE

IKHSAN NURAHMAN

Yarsi Pratama University, Indonesia

MUHAMMAD ARTOVA AL-KINDI

Yarsi Pratama University, Indonesia

ANGGRAENI PRATAMA INDRIANTO

Yarsi Pratama University, Indonesia

Corresponding author: anggraeniprtm@yarsipratama.ac.id

Abstract

This research aims to explore the influence of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and Employee Empowerment on employee job, with knowledge sharing as a mediating factor. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, data were collected from 99 employees at PT XYZ Tutoring Institute through questionnaires and interviews. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Square (PLS) and Smart PLS V.3 software to ensure validity and reliability. The findings reveal that both LMX and Employee Empowerment significantly enhance job satisfaction through improved knowledge-sharing practices. These results highlight the importance of fostering strong relationships between leaders and employees, as well as empowering employees to boost organizational performance. In conclusion, this research contributes to a better understanding of how internal organizational dynamics, specifically LMX and Employee Empowerment, can influence employee performance and job satisfaction.

Keywords: Employee empowerment, job satisfaction, knowledge sharing, leader-member exchange, organizational performance.

Introduction

As times have become increasingly modern, human needs have undergone significant changes. In the past, basic human needs were limited to essentials such as food, clothing, and shelter. Today, however, the list includes access to information and technology, as these are critical in decision-making processes. The internet and smartphones, which provide individuals with instant access to data and

services, have become an integral part of daily life (Kratzke & Cox, 2012). This trend has led companies to increasingly focus on customer satisfaction, recognizing that satisfied customers are essential to maintaining competitiveness in the marketplace. However, what is often overlooked is that customer satisfaction is largely dependent on the satisfaction of the employees providing the services (Al Mehrzi & Singh, 2016). When employees feel valued and satisfied, they are more likely to contribute positively to the organization's goals and customer satisfaction.

A crucial factor in creating a positive work environment is the quality of the relationship between leaders and their subordinates. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory suggests that leaders do not treat all employees uniformly but instead develop different relationships with each member of their team, characterized by varying degrees of trust, support, and loyalty (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Research by Lee et al. (2020) indicates that employee involvement in decision-making enhances their sense of value and attachment to the organization. Such practices are expected to build stronger relationships between employees and their leaders, promoting knowledge sharing. When employees feel respected and supported by their leaders, their motivation and commitment to their work tend to increase (Erdogan & Bauer, 2019; Gerstner & Day, 1997). Moreover, these employees are more likely to exhibit loyalty toward the organization, reducing turnover intentions and enhancing overall performance (Dulebohn et al., 2011).

In addition to LMX, Employee Empowerment is another key factor that influences job satisfaction. Empowerment involves granting employees autonomy and authority in their work, allowing them to make decisions and solve problems independently (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013). Empowered employees are more engaged, exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction, and tend to be more productive. Empowerment fosters a sense of responsibility and ownership over one's work, which can lead to enhanced performance and reduced turnover rates (Kim & Fernandez, 2021). The role of empowerment in promoting knowledge sharing is also significant. When employees feel empowered, they are more likely to share their knowledge and expertise with others, creating a collaborative work environment that enhances job satisfaction (X. Zhang & Bartol, 2010). With this system, employees show mutual respect for their colleagues' and leaders' abilities, increasing trust between employees and superiors.

Knowledge Sharing is a reciprocal process where individuals exchange knowledge and collectively create new knowledge or solutions (van den Hooff & de Ridder, 2004). In the context of LMX, high-quality leader-member relationships facilitate knowledge sharing by promoting open communication and trust between leaders and subordinates (Davies et al., 2011). Similarly, empowered employees are more likely to engage in knowledge sharing, as they feel more confident and valued in their roles (Lee et al., 2020). Recent studies by Wang and Wang (2012) highlight that knowledge sharing is crucial for organizational innovation, which boosts employee satisfaction and enhances the company's competitive edge.

Wang et al. (2020) describe job satisfaction as a pleasant feeling resulting from an employee's evaluation of their job. Factors such as work environment, relationships with supervisors and colleagues, and recognition significantly influence job satisfaction levels. Employees who are satisfied with their work tend to prioritize job fulfillment over compensation. Zhang et al. (2022) confirm that high job satisfaction is closely linked to increased productivity and employee commitment. One

company that pays significant attention to these aspects is PT Lembaga Bimbingan Belajar XYZ, a service-oriented company operating in the non-formal education sector since the 1900s. With a strong commitment to contributing to Indonesia's education sector, the company has successfully assisted over one million students through more than 100 branches across Indonesia. Non-formal educational institutions, like PT XYZ, play a vital role in developing skills and knowledge that are not always addressed in formal schools (Arshad et al., 2020). In addition to tutoring, the company has developed business lines to help the next generation develop soft skills in areas such as language, music, and culinary arts. The head office in Yogyakarta supports branch offices in serving students and is divided into several divisions, including Human Resources, Education, Marketing, Finance, IT, and Asset Management. According to Amjad et al. (2019), a clear organizational structure and well-distributed tasks within a company improve operational efficiency and employee job satisfaction, ultimately enhancing service quality.

In addition to LMX, PT XYZ also implements Employee Empowerment. According to Fernandez and Moldogaziev (2013), employee empowerment involves giving employees authority, autonomy, and trust to make decisions about their work. This empowerment aims to increase employee engagement, job satisfaction, and productivity. Empowerment provides employees with the skills, authority, and responsibility to perform their work effectively (Wijaya, 2015). Kim and Fernandez (2021) found that empowerment is positively related to employee engagement and satisfaction, which leads to lower turnover and better organizational performance. Employee empowerment also fosters a more adaptive and responsive organizational culture (Çakar & Ertürk, 2010). This practice is evident at PT XYZ, where leaders regularly invite employees to participate in meetings to provide input, enhancing the company's competitive advantage. This study aims to fill the gap in understanding how LMX and Employee Empowerment influence Job Satisfaction, with Knowledge Sharing acting as a mediating factor. While previous studies have focused on the direct effects of LMX and empowerment on job satisfaction, this research examines the indirect effects mediated by knowledge sharing. Additionally, this study focuses on a non-formal educational organization, providing new insights into how these relationships operate in this unique context.

The purpose of this study is to examine the mediating role of knowledge sharing in the relationship between Leader-Member Exchange, Employee Empowerment, and Job Satisfaction in a non-formal educational setting. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) how does Leader-Member Exchange affect Job Satisfaction through the mediating role of Knowledge Sharing? and (2) how does Employee Empowerment influence Job Satisfaction through the mediation of Knowledge Sharing? By addressing these questions, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how internal organizational dynamics—specifically LMX, empowerment, and knowledge sharing—affect employee job satisfaction. This research has practical implications for managers in non-formal educational institutions, as it highlights the importance of fostering strong leader-member relationships and empowering employees to enhance both knowledge-sharing behaviors and overall job satisfaction.

Literature Review

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory posits that the quality of the relationship between a leader and their subordinates can vary significantly, ranging from high-quality exchanges characterized by mutual trust, respect, and support to lower-quality exchanges based primarily on formal authority and transactional interactions (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). High-quality LMX relationships foster open communication and mutual loyalty, contributing to a positive work environment where employees feel valued and supported. This dynamic has been shown to enhance job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Gerstner & Day, 1997).

Erdogan and Bauer (2019) further highlight that employees who perceive strong support and trust from their leaders exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction and are less likely to leave the organization. These findings emphasize that LMX quality plays a critical role in employee well-being and organizational stability. Strong LMX relationships create an environment of psychological safety, where employees feel confident sharing ideas and taking risks, ultimately promoting higher job satisfaction (Dulebohn et al., 2011). Consequently, understanding and improving LMX within organizations can lead to more engaged and committed employees, which is particularly relevant in service-oriented sectors like education.

Employee Empowerment

Employee empowerment refers to the process of granting employees autonomy, authority, and responsibility in their roles, enabling them to make decisions and solve problems independently (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013). This empowerment fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, leading to higher job satisfaction and productivity. Empowered employees are more likely to feel valued and motivated, contributing positively to organizational performance (Pelit et al., 2011). Research by Ripley and Ripley (1992) and Spatz (2000) suggests that empowerment not only improves service quality but also enhances employee loyalty and self-recognition.

In a study by Kim and Fernandez (2021), empowered employees reported higher levels of job satisfaction and engagement, as they felt trusted and respected by their organizations. This sense of empowerment is especially critical in dynamic environments where employee autonomy can lead to innovation and adaptive problem-solving. In non-formal educational settings, such as the one studied here, empowering employees can foster a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement, further enhancing job satisfaction and organizational performance.

Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing involves the exchange of information, skills, and expertise among employees, creating a collaborative environment that fosters innovation and problem-solving (Wang & Noe, 2010). It has been recognized as a crucial driver of organizational success, as it promotes

learning and efficiency while reducing redundant efforts. Wang and Noe (2010) emphasize that knowledge sharing enhances employee satisfaction by creating a sense of belonging and mutual respect within teams. In environments with high-quality LMX relationships, knowledge sharing is facilitated by open communication and trust, allowing employees to leverage their collective expertise (Davies et al., 2011). Wang et al. (2020) found that employees who actively participate in knowledge sharing feel more valued by their peers and supervisors, which enhances their overall job satisfaction.

In addition, empowered employees are more likely to engage in knowledge-sharing activities, as they feel a greater sense of responsibility and confidence in their roles. This reciprocal process not only improves individual and team performance but also strengthens organizational culture (Lee et al., 2020). In educational institutions, fostering a knowledge-sharing culture can lead to continuous learning and improvement, benefiting both employees and the organization. In this way, knowledge sharing acts as a mediator in the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction, as it allows employees to benefit from their leaders' expertise and the collective knowledge of their peers (Han, 2010).

Interconnection Between LMX, Employee and Knowledge Sharing

The relationships between LMX, Employee Empowerment, and Knowledge Sharing are interconnected. Employees who are both empowered and engaged in strong leader-member exchanges are more likely to share knowledge with their peers, increasing overall job satisfaction. Empowerment encourages employees to take initiative in knowledge sharing, while LMX promotes a supportive environment in which knowledge can be exchanged freely (X. Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Research by Lee et al. (2020) indicates that empowered employees engage in more knowledge-sharing activities, which further enhances their job satisfaction. Similarly, Burhan and Khan (2024) highlights that a reciprocal relationship between leaders and employees, fostered through LMX, optimizes knowledge sharing and improves job satisfaction.

Therefore, knowledge sharing serves as a mediating variable in both the LMX and empowerment frameworks. As research has shown, employees who engage in active knowledge sharing not only feel more satisfied with their jobs but also experience increased loyalty and commitment to the organization (Nguyen et al., 2023). This interplay between LMX, empowerment, and knowledge sharing underscores the complexity of the factors contributing to employee satisfaction.

Methodology

Research design and approach of the study

This study utilized a quantitative approach with a descriptive design to test hypotheses by measuring variables using numerical data. The research was conducted as a census at PT Lembaga Bimbingan Belajar XYZ, with all 99 employees serving as the sample. A census approach is appropriate because it includes the entire population, ensuring comprehensive data collection (Sugiyono, 2016).

Data were collected using surveys distributed through structured questionnaires and interviews. The research focused on examining the cause-and-effect relationships between the dependent variable (job satisfaction), independent variables (leader-member exchange and employee empowerment), and the mediating variable (knowledge sharing). The survey method was selected to gather insights from the employees in their natural working environment. The study relied on both primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through questionnaires measuring constructs such as Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), Employee Empowerment, Knowledge Sharing, and Job Satisfaction. Secondary data was gathered from organizational documents and literature relevant to the research. To ensure accurate data, we employed Likert scales (Sugiyono, 2013) for variable measurement, and conducted validity tests using Pearson correlation and reliability tests using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The data was analyzed quantitatively using Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis, a statistical technique suitable for small sample sizes and non-normal data distributions (Ghozali & Latan, 2015).

Research site and participants

The research was conducted at the headquarters of PT Lembaga Bimbingan Belajar XYZ, and all 99 employees participated in the study. Since this was a census, the entire employee population was included, providing a comprehensive data set to ensure accuracy and validity. The participants were drawn from various departments, as shown in Table 1, which presents the division of respondents across departments.

Table 1. *Respondent characteristics*

Division	Number	Percentage
Recruitment	6	6.06%
Education	6	6.06%
Documentation	3	3.03%
Marketing	11	11.11%
Partnership	6	6.06%
Secretariat	2	2.02%
Inventory	13	13.13%
Data Management	6	6.06%
Finance	8	8.08%
Tax	4	4.04%
Accounting	7	7.07%
Supervision	3	3.03%
IT	11	11.11%
Multimedia	3	3.03%
Asset Management	10	10.10%

The majority of the employees are distributed across divisions such as Inventory, Marketing, and IT, which collectively represent the largest proportions of the workforce. Smaller departments, such as Documentation, Supervision, and Secretariat, have fewer participants, reflecting their operational roles within the organization. This distribution suggests a fairly balanced representation across divisions, with certain departments, such as Inventory, Marketing, and IT, showing a larger number of members due to the operational needs of the organization.

Data collection and analysis

This study employed the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) method for data analysis, using Smart PLS V.3 software. This method was selected due to the non-normal distribution of the data and the relatively small sample size (Hair et al., 2019). PLS-SEM is particularly suitable for sample sizes under 500 (Hair et al., 2017). Data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to all 99 employees of PT Lembaga Bimbingan Belajar XYZ. The questionnaire measured four key constructs: Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), Employee Empowerment (EE), Knowledge Sharing (KS), and Job Satisfaction (JS). Each construct was assessed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The analysis was conducted in two main stages:

Measurement model assessment: This stage involved testing for convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability of the constructs. Convergent validity was assessed by examining factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR). All items exhibited factor loadings greater than 0.70, and AVE values were above the 0.50 threshold, indicating satisfactory convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019). Discriminant validity was confirmed by ensuring that the square root of each construct's AVE was greater than its correlations with other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Structural model assessment: The structural model was evaluated by testing the collinearity, path coefficients, and hypothesis relationships. Collinearity was assessed using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), with all VIF values below the threshold of 3.3, indicating no multicollinearity issues (Smith et al., 2020). The results are presented in Table 2, summarizing the path coefficients and hypothesis testing.

Table 2. *Path Coefficients*

Hypothesis Relationship	Beta	SD	t-value	p-value	VIF	Decision
LME → KS	0.503	0.099	5.106	0	1.769	Accepted
EE → KS	0.352	0.115	3.051	0.002	1.769	Accepted
LME → JS	0.415	0.083	4.992	0	2.42	Accepted
EE → JS	0.243	0.088	2.761	0.006	2.088	Accepted
KS → JS	0.293	0.095	3.073	0.002	2.571	Accepted
LME → KS → JS	0.147	0.055	2.683	0.008		Accepted
EE → KS → JS	0.103	0.049	2.092	0.037		Accepted

The mediating effect of Knowledge Sharing (KS) was also tested. Results show that KS significantly mediates the relationships between Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), Employee Empowerment (EE), and Job Satisfaction (JS): $LMX \rightarrow KS \rightarrow JS: \beta = 0.147, p = 0.008$; $EE \rightarrow KS \rightarrow JS: \beta = 0.103, p = 0.037$. Both indirect effects were significant, supporting the mediating role of Knowledge Sharing in the relationships between LMX, EE, and JS.

Results

Measurement Model Analysis

The measurement model analysis confirmed the validity and reliability of the constructs. Cronbach's alpha (CA) values for all constructs were greater than 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency. Additionally, Composite Reliability (CR) values for all constructs exceeded 0.70, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were above 0.50 (Byrne, 2013; Hair et al., 2019). The rho_A values also surpassed the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming composite reliability (Jung & Park, 2018).

Table 3. *Discriminant validity*

	Employee Empowerment	Job Satisfaction	Knowledge Sharing	Leader- Member Exchange
Fornell-Larcker Criterion				
Employee Empowerment	0.899			
Job Satisfaction	0.717	0.907		
Knowledge Sharing	0.684	0.764	0.877	
Leader-Member Exchange	0.659	0.790	0.735	0.915
Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio				
Employee Empowerment				
Job Satisfaction	0.763			
Knowledge Sharing	0.725	0.800		
Leader-Member Exchange	0.692	0.818	0.756	

The model's discriminant validity was confirmed using both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The square root of each construct's AVE was greater than its correlation with other constructs, and the HTMT ratio values did not exceed the recommended threshold of 0.85 (Yusoff et al., 2020).

Model Fit

The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value for the model was 0.05, indicating a good fit (Henseler & Sarstedt, 2013). The SRMR is a measure of the difference between observed and predicted correlations, with values below 0.08 considered acceptable (Pavlov et al., 2020).

Hypothesis Testing

The results indicated a significant positive effect of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) on Job Satisfaction (JS) ($\beta = 0.415$, $p < 0.01$). This finding aligns with previous research showing that high-quality LMX relationships enhance job satisfaction through trust and communication (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Similarly, Employee Empowerment (EE) was found to significantly influence Job Satisfaction (JS) ($\beta = 0.243$, $p < 0.01$). Empowering employees through autonomy and decision-making positively impacts their job satisfaction (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013).

The study also demonstrated that Knowledge Sharing (KS) partially mediates the relationship between LMX and Job Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.147$, $p = 0.008$), as well as the relationship between Employee Empowerment and Job Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.103$, $p = 0.037$). These findings suggest that knowledge-sharing activities enhance job satisfaction in environments with strong LMX and empowered employees. Finally, Knowledge Sharing (KS) had a direct positive effect on Job Satisfaction (JS) ($\beta = 0.293$, $p < 0.01$), confirming that collaborative environments foster greater employee satisfaction (S. Wang & Noe, 2010; X. Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

Discussion

Leader-member exchange signficancy affects employee job satisfaction

This study reaffirms the critical role of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) in enhancing job satisfaction. The findings suggest that high-quality LMX relationships, characterized by mutual trust, respect, and open communication, significantly improve job satisfaction among employees. Previous research corroborates this, highlighting that supportive leader-employee relationships foster a sense of value and commitment within the organization (Lee et al., 2020; Skarlicki & Latham, 2013). Similarly, Dulebohn et al. (2011) found that LMX quality is positively associated with job satisfaction, as it establishes an environment of psychological safety, allowing employees to thrive. By confirming these associations, the current study underscores the necessity for leaders to invest in fostering meaningful connections with their team members to optimize satisfaction and retention.

Employee empowerment significantly affects employee job satisfaction

The results also demonstrate that Employee Empowerment (EE) has a notable positive effect on job satisfaction. Empowered employees, who are entrusted with autonomy and decision-making

authority, often exhibit higher motivation, ownership, and overall job satisfaction. This aligns with findings by [Kumar et al. \(2021\)](#) which assert that empowerment enables employees to align their tasks with organizational goals, increasing their engagement and loyalty. Additionally, [Huang et al. \(2023\)](#) observed that such empowerment fosters a sense of responsibility and competence, driving improved job performance and satisfaction. This study enriches this body of knowledge by demonstrating the effectiveness of empowerment in a non-formal education setting.

Employee empowerment affects job satisfaction through knowledge sharing

Similarly, the study confirms that EE influences job satisfaction through the mediation of KS. Empowered employees feel more confident in contributing to organizational knowledge, leading to enriched team collaboration and satisfaction. This finding aligns with research by [Caniëls et al. \(2017\)](#), which notes that empowered employees actively engage in knowledge sharing due to their sense of responsibility and value within the organization. [Chen et al. \(2022\)](#) further argue that such behaviors not only enhance individual fulfillment but also elevate collective performance. The mediating role of KS underscores the importance of creating an environment that promotes both autonomy and collaboration to maximize satisfaction outcomes.

Knowledge sharing affects job satisfaction

The direct influence of KS on job satisfaction observed in this study highlights its foundational role in fostering a positive work environment. [Smith et al. \(2020\)](#) found that employees who share knowledge feel a heightened sense of belonging and appreciation within their organizations. This finding resonates with [Nguyen et al. \(2023\)](#), who noted that shared learning and collaborative problem-solving boost employee morale and productivity. By enabling smoother workflows, reducing redundancies, and driving innovation, KS plays a pivotal role in improving satisfaction levels. This study reaffirms these findings and further emphasizes that KS is a critical factor in non-formal education organizations.

While this study offers valuable insights into the interplay between Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), Employee Empowerment (EE), Knowledge Sharing (KS), and job satisfaction, certain limitations must be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted within a single organization, PT Lembaga Bimbingan Belajar XYZ, operating in the non-formal education sector. Although this context provides unique perspectives, it restricts the generalizability of the findings to other sectors or organizational types. To address this, the study used a full census approach, which included all employees within the organization, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the internal dynamics. Future research could expand the scope to diverse organizations across various industries to enhance the broader applicability of the findings.

Another limitation is from the reliance on self-reported data collected through questionnaires, which may introduce bias as participants might provide socially desirable responses. Efforts were made to mitigate this risk by ensuring respondent anonymity and emphasizing the need for honest answers during data collection. However, future studies could complement self-reported data with

peer assessments, supervisor evaluations or objective performance measures to improve reliability and validity. Additionally, the cross-sectional design of this study, capturing data at a single point in time, limits its capacity to establish causality between the examined variables. This study employed a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to establish causality. Future research could adopt a longitudinal approach to capture the long-term effects of LMX, empowerment, and knowledge sharing on job satisfaction.

Conclusion and Implications

The results of the study also pointed out that EFL student teachers used some potential strategies to overcome their academic writing challenges. Those strategies are classified into metacognitive strategies (using technology), cognitive strategies (brainstorming and making outline), and social strategies (peers discuss and support). The results of this study indicate that Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), Employee Empowerment, and Knowledge Sharing have a significant positive effect on job satisfaction among employees at PT Lembaga Bimbingan Belajar XYZ Yogyakarta. These findings are consistent with previous research, which highlights the importance of high-quality leadership relationships, employee empowerment, and knowledge-sharing practices in enhancing job satisfaction (Lee et al., 2020; C. Wang et al., 2020). While PT XYZ has successfully implemented these variables, opportunities remain to further improve LMX communication, employee empowerment practices, and the knowledge-sharing system. Strengthening these areas could lead to even higher levels of job satisfaction and unlock the full potential of the organization's workforce. Enhanced communication between leaders and employees, as well as more structured and accessible knowledge-sharing mechanisms, could foster a more collaborative and engaged work environment.

The findings of this study have important implications for both practitioners and policymakers. For practitioners, fostering strong leader-member relationships and empowering employees are essential strategies for improving job satisfaction. Organizations should implement leadership training programs that emphasize open communication, trust-building, and support to enhance LMX quality. In addition, empowering employees by giving them greater autonomy and decision-making authority can lead to more engaged and satisfied employees. For policymakers, creating policies that promote employee empowerment and knowledge-sharing practices is crucial. By encouraging organizations to adopt these practices, employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention can be improved. For future research, further investigation is needed to explore the relationship between knowledge sharing and job satisfaction across different organizational settings. Researchers could also examine the moderating effects of organizational culture on the LMX-job satisfaction and empowerment-job satisfaction relationships.

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