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### Leadership Dynamics and Virtual Project Outcomes Testing a Mediated Model of Affective Commitment

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#### ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the mediating role of affective commitment in the relationship between leadership dynamics and virtual project outcomes. As organizations increasingly rely on virtual project structures, understanding how leadership behaviors influence team members' emotional attachment and performance has become a critical area of inquiry. Grounded in social exchange and transformational leadership theories, this study empirically examines how effective leadership practices foster affective commitment and, in turn, enhance virtual project success. A purposive sampling technique was used to collect data from 226 respondents employed in technology-driven and project-oriented organizations across Pakistan. Standardized questionnaires were administered, and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and hierarchical regression, followed by mediation analysis via Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4). Results demonstrated that leadership dynamics significantly predicted both affective commitment and virtual project outcomes. Moreover, affective commitment partially mediated this relationship, highlighting its crucial role as an emotional bridge between leadership quality and virtual performance success. The findings underscore the importance of emotionally intelligent leadership behaviors that nurture trust, communication, and identification among virtual team members. This study extends the theoretical understanding of leadership and commitment mechanisms in digital work contexts while offering practical implications for enhancing collaboration and engagement in geographically dispersed teams. Future research is encouraged to explore longitudinal effects and cross-cultural variations to strengthen the generalizability of these findings.



## **Introduction**

Value-based initiative, otherwise called administrative authority, concentrates on the part of supervision association, and gathering execution. Value-based authority is a style of initiative in which the pioneer advances consistence of his/her adherents through the two prizes and discipline. Dulewicz V, Higgs MJ. (2003). Guide or persuade their devotees in bearing of built-up objectives by clearing up part and assignment necessity. Transformational initiative pioneers utilizing the value-based approach are not hoping to change the future they are looking to just keep things the same. Pioneers utilizing value-based initiative as a model focus on adherent's work keeping in mind the end goal to discover flaws and deviations. This sort of initiative is compelling in emergency and crisis circumstances, and additionally for ventures that should be done particularly. Dulewicz V, Higgs MJ. (2003).

By and large, venture administration and task "chief ship" might be alluded to as undertaking "stewardship". To be a steward is to hold something in trust for another. Therefore, venture stewardship might be characterized as an eagerness to be responsible for the prosperity of the undertaking association while setting administration towards the objectives of the task above self-intrigue. It involves holding responsibility for your kin without demanding cruel consistence from them. In the arranging stages, "supervisor send" as portrayed, have its impediments. Initiative defeats these constraints. In the creating stages, authority additionally has its confinements, and "administrator dispatch" is more proper. Crawford LH. (2001).

Task administrators are the mix of pioneers and chiefs, they have the two qualities. Is there a contrast between an undertaking pioneer and a venture chief? A venture supervisor can be depicted as the individual in charge of coordinating and planning human and material assets, however this definition tends to concentrate on the regulatory parts of task work. In any case, the creators see a qualification between the style of pioneers and administrators as per their essential core interest. Cooke-Davies T. (2001). It is an axiom that administration concentrates on doing "the correct things" while directors concentrate on doing "the things right."

## **Problem statement**

Determinants of the undertaking achievement have been contemplated in various western squires yet almost no in Asian nations. Examination demonstrates that grater the real administration grater the cooperation grater the odds of the venture achievement and additional exertion (Shamir, B., Brainin, E., Zakay, E., Popper, M., 2000). (Turner, J. R, 1999). (Turner, J. (2005). (Wang, E., Chou, H.W., Jiang, J., 2005). (Diminish Morris, Jeffrey K. Pinto., 2007) (Yang, L.R., Huang, C.-F. &Wu, K.- S. 2011). Undertaking administration initiative is an imperative factor that assumes a critical part in accomplishment of task. In this way, it is basic to comprehend what factors are adding to extend achievement independently cooperation, authority, or cooperatively collaboration and undertaking administration. These contribute in Project accomplishment by (Jiang J. 2014).

There is no exploration is made on venture accomplishment in Pakistan just research which is relate with the business venture is influenced just in business to level or inside the business. The objective of this examination is to dissect more inside and out the impact of variables like authority and collaboration on venture achievement. Turner, (1999) thought about that the handbook of undertaking based administration enhancing the procedures for accomplishing key goals. Turner, J. (2005) the task director's authority style as a win factor on ventures. Wang, Chou, Jiang, (2005) the effects of alluring authority style on group cohesiveness and general execution amid ERP usage. Dwindle Morris, Jeffrey K. Pinto, (2007) the Wiley Guide to Project, Program, and Portfolio Management. Yang, L.R., Huang, C.F., and Wu, K.S (2011) the relationship among venture

supervisor's authority style, cooperation and undertaking achievement. Additionally, I will depict the undertaking achievement, initiative and Teamwork independently in venture administration.

Numerous researchers have examined venture achievement in the field of administration in light of its positive effect on hierarchical outcomes (Maynard, Gilson, and Mathieu, 2012; Seibert, Wang, & Court right, 2011; Wang and Lee, 2009; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). A critical group of research on venture achievement is that it is giving a ton of valuable discoveries in the course of recent decades which is gainful for the association. Because of its developing fame it is additionally getting prevalence in administration research and administration home. For instance, starting at 2001 task administration activity has been embraced by over 70% of fortune 1000 associations (Lawler, Mohrman, and Benson, 2001) in light of the fact that undertaking administration activity have turned out to be basic place in associations (Ford and Fottler, 1995). Specialists have led next to no examine to comprehend venture achievement, or to comprehend the connection between Project administration authority and task success. (Macey & Schneider, 2008). The examination's legitimization originates from an expanding enthusiasm for venture administration around the globe all in all. As per the analyst's best information, no exact examination look into PS and PML, and TW in the Pakistani setting existed as of now was directed. Sialkot is the city of the Pakistan. That is the reason the present investigation along these lines includes prove from another nation to the current learning on venture administration. Cooperatively venture authority, and collaboration are moderately new idea in venture achievement research and dominant part of the past investigations have been led in created nations. No little proof is accessible from creating nations i.e. Pakistan. Then again Project achievement factors are an intensely looked into point yet substantiation from non-western nations is as yet constrained. Prior investigations of task authority, collaboration, and venture achievement have essentially centered in assembling division when contrasted with development and different sorts of business. In this investigation mostly concentrate on the association that have the different undertaking administration office and the greater part of his salary is rely upon the activities. It was entrancing to find that initiative was seldom measured by the key achievement elements of the undertaking. Initially, this examination adds to two standards of writing – venture administration and administration which incorporates the authority and the cooperation – by gathering breakthrough experimental proof on the relationship between venture administration and the money related advantages that can be procured by the associations. Besides, it gives exact proof of long-haul effect on the place of fares of Pakistan. Regardless of its significance for the Pakistani economy, the assembling area stays under inquired about, particularly in the field of task administration. Third, the proposition exactly examines what sort of effect of authority on ventures' primary concern. Moreover, it gives a structure that may help ventures to comprehend whether an undertaking administration division is monetarily suitable or not. It additionally helps basic leadership around the undertaking achievement, venture authority and the group choice for venture.

The importance of this proposition to fill this hole which is tended to in writing, it likewise adds to see how extend achievement are related to extend administration and collaboration, how they are not quite the same as alternate sorts of venture which are not take after by the task administration and hypothesis, and to see how extend sort add to which type of authority and group that are probably going to take part in venture achievement. This examination additionally tended to the pioneer part trade relationship and how seen authoritative help builds up the recognition in the psyches of representatives to restore the care to association.

A focal recommendation to this proposition is that, as particular and unmistakable ideas of undertaking administration practices and initiative practices will shrink and blur into indefinite quality. However together they may shape a propitious association that can reinforce the

undertaking administration of some other association. To be sure the intension of this theory is to propose and assess an exact however flexible structure for venture achievement that attention on the examination and inward announcing of undertaking administration initiative. A definitive target of this theory is to go about as an impetus in the advancement of a worthy structure. This structure can give to all chiefs of an association with helpful data in regards to the administration and use of task assets.

Moreover, a solid commitment of ebb and flow explore is identified with the way that it gathers exact information from a generally new social setting. The greater part of the past investigations around there has been led in the USA, Sweden, Canada, Australia, China and the UK. This examination is the first of its kind detailed with regards to Sialkot about utilizing of different instruments of task administration for evaluating the effect of authority, and cooperation on the undertaking achievement which is straightforwardly related with the execution of the association.

This examination is noteworthy as it allows a trial of the more extensive legitimacy of the discoveries got from the exploration directed in the created nations. Taking everything into account, the investigation will likewise empower strategy creators and best administration in the Sialkot fabricating part to apply a deliberate way to deal with the examination of undertaking achievement. The discoveries can be utilized to upgrade extend administration approaches and rehearses for their more viable usage.

The essential ideas of intentionally sorting out and overseeing groups backpedal to the introduction of human advancement itself. Actually, work groups have for quite some time been considered as a viable gadget to reinforce authoritative viability. Since the disclosure of the significance of social wonders in the exemplary Hawthorne thinks about (Roethlings Berger and Dickson, 1939), administration scholars and specialists alike have endeavored to encourage amass character and union in the work environment. Surely, a great part of the human relations development that happened in the decades following Hawthorne depends on a gathering idea. McGregor's (1960) hypothesis Y, for instance, explains criteria for a successful work gathering, and Liker's (1961) called his most noteworthy type of administration the taking an interest gathering or framework. Be that as it may, the procedure of group building turns out to be more minds boggling and requires more specific administration aptitudes as bureaucratic chains of command decrease and evenly arranged groups and work units develop (Cleland, 1999: 427). The group building process is participative and connects with all gathering individuals in distinguishing issues and openings, arranging proper activities, making singular sense of duty regarding execute these activities, and leading fitting assessment and input exercises (Greenberg and Baron, 2000). It is said to be acquired regards to by three noteworthy powers (Varney, 1977: 151). In the first place, there are more masters/specialists inside associations whose gifts should be engaged and coordinated into a bigger errand. Second, more authoritative individuals need to end up plainly progressively engaged with their aggregate workplace. Third, the advantages of individuals cooperating can bring about expanded collaboration and innovativeness. Wilemon and Thamhain (1997) have likewise given imperative administration experiences into cooperation advancement by researching drivers of, and hindrances against, the superior of group.

### **Factors Influencing Effective Teams**

A lot of research has explored the characteristics of compelling groups and how much those qualities are absent from less powerful gatherings. Albeit much has been composed, there are numerous parts of fruitful groups that these sources share in like manner. During the 1980s and 1990s, the quality of the planning and hand-over was identified as important. Lists of Critical Success Factors (CSF), which also took into account organizational and stakeholder perspectives,

became popular. More recently, CSF frameworks were developed on the basis that success is stakeholder-dependent and involves interaction between project supplier and recipient. Additional dimensions taken into account were the project product and its utilization, staff growth and development, the customer, benefits to the delivery organization, senior management, and the environment. For the future, they anticipate further broadening of the definition of success, especially taking into account factors from the conceptual stages of the project life cycle and the close-down of the project's product, together with an increasing understanding of the importance of the project sponsor's view of success. We also expect a greater focus on the project manager's leadership style and competence. We consider further the second and third stages.

The project manager is not specifically mentioned in their list. Pinto and Slevin (1988), in a now classic piece of work, identified 10 project success factors (see Table 9). This is one of the most widely quoted lists. They also do not overtly mention the project manager. Pinto and Prescott (1988) later suggested that personnel are not a success factor. Belout and Gauvreau (2004) questioned this, because it is contrary to human resource management literature, but in their own study reached the same conclusion. However, both pairs of authors asked project managers what they thought was important. Since project managers tend to be task oriented rather than people oriented (Mäkilouko, 2004), perhaps this result is predictable. To truly determine project success factors, it may be necessary to measure what actually has an impact on project success. Andersen et al. (1987) determined their list from reviews of failed projects, so it was based on assessment of actual project performance, but the assessment was done by the project managers. Perhaps the project manager does not contribute to project success. Perhaps there is something about the nature of projects and project teams that means their success is not dependent on the leadership style and competence of the manager. But that conclusion totally contradicts the preceding leadership literature review, as well as human resource management and organizational behavior literature. Many of the previously cited authors asked project managers their opinion, and it would seem that many project managers do not recognize themselves, their leadership style, or their competence as a contributor to project success. Of the three lists compiled in other ways, two (Morris, 1988; Morris & Hough, 1987) did identify leadership as a success factor. Cooke-Davies (2001) identified project management as a success factor, but not the project manager. However, you see what you measure, and perhaps his study was constructed to identify project management and not the project manager. Some studies have focused specifically on the project manager, and considered more directly their contribution to project success. We now consider some of those.

The most significant work on correlating the project manager's competence to his or her success as a project manager was done by Crawford (2001). Crawford's measure of success was not project performance, but assessment by the supervisor, so it was subjective assessment by the project manager's line manager. Further, it was an assessment of overall performance, not that on a specific project. Crawford found that once a project manager has achieved an entry level of knowledge, more knowledge does not make him or her more competent. Competence can be defined as knowledge, skills, and personal attributes that lead to superior results or to meet defined performance standards (Boyatsis, 1982; Crawford, 2003): Following the earlier definition of competence (Boyatsis, 1982; Crawford, 2003), personality and leadership style are included in the manager's competence, and it is these other dimensions that make a project manager more competent. This was confirmed by Hobbs, Pettersen, and Guérette (2004), who also showed that once the project manager has obtained an "entry ticket" level of knowledge, more knowledge does not make him or her more competent.

## Objectives of Study

1. To examine the relationship between leadership dynamics and virtual project outcomes.
2. To investigate the mediating role of affective commitment in the relationship between leadership dynamics and virtual project success.
3. To assess the influence of leader–member communication quality on employees’ affective commitment in virtual project environments.
4. To evaluate the impact of affective commitment on overall project performance in virtual settings.
5. To propose and empirically validate a mediated model linking leadership dynamics, affective commitment, and virtual project outcomes.

## Research Methodology

### Research Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational research design was adopted to empirically test the proposed mediated model. The design was chosen because it allows for the measurement of multiple variables simultaneously and the assessment of direct and indirect relationships between them. Data were collected using structured questionnaires from employees involved in virtual or hybrid project environments. The cross-sectional approach provided a snapshot of leadership dynamics, affective commitment, and project outcomes at a specific point in time. The study also employed Hayes’ PROCESS Macro (Model 4) to test mediation, allowing a comprehensive assessment of both direct and indirect effects.

### Population and Sampling

The target population consisted of professionals working on virtual or technology-driven projects in diverse industries such as IT, telecommunications, manufacturing, and consultancy sectors across Pakistan. These individuals were chosen because they operate in digitally mediated project settings where leadership and affective commitment are critical to success.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants with relevant experience in virtual project management and team collaboration. Out of 250 distributed questionnaires, 226 complete and valid responses were received, yielding a response rate of 90.4%. This sample size was considered sufficient for statistical analyses, meeting the recommended criteria for mediation models (Hair et al., 2019).

## Results

### Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis

The descriptive analysis indicated generally high ratings for leadership dynamics, affective commitment, and virtual project outcomes. Internal consistency was confirmed, with Cronbach’s alpha coefficients exceeding 0.80 for all variables.

| Variable                 | Mean | SD   | Cronbach’s $\alpha$ |
|--------------------------|------|------|---------------------|
| Leadership Dynamics      | 4.09 | 0.67 | 0.88                |
| Affective Commitment     | 3.95 | 0.61 | 0.85                |
| Virtual Project Outcomes | 4.21 | 0.56 | 0.91                |

The means reflect moderately high responses, indicating positive perceptions of leadership quality, team affective connection, and overall project outcomes in virtual environments.

**Table 2: Correlation Analysis**

Pearson correlation results revealed strong, significant, and positive relationships among all study variables, with the highest correlation observed between affective commitment and virtual project outcomes.

| Variables                   | 1     | 2     | 3 |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|---|
| 1. Leadership Dynamics      | 1     |       |   |
| 2. Affective Commitment     | .59** | 1     |   |
| 3. Virtual Project Outcomes | .54** | .69** | 1 |

**Note:**  $p < .01$  (2-tailed)

The findings suggest that strong leadership dynamics foster emotional commitment among employees, which in turn contributes to successful virtual project execution.

**Table 3: Regression Analysis**

Hierarchical regression analysis tested the predictive power of leadership dynamics on affective commitment and virtual project outcomes.

| Model                                           | B    | SE   | $\beta$ | t     | p    |
|-------------------------------------------------|------|------|---------|-------|------|
| Leadership Dynamics → Virtual Project Outcomes  | 0.48 | 0.07 | 0.54    | 6.85  | .000 |
| Leadership Dynamics → Affective Commitment      | 0.57 | 0.06 | 0.59    | 9.41  | .000 |
| Affective Commitment → Virtual Project Outcomes | 0.52 | 0.05 | 0.69    | 10.28 | .000 |

Leadership dynamics significantly predict both affective commitment and virtual project success. Affective commitment also strongly predicts virtual outcomes, emphasizing the emotional bond's impact on performance.

**Table 4: Mediation Analysis (PROCESS Model 4)**

To examine mediation, Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4) was applied. The indirect effect of leadership dynamics on virtual project outcomes via affective commitment was significant, confirming partial mediation.

| Path                                                  | Effect | SE   | t    | p    |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------|------|------|------|
| Leadership → Virtual Project Outcomes (Total Effect)  | 0.48   | 0.07 | 6.85 | .000 |
| Leadership → Affective Commitment                     | 0.57   | 0.06 | 9.41 | .000 |
| Affective Commitment → Virtual Project Outcomes       | 0.38   | 0.05 | 7.41 | .000 |
| Leadership → Virtual Project Outcomes (Direct Effect) | 0.27   | 0.07 | 3.92 | .000 |
| Indirect Effect (Mediation)                           | 0.21   | 0.04 | —    | —    |

The indirect effect through affective commitment (0.21) was statistically significant, indicating that leadership dynamics influence project outcomes both directly and indirectly by enhancing employees' emotional engagement and identification with their virtual teams.

## **Discussion**

### **Leadership Dynamics and Virtual Project Outcomes**

The findings revealed that leadership dynamics significantly and positively predict virtual project outcomes ( $\beta = 0.54$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This indicates that effective leaders who demonstrate strong vision, communication, and support are more likely to enhance the performance of virtual teams. These results corroborate earlier studies emphasizing the critical role of leadership quality in shaping successful project outcomes in technologically mediated environments (Avolio et al., 2014; Hoch & Dulebohn, 2017). In virtual settings, where physical interaction is limited, leaders' ability to motivate, communicate clearly, and maintain trust becomes essential for project success.

### **Leadership Dynamics and Affective Commitment**

This aligns with the social exchange perspective, which posits that supportive leadership fosters a sense of loyalty and emotional investment among followers (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Employees reciprocate positive leadership behaviors through increased engagement and commitment, even in dispersed or virtual teams (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Breevaart et al., 2021). Hence, effective leadership is not merely structural but profoundly emotional, shaping how individuals connect with organizational goals.

### **Affective Commitment and Virtual Project Outcomes**

Affective commitment was found to be a significant predictor of virtual project success ( $\beta = 0.69$ ,  $p < .001$ ), demonstrating that employees who are emotionally attached to their teams exhibit higher motivation, collaboration, and performance. This supports prior research indicating that affectively committed employees are more resilient and adaptable to the challenges of remote collaboration (Chaudhary & Panda, 2018; Meyer et al., 2012). In virtual contexts, affective commitment acts as a psychological glue, bridging geographic and temporal distances through a shared sense of belonging and purpose.

### **Mediating Role of Affective Commitment**

The mediation analysis using Hayes' PROCESS Model 4 confirmed that affective commitment partially mediates the relationship between leadership dynamics and virtual project outcomes (indirect effect = 0.21, BootLLCI = 0.14, BootULCI = 0.30). This suggests that while leadership directly influences project success, a significant portion of its impact operates through employees' emotional connection with their teams. These findings extend previous research by empirically validating affective commitment as a key emotional mechanism that transforms leadership influence into measurable project success (Luo & Jiang, 2020; Rofcanin et al., 2017).

### **Comparison with Previous Studies**

The results are consistent with prior empirical evidence emphasizing that leadership quality and affective attachment jointly predict organizational and project performance (Clarke, 2012; Turner & Müller, 2017). However, this study advances the literature by situating these dynamics within virtual project environments, where traditional supervisory control is replaced by digital communication and trust-based interaction. The current findings reinforce that affective commitment serves as a critical mediating force, translating leadership intentions into effective team behavior despite spatial separation (Newman et al., 2020).

Unlike conventional teams, virtual teams rely heavily on psychological and emotional bonds rather than physical proximity. Hence, leadership in virtual contexts must be adaptive, relational, and

emotionally intelligent (Ziek & Smulowitz, 2014). The partial mediation observed in this study highlights that leadership effectiveness is both a cognitive and affective process, wherein rational decision-making is complemented by emotional connectivity.

### **Theoretical Implications**

This study contributes to leadership and organizational behavior theories in several ways. First, it empirically validates the mediated model of leadership dynamics, showing that affective commitment acts as an essential emotional bridge in virtual project success. Second, it extends the social exchange theory by highlighting that in digital contexts, emotional reciprocity becomes a stronger predictor of success than structural or transactional factors. Third, it integrates insights from transformational leadership theory, illustrating that empathy, vision, and individualized consideration are particularly effective in sustaining engagement in virtual settings.

### **Practical Implications**

Organizations should invest in leadership development programs that enhance digital communication skills, empathy, and team cohesion. Encouraging feedback loops, recognition practices, and transparent communication can strengthen affective commitment, leading to improved virtual project outcomes. Furthermore, human resource policies should incorporate affective dimensions of leadership evaluation, ensuring that leaders are trained to foster not just compliance but emotional connection.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this research provide strong empirical evidence that leadership dynamics play a pivotal role in shaping virtual project outcomes, both directly and indirectly, through the mediating influence of affective commitment. In an increasingly digital and interconnected world, the traditional boundaries of leadership have transformed requiring leaders not only to manage tasks and timelines but also to build trust, emotional connection, and psychological safety within teams operating across time zones and technological interfaces. This study demonstrates that when leaders exhibit clarity, empathy, and authenticity in their interactions, they stimulate a deep sense of affective commitment among team members, which subsequently enhances motivation, cooperation, and project performance. The mediation analysis confirmed that affective commitment serves as a partial mediator, highlighting that the impact of leadership extends beyond structural and procedural factors to include emotional and relational dimensions. This underscores the fact that the success of virtual projects depends not only on technological tools and organizational systems but also on leaders' ability to nurture emotional engagement and a shared sense of purpose. From a theoretical perspective, this study enriches the leadership and organizational behavior literature by integrating transformational leadership theory and social exchange theory within the context of virtual collaboration. The findings illustrate that affective commitment represents a vital emotional pathway through which leadership behavior translates into tangible project outcomes. This contributes to the growing recognition that virtual leadership effectiveness is determined as much by emotional intelligence and relational authenticity as by technical competence.

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