



The role of knowledge management in fostering psychological empowerment: A Nepalese service sector perspective

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ABSTRACT

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In the service industry, effective knowledge management is essential for enhancing employees' sense of psychological empowerment. This study examines the impact of knowledge management on the psychological empowerment of employees in Nepal's service sector. To examine the status of knowledge management, psychological empowerment, and their relationship, data were collected from four service sectors using a structured questionnaire with validated items, which were confirmed (25 out of 43) again using confirmatory factor analysis, given the contextual differences. A significant presence of knowledge management and psychological empowerment was found in Nepal's service sector. Knowledge management and psychological empowerment were found to have a positive and significant relationship, even though the confirmed items differed from those in Western approaches. Of the four knowledge management variables, only three (explicit knowledge, knowledge management culture, and tacit knowledge) were found to predict employees' psychological empowerment, whereas knowledge conversion was not found to have a significant impact on it. These findings suggest that knowledge management plays a positive and significant role in psychologically empowering employees in Nepal's service sector. However, knowledge conversion mechanisms, along with effective knowledge management systems, must be developed to enhance psychological empowerment through significant development of knowledge management. Future research using different tools, variables, and samples from various industries is recommended to further validate and revise these findings.

Contribution/Originality: This study is one of the few in Nepal to investigate the relationship between knowledge management and psychological empowerment, considering the four significant service industries in Nepal. This article can significantly contribute to understanding the value of knowledge management in psychologically empowering employees.

1. INTRODUCTION

The service sector has made a vital contribution to the world's GDP, and it is growing rapidly. From 1970 to 2021, the contribution of the service sector rose from 53% to 76% (Report of World Bank and World Trade Organization, 2023). In this scenario, the Nepalese economy is aligning with the global GDP trend through a steady

rise in the service sector's contribution. In fiscal year 2018/19, the service sector accounted for 57.4% of Nepal's GDP (Government of Nepal Ministry of Finance, 2020), which grew to 61.2% by 2021/22 (Government of Nepal Ministry of Finance, 2023).

Along with the increase in GDP contribution, service-sector industries have been increasing tremendously. Despite the current situation, there is a lack of research in this sector focusing on the contribution of employees' competencies. According to the resource-based approach (Barney, 1991; Wright, McMahan, & McWilliams, 1994), because of the heterogeneity associated with human resources, they have the potential to enhance the quality of these services through the application of their expertise and competencies throughout the service-creation and delivery processes. An effective knowledge-management process and the use of appropriate tools are essential for developing employee competence. However, few studies have addressed these factors, especially in the Nepalese service sector.

The education, hospital, telecommunication, and aviation sectors are all very important service sectors in any nation. All sectors need their employees to be updated regularly by acquiring knowledge continuously and developing new knowledge in the course of practising that knowledge. This process requires regular research so that the knowledge can be generalized and disseminated to other sectors as well. But the fact is that few research studies are being conducted and the sharing of knowledge is very limited. In this context, this research was conducted to determine the status of knowledge management and psychological empowerment in Nepal's service sector. What is the relationship between these variables, and what is the impact of knowledge management on psychological empowerment?

To answer the questions raised herein, a literature review was conducted to develop a conceptual framework and hypotheses. In addition, a structured questionnaire was developed. The research methodology is discussed to provide information regarding the research design, population, sample size of the study, and the analysis tools used in the analysis of the collected data. Furthermore, the results are presented and discussed to determine what was found and their implications. The conclusion of the study provides the essence of the study considered.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Various studies related to knowledge management, psychological empowerment, and their relationships were reviewed to finalize the dimensions under each variable. The evolution of relevant dimensions and their relationships was studied for hypothesis formulation and testing.

Knowledge is considered the only strategic source of competitive advantage in the global economy today (Zack, 1999). According to the resource-based view, competitive advantages stem from strategic resources that are valuable, rare, and difficult to imitate or replace (Dess, Lumpkin, & Eisner, 2008). This perspective is built on three main principles: organizations possess distinct resources; valuable and rare resources lead to enhanced performance; and for an organization's resources to be valuable, they must be challenging to disseminate.

To succeed in today's highly competitive environment, companies must create, share, and transform new knowledge into products and services (Zafarian, Esmail-Zadeh, & Shahi, 2009). Knowledge is a unique source of competitive advantage (Salajeghe, Rashidi, & Mousaei, 2013); sometimes it is very intangible knowledge, that is, within the brain of the human, highly addressing the core tenets of the resource-based approach. Organizations gain skills in the context of learning (internalizing knowledge), codify the skill-gaining process (externalizing knowledge), and distribute it in the form of repository knowledge (Abtahi & Salavati, 2006; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). From the perspective of the resource-based approach, value addition is performed to develop innovative products and services through knowledge assimilation, which differentiates them from other competitors.

2.1. Theoretical Foundation of the Study

The socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization (SECI) model developed by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) attempts to bridge the gap between implicit, tacit, and explicit knowledge through conversion.

According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), knowledge is produced by transforming it into implicit and explicit forms (Klein, 2008).

Karl Wiig's model, developed by Wiig (1993), highlights that knowledge has to be organized to make it useful and valuable. This model uses four dimensions to organize knowledge: building knowledge, holding knowledge, pooling knowledge, and applying knowledge. Completeness, connectedness, congruency, purpose and perspective are used as four tools to organize knowledge.

The Choo model, developed by Choo (1998), focuses on three interconnected processes of sense-making, knowledge-creating, and decision-making to manage knowledge. Under sense-making, an organization interprets relevant information to understand the needed factor. Under knowledge-creation, an organization creates new knowledge by acquiring, organizing, and processing knowledge. Finally, under decision-making an organization chooses the best option among the alternatives that are available and relevant to build new knowledge.

Menon's model of psychological empowerment is based on the models developed by Thomas and Velthouse (1990); Spreitzer (1995); and Menon (2001) discusses goal internalization, perceived control, and perceived competence as necessary ingredients for empowering employees. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and Spreitzer (1995) claimed that empowered employees have self-assurance and control over their surroundings. A sense of perceived control can result from empowerment techniques, including knowledge sharing, delegation, and enhanced participation (Kankanhalli, Lee, & Lim, 2011). According to Menon (2001), perceived control is crucial for psychological empowerment, and this is also reflected in the two dimensions discussed by Thomas and Velthouse (1990) model i.e., impact and choice, and also in the model developed by Spreitzer (1995). When employees know the purpose of their efforts and have control over their surroundings, they will understand the elements responsible for their competence. The degree to which an individual can affect strategic, administrative, or operational results at work is reflected in Thomas and Velthouse (1990) impact model of empowerment, which includes perceived competence as a key component. According to Menon (2001), competence is the worker's conviction that they can carry out tasks competently. It refers to an individual's knowledge of the skills required to successfully perform a task in a specific area or for a specific purpose (Gautam & Ghimire, 2017; Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Spreitzer (1995) developed a model that identified meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact as dimensions of psychological empowerment. Meaning is related to knowing the purpose of the efforts required of an employee. Competence is related to the skills needed to fulfill a role or to carry out activities. Self-determination is related to control or autonomy in decision making, and impact is related to influence over outcomes.

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) developed a model that identified the sense of impact, competence, meaningfulness, and choice as four cognitions/dimensions of psychological empowerment. Choice is the sense of having a choice in initiating and regulating actions. It represents autonomy over work processes, pace, and methods. Impact is related to the degree to which a person can make a difference by influencing work outcomes. Meaningfulness is related to the fit between work values and individual values. Competence is an individual's belief in their ability to exert the effort necessary to perform a task. Both the models developed by Spreitzer (1995) and Thomas and Velthouse (1990) used similar constructs; however, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) provided the theoretical, conceptual model, while Spreitzer (1995) built upon this to develop and empirically validate a measurement scale for these variables.

2.2. Empirical Evidence from Different Studies

Recognizing the significance of knowledge management, managers are now leveraging knowledge from a resource-based perspective to establish a lasting competitive edge (Huysman & Wulf, 2006) by developing new capabilities, fostering innovation, and enhancing customer value (Ganjinia, Salimi, & Ghasabsaraei, 2014). To develop such an environment in the organization, the focus is on developing a knowledge-management culture through the management of tacit knowledge, knowledge conversion, and explicit knowledge.

To enhance understanding, cultural management knowledge must be valued in the organization by developing an environment of knowledge creation, conversion, implementation, and improvement (Abtahi & Salavati, 2006; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), which begins with the identification of tacit knowledge. According to Klein (2008), people must acquire tacit knowledge through personal development because it is real knowledge. Derived from the Latin *tacitus*, tacit knowledge refers to something silent, quiet, not speaking, peaceful, unmentioned, unthought-of, undealt with, wordless, secret, and unnoticed. Knowledge that is deeply ingrained in the brain, skin knowledge, inherited, physiological, intuitive, mythical, archetypal, and experience-based knowledge are forms of tacit knowledge (Puusa & Eerikäinen, 2010). However, it is necessary to convert this knowledge into a tangible form, for which knowledge conversion is necessary.

The primary goal of any knowledge exchange is to effectively convey the sender's insights to the recipient. From this process, other employees obtain ownership of the shared knowledge and add value to it, demonstrating their commitment through conversion. Therefore, understanding and applying shared knowledge is critical for creating value for organizational competitiveness (Abdul-Jalal, Toulson, & Tweed, 2013). According to Lubit (2001), employees can aid in the application of knowledge, foster innovation, and thereby enhance the organization's competitive edge through knowledge conversion. This leads to the creation of explicit knowledge, which is easily comprehensible.

Explicit knowledge is easy to share and understand because it can be encoded and expressed (Klein, 2008), unlike tacit knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Organizations can create various repositories to encode the knowledge that is developed and utilized within the organization. Oral language, visualization, and behavior, even with odors, fragrances, scents, and aromas. Files, e-mails, recorded voices, recorded visuals, multimedia, computer processors, CCTV cameras, and many other documents and technologies can be sources of explicit knowledge. These dimensions of knowledge are used by the service sector to empower employees psychologically (Ghorbanizadeh & Khaleghinia, 2009; Kankanhalli et al., 2011; Ravanpykar, Fyzi, & Pashazadh, 2014; Yilmaz, 2016). These are a few among many, and most are based on the SECI model.

To link knowledge management with psychological empowerment, the latter must be studied. Researchers have defined psychological empowerment in its integrated form using four cognitive elements: meaningfulness, competence, choice (autonomy), and impact, based on different models of psychological empowerment, essentially that of Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and Spreitzer (1995), as stated in the research conducted by Bektas and Sohrabifard (2013). Menon (2001) highlighted goal internalization, perceived competence, and perceived control as the key aspects of psychological empowerment, which are the primary constructs utilized in this study.

Goal internalization means that employees can be empowered only if they comprehend the organization's aims to solve organizational causes (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Employees should know why they work and what they will achieve during the process. This will empower employees because they will know the purpose of their efforts in any organization, which will help them gain control over their surroundings. Studies using the resource-based perspective of psychological empowerment concluded that psychologically empowered employees working in the Nepalese service sector could add value to the services delivered by them using a differentiation strategy (Gautam & Ghimire, 2017). Hence, it is essential to mention the linkage between psychological empowerment and knowledge management in the service sector.

Service sector organizations are increasingly looking for competent human resources with the knowledge and ability to meet industry requirements. Delivering and sustaining service excellence by empowered and knowledgeable employees results in the competitive advantage of many organizations (Albrecht & Zemke, 2001). The utilization of unique resources, that is, human resources, to develop the competitive advantage of organizations has been well addressed in the literature using the resource-based approach (Albrecht & Zemke, 2001; Barney, 1991; Halawi, Aronson, & McCarthy, 2005; Wright et al., 1994).

When individuals feel more autonomous and perceive their actions as effective, they engage in knowledge management activities that lead to the development of new knowledge, which manifests as services or products (Kankanhalli et al., 2011; Yilmaz, 2016). Ahmadi, Daraei, Khodaie, and Salamzadeh (2012) explored the link between knowledge management and psychological empowerment and found a notable connection between the two. According to Menon (2001), acquiring knowledge can be crucial for shifting employees' attitudes and beliefs in harmony with the organization's mission and objectives. This makes human resources unique because they reflect ideas about goal internalization that meet the requirements of the resource-based approach while also fostering a sense of community, significance, and enjoyment.

Through knowledge management, today's managers attempt to draw intellectual capital from employees' minds and disseminate it to all. When viewed through the lens of human resource management's resource-based approach, the data stored within the system evolves into a lasting asset that offers the organization sustained competitive advantage (Huysman & Wulf, 2006). Ghorbanizadeh and Khaleghinia (2009) suggest that employee empowerment is significantly reliant on the sharing of implicit knowledge. One study revealed that the elements that effectively contribute to empowerment include management support, information availability, decision-making involvement, organizational culture, and a competitive work environment (Ravanpykar et al., 2014).

Numerous studies have been conducted worldwide to explore the connection between psychological empowerment and knowledge management, as outlined here. In the context of Nepal, there have been limited studies focusing on psychological empowerment and knowledge management within the service sector individually (Chalise, 2014; Chaudhary, 2014; Gautam & Ghimire, 2017; Maharjan, 2017). These studies employed models of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995); Thomas and Velthouse (1990); Spreitzer (1995) and Menon (2001), which have been validated globally. There is a dearth of research on an integrated form, that is, research that attempts to address the relationship between these two variables. To find the linkage and impact of these two variables in the service sector, research is needed so that the service sector can enrich itself by developing appropriate strategies guided by the resource-based approach to enrich employees from both insights. Both are in the infancy level of research in Nepalese organizations. The hype surrounding both concepts is misleading, as no real facts or practices have been confirmed through a significant number of studies.

Hence, the following hypotheses were developed to test the impact of knowledge-management dimensions on psychological empowerment. Sectoral differences were also tested to address some of the gaps.

H₁: Knowledge management culture has a significant positive impact on psychological empowerment.

H₂: Tacit knowledge has a significant positive impact on psychological empowerment.

H₃: Knowledge conversion has a significant positive impact on psychological empowerment.

H₄: Explicit Knowledge has a significant positive impact on psychological empowerment.

H₅: There is a significant difference in knowledge management between private and public organizations.

H₆: There is a significant difference in psychological empowerment between private and public organizations.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section clarifies the research design, population, sample, and methods of data collection and analysis used to reach the study's conclusions.

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive and correlational design, utilizing a structured questionnaire for quantitative analysis and relational interpretation to address the specified research questions. A descriptive research design was used to interpret the current status of knowledge management and psychological empowerment in Nepal's service sector, whereas a correlational research design was used to determine the relationship between these constructs and the impact of knowledge management on psychological empowerment. Structured questionnaires were developed and

administered to employees of specified organizations to collect data from employees selected from service sector organizations.

3.2. Population and Sample Size

This study considered employees of hospitals, airlines, telecommunications, and educational sectors in the Kathmandu Valley as the population because these industries are significant service sectors in Nepal. Two organizations from each industry were selected for the study so that organizations representing the public and private sectors could be considered. A total of 480 employees were selected as samples from the population, assuming that the population was unknown and that a sample size of 384 was sufficient to represent the unknown population. Convenience sampling was used to determine the sample of organizations and employees. In most cases, there is only one public organization, which is a limitation in selecting the study sample. If more organizations were available, organizations that served more people would be considered for the study. This could act as a limitation of the study and would be addressed in future studies. Only 421 respondents responded, which is approximately 88% of the total number of respondents.

3.3. Instrumentation of the Study

The data for this research were collected using instruments based on Menon (2001)'s three-component model of psychological empowerment, which includes goal internalization (five items), perceived competence (five items), and perceived control (five items). The instrument employed by Rashid, Hassan, and Al-Asadi (2016) was utilized to gather data on knowledge management culture, knowledge conversion, and tacit knowledge, each comprising seven items. In contrast, the development of the instrument for explicit knowledge, also consisting of 7 items, was informed by the work of researchers Hansen, Nohria, and Tierney (1999); Cohen and Levinthal (1990) and Alavi and Leidner (2001), as reviewed by Wang, Ahmed, and Rafiq (2008). All these sub-variables have been measured by using the instrumentation as discussed, on five points, namely, Highly Disagree as 1, Disagree as 2, Neutral as 3, Agree as 4, and Highly Agree as 5.

3.4. Method of Analysis

The collected data were coded, cleaned, and organized using software. Cleaned data were used for further analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to confirm the items under each variable. Subsequently, the means, correlations, and covariances between psychological empowerment and knowledge management were calculated. Stepwise multiple regression was performed to determine the impact of variables under knowledge management on psychologically empowering employees. This method was used to identify the variables that exert a higher impact, allowing for a ranking of importance, which makes this study more significant than other past studies. Confirmatory factor analysis used in this study also added significance by confirming the items and variables that are relevant in the Nepalese context, which was not done for confirming items in the Nepalese context. Generally, exploratory factor analysis has been conducted to extract the constructs along with their items. The means were calculated to determine the current status of knowledge management and psychological empowerment in service organizations. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine the status difference between public and private organizations. These calculations were performed using AMOS and SPSS software.

Conceptual clarity provides the foundation for any research; for this reason, the conceptual framework is discussed here.

3.5. Conceptual Framework

In the field of knowledge management, the focus is on sub-variables such as the culture of knowledge management, tacit knowledge, the process of knowledge conversion, and the explicit knowledge held by employees.

Psychological empowerment is examined through sub-variables, such as goal internalization, perceived control, and perceived competence, with both private and public organizations serving as intervening variables. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

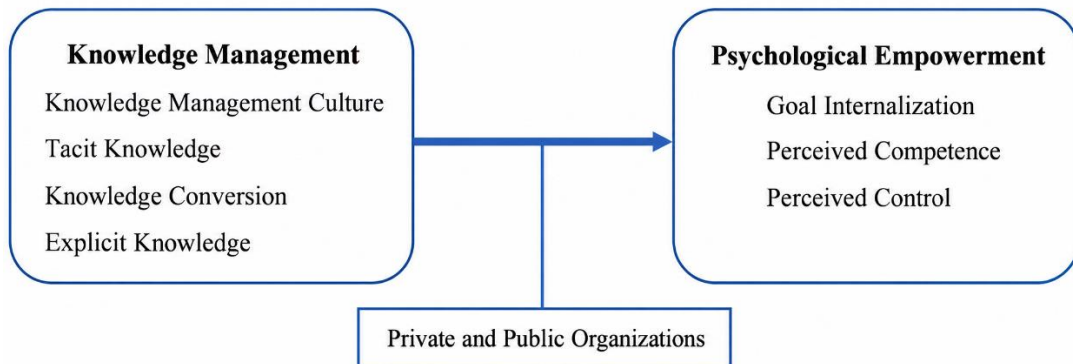


Figure 1. Research framework.

4. RESULTS

After the collected data were coded and data cleaning was performed, the data were analyzed, and the results were displayed using tables and figures.

Table 1. Model Fit Values.

Factor	Chi-square	DF	Probability level	Number of statements		Chi-square/DF	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA	Cronbach alpha after CFA
				Before	After								
Goal internalization	0.693	2	0.707	5	3	0.346	0.999	0.995	0.999	1.000	0.003	0.000	0.803
Perceived control	3.317	2	0.190	5	4	1.658	0.997	0.978	0.994	0.998	0.015	0.039	0.729
Perceived competence	0.110	1	0.740	5	3	0.110	1	0.998	1	1	0.001	0.00	0.837
Knowledge management culture	12.766	9	0.173	7	4	1.418	0.992	0.974	0.989	0.997	0.038	0.031	0.830
Knowledge conversion	9.580	6	0.143	7	4	1.597	0.994	0.972	0.995	0.998	0.015	0.037	0.871
Explicit knowledge	3.371	7	0.849	7	3	0.482	0.998	0.991	0.998	1.00	0.008	0.00	0.806
Tacit knowledge	12.560	9	0.184	7	4	1.396	0.992	0.976	0.995	0.998	0.014	0.030	0.874

Table 1 presents the items explaining knowledge management and psychological empowerment, which were confirmed through CFA. The values in Table 1 ensure that the model is fit for accepting the values for further analysis. Some items were dropped, possibly because of differences in context. The probability levels were greater than 0.05, allowing us to accept the model.

All other values (GFI, AGFI, NFI, CFI, RMR, and RMSEA) did not provide evidence for rejecting the model. Therefore, the model was accepted.

Table 2. Mean and t- test values of psychological empowerment and knowledge management.

Factor	Mean			t-test for equality of means with p-value
	Total	Public	Private	
Goal internalization (GI)	4.07	4.0698	3.9891	-0.080 (0.169)
Perceived control (PC)	3.84	3.8000	3.8987	0.0987 (0.100)
Perceived competence (PCOM)	4.44	4.4275	4.4336	0.006 (0.904)
Knowledge management culture (KM)	3.63	3.4286	3.7606	0.332 (0.000**)
Knowledge conversion (KC)	3.17	3.4052	2.8960	0.509 (0.000**)
Explicit knowledge (EK)	3.34	3.4673	3.2000	0.267 (0.000**)
Tacit knowledge (TK)	3.35	3.5482	3.1540	0.394 (0.000**)
Psychological empowerment (P_E)	4.11	4.1071	4.0991	0.008 (0.855)
Knowledge management (KM_T)	3.37	3.1696	3.5453	0.375 (0.000**)

Note: ** Significant at the 1% level.

Table 2 shows the status of psychological empowerment, showing the significant presence of goal internalization, perceived control, and perceived competence. Among the variables of psychological empowerment, perceived control was low compared to goal internalization and perceived competence. This shows that organizations are sharing their mission and vision with employees, and employees have understood what they are doing and why in their organization. However, they perceived that they were not getting the authority needed to make decisions regarding the achievement of the formulated goals.

In comparison with psychological empowerment, knowledge management variables were found to have a lower status. Among the knowledge management variables, knowledge conversion had the lowest status. Knowledge in a person's skin and brain, that is, tacit knowledge, is similar to explicit knowledge. This shows that the system of knowledge storage and repositories has not yet been developed.

Although employees gain knowledge through experience or exposure, organizations do not seem to be realizing the true benefits of knowledge creation and acquisition in the absence of proper knowledge storage and dissemination mechanisms, as well as because of the psychological behavior of holding information for personal competitive reasons. In the case of retirement or layoffs, individuals retain the information, indicating that knowledge retention is poor in the Nepalese service sector. Organizations are unable to codify this brain knowledge into a comprehensible and usable form.

No significant difference was found between private and public organizations regarding psychological empowerment. However, a significant difference was found between private and public organizations regarding knowledge management. Private organizations have more knowledge-management practices than public organizations.

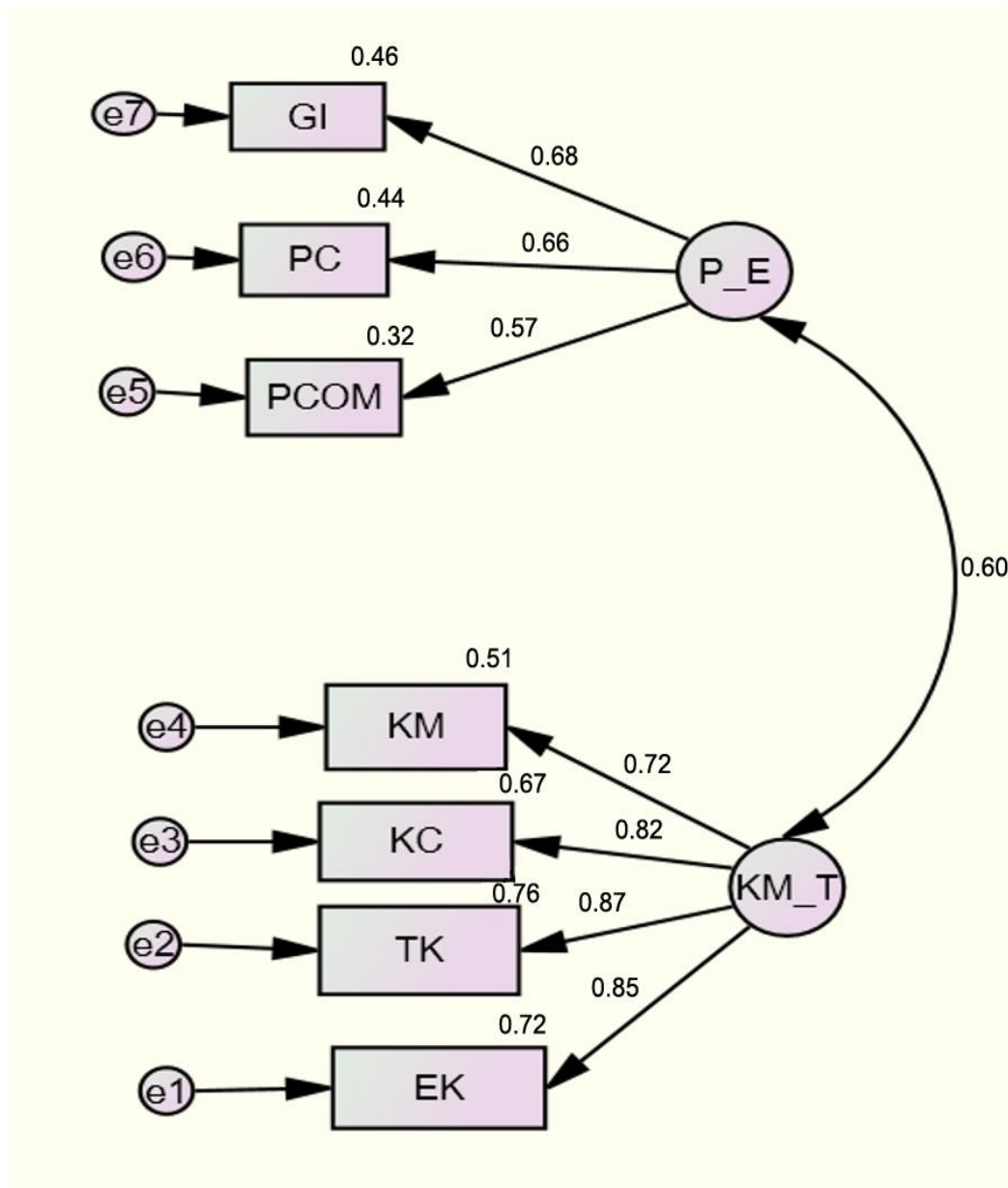


Figure 2. Relationship between knowledge management and psychological empowerment.

Note: In the figure, Goal Internalization (GI), Perceived control (PC), Perceived competence (PCOM), Knowledge management culture (KM), Knowledge conversion (KC), Explicit knowledge (EK), Tacit knowledge (TK), Psychological empowerment (P_E), Knowledge management (KM_T).

Table 3. Criterion values of model fit (Figure 2) for the relationship.

Relation of psychological empowerment with knowledge management	Chi-square	DF	Probability level	Chi-square /DF	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA
	15.639	13	0.110	1.203	0.990	0.971	0.943	0.978	0.015	0.036

The values provided in Table 3 ensure that the model is fit. The probability levels were greater than 0.05, allowing us to accept the model. The other metrics (GFI, AGFI, NFI, CFI, RMR, and RMSEA) also did not support rejecting the model. Consequently, the model was deemed acceptable. As illustrated in Figure 2, the standardized loadings effectively elucidate the components of knowledge management and psychological empowerment.

Table 4. Correlation between psychological empowerment and knowledge management.

Items	Psychological empowerment	Goal internalization	Perceived competence	Perceived control
Knowledge management	0.558**	0.409**	0.276**	0.368**
Knowledge management culture	0.417**	0.358**	0.299**	0.309**
Tacit knowledge	0.394**	0.330**	0.229**	0.346**
Knowledge conversion	0.360**	0.314**	0.186**	0.323**
Explicit knowledge	0.405**	0.404**	0.241**	0.287**

Note: **, significant at 99%.

Table 4 presents that the variables of knowledge management and psychological empowerment are significantly correlated with each other at the 99% level of significance. Hence, they are indicated by **, indicating a significant relationship with each other, as stated by different researchers (Ghimire, 2022; Holsapple & Wu, 2011; Salajeghe et al., 2013).

4.1. Model Analysis

A stepwise regression analysis was performed to assess the influence of knowledge management on psychological empowerment. The regression model is represented by the following equation.

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \dots + b_kX_k + e \quad (1)$$

Psychological empowerment (PE) = Constant + b_1 Knowledge management culture (KM) + b_2 knowledge conversion (KC) + b_3 Tacit Knowledge (TK) + b_4 Explicit Knowledge (EK).

Table 5. Model Summary.

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R-squared	Std. Error of the estimate	F	Sig.
1	0.549	0.301	0.299	0.489	148.669	0.000
2	0.687	0.472	0.463	0.478	93.829	0.000
3	0.726	0.527	0.522	0.476	64.969	0.000

The values of R, R², and adjusted R² increased from Table 5 as the researcher added independent variables, such as explicit knowledge, knowledge management culture, and tacit knowledge. However, adding knowledge conversion as a variable did not impact psychological empowerment in this study. All three other variables were found to have a significant impact on psychological empowerment, explaining the dependent variable by the independent variables (52 units, .527). The ANOVA table also supported the same conclusion, as the F values were high and significant, with p values less than 0.05. However, it was also noted that knowledge conversion had no significant impact on the psychological empowerment of employees in the service sector.

An additional increase of one unit in explicit knowledge is responsible for an increase of approximately 22.7 units (22.7) in psychological empowerment for an employee, provided that the effects of other variables are kept constant. In other words, if an employee receives one unit of explicitly expressed knowledge, their empowerment will increase by 22.7 units, while keeping the effects of other variables constant.

A single unit increase in the culture of knowledge management is responsible for boosting psychological empowerment by approximately 22 units (21.7) if the influence of other variables remains unchanged. In other words, when an employee experiences a one-unit increase in knowledge-management culture, their empowerment is enhanced by 22 units, with the effects of the other variables held constant.

For each one-unit increase in tacit knowledge, an employee's psychological empowerment increases by twelve units (12.2), if all other factors remain unchanged. In other words, when an employee gains one unit of tacit knowledge, their empowerment level increases by 12 units, provided that the influence of other variables remains

constant. However, the sub-variable of knowledge conversion cannot determine the dependent variable of psychological empowerment.

Table 6. Coefficient table with collinearity.

Particulars	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
	Beta	Standard error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
Constant	2.952	0.086	-	34.161	0.000	-	-
a. Explicit knowledge	0.129	0.030	0.227	4.364	0.000	0.454	2.200
b. Knowledge management culture	0.133	0.027	0.217	4.863	0.000	0.615	1.625
c. Tacit knowledge	0.072	0.030	0.122	2.408	0.016	0.479	2.089

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant), EK.
b. Predictors: (Constant), EK, KM.
c. Predictors: (Constant), EK, KM, TK.

The impact of explicit knowledge was the highest, whereas that of tacit knowledge was the lowest. The impact of the other sub-variable, knowledge management culture, also appears to be nearly equal to the impact made by explicit knowledge, whereas the sub-variable knowledge conversion was excluded by the model, as shown in Table 6. The VIF values were less than three; hence, multicollinearity was not a problem in the model. Other tests were performed by the researcher to determine whether the model fulfilled its assumptions.

The histogram shows that the residuals were normally distributed. A normal P-P plot shows that the residuals are normally distributed. A null plot indicates a random pattern. There was no problem with heteroscedasticity in the data. The one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that the error terms were normally distributed because the p-value of the test was $0.263 > 0.05$.

Table 7. Testing of hypotheses.

Hypotheses Statements	Result	Remarks
H1: Knowledge management culture has a significant positive impact on psychological empowerment.	Accepted	$R^2 = 0.463$ along with explicit knowledge, $\beta = 0.217$, $t = 4.863$, $p = 0.000$
H2: Tacit knowledge has a significant positive impact on psychological empowerment.	Accepted	$R^2 = 0.521$ along with explicit knowledge and knowledge management culture, $\beta = 0.122$, $t = 2.408$, $p = 0.016$
H3: Knowledge conversion has a significant positive impact on psychological empowerment.	Rejected	No predictor of R^2 so no β , t , and p
H4: Explicit knowledge has a significant positive impact on psychological empowerment.	Accepted	$R^2 = 0.463$, $\beta = 0.227$, $t = 4.364$, $p = 0.000$
H5: There is a significant difference in knowledge management between private and public organizations.	Accepted	Mean difference = 0.375 and $P = 0.000$
H6: There is a significant difference in psychological empowerment between private and public organizations.	Rejected	Mean difference = 0.008 and $p = 0.855$

Table 7 presents the results of hypothesis testing, indicating whether each hypothesis was accepted or rejected based on the research findings. The hypotheses were evaluated using the statistical results obtained from the data analysis, and the outcomes are summarized in Table 7.

5. DISCUSSION

Confirmatory analysis confirmed that goal internalization, perceived control, and perceived competence play a role in fostering psychological empowerment within Nepal's service sector. This finding is consistent with the explanations offered by Spreitzer (1995); Thomas and Velthouse (1990); Salajeghe et al. (2013); Gautam and Ghimire (2017); and Adhikari (2015). The mean status shown in Table 2 also supports the presence of psychological

empowerment, confirming Adhikari's (2015) findings. However, employees perceive a low degree of control compared to the level of goal internalization and perceived competence. A low degree of power delegation and decentralization could explain this. Lack of trust, training and development, delegation of authority, but not accountability, could explain this result. With low succession development practices, there is a high chance that this situation will continue.

Under goal internalization, employees are not enthusiastic about achieving the set goals. This may be because they do not participate in setting goals, or their skills and capabilities do not comply with the demands of the work to be done or the goal to be achieved. Employees also do not perceive that important responsibilities are part of their jobs. This also shows that organizations cannot make employees feel the importance of the job, as stated by Gagné, Senécal, and Koestner (1997). Goal internalization of public organizations and private organizations does not seem to be significantly different, which contrasts with the findings of Kaur and Lomash (2015), as well as the status of perceived competence, which contrasts with the findings of Kaur and Lomash (2015), showing no significant difference between public and private organizations.

Knowledge management is present in the Nepalese service sector, as all factors of knowledge management, such as knowledge management culture, tacit knowledge, knowledge conversion, and explicit knowledge, have been confirmed through confirmatory factor analysis, showing alignment with Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) explanation. The Nepalese service sector is in its infancy in knowledge management, as the status of knowledge management culture seems to be sound in comparison to the status of tacit knowledge, explicit knowledge, and knowledge conversion, as shown in the table, supporting the findings of Maharjan (2017). The findings of this study confirm those of previous studies (Chalise, 2011; Chaudhary, 2014) by showing a relatively sound status of knowledge management in private organizations compared to public organizations.

Although the processes of knowledge conversion and tacit knowledge are identified as weak, they serve as essential bases for the creation and advancement of knowledge (Borges, 2012). The low practice of knowledge sharing in the Nepalese sector explains this result. This also shows that service-sector organizations must invest more in information technology use, development, and network formation so that the infrastructure and architecture needed for knowledge management can be used by the service sector. Regression analysis confirms that knowledge management affects employees' psychological empowerment; however, employees in the Nepalese sector are weakly empowered because of a lack of knowledge conversion and tacit knowledge, which may be the cause of the service organizations' subpar performance. Hence, the Nepalese service sector must strengthen the status of tacit knowledge and knowledge conversion through training, seminars, workshops, and participative management approaches, as suggested by different researchers (Chaudhary, 2014), to ensure its long-term survival. Discussion provided by unpublished Ph.D. theses is used in this research because they are provided to the library of Tribhuvan University for research purposes, and the library has consented to use them. It is necessary to incorporate the findings provided by these theses in this research because it is difficult to find all published data discussing knowledge management practices and psychological empowerment practices, considering the context of Nepal. Both published and unpublished materials were used in this study.

In this context, it seems that employees are unable to assess how a knowledge management culture can be developed and its importance in developing employees' competencies. The correlation table also confirms these findings. People perceive control through the presence of tacit knowledge, but they are unable to correlate it with perceived control. Table 4 further indicates that explicit knowledge facilitates employees in internalizing organizational goals. Sharing the mission and vision, as well as strategic goals and plans, may help employees internalize organizational goals more effectively; however, this appears to be lacking in the Nepalese service sector.

Psychological empowerment and knowledge management were significantly correlated. However, the findings also indicate that the absence of in-depth insight among employees may result only in the perception that knowledge management and psychological empowerment are interrelated; in reality, however, a void may exist due to the exclusion of knowledge conversion and the low impact of tacit knowledge in empowering employees. This is also

supported by the findings of a significant relationship between the two variables, as shown in Figure 2, confirming the notions of other researchers (Kang, Lee, & Kim, 2017).

The interconnections between knowledge management and psychological empowerment were validated, highlighting a reciprocal relationship between these factors. Nevertheless, the findings from the descriptive analysis suggest that employees who are psychologically empowered but lack strong knowledge-management abilities might pose challenges for the service sector in the future. This is due to the significant positive link between knowledge management and psychological empowerment. In addition, knowledge management can significantly impact psychological empowerment.

6. CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

Knowledge management and psychological empowerment are practiced in Nepalese organizations. They are related to each other, and knowledge management can enhance employees' psychological empowerment in this context. However, public organizations should place more emphasis on empowering employees psychologically through knowledge management.

Despite this, another bitter truth has been revealed, which confirms that organizations cannot utilize knowledge conversion to psychologically empower employees. The use of tacit knowledge is also minimal, even though these two variables related to intangible resources might empower employees to a high degree of effectiveness. To empower employees in the service sector, coded knowledge, as well as the knowledge present in the human brain, must be managed properly. Management and employees must also understand that empowered employees add value to effectively managing knowledge in organizations. For this, the mission and vision developed by organizations need to be shared with employees and discussed with them. Proper training and skill-development programs, as well as long-term development programs for employees and management levels, must be conducted from time to time to upgrade and update employees' knowledge. Employees who can handle their jobs effectively and efficiently should be given the authority to make the right decisions at the right time for the effective delivery of services.

This study can contribute more to the practice of knowledge management and psychological empowerment in the Nepalese service sector. Theoretically, it concludes that the items that are emphasized and practiced in the global context might not be useful and effective in the same way they are used, but should be contextualized based on the nature of the employees, work, working environment, and structure of the organization, because the items have not been confirmed as they have been confirmed at the global level. Practically, the contribution of this study is that the significance of knowledge management in empowering employees cannot be denied by management. Therefore, investment is necessary in the field of infrastructure development of information and communication technology so that knowledge can be shared, used, created, and customized according to the needs of the employees to perform any function.

6.1. Managerial Implications

To develop empowered employees, organizations must develop a knowledge management culture within the organization. The mechanisms and systems necessary to make knowledge conversion effective within organizations should be emphasized.

Both the personalization of knowledge and the codification of knowledge should be integrated into the organizational system. Organizations need to promote workshops, seminars, brainstorming, and discussions to empower employees. There is a high probability that organizations may lose tacit knowledge with the employees they lay off. Therefore, organizations should attempt to capture this knowledge through knowledge conversion to empower the employees who remain in the organization.

Service-providing organizations should emphasize the use of a resource-based approach to empower employees psychologically through the effective management of required knowledge. Because employees are the only ones in

charge of creating and providing services, they must believe that they can do anything to provide customers with any kind of service. To ensure this, organizations should prioritize policies and regulations that ensure that available knowledge in the organization is shared with the employees concerned. Before sharing knowledge among stakeholders, organizations should first identify the 'knowledge' as well as the 'knowledge holder.'

If employees are clear about their tasks and the skills necessary to fulfill them, the services provided by employees would be far more effective. Training, formal and informal gatherings, formal and informal networks for employee brainstorming, seminars, conferences, and talk programs, all needed components of knowledge management, are necessary to make these things effective. This would not only make the service rarer but also inspire employees to perform better because employees would perceive that their roles in the organization are highly significant.

In addition, exposure to both domestic and foreign knowledge-sharing platforms would add value in strengthening the link between knowledge management and psychological empowerment.

As knowledge is within the minds of employees, it can be transferred to others through apprenticeships, which require a long process and duration. To retain the knowledge of employees who are going to be laid off, the development of nodes and repositories is essential in organizations through short- or long-term training and development programs.

6.2. Future Research Implications

This research will not be sufficient to address the issues related to knowledge management and the psychological empowerment of service-sector industries in Nepal, as this is only the initiation with a small effort in this sector. This research could only make other researchers realize that there are many issues to be studied in this sector to take it towards sustainable development.

In the future, research could be conducted by considering all service-providing organizations to make the study more representative holistically, as this research is limited to the four industries under the service sector. Second, a comparative analysis between product and service sector organizations may be conducted, which would provide in-depth insights regarding the concepts, constructs, and their relationships. Age, experience, gender, industry, and the size of the organization can be considered for further analysis.

Methodologically, it could be enriched by using a mixed approach, that is, the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. An integration model using Granger causality tests can be used for the analysis, or other analytical software such as SmartPLS could be used. As this research is based on non-probability sampling, future researchers may apply probability sampling methods. The literature could be reviewed in depth to extract distinct variations at the global, Asian, and local levels in Nepal.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to completing the questionnaire. All responses were anonymized/de-identified to protect participant confidentiality.

Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

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