

# Does servant Leadership create knowledge sharing intensions among employees? (Study of Higher Education Commission of Pakistan)

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## Abstract

Current study is intended to explore the existence of servant leadership in HEC and its impact on the knowledge sharing intensions among employees. The sample of the study was 150 respondents from HEC. Servant leadership was taken as independent, knowledge sharing intension as dependent and attitude, perceived behavioral control and norms towards knowledge sharing were taken as mediating variable. The closed ended questionnaire based on five point likert scale was used for the data collection. The instrument reliability and validity was checked through cronbach alpha and exploratory factor analysis. The One sample T-test was used to check whether servant leadership and knowledge sharing intensions exist in HEC and Structure equation modeling was used to check their relationship and impact of servant leadership on knowledge sharing intensions. One sample T-test shows that servant leadership style, attitude, perceived behavioral control and norms towards knowledge sharing and intensions to share knowledge exist in HEC. Result of SEM influence of the servant leadership on Attitude, Subjective Norms and Perceived Behavioral Control is 0.95, 0.689 and 0.228 at p value 0.000 which shows that influence is significant at 99 % confidence level. Similarly the influence of the Attitude, Subjective Norms and servant leadership on the knowledge sharing intension of the employees is 0.021, 0.374 and 0.014 respectively and these influence are significant but only influence of Perceived Behavioral Control related to Knowledge Sharing on the knowledge sharing intension of the employees is -0.017 which is not significant. It is concluded that servant leadership style directly and indirectly through mediates variable like Attitude, Subjective Norms and Perceived Behavioral Control significantly influence the knowledge sharing intension of the employees of Higher Education Commission.

**Keywords:** Servant Leadership, Knowledge Sharing Intensions, HEC Pakistan

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Knowledge is unique and valuable asset entrenched in the mind of people and organizational processes and can be source of sustainable competitive advantage. Knowledge sharing due to its importance in the process of knowledge creation, innovation and organizational learning has received enormous attention (Hooff & Ridder, 2004, Donate & Guadamillas, 2011). Individuals who are ready to share their knowledge are the key for the effective knowledge management (Lin, 2006). Nonaka (1994) highlighted the significance of knowledge sharing of individuals in knowledge intensive organizations. People in the knowledge driven organizations should be provided with the kind of leadership where the workers are given sufficient responsibility and authority so he/she at workplace can have control over his/her life (Singh, 2008).

It is admitted fact that European countries are seemed to be torchbearers in innovative and creative knowledge (explicit and implicit) in the existing Knowledge Era. Secret behind success of European countries is based on main three pillars integration, convergent and cohesion. It is well acceptable fact that role of leadership is integral to the effective knowledge management. Although it is evident that in knowledge centric organizations leadership can influence the people and practices (MacNeil, 2003) especially leadership's ability to persuade their knowledge workers so they willingly share their knowledge (Politis, 2005) but very little is known that which leadership style is more effective and appropriate (Analoui, Doloriert and Sambrook, 2013, Politis, 2005; Crawford, 2005; Singh, 2008).

In the recent years the concept of servant leadership gained importance to increase the performance of the employees as well as organization. Wheatley (2004) has suggested that servant leadership is an appropriate leadership style for knowledge-based organizations. One reason for the lack of consensus is that like other management theories about the concept of leadership is intensely connected to culture. Actions and responses of both the leaders and followers vary across the cultures as the perception of behaviors being legitimate and apposite is reflected in their respective societies (Amany ,Shahin, Peter & Wright, 2004). There are handfuls of researches that have examined the essential leadership style desirable to improve the scope of Knowledge Management (Politis, 2005; Crawford, 2005; Singh, 2008). There is considerable gap in the research that needs to be filled, although it is evident that in knowledge centric organizations leadership can influence the people and practices (MacNeil, 2003) especially leaders should have the ability to persuade their Knowledge Workers so they willingly share their knowledge (Politis, 2005).

In describing servant leadership, Bass (2000) argued that the strength of servant leadership was the focus upon the follower's learning, growth, and autonomy. Based upon these characteristics, Bass suggested that the theory of servant leadership would play a role in the leadership of the learning organization. There is a need for further studies to provide accurate explanation of knowledge sharing intentions of individual professional groups and the appropriate leadership style required so current research study is intended to extend the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen 1991) by presenting servant leadership as an effective style of leadership for creating an atmosphere where knowledge workers can collaborate with each other for sharing and creating knowledge thus encouraging intentions to share knowledge. There is a need for further studies to provide accurate explanation of knowledge sharing intentions of individual professional groups and the appropriate leadership style required, thus this research aim to study the role of servant leadership in strengthening the HEC employee's knowledge sharing intentions.

### **1.2 Objectives of the study**

There are the following main objectives of the study

1. To identify the existence of the servant leadership style, knowledge sharing attitude, perceived behavioral control towards knowledge sharing and subjective norms towards knowledge sharing and knowledge sharing intension among the employees of the HEC.
2. To evaluate the influence of the servant leadership style on knowledge sharing intensions.

### **1.3 Research Questions of the study**

There are the main followings research questions of the study which are extracted from the objectives of the study.

1. Is knowledge sharing attitude, perceived behavioral control towards knowledge sharing, subjective norms towards knowledge sharing, servant leadership, and knowledge sharing intension exist in the Higher Education Commission Of The Pakistan?
2. Is servant leadership style relationship influence the knowledge sharing intensions of the employees mediated by knowledge sharing attitude, perceived behavioral control towards knowledge sharing, and subjective norms towards knowledge sharing?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Servant leadership**

Classic statement of Greenleaf's (1977) can well define servant leadership: "The servant leader is servant first. It begins with a natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (p. 27). Servant leaders help others to grow professionally and personally going beyond their own self interest (Greenleaf, 1977; Lussier and Achua, 2007). Servant leaders encourage followers to go beyond and above their own immediate interests, thus enhancing the organizational performance by pro-social and altruistic behaviors (Parolini, Patterson and Winston, 2008; Organ, Podsakoff, and MacKenzie, 2006). Dierendonck (2011) identified different models having 44 characteristics associated with Servant Leadership but these can be rearranged into six major categories: Empowering and developing people, Humility, Stewardship, Interpersonal acceptance, Authenticity, Providing direction.

### **2.2 Knowledge Sharing Intensions**

Knowledge sharing can be studied by using the Theory of Planned Behavior as it is an intentional behavior, intentions according to TPB "are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behavior" (Ajzen, 1991). According to TPB there are three factors namely; attitudes, subjective norms and perceived control can influence the individual's intentions. First factor of TPB is attitudes it can be defined as the evaluations of the knowledge workers regarding knowledge sharing being favorable or unfavorable (Witherspoon, Bergner,

Cockrell and Stone, 2012; Zhang and Ng, 2012). Subjective norms can be defined as perceived social pressures where knowledge workers feel to share or not to share the knowledge (Wu and Zhu, 2012). Third factor in TPB is perceived behavioral control defined as the required resources, skills and opportunities available to the knowledge workers so they can share knowledge (Tohidinia & Mosakhani, 2010).

Lin and Lee (2004) developed and tested the model by using Theory of Planned Behavior to predict the factors that can influence and encourage the senior manager's knowledge sharing intentions and behavior. Similarly Jeon, Kim and Koh (2011) used TPB to study knowledge sharing attitudes, intentions and behaviors and Chatzoglou and Vraimaki (2009) studied the knowledge sharing behavior of Bank employees by using TPB in Greece. Based on the survey results on HEC's employees' knowledge sharing behavior collected from 286 Korean HEC's employees Ryu, Ho, Han (2003) concluded subjective norms were found to have the strongest total effects on behavioral intentions to share knowledge of HEC's employees through direct and indirect path by attitude. Attitude was found to be the second important factor influencing HEC's employees' intentions. By using the models of above mentioned studies following hypothesis are proposed.

### **2.3 Servant leadership and knowledge sharing intentions:**

Leadership plays important role in either enhancing or detracting worker's knowledge sharing intentions (Carmeli, Atwater, Levi, 2010). In the knowledge intensive organizations encouraging behaviors are prerequisite for creating the behavioral context where individuals collaborate, share information and endorse cooperative decision-making processes, thus improving the group performance (Carmeli and Waldman, 2010). Servant leadership's empowering and developmental behaviors, with the right mixture of providing autonomy and direction, are prone to result in a high-quality dyadic relationship, which in turn is associated with higher engagement in challenging tasks. Correia de Sousa and Dierendonck (2010) identified four characteristics of servant leadership that can be associated with knowledge workers. (A) *Work as a calling*: Servant leadership is the holistic approach to work might play a key role in fulfilling the need for work to have a purpose and to be intrinsically satisfying. (B) *Membership Association*: In order to fulfill the need for the formation of knowledge worker's identity and get connected to their peers servant leader can develop and encourage the communal focus. (C) *Need for autonomy*: servant leader's ability to share power in the process of decision making can lead to empowerment of knowledge workers thus giving control over their work. (D) *Serving others* is basic principle that will reinforce and support the three above described relationships.

Hinds and Pfeffer (2003) suggested that, people tend to share knowledge in a climate where individuals are highly trusting of others and of the organization. Trust is found to reduce one's fear of losing his/her uniqueness which ultimately enhance one's intention and behavior of knowledge sharing (Renzl, 2008). In building this trust servant leaders can play their role as researchers have suggested servant leader value integrity and competence in order to foster interpersonal trust – an essential ingredient in servant leadership (Russell, 2001; Russell and Stone, 2002). People follow a servant-leader “voluntarily, because they are persuaded that the leader's path is the right one for them” (Greenleaf, 1998: 44); a leader trusts the others' intuitive sense to discover for themselves which is the right path to take. As a result follower is developed by the servant leader who presents himself as a role model so as to inspire followers, thereby enhancing his trust, information and feedback (Liden et al., 2008). In addition, creative and innovative atmosphere is also endeavored by servant leaders (Neubert et al., 2008).

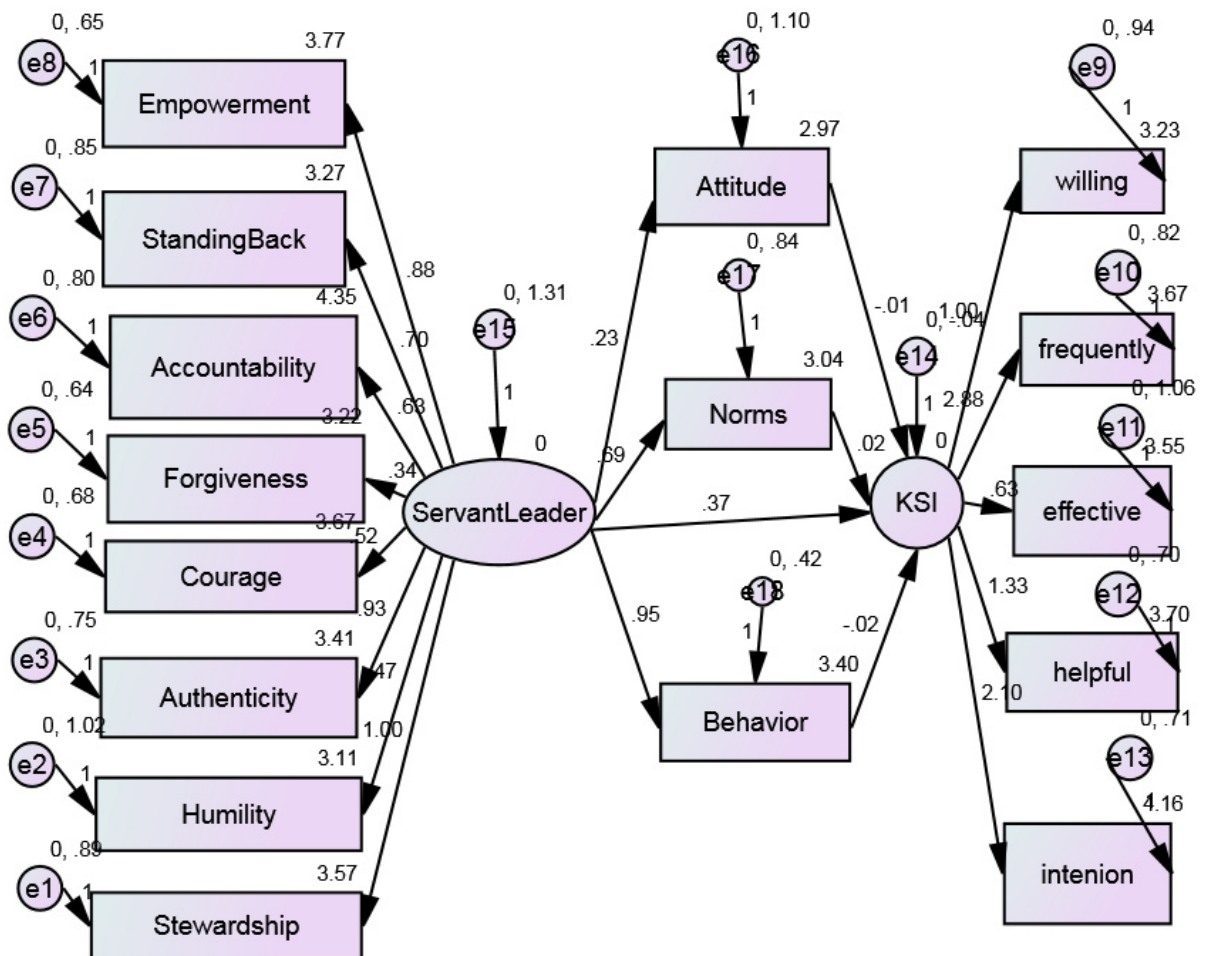
According to Beckman (1999), the sole responsibility of top echelons of the company in knowledge management process is to motivate all its employees, provide them with equal opportunities and developmental avenues, and scientifically measure and reward those performances, behaviors and attitudes that are required for effective knowledge management. The ability to visibly appreciate, consider, and care for followers is thought to be a valuable attribute of servant leaders (Batten, 1997; Greenleaf, 1977; Kouzes and Posner, 1995, 1993; Pollard, 1996; Russell, 2001). Servant leader can significantly influence the attitude of knowledge workers in a positive manner they can involve knowledge workers in crafting organizational vision, constructing an atmosphere of psychological well being and trust where the knowledge workers are encouraged to make experiments and take risk and feel empowered (Correia de Sousa and Dierendonck, 2010).

Servant leader can help develop communities of practice CoPs where knowledge workers can collaborate and share knowledge with others thus developing the culture where knowledge sharing becomes the norm. It was proposed by Johnson (2001) servant leadership's characteristic of self-awareness is benefit because it relates with simplicity, altruism and consciousness. Based on this assumption it was concluded by Parolini (2007) that the ethical distinction of the servant leadership is his/her conscious altruistic and sacrificial service towards highest priority needs of followers (Parolini, Patterson & Winston, 2009) thus servant leaders can allow the knowledge workers to focus and concentrate on their work by removing the unnecessary hurdles and overheads

and provide opportunities for training and development that are tailored to the specific needs of knowledge workers, allowing for job crafting where people have control over their jobs and they can feel free to define their own work parameters. Based on the literature presented above following model is proposed.

### 3. Structural Equation Model

#### *Servant leadership and knowledge sharing intension*



### 4. Research Methodology

#### 4.1 Sampling and Data Collection:

The Population of the study was the total employees of the higher education commission of the Pakistan. These employees were associated with different departments like Human Resource Management Division, Attestation & Accreditation Division, Curriculum Division, Administration and Coordination Division, Research & Development Division, Learning & Innovation Division, Planning Division, Services Division and Finance Division. The sample of the study was 150 respondents from the above mentioned departments of the Higher Education Commission of the Pakistan. Sample of the study is set out on the basis of access to the respondents.

#### 4.2 Measurement Development:

Five constructs were measured in this research study: servant leadership, attitudes towards knowledge sharing, subjective norms towards knowledge sharing, perceived behavioral control related to knowledge sharing and knowledge sharing intentions. Multiple items were used to measure the five constructs. All survey items were

measured on five point likert scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree. Servant leadership was measured by using multi dimensional scale having 30 items and eight dimensions developed by Dierendonck and Nuijten (2010). Eight dimensions included were empowerment, standing back, accountability, forgiveness, courage, authenticity, humility, and stewardship. Scales for measuring attitude towards knowledge sharing, subjective norms regarding knowledge sharing and perceived behavioral control related to knowledge sharing were adapted from the study of Lin and Lee (2004) having four items each construct. Finally knowledge sharing intentions construct was measured by using five items based on the work of Chatzoglou and Eftichia Vraimaki (2009). Instrument validity and reliability was checked through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and cronbach alpha respectively. Structural equation Model was used to check the influence of the servant leader on attitude, perceived behavioral control and norms towards knowledge sharing and also on knowledge sharing intentions of HEC's employees.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Existing of Knowledge sharing Intension and Servant Leadership

The result of the one sample test in table (1) shows that all the characteristics of the servant leadership exist in the in the high level management of the higher education of the Pakistan. The Test value is 4 (Agree) which shows if these qualities of servant leadership exist then result will insignificant difference between the test value and response of the employees of the higher education commission of the Pakistan. The result of entire variables servant leadership and knowledge sharing intensions are insignificant ( $P > 0.05$ ) which indicate higher education commission higher management is knowledge oriented, dedicated and collaborative with their subordinates. They also empower their subordinate, provide them support in difficult task, make them accountable on their works, and provide them courage in innovative tasks. It also shows that the personality traits of the higher management are intuitive thinkers, collaborative, extraverted and knowledge oriented. Similarly culture of the HEC is knowledge sharing culture. Norms of HEC is based on knowledge sharing, attitude of the employees toward the knowledge sharing is positive and working style of employees is like a team. The intensions of the employees are also knowledge sharing with colleagues and subordinates. The result of the T-test shows that all characteristics of the servant leadership exist in the employees of the HEC, there is vigorous planned behavior and people have the positive intensions toward the knowledge sharing.

### 5.2 Model Fitness

The result of the model fitness shows that the degree of freedom is 120 having the 16 parametric, probability of getting a discrepancy as large as 8925.227 is .000 which is less than 0.05 and the discrepancy divided by degrees of freedom is  $8925.227 / 120 = 74.377$  these values shows that model is correct. In the model goodness of the fit index is as **RMR** (root mean square residual) is .203, **GFI** (goodness of fit index) is .494, **AGFI** (adjusted goodness of fit index) is .312, **PGFI** (parsimony goodness of fit index) is .363 and RMSEA equals 0.078 which is lower than 0.1. It concluded that all the value of the goodness and fitness of the model are appropriate and model is fit for the further analysis.

### 5.3 Structural Model findings

The summary of the result of the regression weights in table 2 shows that influence of the servant leadership on Attitude towards Knowledge Sharing, Subjective Norms towards Knowledge Sharing and Perceived Behavioral Control related to Knowledge Sharing is 0.95, 0.689 and 0.228 respectively at p value 0.000 which shows that influence is significant at 99 % confidence level. Similarly the influence of the Attitude towards Knowledge Sharing, Subjective Norms towards Knowledge Sharing and servant leadership on the knowledge sharing intension of the employees is 0.021, 0.374 and 0.014 respectively and these influence are significant but only influence of Perceived Behavioral Control related to Knowledge Sharing on the knowledge sharing intension of the employees is -0.017 which is not significant.

Contribution of all the measurements of the servant leadership like Stewardship, Humility, Authenticity, Courage, Forgiveness, Accountability, Standing Back and Empowerment is significant which is shown in table 2. It indicates that above mentioned characteristics are belong to the servant leadership. Similarly Contribution of all the measurements of the knowledge sharing intensions like willing to share knowledge, frequently share knowledge, effectively share knowledge, share the knowledge which is helpful for organization and knowledge sharing intensions is shown in table 2. It indicates that above mentioned characteristics are belong to knowledge sharing intensions.

On the basis of the above results it is concluded that servant leadership style directly and indirectly through mediates variable like Attitude towards Knowledge Sharing, Subjective Norms towards Knowledge Sharing and Perceived Behavioral Control related to Knowledge Sharing significantly influence the knowledge sharing

intension of the employees of Higher Education Commission.

### Conclusion

The Dimensions which are taken from the literature about the servant leadership, knowledge sharing intension and Attitude towards Knowledge Sharing, Subjective Norms towards Knowledge Sharing and Perceived Behavioral Control related to Knowledge which are shown in table 3 are empirically supported. All the research questions about leadership, knowledge sharing intension and Attitude towards Knowledge Sharing, Subjective Norms towards Knowledge Sharing and Perceived Behavioral Control related to Knowledge of the organization is proved at 99 % confidence level. The SEM result about that influence of the servant leadership on Attitude towards Knowledge Sharing, Subjective Norms towards Knowledge Sharing and Perceived Behavioral Control related to Knowledge Sharing is 0.95, 0.689 and 0.228 at p value 0.000 which shows that influence is significant at 99 % confidence level. Similarly the influence of the Attitude towards Knowledge Sharing, Subjective Norms towards Knowledge Sharing and servant leadership on the knowledge sharing intension of the employees is 0.021, 0.374 and 0.014 respectively and these influence are significant but only influence of Perceived Behavioral Control related to Knowledge Sharing on the knowledge sharing intension of the employees is -0.017 which is not significant. One sample T-test shows that servant leadership style, attitude, perceived behavioral control and norms towards knowledge sharing and intensions to share knowledge exist in HEC.

It concluded that that servant leadership style directly and indirectly through mediates variable like Attitude towards Knowledge Sharing, Subjective Norms towards Knowledge Sharing and Perceived Behavioral Control related to Knowledge Sharing significantly influence the knowledge sharing intension of the employees of Higher Education Commission. Only influence of the behavior on knowledge sharing intension of the employees of Higher Education Commission is not significant. It might be due to back ground of Higher Education Commission because it is governmental institute and its structure influence on the Perceived Behavioral Control related to Knowledge Sharing

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**Table 1**  
*Summary of the Result of T-test*

Test Value = 4						
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Servant Leader	8.751	149	.087	.16956	.1313	.2078
Planned Behavior	16.860	149	.452	.24593	.2171	.2747
Knowledge sharing intension	7.460	149	.641	.21067	.1549	.2665

**Table 3**  
*Summary of the dimensions of the endogenous variables*

<b>Servant Leadership attributes</b>	<b>Planned Behavior Theory</b>	<b>Knowledge Sharing Intension</b>
1. Empowerment	1. Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing	1. Sharing knowledge
2. Standing Back	2. Subjective Norms Towards Knowledge Sharing	2. Sharing knowledge frequently
3. Accountability	3. Perceived Behavioral Control related to Knowledge Sharing	3. Share knowledge effective way
4. Stewardship		4. Sharing knowledge which is helpful to the organization
5. Courage		5. Sharing knowledge on demand
6. Authenticity		
7. Humility		
8. Forgiveness		

**Table 2**  
*Summary of regressions Weights*

<b>Variable</b>		<b>Estimate</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>C.R.</b>	<b>P</b>
Behavior	<--- Servant Leader	0.95	0.038	24.717	***
Norms	<--- Servant Leader	0.689	0.039	17.734	***
Attitude	<--- Servant Leader	0.228	0.037	6.18	***
Knowledge Sharing Intension	<--- Norms	0.021	0.008	2.548	0.011
Knowledge Sharing Intension	<--- Servant Leader	0.374	0.039	9.575	***
Knowledge Sharing Intension	<--- Attitude	-0.014	0.006	-2.112	0.035
Knowledge Sharing Intension	<--- Behavior	-0.017	0.015	-1.135	0.256
Stewardship	<--- Servant Leader	1			
Humility	<--- Servant Leader	0.471	0.037	12.677	***
Authenticity	<--- Servant Leader	0.933	0.042	22.338	***
Courage	<--- Servant Leader	0.519	0.032	16.049	***
Forgiveness	<--- Servant Leader	0.338	0.029	11.672	***
Accountability	<--- Servant Leader	0.628	0.036	17.366	***
Standing Back	<--- Servant Leader	0.699	0.038	18.268	***
Empowerment	<--- Servant Leader	0.88	0.039	22.488	***
Willingness	<--- Knowledge Sharing Intension	1			
Frequency	<--- Knowledge Sharing Intension	2.883	0.267	10.78	***
Effectiveness	<--- Knowledge Sharing Intension	0.626	0.108	5.803	***
Helpful to organization	<--- Knowledge Sharing Intension	1.334	0.14	9.539	***
Intension	<--- Intension	2.103	0.201	10.482	***



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