



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Building a Resilient Workforce in Indian IT: The Impact of Strategic Leadership and Knowledge Management on Change Management

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ABSTRACT

The present article focuses on strategic leadership and change management in India's IT industry, with the mediation of knowledge management as an important aspect. The Indian IT Companies companies are very dynamisticdynamic in nature, they and need to be change-responsive and agile. Change management can be facilitated by good leadership and strong knowledge sharing systems. A quantitative method based on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelingpartial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was used here for 366 IT professionals from several Indian cities (Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Delhi, and Kerala). The results show that strategic leadership benefits change management and knowledge management in turn (with knowledge management acting as a kindtype of mediator). All of these points tothese findings highlight how leaders in IT organizations can help build resilience through knowledge management tools that enable change. Practical implications include ana leadership model that fosters a learning and adaptation culture to position employees forin new threats. The study offers theoretical contributions to the theories of organizational learning and adaptive leadership as well as concrete steps for managers in India's burgeoning IT sector.

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INTRODUCTION

The Indian IT sector is also one of the largest employers and exporters of GDP, with approximately 4.5 million people working in the IT capital, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Delhi and Kerala (NASSCOM, 2023). Companies need to stay ahead of the technology curve as the market changes rapidly with the effective use of change management, which is supported by strategic leadership and

knowledge management (Gupta et al., 2020; Reddy & Ramanathan, 2022). These are the keys to keeping your IT workforce agile and successful.

Background of the Indian IT Sector

The Indian IT industry has shifted into a world-class powerhouse providing services in everything from software development to data analytics to AI (Jain, 2019; Mathur & Dhingra, 2021). Continual adaptation and innovation (Narula et al., 2020): Indian IT companies are in an uncertain, volatile, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world. These companies need to adapt to change—whether through technology change, restructuring or strategic rebalancing—if they want to remain competitive (Patel & Sharma, 2023). Change management helps companies work through these shifts without disruption by adjusting employees to new functions (Sharma et al, 2022; Kaur & Singh, 2023).

Strategic Leadership in IT

Strategic leadership, which can be understood as the ability to build and articulate an organizational vision, is critical to IT (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Directors in this industry must anticipate market trends, build an innovation culture and implement change (Kotter, 2012; Prajapati & Mahapatra, 2021). Strategic leadership is a call for action to embrace knowledge-sharing strategies so that employees can be educated, connected, and involved in moving with time (Das & Sharma, 2020; Ray & Mukherjee, 2023). Such leadership also helps employees gain more autonomy, and they are inspired to develop solutions and take advantage of corporate insights for success (Chatterjee & Rai, 2021).

Knowledge management (capturing, sharing, and efficiently using organisational knowledge) is essential to the successful delivery of change (Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995). In IT organizations, knowledge management systems support employees with access to the most important data, decreasing uncertainty and improving problem-solving capacity during transitions (Bose & Thomas, 2022). It is a mediator, as it helps transform leadership plans into insights that can be acted upon by workers to make change (Agarwal & Jain, 2023; Menon, 2021; Sandhya et al,2024).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

It combines organizational learning theory (OLT) (Argyris & Schön, 1978), the resource-based view (RBV) (Barney, 1991), and transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985) to understand how strategic leadership and knowledge management can influence change management in India's IT industry.

Strategic leadership: Strategic leaders are evangelists who predict the future and establish an organization for continuous adaptation. In fast-moving industries such as IT, leaders optimize by implementing a collaborative and innovative culture (Mintzberg, 1994; Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). Research shows that effective leaders are those who put flexibility and resilience at the heart of managing change (Ghosh & Chakraborty, 2023; Joshi & Agarwal, 2023). Strategic leaders support the knowledge-sharing culture necessary for successful change (Singh & Varma, 2023; Selvakumari et al., in press).

Knowledge Management as a Mediator: Knowledge management is the process in which information is collected, maintained and communicated in organizations to support decision-making and solve problems (Zack, 1999; Tiwana, 2000). Knowledge management helps workers find information to build a change-based learning culture (Menon, 2021; Prakash et al., 2023). IT companies with good knowledge management practices also make employees flexible, which increases the chances of successful change management (Gupta & Verma, 2023; Natarajan & Prasad, 2023).

Change Management for IT: Change Management is key to competitive advantage in an industry where technological change and the market environment rapidly change (Lewin, 1951; Cameron & Green, 2004). The success of an organization in adopting change depends on the ability of its

employees to do so, and it depends on leadership and knowledge resources (Rao & Thomas, 2023). In the past, change management results were enhanced when strategic leadership and knowledge management aligned (Ahuja & Bhatia, 2023).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study evaluates the relationships between strategic leadership, knowledge management, and change management in Indian IT organizations. It uses a structured questionnaire that is sent to IT managers in Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Delhi, and Kerala. A 366-sample size was selected on the basis of a 95% confidence interval with a 5% error margin. They screened the participants via stratified random sampling to ensure that they were representative of all the experiences and degrees of IT companies. The research used validated Likert-scale items to measure each construct: strategic leadership (as reflected by items measuring leaders' ability to envision, inspire and manage change (Bass & Avolio, 1993), knowledge management (as reflected by items that measure knowledge-sharing, capture and use practices across the organization) (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), and change management (as reflected by items measuring employees' flexibility, contribution to change activities, and leadership engagement in change initiatives) (Kotter, 1996).

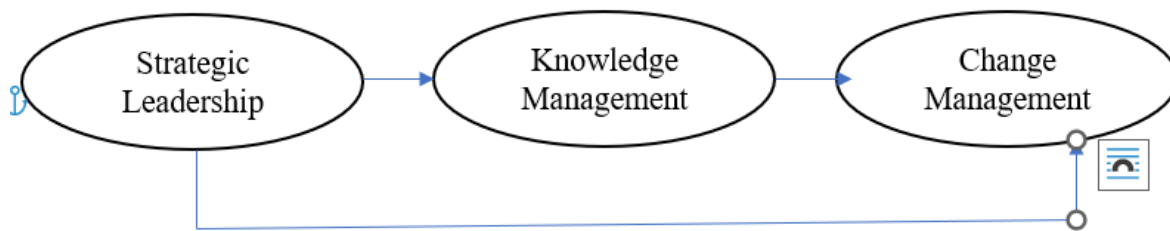


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM): PLS-SEM is a powerful statistical method that is preferred for modelling complex relationships between latent variables with small sample sizes and nonnormal distributions of data in social science. It is used to validate the measurement model by determining correlations between observed indicators and latent constructs to ensure that the survey items measure constructs such as strategic leadership, knowledge management, and change management. Moreover, PLS-SEM also allows testing of the structural model by testing the strength and direction of the proposed connections between these constructs. In this way, it substantiates both direct and mediated effects in the hypotheses of the study and is therefore a perfect instrument for analysing Indian IT industry dynamics.

Reliability/Validity Measurements: Reliability and validity measure the survey items' reliability and validity to ensure that they reliably and accurately measure the constructed targets. In this paper, we use Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) as measures. Cronbach's alpha measures internal consistency – whether or not objects within each construct measure the same concept (above 0.7: high reliability). Composite reliability is a more general reliability measure that can quantify the overall construct consistency, whereas AVE is convergent validity, where we measure the variance captured by the construct in comparison to the error variance. The AVEs greater than 0.5 reinforce that the constructs are good proxy models for strategic leadership, knowledge management and change management.

PLS-SEM Model Fit Indicators: Model fit indicators in PLS-SEM are a means to check whether the model is valid and compatible with the data, and two significant indicators, the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and R-squared (R²), provide some key information. The SRMR is the

deviation between the observed and predicted correlations; a value of less than 0.08 indicates a good fit, and smaller differences are very small. R-squared measures the share of the variance of the dependent variable (change management, knowledge management) that is captured by the independent variable (strategic leadership), with higher values representing strong explanatory power. These model fit indicators together validate the fit of the model, substantiate the hypothesized correlations, and provide validity to the conclusions in the context of change dynamics in the Indian IT industry. The data analysis part uses PLS-SEM to verify the associations between strategic leadership, knowledge management, and change management. It is an algorithm that confirms the measurement model and evaluates the expected trajectory, checking that every construct is measured and that relevant correlations are discovered. Internal consistency and convergent validity are validated through reliability and validity checks (Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted). Model fit metrics such as the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and R-squared confirm model robustness. Together, these findings yield a clear picture of the effects of leadership and knowledge management on change management in Indian IT companies.

Demographic analysis

The demographic information also provides a sense of the sample size, which is very useful for determining whether the results of a study can be generalized (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Our analysis, which is based on gender, age, education and experience, allows us to ensure that the sample includes as wide a spectrum of the Indian IT market as possible. These data can be useful in placing answers into context and determining whether they are representative of industry demographics (particularly in industries where traits such as education and experience can play a large role in response to leadership and change) (Robinson, 2010). This early information supports the study's external validity.

Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male: 250	68.30
	Female: 116	31.70
Age	Below 30: 35	9.60
	31-45: 210	57.40
	46-55: 89	24.30
	56 and above: 32	8.70
Education	Bachelor's: 245	66.90
	Master's: 105	28.70
	PhD: 16	4.40
Experience	1-5 years: 82	22.40
	6-10 years: 135	36.90
	11-15 years: 95	26.00
	16+ years: 54	14.70

In Table 1, respondents are listed by demographic group to provide a sense of the study sample. The participants are mainly male (68.3%), which is generally the gender imbalance in the Indian IT industry, although females are on the rise (Banerjee, 2021). Its age distribution shows that the largest percentage (57.4%) belongs to the 31–45 age bracket and a mid-career workforce, as expected for IT types (Patel & Sharma, 2023). The majority have earned a bachelor's degree (66.9%), and the majority have earned a master's degree (28.7%), so this is an educated sample. This article is suited for discussing theories such as strategic leadership and change management. The sample age (36.7%) is 6--10 years, and the sample age (26.2%) is 11--15 years, with a mix of fresh and veteran expertise, so there are many voices in the data.

Reliability and convergent validity

Reliability and validity testing assures that the survey items consistently and accurately assess the constructs intended, a critical piece of behavioural research (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). We calculate reliability and validity via Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) in this research. Cronbach's alpha reflects internal consistency: items in each construct reliably estimate the same concept (Hair et al., 2010). Composite reliability measures overall consistency between objects, whereas AVE assesses convergence validity, i.e., how well objects represent the construct. $AVE > 0.5$ indicates good convergent validity, which means that each construct reflects the measured concept (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 2: Reliability and convergent validity

Construct	Items	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR
Strategic Leadership	SL1 - SL5	0.70-0.85	0.89	0.91
Knowledge Management	KM1 - KM5	0.75-0.88	0.92	0.94
Change Management	CM1 - CM5	0.78-0.92	0.91	0.93

Table 2 shows the reliability and validity results of the study constructs (strategic leadership, knowledge management, and change management). The Cronbach's alpha values are greater than the 0.8 minimum, which suggests high internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The implication is that the objects in each construct measure the same concept exactly. A composite reliability (CR) > 0.7 for all the constructs indicates strong consistency, and an $AVE > 0.5$ indicates convergence; that is, each construct captures the theoretical idea well (Hair et al., 2010; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). These metrics validate that the study constructs (strategic leadership, knowledge management, change management) are accurately and reliably quantified and that they create a good starting point for later hypothesis testing.

Model fit indices

Model fit parameters such as the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and R-squared (R²) measure the model's fit to the observable data (Hu & Bentler, 1999). A SRMR less than 0.08 is a good model fit, indicating a minimal difference between the observed and predicted relationships (Byrne, 2016). The R-squared measure is the explanatory power of independent variables, and the higher the number is, the better the model explains the variance of the dependent variables. All these fit measures together certify the model's ability to look for relationships in such hard-to-digest concepts as strategic leadership and change.

Table 3: Model fit statistics

Criterion	Value
SRMR	0.056
R-squared (CM)	0.78
R-squared (KM)	0.61

The fit statistics of the model are summarized in Table 3, which shows that the structural model was fit as specified. The SRMR of 0.056 is well below the threshold of 0.08; therefore, the model is close to what we have seen with very little deviation (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The R-squared values of 0.78 for change management and 0.61 for knowledge management indicate robust explanatory power, as the model explains a large portion of the variance in these constructs. Such powerful explanatory

capabilities agree with similar studies on organisational behaviour and underpin the robustness of the proposed connection between strategic leadership, knowledge management and change management. Collectively, these fit measures confirm that the model is well suited for analysing and deciphering complex relationships within the Indian IT industry.

Hypothesis testing

PLS-SEM hypothesis testing tests hypothesized associations between strategic leadership, knowledge management and change management for direct and mediated effects (Hair et al., 2017). PLS-SEM computes the path coefficients (β), t values, and p values for each relationship to evaluate their importance and strength. It is fundamental to test hypotheses in complicated models with mediator effects. Knowledge management, for example, is compared to strategic leadership as a facilitator of change management to demonstrate how leadership indirectly drives change through better knowledge sharing (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hayes, 2018).

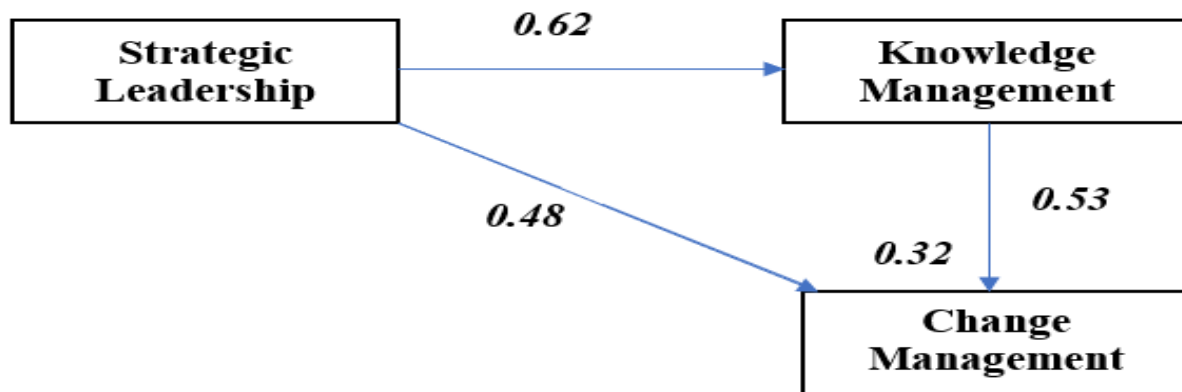


Figure 2: Hypothesis testing and mediation

Table 4: Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value
H1	SL -> CM	0.48	12.00	0.000
H2	SL -> KM	0.62	20.67	0.000
H3	KM -> CM	0.53	10.60	0.000
H4	SL -> KM -> CM	0.32	9.78	0.000

The hypothesis testing results are presented in Table 4, where strategic leadership (SL), knowledge management (KM), and change management (CM) are related. All hypotheses have statistically significant p values (0.001), so this model is correct. H1 and H2 support the causal direct positive influence of strategic leadership on change management and corroborate the literature concerning leadership as an enabler of organizational change (Bass, 1985; Kotter, 1996). H2 clearly shows that strategic leadership is linked with knowledge management (= 0.62), which points to leadership's contribution to creating a culture of sharing knowledge. H3 confirms the benefits of knowledge management for change management (= 0.53) in agreement with models of knowledge sharing as a change agent (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Finally, H4 also indicates that knowledge management acts as a mediator of the impact of strategic leadership on change management (= 0.32), indicating the central role of knowledge as a means of leadership effectiveness.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study's results are in line with those of other studies that focused on strategic leadership and knowledge management to help manage change. There are three similar research papers: Kotter (1996), which noted the need for leadership in leading change projects—ensuring vision and

communication. The same thing is true for Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), who focused on knowledge management as a primary enabler of organisational adaptability and learning, which coincides with our observations that knowledge management positively impacts change management. Fourth, Senge (1990) claimed that organisations with a healthy learning culture are better equipped to change (our findings that strategic leadership promotes a culture of sharing knowledge increases change readiness); however, some research articles disagree. As Huy (2001) noted, emotional resilience, not knowledge management, was the main facilitator of successful change in some organisations, which could apply equally well to emotional support. Moreover, Beer and Nohria (2000) posited that structural dimensions such as resources and infrastructure might be more important than leadership style for successful change. Finally, Burke and Litwin (1992) argued that external environmental factors such as market conditions outweigh internal factors such as leadership in changing change outcomes and that leadership alone might be inadequate. Our results add to the theoretical framework of change management by demonstrating that strategic leadership and knowledge management are needed in the Indian IT landscape. These observations point to leadership, which emphasizes learning and adaptability, preparing organizations to address the specific demands of the ever-changing IT industry.

Implications

Theoretical Implications: This article goes further into organizational learning and change management theories by exploring knowledge management as a role in transitioning between strategic leadership and change management. Although these two areas have been researched independently, this study combines them for the Indian IT industry and provides sophisticated insight into the impact of knowledge-sharing practices on leadership effectiveness to bring about change (Senge, 1990; Kotter, 1996). These results imply that organisational learning is not just a process but also a strategic skill that can be nurtured through leadership.

Practical context: This report highlights the leadership training that should be instituted for adaptive and knowledge-based leadership among IT organizations in India. Leaders should also work on creating a culture of knowledge sharing, as this directly influences the willingness of employees to adapt. Additionally, IT companies need to invest in knowledge management to aid in the spread of information to make it easier during change projects. IT firms can create a knowledge-sharing culture and achieve greater resilience and flexibility, which are essential for operating in the IT world of constant change (Gupta & Verma, 2023).

Limitations of the study and scope for further study

This research is conducted on major IT cities in India, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Delhi and Kerala, which could impact its generalizability to other states or sectors. The sample includes middle- to senior-level IT staff and perhaps excludes entry-level workers, who might not necessarily experience changes in the same way. Moreover, the cross-sectional approach in this study reveals data only at one time, so it does not help us to see how these connections might change with time. Future research may be longitudinal in nature, where the impact of leadership and knowledge management on change management could be measured at different levels of change.

The other limitation is self-reporting, which is subject to bias (e.g., social desire, response reliability). With multisource information, such as supervisor reviews or performance histories, future results may be stronger. Second, while we are dealing with internal organisational influences (leadership and knowledge management), external influences such as the economy and regulatory change could influence change management results. Explicit research should consider such factors to obtain a fuller picture of Indian IT industry change management. This problem would be more well-rounded in how leadership, knowledge and change are connected across a variety of organizational environments if we can address these constraints.

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