



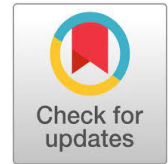
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Effect of Despotic Leadership Style on Employee Job Satisfaction at University Level: A Mediating Role of Workplace Deviance Behaviour



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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of despotic leadership on job satisfaction among employees in Pakistani universities, with a particular focus on the mediating role of workplace deviance. This research is pivotal as it addresses a relatively underexplored dimension of leadership within the unique context of higher education in a developing country. A cross-sectional research design was employed, gathering data through questionnaires from six public universities in Punjab, Pakistan. Despotic leadership, workplace deviance, and employee job satisfaction were assessed using validated scales. Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicated a significant negative direct relationship between despotic leadership and employee job satisfaction. Furthermore, workplace deviance was found to mediate this relationship, indicating that negative leadership styles not only directly diminish job satisfaction but also promote behaviors that further degrade satisfaction. Despotic leadership detrimentally affects employee satisfaction and cultivates a negative environment that can lead to deviant workplace behaviours. The study underscores the importance of recognizing the effects of leadership styles to enhance employee satisfaction and organizational health in academic institutions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Women's Leadership is centered on inspiring stakeholders to pursue objectives, guiding and uplifting their spirits, actively engaging in organizational triumphs and influence, and supporting and enhancing organizational accomplishments (Raffo & Clark, 2018). According to Stone and Patterson (2022), the origins of leadership trace back to early human civilization, although the formal study of leadership began in the mid-20th century. Even in religious contexts, prophets are esteemed as exemplary leaders. Since the concept of leadership entered scholarly discussions,

extensive praise for leadership has been documented in literature. However, due to its complexity, scholars have not agreed on a single comprehensive definition of leadership, approaching it from various perspectives. This is because leadership presents significant challenges in the global and diverse business environment, necessitating that leaders adopt suitable attitudes according to circumstances. Leadership encompasses both positive and negative aspects (Avey et al., 2008). Most studies have aimed to identify successful, effective, and constructive leadership styles.

Destructive leaders typically lack skills, practical wisdom, effective communication, and display disordered attitudes. Traditionally, leadership was perceived as an individual trait (encompassing the leader's characteristics, skills, abilities, etc.). However, recent studies suggest that leadership is not confined to the individual but is a process based on social interactions (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). Earlier research has focused on employee performance within business organizations, recognizing the differences compared to educational institutions. Given the distinct factors influencing business organizations versus non-

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teaching staff at universities, previous studies have highlighted leadership as a crucial determinant of overall employee performance. While leadership has been extensively studied in business contexts, its examination within educational institutions has been limited. Therefore, it is imperative to investigate the impact of emerging styles of academic leadership, particularly despotic leadership, on employee job satisfaction at the university level, considering the mediating role of workplace stress in both public and private universities in Pakistan. Additionally, this study is conducted in the context of developing countries, which have unique dynamics and institutional differences. Thus, the research aims to provide valuable insights into the dynamics of academic leadership within the unique context of Pakistan's emerging economy, particularly in higher education.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Background of Leadership

Approximately 2400 years ago, the renowned Greek philosopher Aristotle first articulated the concept of leadership. Leadership is the capacity of an individual or group to bring justice, peace, respect, and prosperity to those involved in the organization and society (Bogardus, 1934). Consequently, leadership is a blend of human understanding and moral character that empowers an individual to effectively influence and guide a group or individual. It provides equal opportunities for all employees or subordinates to work in an environment of peace and prosperity. Generally, leadership is divided into two aspects: constructive leadership and destructive leadership (Wen et al., 2019).

In research, leadership falls within the field of social sciences and practical skills. Over the past two decades, educational researchers worldwide have increasingly focused on identifying the “dark” or “negative” side of leadership, characterized as destructive leadership (Fors Brandebo & Journal, 2020; Li et al., 2023). Many aspects of leadership are discussed in the literature, with differing views between the East and the West, as well as between European countries and the United States. American educationists define leadership as “a process of social influence in which a person is assisted by others and supported by peers to accomplish a common task,” while European scholars describe it as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.”

Researchers have outlined a wide range of personal qualities and behaviors necessary for higher education leaders to succeed in their roles. According to Kilag et al. (2024), higher education leaders should integrate management and leadership competences, as each is directly related to the other. While management focuses on the organization's day-to-day activities, leadership emphasizes long-term goals and guides the organization towards them (Kim et al., 2023). Leaders in academic institutions must also instill self-assurance and self-worth in their subordinates and foster a workplace atmosphere

that encourages self-expression and protects academic freedom (Khan et al., 2023).

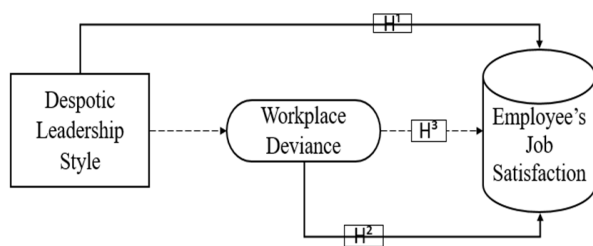
Although much research has examined effective leadership behaviors in higher education, less attention has been given to destructive behaviors in leaders. In higher education institutions, discussions on destructive leadership practices have referenced various leadership styles, including abusive leadership (Cai et al., 2023; Lavoie-Tremblay et al., 2016), narcissistic leadership (Lynch et al., 2023; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006), and destructive leadership (Emmerling et al., 2023). Among these, despotic leadership is often viewed as egocentric, self-centered, destructive, and authoritarian. A key distinction between despotic leadership and other forms of ‘dark’ leadership is its explicit demonstration of the leader's unethical behavior towards employees (Den Hartog et al., 2024). The corrupt and self-serving attitude of despotic leadership not only misguides employees but also negatively impacts their mental health, family life, job performance, and organizational commitment. Despotic leadership is characterized by authoritarian, egocentric, exploitative, and vengeful traits (Badar et al., 2023).

Despotic leadership fosters negative feelings and motives, adversely affecting the organizational environment, employee well-being, and job performance. According to Zhou, Rasool et al. (2021), work-life balance positively correlates with employees' work withdrawal (Nauman, Zheng et al. 2020), psychological well-being (Raja, Haq et al. 2020), emotional exhaustion (Nauman, Fatima et al. 2018), bullying behavior (Syed, Akhtar et al. 2020), and organizational commitment (van Prooijen and de Vries 2016).

The concept of dark-side leadership behavior encompasses multiple interpretations and overlapping descriptions, appearing in various forms across the literature and highlighting the significance of perception when characterizing despotic leadership (Rose et al., 2015). Therefore, this study aims to examine the gap between the desirable behaviors of exceptional leaders and the destructive behaviors of ineffective leaders within higher education. It is a common misconception that universities and colleges require particularly cautious immediate supervisors or heads. Leaders at higher education institutions are more prone to despotic leadership behaviors than those in other sectors due to the “special character of leading academic followers... and the lack of preparation for the position of a leader” (Brandebø et al., 2016).

Previous research has examined the consequences of authoritarian leadership on organizational performance, turnover intentions, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Naseer et al., 2016). Despite this evidence, further exploration is needed on the detrimental effects of negative leadership aspects, such as abusive leadership, on employees' attitudes and behaviors (Nawaz et al.). Therefore, this research aims to identify the effect of the despotic leadership style on employee job satisfaction, with workplace deviance as a mediating factor between despotic leadership style and employee job satisfaction.

Conceptual Framework of the Stud



Hypothesis development

Despotism Leadership Style and Employee Job Satisfaction

Authoritarian leadership, also referred to as despotism leadership, is characterized by harsh and dictatorial behavior towards employees, leading to discomfort and dissatisfaction with their jobs. This tyrannical leadership style imposes undue pressure on employees, adversely affecting the organization, the economy, and employee job satisfaction. It epitomizes the defining traits of negative leadership styles, emphasizing domination and control within the workplace over achieving organizational objectives (Kiazad et al., 2010).

The significance of job satisfaction in human life cannot be overstated. In the business context, employee satisfaction greatly influences their motivation, performance, and productivity positively. As individuals evaluate their work situations, their satisfaction with employment becomes evident. It is crucial to determine whether they are completely satisfied with their employment in the organization and to what extent various aspects of employment meet their expectations (Ali et al., 2020).

Numerous studies on job satisfaction highlight the importance of human resources policies by considering various social and psychological characteristics of employment. There are significant relationships concerning job satisfaction (Metwally et al., 2014). If job satisfaction encourages employees to perform better and utilize their strengths effectively, it becomes an essential element. Understanding job satisfaction involves recognizing that when a person completes a task, it generates a sense of pride. Theoretically, job satisfaction is understood as a positive psychological state influenced by mental, physical, and environmental conditions that motivate a person to perform their work. Literature suggests that various factors influence job satisfaction, and it should be assessed based on factors such as wages, benefits, work environment, colleagues, and opportunities for advancement. Employees are likely to be more satisfied and inclined to remain in the organization if they receive their desired wages, social rights, and a supportive work environment (Shan et al., 2014).

A 2016 survey by Chook revealed a direct connection between employee job satisfaction and leadership behavior in the workplace. Leaders play a crucial role in helping employees align their values and growth with their professional roles. Numerous scholarly studies, including those by Boamah et al. (2017), have documented the impact of leadership behavior on employee job satisfaction. Heriyati et al. (2012) also highlighted the significant influence

of leaders on job satisfaction. Furthermore, aggressive supervisory behaviors negatively affect employee job satisfaction (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010).

In universities, where faculty and staff seek autonomy and intellectual freedom, despotism leadership styles can lead to feelings of dissatisfaction, low morale, and decreased organizational commitment (Ahmed et al., 2021; Ghosh & Swamy, 1979). Despotism bosses can make employees feel controlled and oppressed, reducing their job satisfaction and engagement (Brender-Ilan & Sheaffer, 2019).

Destructive leadership behavior, which can be harmful and deviant towards followers or the organization, manifests in various forms—physical or verbal, active or passive, and direct or indirect (Harms et al., 2017). Consequently, issues of stress and leadership continue to impact job satisfaction and employee turnover (Coomber & Barriball, 2007). A recent study highlighted the detrimental effects of despotism leadership behavior in Pakistan (Nauman et al., 2018). Based on these observations, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

H1. A despotism leadership style is negatively associated with employee job satisfaction.

Workplace Deviance and Employee's Job Satisfaction

All organizations and institutions encounter the issue of workplace deviant behavior (WDB), prevalent across all sectors. WDB refers to "voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and threatens the well-being of the organization, its members, or both" (Robinson & Bennett, 1995, p. 556). Robinson and Bennett (1995) categorize deviant behaviors into two types: minor and serious deviations. Minor deviations include actions such as working slowly, leaving early, and showing favoritism, while serious deviations encompass theft, accepting kickbacks, and abusing privileges (Greenberg, 1993). Absenteeism (Kidwell & Bennett, 1993) is also indicative of deviant behavior. A study by Rahman et al. (2013) revealed that up to 75% of employees engaged in fraud, damage, theft, misappropriation, sabotage, or unexcused absences. The consequences of workplace deviance extend far beyond the immediate actions, significantly impacting both institutions and employees. Over the past decade, research has highlighted that damaging, immoral, and critical behavior at work has cost institutions billions of dollars annually (Burroughs, 2001).

Several previous studies have focused on specific types of negative behavior, including misbehavior (Japutra et al., 2018; Mesurado et al., 2018) and betrayal of trust (Mertasari & Candiasa, 2020). Since the early 1990s, the focus of research on workplace deviance has shifted towards developing a unified construct and validated measures of deviant behaviors (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). Appelbaum et al. (2007) found that WDB impacts victims with stress-related problems and organizations with decreased employee commitment, productivity, and increased turnover (Hoel & Salin, 2003; Keashly & Jagatic, 2003). Previous research has indicated that job stress and job satisfaction influence workplace deviance. Job stress is defined as "unpleasant, negative emotions such as tension,

anxiety, frustration, anger, and depression” resulting from an individual’s occupation (Salami, 2010, p. 486).

Job satisfaction, as defined by Judge et al. (2001), refers to the sense of fulfillment derived from performing daily tasks in the workplace. Locke (1976) describes it as an emotional state arising from appreciating one’s job or job experiences. According to Judge et al. (2001), job satisfaction is closely linked to job performance. Employees’ job satisfaction encompasses emotional and cognitive responses to the internal and external aspects of their work. Tella et al. (2007) identify factors contributing to job satisfaction, including salary, the nature of the job, co-workers, supervisory controls, promotion opportunities, and working conditions. Satisfied employees tend to exhibit positive behaviors, while dissatisfied employees are prone to negative behaviors in the workplace (Lumley et al., 2011; Robbins, 1993, p. 97). Srivastava and Innovation (2012) conducted a study measuring job dissatisfaction related to deviant behavior in the workplace. They found that dissatisfied employees are more likely to exhibit deviant behaviors, leading to decreased performance, poor communication, and low productivity. Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that workplace deviance is strongly related to unhappiness at work.

H2. Workplace deviance is negatively associated with employee job satisfaction.

The Mediating Role of Workplace Deviance

Workplace stupidity and dysfunctional behavior have been defined as “low-intensity deviant behaviors with ambiguous intentions to harm the target.” Conversely, appreciation for organizing workplace chaos has been shown to have a positive effect, enhancing employees’ gratitude and fostering their creative abilities. Workplace dysfunction is a negative phenomenon that significantly impacts organizations by violating organizational principles (Vasconcelos, 2020).

Workplace dysfunction tends to occur in organizations that overlook employees’ efforts and disrespect genuine practices. This neglect results in decreased productivity and efficiency among employees. Similarly, workplace bullying detrimentally affects employees’ job performance, leading to mental distress and reduced psychological well-being (Zeeshan et al., 2023). Consequently, the unethical behavior in the workplace can lead to diminished mental health and exhaustion of creative capacities among affected employees, reducing their unique contributions. According to Jean (2019), inconsistency in the workplace is perceived to erode employees’ internal dignity, causing them to become tired, depressed, and less innovative in their roles.

In environments rife with workplace dysfunction, employees strive to preserve and maintain their valuable resources due to a perceived loss of them (2023). One objective of this research is to determine the effects of adverse events, such as a lack of interest in the workplace. According to the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, modern work behavior of employees in Pakistan will be

analyzed. Thus, the aforementioned literature forms the basis for the second hypothesis of this study (Tuna et al., 2016).

H3. Workplace deviance mediates the relationship between despotic leadership and employee job satisfaction.

3. METHODOLOGY

A crucial aspect of the methodology used in selecting the study’s samples is its alignment with the research objectives. The study employed a random sampling technique to collect data from six public sector universities in Punjab Province, Pakistan. Utilizing a cross-sectional research design, data were gathered from university officials through questionnaires administered at their respective locations. This design’s advantage is its ability to collect data at a single point in time, which is vital for addressing the research questions effectively.

The study focused on despotic leadership, workplace deviance, employee satisfaction, and demographic details among academic institution personnel. This approach allowed researchers to analyze the relationships between these variables and draw conclusions about their interactions. It is essential to acknowledge the limitations inherent in cross-sectional studies. This design captures only a moment in time, limiting its ability to reflect long-term trends or changes. However, for this study, the design is appropriate as it facilitates an investigation into the specified research questions and provides insights into the dynamics among the variables.

To ensure the dataset’s accuracy, integrity, and reliability, rigorous data validation and quality assurance processes were implemented. The dataset was thoroughly cleaned to address any errors, inconsistencies, or missing data. The review process identified outliers, duplicate responses, and illogical data entries. Survey responses were cross-referenced, and respondents were contacted to correct any erroneous or missing data. Incomplete or missing data were either imputed or excluded from the analysis based on their nature and extent. Outliers were scrutinized for authenticity, and the validity and reliability of the measurement scales were confirmed, thereby enhancing the dataset’s integrity. These steps ensured the study’s credibility and validity, minimizing potential errors, biases, and inconsistencies. Regarding Cronbach’s alpha coefficient values, the despotic leadership style (DLS) scored 0.837, workplace deviant behavior (WDB) scored 0.782, and employee job satisfaction (EJS) scored 0.857. These results indicate that the instrument is reliable and exhibits good internal consistency.

Variable Measurement

To measure the model variables, we employed a multi-item scale that has been validated in previous research to assess our research hypotheses (refer to Table 1). Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The detailed questionnaire used to measure these variables is available here.

Despotic Leadership Style

In order to measure the despotic leadership style, we used a scale derived from Hanges and Dickson (2004) and De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008). A total of six items are included in the measurement instrument to evaluate authoritarian conduct marked by self-interest, self-aggrandisement, insensitivity, and exploitation of others. A punitive nature characterises the individual in question as lacking mercy or compassion. They held a position of authority and lacked tolerance for disagreement or questioning, mostly issuing commands. In the following comments, I used “My director/head of department” at the beginning of each sentence. Research conducted by Abdul Samad Dharr in 2019 and Bushra Jalil in 2020 demonstrated the questionnaire’s reliability. Therefore, we incorporated it into our study.

Employee’s Job Satisfaction

An survey instrument developed by Nanjundeswaraswamy (2019) was used to measure employees’ job satisfaction. As part of this comprehensive tool, we have included eight essential elements: Compensation and Welfare Benefits (C1), Work Environment (C2), Career and Promotion Opportunities (C3), Leadership style (C4), Communication and Job clarity (C5), Work life balance (C6), Training and Development (C7), Teamwork and Job security (C8). In the past few years, several researchers have conducted research on this tool, which provides evidence of its reliability and validity. As a result, we used this questionnaire as a basis for our study.

Workplace Deviance

This study used a questionnaire developed by Bennett, R. J., and Robinson, S. L. (2000) to assess workplace deviance. Two scales were developed: a 12-item scale to assess organisational deviance (behaviours that impact the organization directly) and a 7-item scale to measure interpersonal deviance (behaviours that adversely affect other organisation members). The internal reliability for these scales was found to be .81 and .78, respectively. Confirmatory factor analysis confirmed that the two-factor structure was a good fit. Additionally, initial evidence of construct validity was established. A significant objective of Bennett, R. J., and Robinson, S. L. (2000) study was to examine the potential implications of the instrument mentioned above for future empirical studies of workplace misbehaviour. As part of our research study in this article, we utilised a seven-item scale that measures interpersonal deviance.

4. DATA ANALYSIS & RESULTS

Dis-Jointed Two-Stage Approach

Several methods have been proposed within the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) framework to define and estimate Higher-Order Constructs (HOCs), also known as the “Hierarchical Component Model”. Notably, the extended repeated indicator and two-stage approaches are prominent (Ringle et al. 2012; Becker, Klein, and Wetzels 2012). Regarding the two-stage approaches, there are integrated and disjointed versions.

Given that both types of the two-stage approach yield similar outcomes, there is no strong preference for one over the other (Cheah et al., 2018). Our study employed a disjointed two-stage approach, which helps simplify the path model relationships and achieve model parsimony (Polites, Roberts, and Thatcher 2012; Sarstedt et al., 2019).

We utilised SmartPLS 4.0 statistical software to conduct the two-stage disjointed analysis, following the methodology outlined by Sarstedt et al. (2019). Initially, we connected all model components, from exogenous to endogenous constructs, and then executed the PLS-SEM algorithm. The first stage focused exclusively on reflective measurement models. Hair et al. (2013) first evaluate the quality of the measurement model. According to their evaluation, all criteria necessary for validating the model were met, including factor loading, multi-collinearity, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Tables 1–3). In the second stage, we simplified the model. We linked all theoretically proposed paths by analysing the latent variable scores (despotic leadership, workplace deviance, and employee job satisfaction) derived from the PLS-SEM algorithm used in the first stage.

Measurement Model

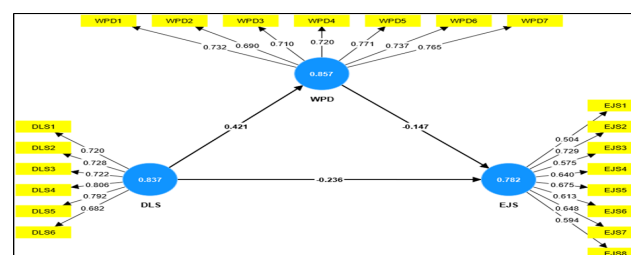


Fig. 1. Measurement model

Individual Items Reliability

The reliability of individual items was assessed based on the standardised factor loadings of individual items on their respective variables. Typically, standardised loadings should be at least 0.7, indicating that over 50% of an item’s variance is explained by its assigned construct (Hulland, 1999). However, items with lower loadings are acceptable if other items of the variable exhibit sufficient loadings (Chin, 1998). Therefore, while items with factor loadings below 0.4 should be removed, those below 0.7 need not necessarily be deleted unless such removal leads to an increase in internal consistency measures above recommended levels (Hulland, 1999). In this study, most individual items of the measurement models had loadings above 0.7. Only a few items had loadings slightly below 0.7 but still above 0.5, which is considered acceptable since they belong to different variables, and other loadings of these variables were well above the recommended threshold (Barclay, Higgins, & Thompson, 1995) (refer to Table and Figure 1).

Table 1
Measurement Model

| Constructs | Item Code | Statements | FL | VIF |
|---|-----------|--|-------|-------|
| Being an employee, I understand that my immediate supervisor/head/boss: | | | | |
| Despotic Leadership Style (DLS) | | | | |
| | DLS1 | Is punitive (punishing) and has no pity or compassion. | 0.720 | 1.595 |
| | DLS2 | Is in-charge and does not tolerate the disagreement or questioning, i.e., gives orders only. | 0.728 | 1.656 |
| | DLS3 | Acts like a despot (dictator) and is commanding. | 0.722 | 1.574 |
| | DLS4 | Tends to be unwilling or unable to relinquish (surrender) control of tasks. | 0.806 | 2.017 |
| | DLS5 | Expects an unquestioning obedience of those who report to him/her. | 0.792 | 1.988 |
| | DLS6 | Is vengeful, i.e., seeks revenge, if a mistake is committed. | 0.682 | 1.558 |
| During my time as an employee, I noticed that colleges: | | | | |
| Workplace Deviance (WPD) | | | | |
| | WPD1 | Made fun of someone at work. | 0.732 | 1.616 |
| | WPD2 | Said something hurtful to someone at work. | 0.690 | 1.520 |
| | WPD3 | Made an ethnic, religious, or racial remark at work. | 0.710 | 2.568 |
| | WPD4 | Cursed at someone at work. | 0.720 | 1.593 |
| | WPD5 | Played a mean prank on someone at work. | 0.771 | 2.168 |
| | WPD6 | Acted rudely toward someone at work. | 0.737 | 2.750 |
| | WPD7 | Publicly embarrassed someone at work. | 0.765 | 2.242 |
| Employee's Job Satisfaction (EJS) | | | | |
| | EJS1 | I feel I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do. | 0.504 | 1.342 |
| | EJS2 | I am satisfied with my chances for promotion. | 0.729 | 1.613 |
| | EJS3 | I like my supervisor. | 0.575 | 1.412 |
| | EJS4 | The benefits we receive are as good as most other organizations offer. | 0.640 | 1.438 |
| | EJS5 | I feel my efforts are rewarded the way they should be. | 0.675 | 1.524 |
| | EJS6 | I have no burden at work. | 0.613 | 1.395 |
| | EJS7 | I enjoy my co-workers. | 0.648 | 1.497 |
| | EJS8 | I feel a sense of pride in doing my job. | 0.594 | 1.492 |

Note: FL: Factor Loading of Reflective Constructs; VIF: Variance Inflation Factor of Reflective constructs.

Table 2
Reliability and validity Statistics

| Constructs | Cronbach's alpha | rho_a | rho_c | AVE |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1 Despotic Leadership Style (DLS) | 0.837 | 0.839 | 0.880 | 0.552 |
| 2 Workplace Deviance (WPD) | 0.782 | 0.796 | 0.836 | 0.524 |
| 3 Employee's Job Satisfaction (EJS) | 0.857 | 0.860 | 0.890 | 0.537 |

Note. CR: Composite Reliability (rho_a, rho_c); AVE: Average Variance Extracted.

Table 3
Discriminant and convergent validity assessment.

| | DLS | EJS | WPD |
|-----------------------------------|--------|--------------|--------------|
| Despotic Leadership Style (DLS) | 0.743 | | |
| Workplace Deviance (WPD) | -0.298 | 0.626 | |
| Employee's Job Satisfaction (EJS) | 0.421 | -0.246 | 0.733 |

Note. HTMT: Heterotrait- monotrait Ratio of Correlations (Observing constructs Discriminant Validity). Fornell-Larcker Criterion: A Diagonal values in bold & italic (Observing constructs Convergent Validity).

Hypotheses Testing

To evaluate the study hypotheses, we initially set up two separate models in Smart-PLS during the second stage. Model 1 examines direct relationships, while Model 2 explores indirect relationships and interactions (see Figures

2 and 3). We applied bootstrap resampling with 5,000 subsamples to each model sequentially. This approach has been increasingly adopted by many researchers (Abbas et al., 2022; Abdullah et al., 2016; Faraz et al., 2021) in PLS-SEM contexts to achieve more accurate results in complex models, enabling a clearer identification of mediation and

moderation effects within the structural model. The results, including Beta values, R-squared, path coefficients, standard errors, t-statistics, and confidence intervals (lower; upper) (Andrej et al., 2023), are detailed in Table 4. In Model 1, the significant negative direct effect of Despotic Leadership

Style (DLS) on Employee Job Satisfaction (EJS) (-0.339; p=0.000) supports Hypothesis 1, and the negative effect of Workplace Deviance (WPD) on EJS (-0.257; p=0.000) supports Hypothesis 2 (see Figure 2).

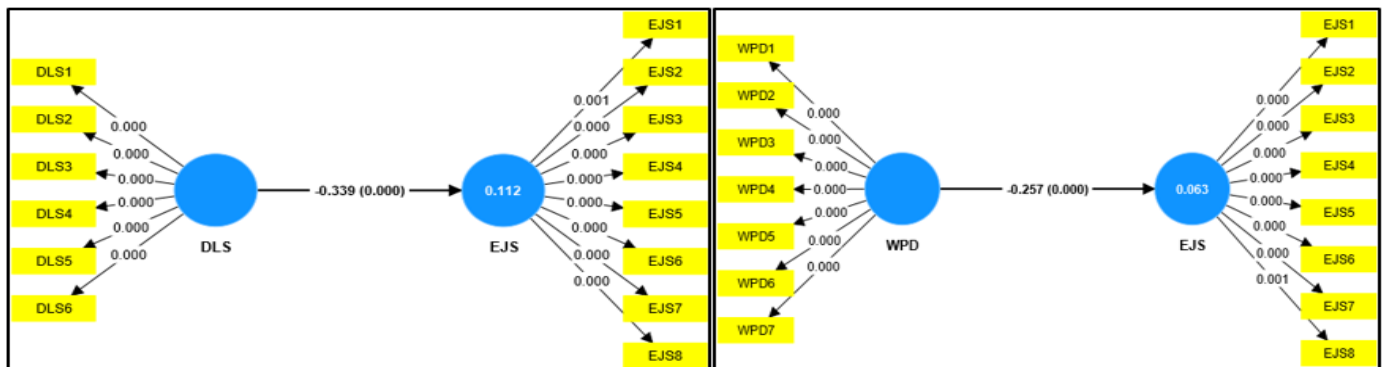


Fig. 2. Structural Model-1 (Direct Effect)

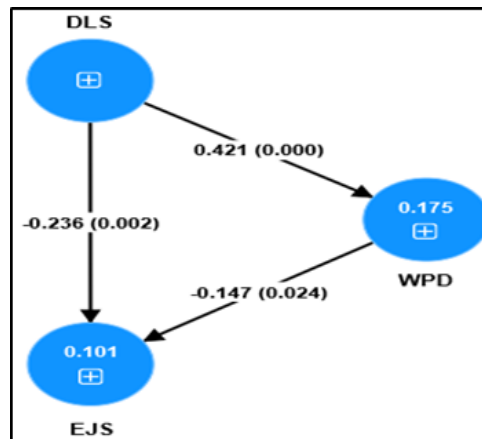


Fig. 3. Structural Model-2 (Indirect Effect)

Table 4
Structural model-1 (Direct effect results)

| H | Direct Relationship | Beta | T- value | P- value | R ² | Confidence intervals (Lower; Upper) | Conclusion |
|----|--|--------|----------|----------|----------------|-------------------------------------|------------|
| H1 | Despotic Leadership Style -> Employee's Job Satisfaction | -0.339 | 0.595 | 0.000 | 0.112 | -0.467; -0.261 | Supported |
| H2 | Workplace Deviance -> Employee's Job Satisfaction | -0.257 | 0.429 | 0.000 | 0.066 | -0.388; -0.180 | Supported |

Note: **Significant at 0.01 (2-tailed), *Significant at 0.05 (2-tailed)

Table 5
Structural model-2 indirect (Mediating) effect

| H | Indirect Relationship | Beta | T- value | P- value | R ² | Confidence intervals (Lower; Upper) | Conclusion |
|----|--|--------|----------|----------|----------------|-------------------------------------|------------|
| H3 | Despotic Leadership Style -> Workplace Deviance -> Employee's Job Satisfaction | -0.062 | 2.096 | 0.036 | 0.101 | -0.121; -0.003 | Supported |

In Model 2 (referenced in Figure 3), the introduction of the mediator (Workplace Deviance) revealed significant indirect relationships between despotic leadership style and employee job satisfaction, affirming Hypothesis H3. The inclusion of a mediator modified the R-squared value for the endogenous construct employee job satisfaction, (EJS) from 0.17% to 0.10%, representing a net decrease of 7%. The findings presented in Table 5 show that the bootstrapped confidence interval is 97.5% (-0.121; -0.003), indicating a value greater than zero, and the path coefficient is (-0.062; $p=0.036$), which supports the mediation hypothesis (H3).

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the relationships among despotic leadership style (DLS), workplace deviance behavior (WDB), and employee job satisfaction (EJS). Specifically, it examined the direct interactions between DLS, WDB, and EJS, as well as the mediating role of WDB in the relationship between DLS and EJS. The findings confirm a significant relationship between DLS and EJS. The results indicate that DLS negatively impacts employee job satisfaction within Pakistani universities, significant at the 0.05 level with a two-tailed test, corroborating the findings of (Jalil, 2020; Nadeem et al., 2020; Zeynali et al., 2021). The data suggest that employees who perceive unfair treatment from their supervisors or immediate bosses are less likely to be satisfied with their jobs.

The study also found a direct relationship between DLS, WDB, and EJS at the university level, aligning with previous research (Haider & Yean, 2023; Murad et al., 2021; Shah et al., 2023). Employees dissatisfied with their jobs and workplace conditions are more prone to engage in deviant behaviors and are less likely to remain committed to the organization. This observation is supported by social exchange theory, which posits that employees reciprocate the organizational environment with corresponding behaviors. If the work environment is perceived negatively, employees are likely to respond with negative actions detrimental to the organization. Moreover, the results indicated that workplace deviance behavior serves as a mediating factor between despotic leadership and employee job satisfaction.

Theoretical Implications

This study enriches the existing literature on leadership style, employee job satisfaction, and workplace deviance behaviour within the educational sector, particularly in the context of Pakistan. It specifically enhances our understanding of academic leadership in higher educational institutions and educational psychology by exploring the influence of despotic leadership on staff job satisfaction through the lens of social exchange theory. The study identifies workplace deviance behaviour as a critical intermediary factor that mediates the relationship between leadership style and job satisfaction in higher education settings.

Furthermore, the study incorporates social exchange theory into the leadership framework, advancing our comprehension of how leadership qualities affect staff job

satisfaction and, consequently, their performance. Special attention is given to the negative impacts of despotic leadership, offering new insights into the implications of such leadership styles under the framework of social exchange theory.

Practical Implications

This research provides actionable insights for higher education institutions (HEIs) to identify leadership style and colleague's behaviours that decrease staff satisfaction, performance and productivity. Leadership is crucial for boosting performance and enabling decisions that benefit both the institution and its employees if leaders use constructive leadership styles; otherwise, results will be negative. The findings suggest that immediate supervisors significantly influence employee performance and satisfaction; thus, adopting inclusive leadership practices can increase institutional effectiveness and productivity. HEIs and educational commissions are advised to develop training programs to enhance the leadership skills of administrative heads, thereby improving educational quality.

The study also reveals the detrimental effects of despotic leadership on employee satisfaction, performance, skills, and organizational commitment. Such leadership can lead to employee burnout, stress, dissatisfaction, decreased creativity, and innovation. Moreover, workplace deviance is often a result of despotic leadership. To achieve institutional goals effectively, it is recommended that supervisors reward staff adequately, maintain open lines of communication, and provide regular feedback. Conversely, neglectful or authoritarian communication by leaders can hinder organizational objectives and foster a toxic and counterproductive work environment.

Limitations & Recommendation

This study, conducted within Pakistan's higher education sector, may not easily generalize to other sectors or countries, particularly developed ones, due to differing dynamics. Future research could apply this model to different sectors or settings to test its applicability and effectiveness. Additionally, employing more scientifically rigorous methods to measure academic performance, such as leadership style interviews, could provide deeper insights into the impact of leadership on employee's job satisfaction. Further studies should also explore destructive leadership styles and the challenges faced by academic leaders. Future research might also consider examining intervening and mediating variables such as organizational justice, the institutional environment, and motivational constructs.

Conflict interests

The authors has declared that no competing interests exist.

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