



The Influence of Despotic Leadership on Counterproductive Work Behavior: The Role of Follower's Dispositional Characteristics

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ABSTRACT

Public sector organizations are considered to be more vulnerable to exhibit bad management practices in Pakistan due to despotic leadership styles. This study investigates the link among despotic leaders and the counter productive work behavior of followers. The study examines the emotional attitude as the outcome of despotic leadership and predictor of deviant behavior in a parallel manner and psychological capital as boundary condition that mitigate the indirect relationship of despotic leadership and the counter productive work behaviors. Data was gathered through two-wave research design from 326 employees of Pakistan's public sector organizations through questionnaire and Google forms. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was utilized to examine relationships, such as mediations and moderation effects between the contextual variables. The results established that the followers of despotic leadership felt disgusted, frustrated, and behaved deviant in the organization. Moreover, we found psychological capital behavior as moderator in the relationship. Authoritative behaviors, poor communications, unethical conducts and deprived managerial skills produce emotionally exhausted followers. The study suggests formal training of leaders and followers concurrently. Based on Social exchange theory, this research might be the foremost study that has examined the emotional attitudes and in parallel, underlying mechanism to explain leader-follower give-and-take relations. Moreover, psychological capital as an important key personal resource that mitigate this relationship theoretically by integrating conversion of resources theory.

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1. Introduction

Contemporary research has focused on negative leadership with associated radical influences on followers and challenges for the organization (De Clercq, Fatima, & Jahanzeb, 2021; De Clercq, Haq, Raja, Azeem, & Mahmud, 2018; Syed, Naseer, Nawaz, & Shah, 2021). Destructive leadership are eventually prevailing in organizational settings with extra-role behaviors and moral abuses (Li, Yin, Shi, Damen, & Tavis, 2024; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Howell and Avolio (1992) explained unethical leadership to be manipulative and self-absorbing, later destructive leadership categorized as insulting, self-interested (Tepper, 2000), and egoist leadership labeled as pseudo-transformational leadership (Lin, Huang, Chen, & Huang, 2017) and recently exploitative leadership (Schmid, Pircher Verdorfer, & Peus, 2019) have toxic behaviors that are harmful to organization and followers. Despotic leaders fall into both categories of destructive and unethical leadership and are considered as bossy, controlling, and revengeful, with personal domination and strict behavior that aids to the egotism of the leader in the exploitation of followers with low ethical and moral standards (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; House & Howell, 1992; Khizar et al., 2023).

Despotic leadership exploit followers for own gains, exhibit autocratic behavior, emphasizing on gaining supremacy, have direct link with job stress, poor organizational performance, emotional exhaustion, and workplace deviance. Despotic leadership are observed to be arrogant and bossy and most self-centered destructive leadership style (Naseer, Raja, Syed, Donia, & Darr, 2016), explicitly retain low moral standards, and engage in fraudulent activities that lead to organizational unwell being (Aronson, 2001; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Islam, Chaudhary, & Ali, 2024). Despotic leadership undermine followers' capability and firms legitimate interests, take credit for followers, and force them to excessive obedience in the pursuit of personal gain (Schilling, 2009). Counterproductive work behavior is a deliberate act to harm the health of both organization and employee, it ranges from making fun to physical and verbal violence (Spector et al., 2006). The persistent damaging impact of despotic leadership impedes organizational functioning and arises derogatory and retaliating behaviors in followers therefore suggests positive relationship with workplace deviance (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2018; Majeed & Fatima, 2020). Followers find themselves in social exchange relationship with selfish and destructive leadership experience their work environment adverse and retaliate in response (P. Blau, 2017; De Clercq et al., 2018).

Research has demonstrated intimidating influences of destructive leadership are indirect and drastic, (Schmid et al., 2019) propose unfolding the underlying mechanism that exists between destructive leadership and outcomes. Previous research indicate some dispositional factor like emotional exhaustion (Murad, Jiatong, Shahzad, & Syed, 2021), narcissist tendencies (Brender-Ilan & Sheaffer, 2019) of followers and contextual factors like organization based self-esteem (Ahmed, Shabeer, & Khalid, 2021), leaders mistreatment (Liang et al., 2022) that contributes to followers counterproductive work behavior. These studies take CWB as coping strategy with undesirable emotions. Though, other theoretical perspectives could have recognized more careful examination of underlying mechanism that employee may use to justify their successive CWB as a rational response to the exploitation (Liang et al., 2022; Mackey, Frieder, Perrewé, Gallagher, & Brymer, 2015). Actions and behaviors of others in an organization are the stimuli of emotions and feelings. Human have two minds emotional mind and rational mind (Goleman, 1995). The emotional mind influence our work-related behavior and interactions (Brown, 2003).

Destructive leadership is constantly associated with negative outcomes that may be due to strong negative emotions like disgust triggered by despotic leadership (Syed et al., 2020). Followers experience disgust toward perpetrators of moral harms and felt disgusted by the abusive and tyrannical behavior of their leaders (Skarlicki, Hoegg, Aquino, & Nadisic, 2013). Despotic leadership' self-serving behavior elicits emotions like an insult, annoyance, and frustration among followers (Chen, Chen, Zhang, & Yan, 2021), resultantly followers show their negative emotional response frustration and disgust by engaging in deviant behaviors (Avey, Wu, & Holley, 2015) based on social exchange theory (Mackey, Frieder, Brees, & Martinko, 2017). The most recent research written on despotic leadership in 2023 have explored emotional exhaustion as emotional facets of followers leading to dysfunctional behavior towards the organization yet leaving a void of more systematic and careful examination of about these behaviors (Badar, Aboramadan, & Plimmer, 2023; Shahzad, Iqbal, Nauman, Shahzadi, & Luqman, 2023).

Therefore, to our best knowledge underlying mechanisms to divulge the egoist and self-centered leaders on followers' discrete emotional reactions are yet to be investigated in parallel. Conservation of Resources (COR) theory has established resource gain (positive psychological state) is paramount in face of loss, and the developmental process creates a resource caravan (Hobfoll, 2002). Building on resource caravan we postulate that psychological capital will serve as a social resource translating into mitigating effects of injurious and unethical leadership. Previous studies mostly undertake situational and dispositional factors as moderators (De Clercq et al., 2021; Islam, Ahmed, Ali, Ahmer, & Usman, 2020; Murad et al., 2021). Though empirical evidence exists that psychological capital attenuates stressful situations (Khliefat, Chen, Ayoun, & Eyoun, 2021), this study is in response to address the gap requiring exploration in individuals' psychological capital in a leadership-deviance association (Ahmed et al., 2021). Despotic leadership act unethically due to a dearth of checks and balances, psychological capital serve as positive reservoir of resource and overcome the harmful resource-depleting factors (Bouckenooghe, De Clercq, & Raja, 2019).

This study adds to emerging literature with multi-dimensional dispositional factors as moderating effects to strengthen the positive attitudinal and behavioral relationships (Naseer et al., 2016; Nauman, Zheng, & Basit, 2020). Secondly, an extensive body of knowledge examined underlying mechanisms like different dispositional like contempt (Syed et al., 2021) or moral emotion (Syed et al., 2020) and contextual factors like withdrawal (Nauman et al., 2020) in destructive leadership and work-outcomes, the research answer the call for integrating different types of negative emotion (disgust and frustration) through the related outcome of the leadership-deviance relationship. Lastly, according to Hofstede (2001) and Hofstede (2011) Pakistan ranks higher on power distance and uncertainty avoidance, individuals behave more aggressively and emotionally in stressful situations due to a wide breach between leadership and followers, such culture creates more destructive leadership (Alam, Waheed, & Rehman, 2024; Rehman, Waheed, Munir, & Gul, 2024). Therefore, this study adds to the current knowledge of harmful influence of DL in our contextual background.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1. Despotic Leadership and Counterproductive Work Behavior

Contemporary research has shown harmful effects of counterproductive work behavior both for individuals and organizations (Jung & Yoon, 2012) and as a coping strategy (Van den Broeck et al., 2014; Yiwen & Hahn, 2021). CWB are defined as voluntary behavior of employees that is a threat to all stakeholders and the organization (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). One can firmly believe that personality/ organizational traits are key conjecturers in explaining one's attitude towards committing CWB such as meta-analysis has established perception of politics (Bedi & Schat, 2013), role stressor (Zhang, Crant, & Weng, 2019), organizational injustice (Bashir, Nasir, Qayyum, & Bashir, 2012), in most recent studies destructive especially despotic leadership (Brender-Ilan & Sheaffer, 2019) among some antecedent would increase the likelihood of retaliation and deviant behaviors among employees. Social exchange theory discuss the interdependent exchange relation of followers and leaders (P. Blau, 2017). Despotic leadership are controlling and creates stress and emotional exhaustion among followers, compel followers to exhibit immoral behavior, as per the perspective of social exchange theory (Islam et al., 2024; Naseer et al., 2016). Followers passively follow leaders' destructive behavior and implicitly pursue harmful goals and make them engage in dysfunctional activities (Thoroughgood, Sawyer, Padilla, & Lunsford, 2018). We thus can hypothesize:

H₁: DL has a positive and significant relationship with CWB.

2.2. The Mediating Role of Disgust between Despotic Leadership and Counterproductive Work Behavior

Disgust is considered significantly deviation from pureness and spirituality deviations (Russell & Giner-Sorolla, 2013). Disgust may arise when a person witness moral wrongness, wicked characters and manipulation (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011). Numerous studies have found the mediating influence of moral emotion (contempt, anger, and disgust) between destructive leadership and negative behavioral outcomes (Fosse, Skogstad, Einarsen, & Martinussen, 2019; Syed et al., 2020; Syed et al., 2021), yet DL have been scarcely studied in the context of disgust. Destructive leadership show derogatory behaviors, and arouse emotions like depression, anger, disgust, insult, disappointment (Kelloway, Nielsen, & Dimoff, 2017, p. 176). Leaders undermine employees' capabilities, force followers to contribute more, show distrust, and verbally attack them to become disgusted in eyes of followers. Destructive leadership manipulate followers and regulate the negative emotion like disgust in followers (Wang, 2019), employees deploy emotion focused strategies like disgust (Webster, Brough, & Daly, 2016). With social exchange theory, exchange relationship promotes injustice and violation (followers' values and principles) cause difficulty for followers to channel their reactions in positive way. In response the emotion of disgust will arise (Rozin, Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999), which is associated with numerous subsequent attitude (Tybur, Lieberman, Kurzban, & DeScioli, 2013) like anti-social behaviors (P. M. Tang, Yam, Koopman, & Ilies, 2022). Thus, this study hypothesizes that:

H₂ (a): DL has a positive and significant relationship with disgust.

H₂ (b): Disgust has a positive and significant relationship with CWB.

H₂ (c): Disgust mediates the positive relationship between DL and CWB.

2.3. The Mediating Role of Frustration between Despotic Leadership and Counterproductive Work Behavior

Frustration is referred to as an emotional condition stimulated when an employee is unable to achieve desired outcomes and goals (Spector, 1978), frustration undermines an employee's performance, psychological well-being, and job satisfaction. Previous research emphasized various outcomes of frustration like the interplay of emotions and behavior as discussed by (Fox & Spector, 1999) and found frustration contributes to counterproductive work behavior. Counterproductive work behavior could be sabotage (Ambrose, Seabright, & Schminke, 2002), retaliatory response (Sims, 2010), self-protection (Mitchell, Baer, Ambrose, Folger, & Palmer, 2018) and linked to frustration. Similarly, studies have discoursed various sources of frustration in employees. According to frustration-aggression theory, frustration in employees provoke deviant behaviors (Bennett, Marasi, & Locklear, 2018). Unethical and destructive leadership has found one of key predictor of negative emotions like frustration, on the other hand when employees perceive fair treatment from leaders, there are less chances that they will indulge in deviant behavior (Mehmood et al., 2023; Valle, Kacmar, & Andrews, 2018). When employee feel that promotions and appreciation cannot be achieved through legitimate means in presence of despotic leadership it encourages them to engage in unethical behaviors. Avey et al. (2015) emphasized that frustration mediates between abusive supervision and deviant behavior, leaving the gap of other leadership styles. As per social exchange theory, the exchange between follower and leader will cease as soon as mutual reward violate and they will reciprocate in the way that is harmful for both parties like lowering desired behaviors (G. Blau, 1994). . Thus, we can propose hypothesis as :

H₃ (a): DL has a positive and significant relationship with frustration.

H₃ (b): Frustration has a positive and significant relationship with CWB.

H₃ (c): Frustration mediates the positive relationship between DL and CWB.

2.4. The Parallel Mediating Role of Disgust and Frustration

Brandebo, Nilsson, and Larsson (2016) conferred destructive leadership as volitional behavior that has strong adverse influences on followers and organization. Followers experience dehumanization, humiliation, and stress due to despotic leadership unethical and abusive behavior resulting in violation of positive exchange behavior. The negative impact of authoritarian behavior of leader increase power distance, complement self-serving behaviors, and undermining followers' performance escalates feelings of disgust and frustration. Social exchange theory suggests in this context that followers will behave inversely as the response to this emotional attitude consequently emerges followers' counterproductive work behaviors (Alias, Rasdi, Ismail, & Samah, 2013) because destructive behaviors impair individual and organizational well-being (Naseer et al., 2016). Existing literature has revealed diverse factors related to a despotic leader like lack of care and compassion for followers jeopardizes work performance (Nauman et al., 2020) accordingly followers feel emotional exhaustion. Existing research have examined many underlying factors to explain leader-follower relationship (De Clercq, Azeem, Haq, & Bouckenoghe, 2020; Shah, Afshan, Mirani, & Solangi, 2023), and there is a lack of literature observing parallel mediation in this context. Hence, we are foremost to suggest a hypothesis that:

H₄: Disgust and frustration parallel mediate the positive relationship between DL and CWB.

2.5. The Moderating Role of Psychological Capital

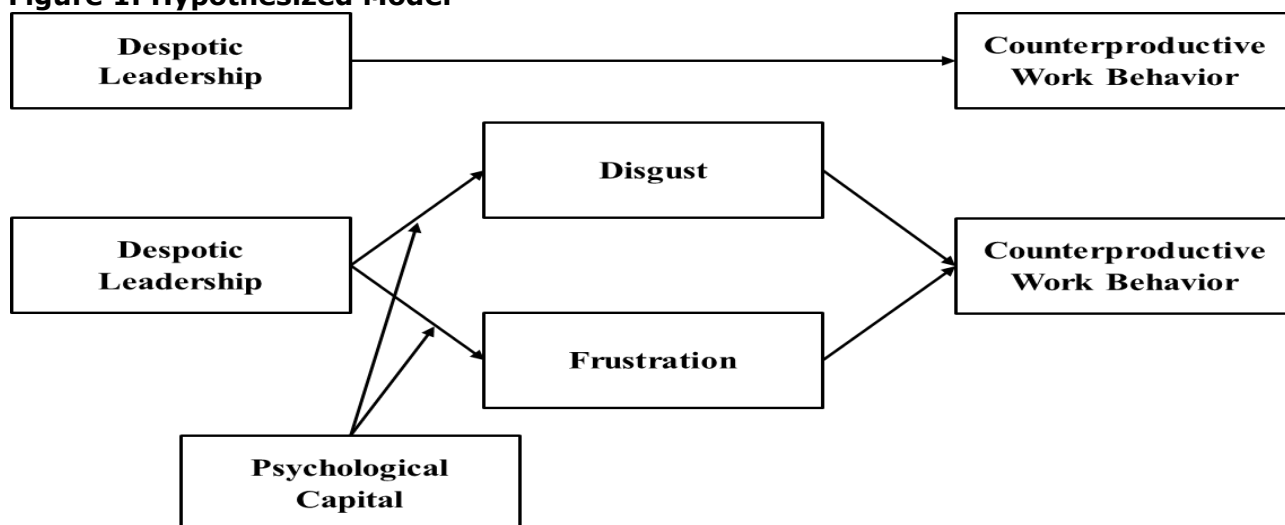
Psychological capital is (Fred Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017; F Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007) an affirmative psychological condition, described by four factors alike hope as preservation and development of goals for success, self-efficacy (confidence) to put adequate efforts for goal accomplishment, resilience is the ability to bounce back when faced with adversity and uncertainty, and optimism as positive acknowledgment for triumph. Individuals with appropriate psychological capital help to attain occupational health and higher levels of psychological well-being (Avey, Luthans, Smith, & Palmer, 2010), job satisfaction (Jung & Yoon, 2015). Psychological capital mitigate undesired attitudes and behaviors like anxiety, stress, turnover intentions (Avey, Reichard, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2011). When followers have positive psychological capital, they will exhibit a proliferation of positive attitudes and behaviors and a decline in counterproductive work behaviors (Shrestha & Jena, 2021). Hope and optimism can be depicted as positive energy and willpower in motivating individuals to explore all possible opportunities to decrease disgust and frustration, converting them into valuable resources (De

Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). Self-efficacy is cognitive ability to pursue a particular strategy to fulfill challenging tasks in supreme severity and domination over followers by despotic leadership (Zhou, Rasool, Yang, & Asghar, 2021).

Resilience as a dispositional and coping factor shields the undesired counterproductive behavioral consequence in stressful conditions (Shoss, Jiang, & Probst, 2018) followers can strive back and resist the unfair and hostile environment. Despotic leadership display bossy, morally unethical, and controlling behaviors (Khan, Mubarak, Khattak, Safdar, & Jaafar, 2022). This study projected counterproductive work behavior as emotion-oriented behavior due to manipulative despotic leadership. Thus psychological capital help followers to identify detrimental motives of leaders, act as a coping strategy of frustration and disgust (Fatima, Raja, & Jahanzeb, 2017; Haseeb & Shah, 2023). Psychological capital will serve as a resource caravan according to Conversion of resources (COR) theory to beget resource gain (Hobfoll, 2002), refrain followers from emotional resource loss, and arise positive motivation to deal with unconventional behaviors. Less discovered boundary condition in despotic leader’s literature helps us to provide a theoretical ground that psychological capital arise follower’s positive motivational thinking, determination, and willpower to invest in energy resources (Calheiros, 2018; Olaniyan & Hystad, 2016). Therefore, we hypothesized:

- H₅ (a): Psychological capital positively moderates the relationship between DL and disgust such that this relationship becomes weak at higher level of psychological capital.
- H₅ (b): Psychological capital positively moderates the relationship between DL and frustration such that this relationship becomes weak at higher level of psychological capital.
- H₆ (a): Psychological capital positively moderates the indirect relationship between DL and CWB through disgust.
- H₆ (b): Psychological capital positively moderates the indirect relationship between DL and CWB through frustration.

Figure 1: Hypothesized Model



3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

To analyze the stated hypothesis, we contacted different organizations (public sector) in the region of Rawalpindi and Islamabad for data collection, as destructive leadership and CWB are common practices in bureaucratic organizations due to permanent employment status and high power distance (Amber, Ahmad, Khan, & Hashmi, 2019; Bashir et al., 2012; Munir, Shakeel, & Waheed, 2023; Nasir & Bashir, 2012). Convenience sampling technique was incorporated through personal and professional contacts, and confidentiality was ensured through a cover letter with the personal information of the investigator for feedback. Convenience sampling as non-probability sampling although has limitations in generalization of the results but useful when randomization is difficult, scarce resources, time, and hitches in data collection (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Middle and low-level management (individual employees with immediate supervisor/ manager) were contacted for data collection, in this study data collection consisted of a two-wave research design to minimize common method bias arising from single-source data

(Lai, Li, & Leung, 2013), as temporal separation can diminish consistent response patterns such as social desirability bias.

3.2. Sampling and Data Collection

Time lagged collection of data was done, with T1 (despotic leadership, disgust, frustration) and T2 (psychological capital, counterproductive work behavior). Time lag between measurements of 1 month. The official language in Pakistan is English, therefore self-reported questionnaire was administered in English, foregoing research also employed a medium of English for anchoring responses (Munir, Waheed, & Shakeel, 2022; Naseer et al., 2016). Earlier studies show that a sample size around 200 or above is suitable for models involving mediations and moderations (Peng & Lai, 2012). The adequacy of the sample size was established through G*power analysis (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009), assuming four predictors as one independent, one moderator, and 2 mediators, and setting the α parameter at 0.05 the G*power indicated 220 could be the minimum suitable sample size while showing high power value of 0.95. A sum of 400 self-reported questionnaires containing latent variables despotic leadership, disgust, and frustration was distributed and shared with respondents. Of these 376 were returned, and after discarding incomplete responses and missing values 345 respondents (86% response rate) remained. The same participants were again given another self-reported questionnaire to for psychological capital, and CWB. A total of 326 useable surveys were completed (81% response rate overall).

3.3. Measurement

A 7-point Likert scale was used with range of 1 being strongly disagree to 7 being strongly agree.

3.3.1. Despotic Leadership

To Measure DL, a 6-item scale developed by (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008) has been used. A sample item is "My supervisor is punitive; has no pity or compassion." In principal component analysis evaluated through factor analysis, the Eigenvalue for the extracted single factor was 4.96, explaining 83% of the variance in the data.

3.3.2. Disgust

Disgust (D) was assessed through a 3-item measurement scale on moral disgust originated by (Nabi, 2002). Sample items are "As a result of my experience with my supervisor, I feel grossed out." Principal component analysis evaluated through factor analysis, the Eigenvalue for the extracted single factor was 2.31, explaining 78% of the variance in the data.

3.3.3. Frustration

To evaluate the degree of frustration (F), an adapted scale of 3-items was used (Peters, O'Connor, & Rudolf, 1980). The sample included "Trying to get this job done was a very frustrating experience", "I feel frustration comes with this job", I experienced very little frustration on this job" (reverse coded). Principal component analysis evaluated through factor analysis, the Eigenvalue for the extracted single factor was 2.48, explaining 83% of the variance in the data.

3.3.4. Counterproductive Work Behavior

CWB was appraised with a short-version of the CWB checklist developed by (Spector et al., 2006), which are categorized as counterproductive work behavior individuals (CWB-I) and counterproductive work behavior organization (CWB-O). Sample items are "Came to work late without permission" and "Insulted or made fun of someone at work." Principal component analysis evaluated through factor analysis, the Eigenvalue for the extracted single factor was 8.49, explaining 84% of the variance in the data.

3.3.5. Psychological Capital

Psychological Capital (PC) was measured through short-version (12-items) of the original 24-item scale developed by (F Luthans et al., 2007), comprised of hope (4-items), self-efficacy (3-items), resilience (3-items), and optimism (2-items) . The sample item is "The future holds a lot of good in store for me." Principal component analysis evaluated through factor analysis, the Eigenvalue for the extracted two factor was 17.48, explaining the 79 % of variance in the data.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Demographics

The data indicated 69 % were male and 31% were female. In terms of age, 2% were between 21-25 years, 15% were 26-30 years, 33 % were between 31-35 years, 19% were between 36-40 years and 30% were 41 and above years. 42% had obtained a master's and above degree and 58% obtained a bachelor's degree. Moreover, the majority of respondents are permanent employees and 69% of respondents had 6-10 years of experience.

4.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The confirmatory factor analysis was used to measure the construct validity of 5-factor model including all latent variables. To fit this model, different model fit indices like Chi-square/degree of freedom or χ^2/df , Comparative fit index or CFI, Root mean-square error approximation or RMSEA, , Goodness-of-fit index or GFI confirm the validity of the CFA model as shown in Table 1 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Table 1: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Model-fit Indices	χ^2/df	CFI	RSMEA	TLI
DL & CWB	2.49	0.98	0.07	0.97
DL + D & PC + CWB (4-factor)	2.73	0.95	0.07	0.96
DL + F & PC + CWB (4-factor)	2.96	0.94	0.07	0.93
DL + D, F + PC & CWB (Hypothesized)	2.66	0.95	0.07	0.94
Criteria	<3	>0.90	<0.08	>0.90

Note: CMIN/df = normed chi-square, CFI = comparative fit index, TLI = Tucker-Lewis index, RMSEA = root mean square of error approximation.

4.3. Validity and Reliability

Estimation of convergent and discriminant validity specifies the justification of measurement model. Conversing from (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) convergent validity contains the following:

- All factor loading should greater than 0.65
- Composite reliability (CR) should be larger than 0.80
- AVE for each construct should exceed 0.50

Thus, measurement model holds convergent validity. The finding in Table 2 also holds the condition for discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) as square root of the AVE of all latent variables are greater than the correlations between the latent variables. The mean standard deviation and correlation among variables are also presented in Table 2. The current study used a 7-point Likert scale for responses hence, the mean values range between 1 and 7.

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlation and Reliabilities

	CR	AVE	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
DL	0.95	0.79	5.71	1.05	0.89				
D	0.86	0.68	6.07	0.81	0.28**	0.82			
F	0.89	0.74	6.04	0.91	0.16**	0.49**	0.86		
PC	0.95	0.80	2.53	1.39	-0.45**	-0.39**	-	0.86	
							0.47**		
CWB	0.94	0.83	5.81	1.40	0.54**	0.46**	0.51**	-	0.88
								0.56**	

Note: Cut off: CR > 0.7; AVE > 0.50; CR = Composite Reliability, AVE = Average Variance Extracted, Diagonal = Cronbach Alpha; ** p < 0.01, CWB = Counterproductive Work Behavior, DL = Despotic Leadership, D = Disgust, F = Frustration, PC = psychological capital.

Mean value for despotic leadership is 5.71 showing majority followers perceived their leader despotic, similarly the mean value of disgust and frustration are 6.07 and 6.04 respectively showed disgust and frustration in follower aroused by their leadership. Similarly, despotic leadership have positive and significant impact on disgust and frustration ($r = 0.21$, $p < 0.01$) and ($r = 0.16$, $p < 0.01$), hence supported H_2 (a) and H_3 (a). Going further, disgust and frustration are directly and significantly correlated to counterproductive work behavior ($r = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$) and ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$) respectively which proved H_2 (b) and H_3 (b). Overall, there is no unexpected result in bivariate correlation regression analysis.

4.4. Hypothesis Testing (Direct & Indirect Effects)

The results reported in Table 3, indicates the high positive correlation between despotic leadership and counterproductive work behavior ($r = 0.54, p < 0.01$), this resulted in acceptance of H_1 . Despotic leadership explained a variance of 29.7% in the model ($R^2 = 0.297$).

Table 3: Direct & Indirect Effects

Dependent Variable	Direct effects	β	SE	P	R^2
CWB	DL → CWB	0.54	0.06	0.00	0.297

Note: CWB = counterproductive work behavior, R^2 = squared multiple correlation

To assess predictive relevance and effect sizes, The Q-Square statistic evaluates the difference between the R-squared values of the endogenous latent variables in the structural model for the inner and outer models. The inner model represents the structural relationships between latent variables, while the outer model represents the relationships between observed indicators and latent variables. It is noteworthy that the Q2 values for the specific indicators, which range from 0.373 to 0.511, were all greater than zero. Similarly, the F square was employed to ascertain the effect size, playing a crucial role in elucidating the variance of each exogenous variable within the model. The model implies 0.058, 0.393, 0.406, 0.207, 0.176. This study proposed the indirect effects of disgust and frustration between despotic leadership and counterproductive work behavior individually, and in parallel manner, findings are shown in Table 4.

Figure 2: Hypothesis Testing (Indirect Effects)

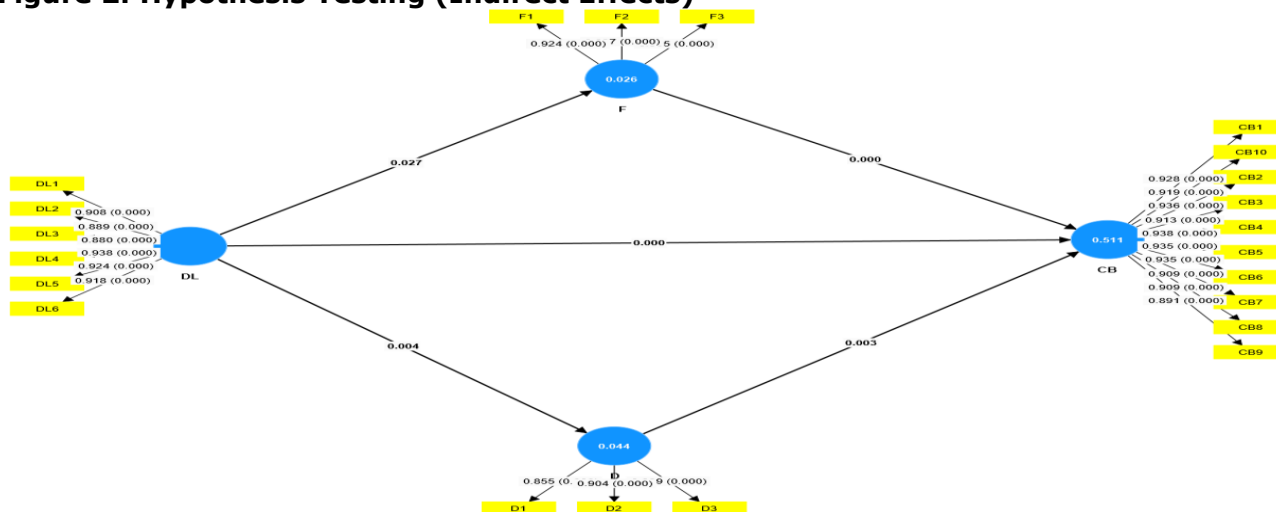


Table 4: Path Analysis

Effects	B	SE	t-value	p-value	Hypothesis
DL -> CWB	0.546	0.058	0.04	0.000	Accepted
DL -> Disgust	0.209	0.073	0.61	0.004	Accepted
Disgust -> CWB	0.197	0.067	0.51	0.003	Accepted
DL -> Frustration	0.163	0.074	0.53	0.027	Accepted
Frustration-> CWB	0.340	0.064	0.01	0.000	Accepted

4.5. Moderated Analysis

This research proposed moderating role of psychological capital in the relationship between disgust and counterproductive work behavior H_5 (a) and moderating role of psychological capital in the relationship between frustration and counterproductive work behavior H_5 (b).

As for conditional effects, the interaction between DL and PC was significant for Disgust and Frustration. More specifically the slope for (DL x PC) on Disgust was significant ($\beta = -0.409, p < .001$) thus confirming H_5 (a). The interaction term then obtained showed that the slope for (DL x PC) on Frustration was significant ($\beta = -0.268, p < .001$) thus confirming H_5 (b).

Figure 3: Moderating effects between Despotic Leadership and Disgust (PC as Moderator)

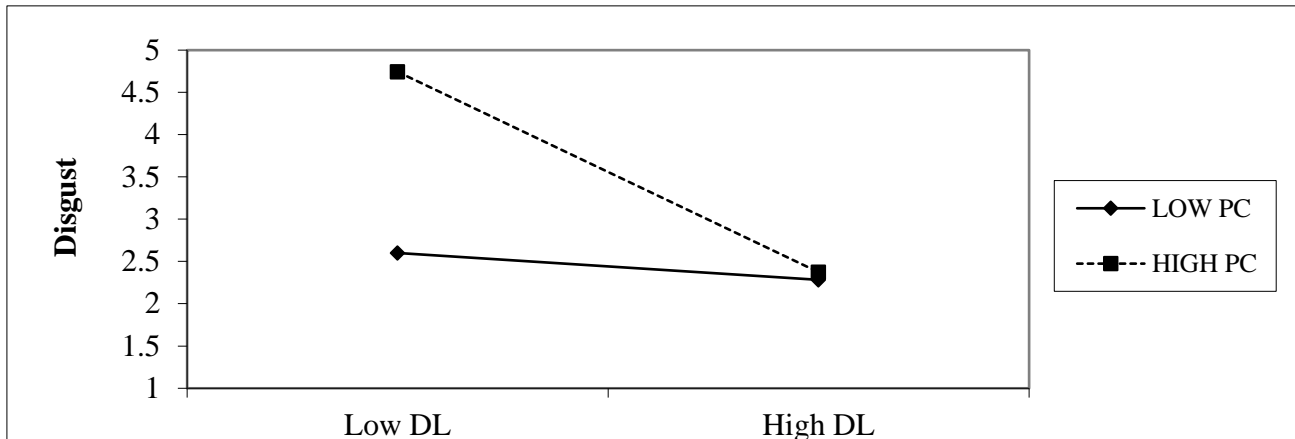
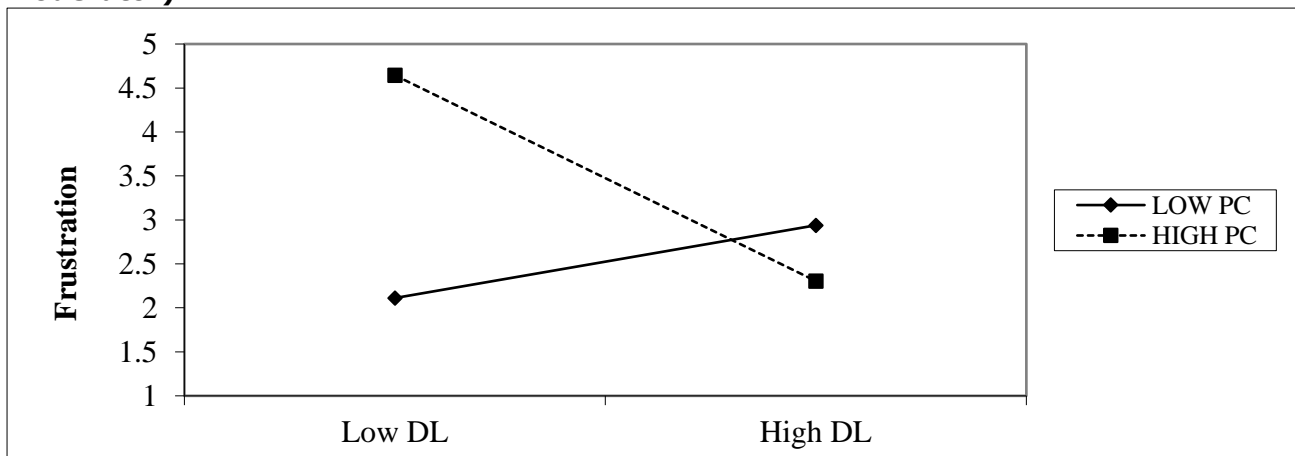


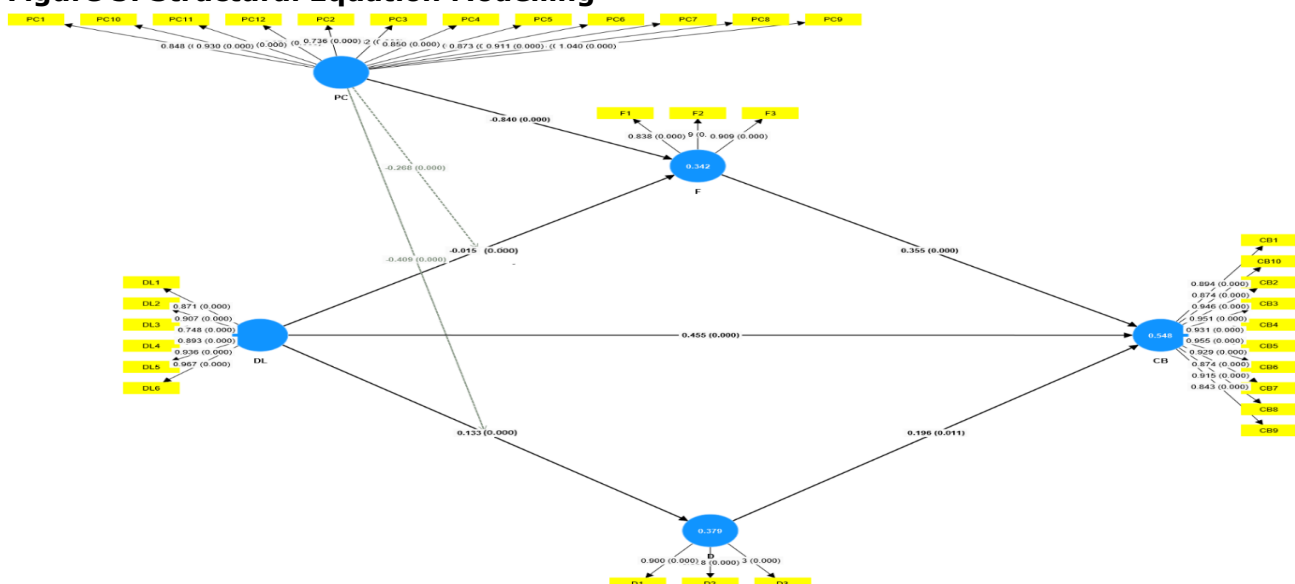
Figure 4: Moderating effects between Despotic Leadership and Frustration (PC as Moderator)



4.5. Moderated Mediation Analysis

Structural equation modelling was employed to evaluate the complete model (moderated mediation) by Smart PLS. The SEM consistent bootstrapping was used to estimate the path coefficients. As can be observed from figure, the indirect effect of despotic leadership and counterproductive work behavior through a) disgust and b) frustration moderated by psychological capital. The moderated mediated index supported H₆ (a) and H₆ (b).

Figure 5: Structural Equation Modelling



5. Discussion

5.1. Findings and Conclusion

Unethical and destructive leadership have studied widely with despotic leadership falling under both of these leadership styles. Despite various studies, this dark side of leadership still needs to be investigated further. The foremost objective of this study was to explore the effects of such leadership on followers' emotional and psychological conditions and the right flow of mechanisms. The study contributes to despotic leader literature by analyzing attitude-behavior model which elucidate when followers engage in counterproductive work behavior. More appropriately, despotic leadership demonstrate self-interest, manipulation, and undermine followers (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Khizar et al., 2023) rise in discrete negative emotions like disgust and frustration and trigger counterproductive work behaviors. We found considerable reported behaviors, like insulting someone at workplace and absenteeism in this study. Categorically extant literature confirmed controlling, abusive, unquestioned compliance as aspects of despotic leadership and other destructive leadership styles as predictor of counterproductive work behavior and our research add to these findings in form about discrete emotions and related conduct (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2018; Nauman et al., 2020; Schmid et al., 2019). This study extend the role of psychological capital to address the way followers might contribute positively in presence of destructive leadership. Hopeful, optimistic, resilient and self-confident follower can alleviate these adverse situations (Hobfoll, 1991, 2002). Their self-motivated, resilient behavior prevent emotional and psychological resource loss, undo the associated hardships and develop positive outcomes (Khan et al., 2022). Hofstede (2001) characterized Pakistan as power distance culture mean poor communication between leader and followers, uncertainty avoidance ethos where people show unusual behaviors in explicit situations, therefore such culture is more appealing to explore leadership behaviors and respective consequences.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

This study has threefold literary contributions in field of management, as discussed in introduction the purpose of this study is to explore impact of leadership on attitudes and behavior of followers. Especially we focused on the despotic leadership' offensive, derogatory, self-aggrandizing, exploiting others, and wicked supervision ascend negative emotions in followers. According to social exchange theory, follower react in reciprocal (Albashiti, Hamid, & Aboramadan, 2021; Murad et al., 2021), in exchange of leader despotic tendencies. By the lens of COR theory, the study proposes new understandings of mechanisms through which despotic leader power followers' behaviors. Aforementioned studies to our best knowledge explored destructive leadership underlying mechanism as negative emotions like frustration (Avey et al., 2015) and contempt (Syed et al., 2021), broadening the existing literature on destructive more precisely despotic leadership by investigating two attitudinal mechanisms in parallel manner as precursors of counterproductive behavior in followers. As a neglected concept in despotic leadership context is psychological capital which is theoretically significant in undesirable organizational environment (Haseeb & Shah, 2023; J.-J. Tang, 2020). In Pakistan, especially in public sector organizations unethical behaviors towards followers is communal practice. The findings here add to multi-dimensional concept of psychological capital as boundary condition suggests a feasible approach to overcome negative emotions and counterproductive work behaviors.

5.3. Managerial Implications

Likewise, to literary contribution, our research findings exhibit some managerial implications based on following argument. Firstly, psychological assessment for hiring should be established in order to avoid candidates with despotic tendencies. Numerous studies have molded as psychological parameters and training on emotional regulation should have part of selection procedures (Majeed & Fatima, 2020; Murad et al., 2021; Syed, Naseer, & Shamim, 2022). Secondly, poor communications, unethical conducts and deprived managerial skills produce emotionally exhausted followers and environment, for this instance we suggest formal training of leadership and followers concurrently. Leadership needs to focus on emotional intelligence, decision-making and leadership skills that encourages supportive and competitive culture. Moreover, training should emphasize on destructive consequences of leadership to avoid practicing of manipulating and exploiting followers for self-interest. Thirdly, the mediating role of negative emotions have been discussed therefore, this can be facilitated through counselling sessions or psychological workshops for cultivating psychological capital of victims. A number of measures could be taken into consideration like appreciation notes, emotional and cognitive

rewards, and quality of professional experience to cope adverse situation. Finally, job crafting could be one of the intervention strategies may possibly be incorporated for positive orientation, constructive environment, to grace capabilities of low-level management.

5.4. Limitations and Future Directions

Some archetypal limitations for further research have been identified. Foremost, is self-reported measuring instrument, due to limitation of resources and time. Future research can replicate with self-reported, peer-reported and qualitative data collection procedures can be employed. Second, although this study involved two-wave research design, but it is not completely longitudinal study. Therefore, we suggest future researcher to conduct longitudinal research for this spillover model. Third, scope of this study is constrained to public sector organization, further studies can enhance their understanding about despotic leader by exploring in academia, hospitality industry, and private organizations. Lastly, we measured just individual-level factors as mediating aspects for explaining the relationship between the two variables DL and followers' CWB, future studies can deliberate organizational and situational factors as underlying mechanisms. Forthcoming studies may analyze positive behavioral outcomes like enhance work engagement, employee and task performances.

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