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RESEARCH PAPER

Impact of Despotic and Autocratic Leadership on Employees' Deviant Behavior, with the Moderation of Perceived Organizational Justice

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the impact of autocratic and despotic leadership styles on employees' deviant behavior, with the moderating effect of perceived organizational justice. In the realm of research, there exists significant concern regarding the influence of despotic and autocratic leadership styles on employees' deviant behavior, particularly within service-oriented industries such as banking and educational institutions. Therefore, this study helps to understand how these leadership styles may affect deviant behavior among employees. This study used a quantitative survey-based research methodology, Data was collected from 356 employees of different banks and universities in Rawalpindi, Islamabad, and Lahore. The findings show a positive and significant effects of autocratic and despotic leadership styles on employees' deviant behavior. Results also indicate that the relationship between autocratic leadership and employees' deviant behavior is moderated by perceived organizational justice. Future researchers should explore different industries, use multi-source data, and different mediators in the relationship between negative leadership styles and deviant behavior for a diversified sample size.

| **KEYWORDS** | Autocratic Leadership, Despotic Leadership, Employees' Deviant Behavior, Perceived Organizational Justice |

Introduction

Previous researches on leadership also focused on the negative aspects of leadership (Griffin & Lopez, 2005; Naseer et al., 2016) and its devastating traits that may lead to undesirable results (Schyns & Hansbrough, 2010). Despotic and autocratic leadership has notable negative traits. Researchers are increasingly interested in leadership's dark side, which suggests a fundamental repositioning (Karakitapoglu-Aygun & Gumusluoglu, 2013). They are cruel, Machiavellian, and suppressive. They can commit several unethical and unlawful acts (Tepper, 2007). Abuse, undermining, poisonous, or authoritarian leadership are examples (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Despotic leaders are egoistic, self-important, burdensome, and unappeasable, have less probity and code of ethics require hard work, obedience, and exert power and authority at work (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). They prioritize themselves and don't engage subordinates in key decisions. In response to this harsh leadership style, employees may become less productive (Naseer et al., 2016). On the other hand, autocratic leaders make decisions without subordinates' input and are useful when quick decisions are needed to achieve goals and objectives without team members (Boehm et al., 2015). Subordinates have few chances or options to make opinions, even if they benefit the team and workplace (Amanchukwu et al., 2015).

Researchers have observed several correlations between despotic and autocratic leadership and other characteristics. De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008) discovered that despotic leadership affects optimism and effectiveness. The literature of social exchange theory suggests that supervisors and subordinates have an autonomous reciprocal connection since subordinates' behavior depends on supervisors' treatment. When subordinates follow the culture of reciprocity or exchange, ethical leaders will have employees who are trustworthy, honest, and committed. On the other hand, when

employees feel mistreated and their leaders act narcissistically or deviantly, subordinates realize they are not being respected and treated well and engage in deviant and abusive behavior. Organizational deviance affects employee performance and unfavorable outcomes previous literature examined many reasons for deviant behavior (Robinson & Greenberg, 1998). Reasons include perceived injustice, unhappiness, role modeling, and thrill-seeking. Thus, workplace deviant behavior of the employee can harm an organization. There are many studies on these two leadership styles and their effects, but limited have used perceived organizational justice as a moderator to examine how autocratic and despotic leadership affect employee deviance. Erkutlu and Chafra (2017) suggested using perceived organizational justice as a moderator while examining these relationship.

The objective of this research is to examine the influence of despotic and autocratic leadership on employees' deviant behavior in Pakistan's service sector (universities and banks), while examining the moderating role of perceived organizational justice. Public and private sector institutions contribute to the advancement of the nation. The attitudes and behaviors of bank managers and upper management of universities, including bosses and supervisors, have a critical role in service delivery, alongside other factors.

Literature Review

Theoretical Support

According to social exchange theory, workers and subordinates perceive a distinct relationship between themselves and their superiors, and their activities are contingent upon the behavior exhibited by their upper-level management. Copanzano and Mitchell (2005) conducted a study. This theory posits that the behavior of employees is contingent upon the manner in which their superiors are treated. Social exchange theory is employed as a conceptual framework in certain research studies to elucidate employees' deviant behavior (Bordia et al., 2008). Deviant behavior can be conceptualized as the result of adhering to the negative reciprocity norm (Gouldner, 1960), which posits that individuals tend to react negatively when they perceive treatment or injury from the organization. Mount et al. (2006) employed the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which posits that it involves a reciprocal interaction characterized by giving and taking. Based on the social exchange theory, it may be posited that employees who hold the notion that they are not being treated favorably tend to exhibit higher levels of job dissatisfaction. When individuals are subjected to unfavorable treatment, they tend to adhere to the principle of reciprocity and exhibit negative reactions in various circumstances. According to this framework, it is contended that employees respond unfavorably when they perceive receiving favorable treatment and participate in organizational deviance.

Autocratic Leadership and Employees' Deviant Behavior

Autocratic leaders refrain from incentivizing their subordinates to provide their own views or opinions while making significant choices. They exercise their superior authority and independently make decisions without external influence. Leaders issue directives to their workers and anticipate that they will do the same task as instructed by their superior (Khan, 1999). Based on prior research and scholarly literature, it has been shown that autocratic leadership is characterized by a leader's neglect of the social and emotional well-being of team members. Leaders of this nature do not prioritize the preservation of group stability and fail to perceive the group as a viable social organization or entity (Harms et al., 2018). Leadership can be defined as a leadership style characterized by the leader's ability to organize and motivate their subordinates towards the attainment of the workplace's ultimate objectives. Leadership involves the act of directing, motivating, and enabling people to achieve their goals using methods that they have chosen or authorized (Alblooshi et al., 2021). Autocratic leadership is a distinct form of leadership characterized by the utilization of authority by the leader over subordinates. According to Bass and Bass (2009), autocratic leadership is characterized by leaders that restrict the control and

influence of group members in decision-making processes, while also exhibiting a dominant and assertive leadership style that demonstrates no regard for the opinions and values of followers. Certain behaviors that bear resemblance to deviant behavior or are regarded as deviance have been identified by researchers. These behaviors include absenteeism (Everton et al., 2007), withdrawal or job turnover (Sender et al., 2021), as well as attitudes and behaviors that lead to forms of injustice such as procedural or distributive justice (Dora & Azim, 2019). When considering the justice approach or perspective, it is seen that individual employees tend to exhibit changes in their attitudes and behavior when they perceive unfair treatment and encounter an unfair and abusive leadership style from their bosses. The individuals' favorable attitudes experience a decline and transform into unfavorable attitudes (Tepper, 2000). Workplace deviance refers to the voluntary and discretionary behavior of individuals who do not adhere to the norms and principles of an organization. This behavior can be detrimental to the organization's effectiveness, reputation, and the well-being of coworkers (Bennet & Robinson, 2000). The establishment of norms and ethical guidelines by higher-level authority is vital for subordinates to adhere to. If senior management employs effective leadership tactics to oversee their subordinates, it is quite likely that they will adhere to the established regulations and directions (Litzky et al., 2006). It is imperative to establish a tranquil and morally upright work atmosphere for employees in order to alleviate the occurrence of deviant behavior.

H1: Autocratic leadership positively related to employees' deviant behavior.

Despotic Leadership and Employees' Deviant Behavior

As previously stated, there exists a positive association between despotic leadership and deviant behavior exhibited by employees. Robinson and Bennett (2003) proposed two classifications of workplace deviance. There are two types of deviance: interpersonal deviance and organizational deviance. They described interpersonal deviance as the behavior of individuals in the workplace that involves misbehavior and causing harm to others. The manifestation of such aberrant behavior has the potential to negatively impact the productivity and efficacy of the organization (Galperin, 2012). The interdependent relationship between employers and employees can be inferred from the framework of social exchange theory (Mount et al., 2006).Therefore, drawing from the existing body of literature, it is postulated that employees are more likely to engage in deviant behavior when they perceive their leader to be employing a despotic leadership style. Previous studies have unequivocally demonstrated that when employees encounter challenging working conditions, their capacity to engage in voluntary behavior gradually declines due to a perceived burden of labor associated with imprudence (e.g., Pooja et al., 2016). As previously said, despotic leaders exhibit dispositions characterized by moodiness, pride, the exercise of authority, and a primary focus on personal benefits and gains rather than the well-being of their subordinates (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). According to Naseer et al. (2016) and Wu & Lee (2016), it can be inferred that destructive leadership styles, such as despotic leadership, have a detrimental impact on employees' job deviance and workplace hardship. These styles hinder employees from receiving support, care, and other advantages and incentives.

Based on the above literature, it is hypothesized as:

H2: Despotic leadership positively related to employees' deviant behavior.

Moderating Effect of Perceived Organizational Justice

The concept of justice was initially articulated in the 1960s. In the 1990s, three new justice systems emerged. These include distributed, procedural, and interactional justice (Lapidot et al., 2007). Research has shown that justice perception affects ideas, perceptions, and social behavior (Shapiro & Brett, 1993). The supervisor's leadership style will influence subordinates' views on justice and subsequent actions. No study has examined the intended

meaning of justice-leadership interactions in some nations. It examines how perceived organizational justice and leadership styles moderate employee deviance. Several studies have used social exchange to better understand the relationship between abusive supervision, employee deviance and organizational justice (Thau, Bennett, Mitchell, & Marrs, 2009). Leaders who utilize abusive supervisory approaches reduce employees' impression of justice and workplace social relationships. According to the following reference, authoritarian or autocratic leaders cause bad or deviant behavior and lower organizational fairness and leader perception. Deviant behavior in an unfair workplace will harm the workplace. Thus, focusing on such constructs can reduce the detrimental effects of abusive leadership (Kenny, 2008).

Organizational justice is emphasized in recent decades. It immediately reflects employee ideas due to employee response. Past researchers have found that perceived organizational support for justice has implications for several attitudes, including employee performance (Khan et al., 2023), organizational citizenship behavior (Tran & Choi, 2019), organizational support (Engelbrecht & Samuel, 2019), and organizational commitment (Lee & Wei, 2017).

These studies show that employees' perceptions of justice affect their outcomes and are influenced by their leaders' behavior and style. When employees repeatedly interact with the workplace, it is linked to several job-related effects. Job satisfaction, absenteeism, and intention to leave are these consequences. Other consequences include employment motivation and readiness to execute extra duties outside of job routines. Deviance in an organization can cause significant injury and damage (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Brown & Treviño, 2006). Destructive leadership, negative leadership styles, abusive supervision, workplace bullying, and toxic leadership are all part of the dark side of leadership. According to the above literature and findings, leaders who use negative leadership styles like abusive supervision, unethical leadership, and despotic or autocratic leadership negatively impact employees' perceptions of organizational justice and lead to deviant or negative behavior. Organizational fairness is key to understanding employee deviance (Greenberg & Alge, 1998). Many scholars used social exchange theory and equity theory to study leadership styles and employee deviance. Researchers also explained how fairness views affect work. How justice typologies affect employee work attitude, contentment, and commitment (Jones & Martens, 2009). When they see organizational justice and realize they are treated equally and rewarded for their contributions to the organization's goals and effectiveness, they will be happier at work and less likely to act deviantly. From the above discussion we hypothesized that

H3: Perceived organizational justice will moderate the relation between autocratic leadership and employees' deviant behavior.

H4: Perceived organizational justice will moderate the relation between despotic leadership and employees' deviant.
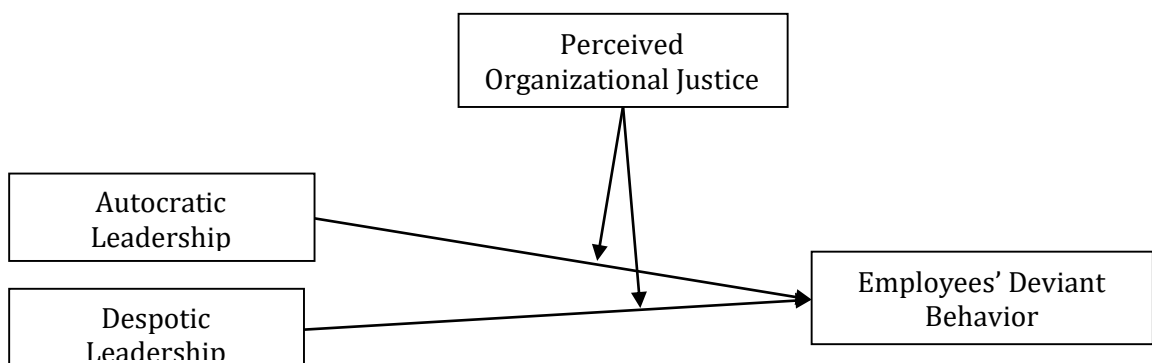

Figure No. 1: Theoretical Framework

Material and Methods

This study aims to examine the causal relationship between autocratic leadership and despotic leadership and employees' deviant behavior. Additionally, the study seeks to explore the moderating role of employees' perceived organizational justice. The measurement of these variables is based on self-reported perceptions provided by the respondents. Different organizations may have varying perceptions of autocratic and despotic leadership styles. Data is gathered from personnel employed in various public and private sector banks and educational institutions of Islamabad, Lahore and Rawalpindi, in order to examine the distinction between autocratic and despotic leadership styles. The study's objective was elucidated to the participants, who were also informed that their involvement is optional and their answers will be treated with utmost confidentiality. The respondents completed a survey that included questions pertaining to autocratic and despotic leadership styles, employees' deviant behavior, and their perception of organizational fairness. Furthermore, in the demographic section of the survey, each participant provided information regarding their age, gender, qualifications, and overall experience within the business. 450 questionnaires were distributed and 377 were received back with the response rate of 83%, out of which 356 were completed and used for data analyses.

Measures

The questionnaire included four demographic variables: Age, Gender, Qualification, and Tenure of the respondents. In addition to demographic aspects, the questionnaire has encompassed many variables that are being examined. The factors encompassed inquiries pertaining to autocratic leadership, despotic leadership, employee deviant behavior, and perceived justice in the organization. Autocratic leadership has been examined through the utilization of a 5-item scale that was developed and validated by De Hoogh et al. (2004), (see also, De Hoogh and Den Hartog, 2009). An example item is "Exerts influence over others by imposing their own values and opinions." The measurement of despotic leadership has been conducted using a 6-item scale developed by Hanges and Dickson (2004). A representative item is "Exhibits leadership qualities and displays a lack of tolerance towards disagreement or questioning, issuing directives." The measurement of employee deviant behavior is conducted using a 12-item version as previously proposed by Bennett et al. (2000). An example item is "Excessively engaged in fantasizing or daydreaming instead of focusing on work." The measurement of perceived organizational justice has been conducted with 4-item scales that were produced by Hausknecht et al. (2011). In the present organization, the procedures are founded upon precise and reliable information.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the mean, standard deviation, reliability, and correlation of all the variables. The construct of Autocratic Leadership exhibits a mean score of 3.28 and a standard deviation of 0.916. Cronbach alpha is a statistical measure that estimates the reliability of a measure by examining the correlation between variables, assuming that all variables have equal reliability. The Cronbach alpha values ranged from 0.88 to 0.94. This finding demonstrates the presence of high reliability, since the observed values exceed the recommended level set by Fornell and Larcker (1981), specifically greater than 0.70.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviation, Correlations, and Reliabilities

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1.	Autocratic leadership	3.28	.916	(0.91)			
2.	Despotic Leadership	3.15	.757	.623**	(0.88)		
3.	Perceived Justice	3.12	.636	-.602**	-.612**	(0.90)	
4.	Deviance	2.74	.812	.678**	.693**	.516**	(0.94)

The data shown in the table demonstrates a significant positive relationship between autocratic leadership and employees' deviant behavior, specifically in regard to their attitude towards change (r = 0.678, p < 0.001). This finding offers preliminary evidence in favor of hypothesis 1. Nevertheless, there exists a favorable correlation between despotic leadership and employees' deviant behavior. The value is 0.693, with a p-value of 0.001. However, a robust negative relationship exists between the perception of organizational justice and the manifestation of deviant behavior among employees.

Regression Analysis

The present study employed multiple regression analysis to examine the primary effects and moderating effects of the variables under investigation, namely autocratic leadership, despotic leadership, perceived organizational justice, and employees' deviant behavior. Table 2 displays the outcomes derived from the regression analysis.

Table 2
Moderation Regression Analyses

Predictor	Employees' Deviant Behavior		
	B	R2	ΔR2
Step 1		0.001	
Control variable			
Step 2			
Autocratic leadership	.186**		
Despotic leadership	.335***		
Perceived organizational justice	-.409**	.840	.839
Step 3			
AL*POJ	-.194**	0.004	0.005
DL*POJ	-0.74ns	.846	0.006

N=356, *=*p* < .05, **=*p* < .01, ***=*p* < .001; ns = not significant

The findings suggest a statistically significant positive correlation between autocratic leadership and employees' deviant behavior (β =.186**, p>0.001). Therefore, hypothesis 1 is confirmed. The study reveals a statistically significant positive association (β =.335***, p<0.001) between despotic leadership and employees' deviant behavior, leading to the acceptance of hypothesis 2. This study examines the association between autocratic leadership and employees' deviant behavior, with a focus on the moderating role of perception of justice. The findings suggest that the relationship between autocratic leadership and employees' deviant behavior is influenced by the perception of organizational justice, with a stronger relationship observed when perceived organizational justice is high. As a result, hypothesis 3 is substantiated and deemed valid (β = -0.194 (2012), p>0.001). The acceptance of Hypothesis 4 is rejected. The relationship between despotic leadership and employees' deviant behavior will be moderated by the perception of organizational justice. Specifically, when perceived organizational justice is strong, the relationship will be less (β = -0.074, p>0.05). The results of the previous hypothesis do not align with the anticipated outcomes or the stated hypothesis. As previously stated, data was gathered from both the banking sector and the education sector. There is a potential for dissatisfaction among employees in various public and private sector banks and universities regarding their bosses, although they are unable to divert from their work due to certain factors. Despite their lack of perception of justice in their work environment, they are unable to display deviant behavior.

Discussion

The application of social exchange theory is employed to examine the link between autocratic and despotic leadership styles and the manifestation of deviant behavior among employees, while also considering the moderating influence of perceived organizational justice. The social exchange theory provides support for my model as it demonstrates that

when a leader exhibits autocratic tendencies and employees perceive their leader's behavior as unsatisfactory and lacking involvement in decision-making processes, they are more likely to engage in deviant behaviors, such as counterproductive actions. The findings suggest that there exists a positive correlation between autocratic leadership and the manifestation of deviant behavior among employees. The analysis offered in this research is closely linked to previous investigations. From an organizational standpoint, it is evident that employees tend to exhibit increased self-centeredness and pose greater risks to the firm when they perceive a lack of autonomy from their leader, resulting in a restriction of their ability to contribute ideas and express personal perspectives pertaining to the organization. Ultimately, they engage in destructive behavior. The subsequent hypothesis posited a noteworthy positive correlation between autocratic leadership and the manifestation of deviant behavior among employees. The results corroborated the suggested hypothesis. As previously mentioned, despotic leaders' exhibit arrogance and prioritize their own self-interest. Previous research has indicated that despotic leaders exhibit pronounced moodiness, pride, and a tendency to exploit their authority, prioritizing their own personal benefits and profits over those of their subordinates Aaronson (2001) and De Hoogh & Den Hartog (2008). When leaders exhibit selfishness and arrogance, it is quite likely that employees may resort to violent behavior, resulting in detrimental consequences for both the organization and the well-being of both employees and leaders. The second hypothesis has been substantiated and deemed valid. The third hypothesis posits that the relationship between autocratic leadership and employees' deviant behavior is moderated by perceived organizational justice. Specifically, it suggests that a higher level of perceived organizational justice will result in a weaker relationship between these two variables. The findings supported this hypothesis. Therefore, the third hypothesis is acceptable and validated by the obtained results. The final hypothesis posits that the relationship between despotic leadership and employees' deviant behaviors will be moderated by perceived organizational justice. Specifically, it suggests that a higher level of perceived organizational justice will result in a weaker relationship between these two variables. The findings did not support this hypothesis.

Conclusion

The objective of this research is to investigate the impact of autocratic and despotic leadership styles, while considering the moderating effect of perceived organizational justice, on employees' deviant behavior. The data was obtained from a sample of 356 participants who were employed in various public and private sector banks located in Rawalpindi, Islamabad, and Lahore. The data was acquired through the use of closed-ended questions. The participants in this study were selected voluntarily, and a convenience sample technique was employed. The employees willingly completed the questionnaire without any undue coercion. The data was collected and subjected to analysis using regression and correlation techniques. The findings indicate a statistically significant positive correlation between autocratic leadership and despotic leadership styles and employees' deviant behaviors. The relationship between perceived organizational justice and deviant behavior among employees has been found to be negative and statistically significant. When leaders grant individuals the opportunity to engage in the decision-making process, they will come to recognize their inherent value and recognize their significance as valuable assets inside the organization. The utilization of effective leadership styles is crucial for leaders, as bad leadership styles can have detrimental effects on businesses and yield severe consequences. Promoting an ethical culture is of paramount importance for the development of organizations, as it yields significant benefits for the overall welfare of the organization.

Recommendations

For this study data was gathered from many employees across both public and private banking sectors and universities. It is advisable for future researchers to do similar

investigations in diverse industries, such as telecommunications corporations and healthcare organizations, to augment the applicability of our findings. The present study utilized a sample size of 356 participants, which was obtained through the application of convenience sampling methods. In order to enhance the generalizability of the study, it is advisable for future researchers to employ a bigger and more diversified sample size. In order to mitigate the potential influence of common technique bias, it is recommended that future studies use multi-source data collecting and adopt a longitudinal approach. The majority of our sample consisted of early career employees, which may restrict the generalizability of our findings. Therefore, it is important to exercise caution in using our findings. This study examines the collective impact of autocratic and despotic leadership styles on employees' deviant behavior, focusing on a single variable. Researchers are advised to investigate the collective impact on additional factors. It is advisable for future researchers to incorporate additional variables, such as perceived organizational support, in order to investigate the association between these two leadership styles and workplace deviance. Moreover, some mediators might be employed to examine this association in subsequent investigations.

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