

## **Attrition of Creativity and Psychological Well-Being by Exploitative Leader: A Moderated Mediation Model**

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### **Abstract**

This study analyze the frustration in employees due to exploitative Leader. The feeling of being undervalued generated in the minds of employees negatively effects the employees' psychological well-being and creativity. Data was collected from employees working in banking sector. Data from 290 respondents were collected through the self-administered questionnaires at one point in time. The moderation and mediation hypotheses were examined through SPSS 25 and PROCESS Macros model 4. The results shows that exploitative leadership decreases the employee creativity and psychological well-being through emotional exhaustion. Moreover the interaction avoidance significantly moderates the negative impact of emotional exhaustion on creativity and psychological well-being. Managerial and practical implications in the banking sector has been discussed.

**Keywords:** Exploitative Leadership, Interaction Avoidance, Emotional Exhaustion, Creativity, Psychological Well Being

### **1. Introduction**

Leaders harassing the employees, is the greatest problems facing subordinates in the business environment (Martinko et al., 2013; Tepper 2000, 2007). A large body of study has focused on examining the characteristics of effective leaders, presuming that the lack of specific leadership traits equates to a lack of leadership (Ashforth, 1994; Kelloway et al., 2006). Exploitative leadership, which is purely self-serving, such as taking credit for the labor of others and using followers for personal gain. Instead of encouraging their subordinates, exploitative leader pushes followers to do their obligations (Schmid et al., 2019). Self-centered leadership always aims at fulfilling their own interest. Such Managers took benefit of people by behaving egotistically, applying threats and exploiting subordinates, loading their employees with non-achievable tasks, and preventing growth.

For decades, leadership has been portrayed as a positive attribute that can be used to inspire followers. Scholars should pay more attention to the "dark side" of leadership in order to gain a better knowledge of leadership and its effectiveness (Burke, 2006). In the previous fifty years or so, few studies have been done on exploitative leadership, according to Schyn & Schilling (2013). Naseer et al. (2016) conducted the interactive study on exploitative leadership, leader-member exchange (LMX), organizational culture and behavior, among other things, but they

did not examine how these interactions affected the performance of the workers, creativity and psychological well-being. Erku & Chafra (2018) attempted to investigate how employees' opinions of themselves affected how exploitative leadership affected their propensity to behave badly. Simoes (2016) investigated the involvement in psychology development, however that research did not indicate any specific or direct effects on creativity or psychological well-being. As a result, there are still a lot of issues with determining how exploitative leadership employees' emotions affect their work behavior. There is a lack of research for identifying the impact of negative leadership on employees' innovative behavior and well-being (Naseer et al., 2016; Simoes, 2016, Erku & Chafra, 2018; Raja et al., 2019). It is important to study the effects of exploitative leadership on employees' behavioral and psychological outcomes (Syed et al., 2019). This study fulfills the above mentioned gap by investigating the interaction avoidance as a buffering mechanism to minimize the negative effects of exploitative leadership on employee outcomes through emotional exhaustion.

Exploitative leadership may cause frustration in employees and can make them feel undervalued and this in turn negatively effects the employees' psychological well-being which in turn will lead to low self-esteem of employees and low levels of confidence. Hence, the employees will avoid interaction with such a leader (or manager) and the presence of an exploitative leader results in emotional exhaustion. Such leaders are a threat to organization's success. Unfortunately, it is the human nature that once in power the human beings tend to be tyrant. These negative effects prevails more in high power distance cultures and developing economies like Pakistan which in turn would destroy the creative and psychological aspects of the employees (Islam, 2004).

These days, businesses face fierce competition and the cutting edge is "Man behind the Gun and not the Gun itself". As every organization is holding almost the same gun i.e., technology due to globalization. It means that the technology is so dynamic these days; that higher technology become obsolete in the shorter tenors. The only competitive advantage which an organization can differentiate it with from other organizations is the leadership and management. This is the reason that organizations in sub-continent in general and Pakistan in particular do not tend to grow up to a level (Majeed & Fatima, 2020).

The objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze that how creativity of the employees is affected by the exploitative leader.
2. To determine the impact of exploitative leadership on psychological well-being of the employees.
3. To investigate that whether exploitative leadership can emotional exhaust the employees.
4. To investigate that how does the interaction avoidance moderate the negative effects of exploitative leader on creativity and well-being?
5. To investigate that how emotional exhaustion affects creativity and well-being due to negative leadership style (i.e. exploitative leadership).

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Exploitative leadership and creativity**

Various negative leadership styles such as autocratic management and hubristic leadership have been the subject of investigation over the last several decades. Exploitative leadership, on the other hand, is rather prevalent and extremely mean management style which encapsulates

the most important characteristics of negative management styles. Exploitative leadership usually defined as a high level of self-interest on the part of the leader. Employee creativity is the capacity to come up with unusual things or concepts that could result in new goods, services, production techniques, or work procedures (Amabile & Gyskiewicz, 1989). Creative ideas are the assets needed to innovate, and strong competitive advantage is given to organizations with the ability to enhance intelligence of their employees (Kanter, 1988). Creativity is often described as a novel and practical concept (Amabile, 1983). The abusive leaders practice work negativities and wrong attitudes and behavior that can damage the employee well-being and creativity.

***H<sub>1</sub>: Exploitative Leadership has a negative effect on Employee Creativity.***

## **2.2 Psychological well-being and exploitative leadership**

In Carol Ryff (2014) conceptualization of psychological well-being, she identified six dimensions: self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, and personal progress. On the other hand exploitative leadership considers as a negative leadership style defines exploitative leadership, as "leadership with the primary purpose to enhance the leader's self-interest by exploiting others, reflected in five dimensions: true egoistic behaviors, taking credit, exerting pressure, undermining progress, and manipulating" (Schmid et al., 2019). Mental well-being is an important indicator of a person's overall satisfaction level from assessing their own health (Karatepe & Baddar, 2006; Aryee et al., 2007; Erdogan et al., 2012); psychological well-being is commonly admitted as an important parameter in a person's well-being (Pavot & Diener, 1993). There are substantive results to suggest a significant correlation among work capability and one's view of living (Rain et al., 1991). Given the importance of mental well-being in gauging human well-being, a number of researches have pondered upon negative effects of negative leader behavior on employee health (Tepper, 2000).

***H<sub>2</sub>: Exploitative Leadership has a negative effect on Employee Psychological Well-being.***

## **2.3 Mediating Role of Emotional Exhaustion**

The main characteristic of burnout is emotional exhaustion, which is defined as a sense of being emotionally drained and over extended (Maslach et al., 2001). Exploitative leadership is linked to emotional weariness, avoiding the exploitative leader will help to reduce emotional exhaustion. Emotional tiredness was linked to psychological well-being in a negative way. Emotional weariness fully mediated the negative association between exploitative leadership and psychological well-being. If a leader engages in unethical behavior, such as being exploitative, the employee who is the target of that behavior is likely to react badly, such as by lowering attempts to achieve high performance through creativity (Naseer et al., 2016). That is, a leader who treats subordinates with contempt fosters unfavorable interactions, which employees may respond to by refraining from engaging in constructive job behaviors (Blau, 1964).

Manipulative leader oppresses workers with unrealistic targets (Wu & Hu, 2009). Exploitative leader ignore the emotional needs of employees and career development due to his/her sole focus on its own interests further aggravates the situation. If employees do not get due appreciation for their value additions then they might start to lose motivation and feel casted out and emotionally exhausted (Ellen et al., 2017). In such scenarios tyrant managers often put extra pressure on their employees to achieve the unrealistic targets for which they always take credit for themselves instead of giving it to their employees. This study investigates the influence of emotional tiredness on employee's creativity and psychological well-being.

***H<sub>3</sub>: Emotional Exhaustion mediates the relationship between Exploitative Leadership and Employee Creativity.***

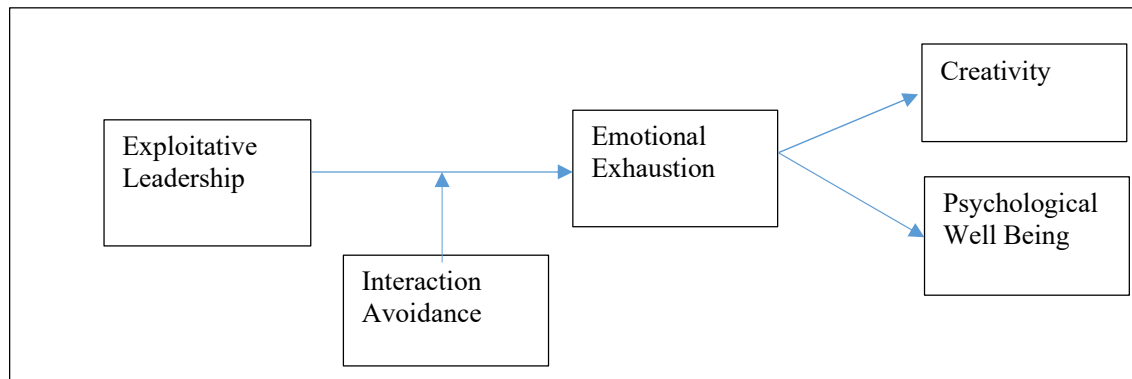
***H<sub>4</sub>: Emotional Exhaustion mediates the relationship between Exploitative Leadership and Employee Psychological Well-Being.***

## 2.4 Interaction Avoidance

A unique form of social withdrawal known as "interaction avoidance" is characterized by a desire to avoid social engagement out of anxiety and a preference to perform activities silently (Asendorpf, 1990). There are many evidences in literature that the exploitative leadership has destructive emotional impact on employees, there is a need to investigate the buffering and underlying mechanism to mitigate these negative effects. Although interaction avoidance as a coping mechanism may reduce the short run influence of manipulative leader on employee well-being and creative behavior ( Ito & Brotheridge 2003; Suls & Fletcher 1985). Interaction avoidance could also employ workers in making extra efforts to deal with destructive leadership inflicted fatigue, which gradually exhausts the employee input and will result in emotional tiredness. Therefore, interaction avoidance as a buffering mechanism can minimize the employee exhaustion due to leader exploitative behavior ( Ito & Brotheridge 2003).

***H<sub>5</sub>: Interaction Avoidance moderates the relationship between Exploitative Leadership and Emotional Exhaustion in such a way that higher the Interaction Avoidance, lower will be the positive effect of Exploitative Leadership on Employee Emotional Exhaustion.***

**Figure 1. Theoretical Framework**



## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Sample and Procedure

This research adopts the survey methods. Data was collected through the personally administered questionnaires. Data was collected from the employees of banking sector. Various meetings conducted before floating questionnaires to give presentations to employees and managers in order to increase their confidence for provide accurate information. Convenience sampling technique was used due to lack of exact number of employees working in the Banking sector. 350 questionnaires were floated among the employees. Out of 350, 60 responses were discarded due to the unengaged responses and final sample size was 290 respondents. The Questionnaires also contains five demographic variables counting from Gender, Age,

Qualification, Experience, Job level. Furthermore, some of the statements were changed in questionnaires without influencing actual construct of a scale.

### 3.2 Measures/Instruments

For the collection of data, adopted questionnaires were used from different sources for all variables i.e. Exploitative Leadership, Interaction Avoidance, Emotional Exhaustion, Creativity, and Psychological Well-being. All of the items included in the questionnaires has only by the employees. All the items in the questionnaires were responded by using a 5-points Likert-scale where 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree) and 5 stands for (strongly agree).

**Table.1 Measures and Instruments**

Variable	Instruments	No. of Items
Exploitative Leadership	Schmid et al., 2017	15
Interaction Avoidance	Hu & Shi, 2015; Watson & Friend 1969	03
Emotional Exhaustion	Maslach and Jackson, 1981	05
Creativity	Oldham and Cummings, 1996	03
Psychological Well Being	E. Diener et al., 2009	08

### 4. Results and Discussion

In this study, there are two linear hypotheses: the negative relationship between exploitative leadership and employee creativity (H1), and between exploitative leadership and the psychological well-being of employees (H2). Two important indicators predict the acceptance or rejection of a hypothesis. Among them, one is the values of the “t” test and the “F” test. If the values of the t-test are equal to or greater than 2 and values of the F-test equal to or greater than 4 then the hypothesis is accepted and vice versa.

**Table. 2 Reliability Analysis**

Variables	Reliability	Number of items
Exploitative Leadership (EL)	0.914	15
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	0.747	5
Interaction Avoidance (IA)	0.735	3
Creativity (CY)	0.706	3
Psychological Well-Being (PW)	0.816	8

The Cronbach alpha values of all the variables used for data collection is above  $\alpha = 0.6$ . The values should be greater than  $\alpha = 0.6$  for ensuring the reliability of the scale (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1978).

**Table. 3 Results of Hypothesis 1**

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.557	.310	.308	.45373	

ANOVA						
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	26.657	1	26.657	129.481	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	59.291	288	.206		
	Total	85.948	289			

Coefficients						
	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.318	.176		13.202	.000
	EL	-.292	.043	-.557	-11.379	.000

Dependent Variable = CY, Predictors: (Constant), EL

The above table 3 is showing the results of linear regression done between the independent variable (exploitative leadership) and dependent variable (employee creativity). The values of the t-test are -11.379 and F-test is 129.481. Besides, the values of 'R' are 0.557 and 'R<sup>2</sup>' are 0.310. This means that there is a moderate relationship between exploitative leadership and the creativity of employees. Furthermore, there is a negative and significant relationship between the results of the t-test and Beta. Therefore, the results of linear regression are supporting H<sub>1</sub>, hence, H<sub>1</sub> is accepted.

**Table.4 Results of Hypothesis 2**

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.896 <sup>a</sup>	.803	.802	.28221		
ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	93.200	1	93.200	1170.230	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	22.937	288	.080		
	Total	116.137	289			

Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	4.293	.109		2.685	.000
EL	.920	.027	-.896	-34.209	.000

**Dependent Variable: PW, Predictors: (Constant), EL**

The results of the linear regression between EL and PW are shown in the above table. The values of the t-test and F-test are important to consider. It can be noticed that the values of the t-test are -34.209 and the values of the F-test are 1170.200. In addition, higher values of 'R' (.896) and 'R<sup>2</sup>' (.802) are suggesting a strong relationship between EL and PW. The negative values of the t-test and beta are suggesting a negative relationship between the above two variables and the values of the F-test and t-test are also significant. Therefore, H2 is also accepted.

When there is nonlinear regression then we use the Processes by Hayes method to measure the impact of the mediator or moderator in an equation. There are two mediating hypotheses (H<sub>3</sub> and H<sub>4</sub>) and one moderating hypothesis (H<sub>5</sub>).

**Table. 5 Mediation Hypothesis (H<sub>3</sub>)**

<i>H<sub>3</sub>: Confidence intervals of total, direct and indirect effects of exploitative leadership on employee creativity through emotional exhaustion</i>					
	Effect	SE	T	LLCI	ULCI
The total effect of X on Y	0.4922	0.0433	11.379	0.4071	0.5773
The direct effect of X on Y	0.4030	0.0501	8.0459	0.3044	0.5016
	Effect	Boot SE		LLCI	ULCI
The indirect effect of X on Y	0.0892	0.0313		0.0341	0.1567

In this study, the process by Preacher and Hayes (2012) method was used to verify the mediation effect. In addition, model 4 was selected to calculate the total direct and indirect effect of exploitative leadership on employee creativity through emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, the total effect of exploitative leadership on creativity of employee is significant through mediation of emotional exhaustion (effect = 0.4922, t = 11.379, IC [0.4071, 0.5773]). While the direct effect of exploitative leadership on employee creativity is also described as significant based on (effect = 0.4030, t = 8.0459, CI [0.3044, 0.5016]). Furthermore, the indirect effect of exploitative leadership on employee creativity through emotional exhaustion as a mediator based on (effect = 0.0892, IC [0.0341, 0.1567]) is also significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that emotional exhaustion is partially mediating the relationship between exploitative leadership and employee creativity in the banking industry working in Pakistan.

Similarly, the process by Preacher and Hayes (2012) method is used to verify the mediation effect of emotional exhaustion on psychological well-being. Similarly, model 4 was selected



to calculate the total direct and indirect influence of exploitative leadership on psychological well-being through emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, the total effect of exploitative leadership on psychological wellbeing is significant through mediation of emotional exhaustion (effect = 0.9203,  $t = 34.2086$ , CI [0.8674, 0.9733]) in Table 6.

**Table. 6 Mediation Hypothesis (H<sub>4</sub>)**

<i>H<sub>4</sub>: Confidence intervals of total, direct and indirect effects of exploitative leadership on psychological wellbeing through emotional exhaustion</i>					
	Effect	SE	T	LLCI	ULCI
The total effect of X on Y	0.9203	0.0269	34.2086	0.8674	0.9733
The direct effect of X on Y	0.7485	0.0253	29.5465	0.6987	0.7984
	Effect	Boot SE		LLCI	ULCI
The indirect effect of X on Y	0.1718	0.0188		0.1371	0.2099

While the direct effect of exploitative leadership on psychological wellbeing is also described as significant based on (effect = 0.7485,  $t = 29.5465$ , CI [0.6987, 0.7984]). Furthermore, the indirect effect of exploitative leadership on psychological wellbeing through emotional exhaustion as a mediator based on (effect = 0.1718, CI [0.1371, 0.2099]) is also significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that emotional exhaustion is partially mediating the relationship between exploitative leadership and psychological well-being.

**Table. 7 Moderation analysis (H<sub>5</sub>)**

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	P
.593	0.352	.279	51.738	3.000	286.0	.000
	Coeff	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	4.020	.040	101.118	0.000	3.942	4.098
EL	.298	.069	4.343	0.000	.163	.433
IA	.331	.059	5.583	0.000	.214	.447
Int_1	.147	.079	1.861	0.064	.008	.302
Conditional effects of the focal predictor at values of the moderator						
IA	Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
-1SD	.197	.096	2.064	.040	.009	.386
M	.295	.069	4.287	0.00	.160	.431
+1SD	.393	.076	5.138	0.00	.242	.543

## 5. Discussion

In this research, the Process by Preacher and Hayes (2012) method is used to check the moderation effect of interaction avoidance between exploitative leadership and emotional exhaustion in banking employees. Further, model 1 of PROCESS method has been selected to calculate the low, average, and high effects of interaction avoidance between exploitative leadership and emotional exhaustion. The values of  $p$  (.000) and interaction term shows that the model is significant. Further, the value of  $R$ -sq (0.352) in the model summary and the increasing conditional effects of the moderator show that interaction avoidance is partially moderating the relationship between exploitative leadership and emotional exhaustion. It



means that interaction avoidance significantly buffers the negative effects of exploitative leadership on emotional exhaustion. Hence, H<sub>5</sub> has been supported.

### 5.1 Practical and Managerial Implications

This study helps to provide an inclusive model for corporate leaders to manage creativity and employee well-being at the workplace by not only molding internal policies to curb exploitative leadership but by also building-in controls in process flows and having accountability mechanism in place.

There are huge repercussions for corporate giants like banking and financial institutions of having destructive leadership. Hiring of a leader is the primary focus of corporate giants. Leaders, having high moral standards, have a more likelihood of performing their tasks in line with best practices by encouraging creative ideas and enhancing employee well-being; unlike a tyrant leader.

### 5.2 Limitations and Future Directions

Like many other pieces of research, this research also has some limitations that are a window for future research work. The results of this research were limited to only one industry (banking) in Pakistan. This study also has the limitation of cross-sectional data from a limited number of respondents, so, future researchers should use longitudinal data collection methods for more accurate results and avoid chances of personal bias.

This study focuses on exploitative leadership, however, there could be any other form of leadership or more than one leadership style can be used to investigate employees psychological and cognitive outcomes in future research. Furthermore, future researchers may use other buffering and underlying mechanisms to further investigate the effects of negative leadership styles on employees' behavioral and psychological outcomes.

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