

# Impact of Despotic Leadership with Mediation of Emotional Exhaustion on Life Satisfaction and Organizational Career Growth: Moderating Role of Emotional Intelligence

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## Abstract

*Previous research has only emphasized on positive traits of a leadership figure ignoring the despotic behaviors a leader might possess damaging employee performance while causing emotional exhaustion. The current study is directed to examine how despotic leadership impacts employees' life satisfaction and organizational career growth with moderation and mediation of emotional intelligence and emotional exhaustion. The study was conducted on 330 employees using simple random sampling among 12 hospitals in 6 cities in Pakistan. Data was analyzed by using statistical package for social science (SPSS). Results for Pearson product correlation indicated existence of substantial relationship between despotic leadership, life satisfaction, organizational career growth, emotional intelligence of employees, and emotional exhaustion. Results established a significant direct relationship between despotic leadership and emotional exhaustion ( $\beta = .556$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 18.14$ ) and the indirect effect that despotic leadership has on life satisfaction was ( $\beta = -.382$ ,  $t = -10.5437$ ,  $p = .000$ ) and organizational career growth ( $\beta = -.225$ ,  $t = -9.37$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Furthermore, results dispatched significant moderation of emotional intelligence between the relationship of despotic leadership and emotional exhaustion ( $b = -0.1480$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This study also assists to develop a system for a managerial level where with the help of training, development programs, practicing moral values, seminars/group projects motivating teamwork, and implementing rules (for centralized organizations), a leader's despotic practices can be mitigated, giving rise to friendly culture between employer and subordinates. There is also room for using other software like AMOS, VOS viewer, or Stata for reliable results.*

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence, despotic leadership, organizational career growth, emotional exhaustion, life satisfaction

## Introduction

Leadership is a knack of individuals that encourages the cohorts to accomplish organizational goals. Leadership emphasizes the qualities, attitudes, and circumstances that subsidize the person as well as the organization's value (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2018) and collective practice of activities such as developing, deciding, supporting, etc. (By, 2021). However, research is more focused on constructive side of leadership, hence toxic behavior of individuals and

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the spot of leader is inappropriate to be characterized as leadership rather than used as foul supervision. Numerous scholars have studied the constructive part of leadership while neglecting the dark side of it (Mackey, Parker, Ellen, McAllister & Alexander, 2021). Destructive leadership is perceived as a harmful factor for employee and organizational success (Mackey et al., 2021). Sturdy growth in the line for the past few years raised interest in the gloomy side of leadership, for instance, abusive supervision (Fischer, Tian, Lee & Hughes, 2021), tyrannical leadership (Balwant, 2021), destructive leadership (Camgoz & Karapinar, 2021) and despotic leadership (Jabeen & Rahim, 2021).

Unprincipled leadership encloses unethical values and is accountable for destructive emotions like furiousness and revulsion (Hassan, Kaur, Muchiri, Ogbonnaya, Dhir, 2022). Despotic leadership (DL) is a type of leadership where the leader creates a controlling and autocratic environment to exploit employees for his gains setting their willingness aside. Such leaders often mislead the mission of the organization by utilizing organizational resources for their gains (Jabeen et al., 2021).

Several studies examined despotic leadership behavior and its impact on employee performance during work. However, experiencing these behaviors at the workplace may facilitate a negative attitude of employees toward work (Jabeen et al., 2021). The undesirable outcomes of despotic leadership are not restricted to employees only but can also be harmful to customers as well as organizational progress (Nauman, Fatima, & Haq, 2018; Khan, Mubarak, Khattak, Safdar & Jaafar, 2022). Studies found these behaviors responsible for the rise in negative outcomes such as organizational deviance (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2018), creativity and career growth (Rasool, Naseer, Syed, & Ahmed, 2018), dampening job performance, damaging psychological well-being, affecting job satisfaction (Raja, Haq, Clercq, & Azeem, 2019; Zhou, Rasool, Yang & Asghar, 2021).

This research intends to highlight the effect of despotic leadership on two domains among which life satisfaction (LS) is one. Life satisfaction is an important element of particular well-being described as an individual's cognitive valuation of life. However, life satisfaction can be accomplished by maintaining a balance in work-family life with minimum conflict (Bouzari & Karatepe, 2020)

Unethical leadership acts as a main character in damaging the level of employees' life satisfaction (Nauman et al, 2018; Almeida, Hartog & Hoogh, 2021) which opens the ventures to study the destructive role of despotic leadership on the life satisfaction. On the other hand, organizational career growth is referred to as meeting career goals, getting promoted, and developing skills and abilities

(Weng, Mcelory, Paula, & Rongzhi, 2010; Jiang, Wang & Weng, 2020) depending on his/her perception and organizational efforts (Jiang et al., 2020). A leader's despotic behavior can hinder employee career growth and might create hurdles in progressing toward their goals and objectives (Nauman et al, 2018; Khan et al., 2022). Despotic leaders or managers can sabotage one's career and ability to work with passion. Their immoral behavior diverts the potential drive of an employee, destroys moral values, and negatively relates to sharing of information. However, one of the main factors that facilitate the destructive effect of despotic leadership is emotional exhaustion that employees face at the workplace.

Emotional exhaustion being an area of burnout can be explained as tension or stress individual experiences during work in the organization (D'Souza, Irudayasamy & Parayitam, 2022) Mainly despotic leadership is responsible for the development of stress caused by society- emotional exhaustion and such mental disturbance brings negative outcomes on life satisfaction of employees (Nauman et al, 2018).

Previous research analyzed the association between work-family conflict and despotic leadership with moderation and mediation of trait anxiety and emotional exhaustion respectively (Nauman et al., 2018). However, this research aims to add a significant variable emotional intelligence (EI) as a moderator (Samad et al, 2021) between DL and EE-a mediator in this context (Volmer, Koch & Goritz, 2016). Previous studies were inclined toward studying the significant effect of despotic leadership on organizational career growth (Rasool et al, 2018). Nevertheless, current research focuses on establishing the relationship between DL and LS with the mediation of emotional exhaustion (EE). Emotional perception can impact individual behavior in social settings (Herland, 2021). Emotional intelligence is labeled as a subcategory of societal intelligence of an individual referring the skill to control emotions or feelings to utilize them in categorizing and guiding one's actions and intellectually, further this characteristic is defined as the skill of a person (Santos, Wang & Lewis, 2018; Alzoubi & Aziz, 2021).

Studies are aligned with the idea that people's perceptions about their skills, capabilities, emotions, and personality stimulate their ability in coping with stress and exhaustion (Natasha, Loi & Nyree, 2022). Thus, this study under the conservation of resources theory aims to unwrap the healing effect of emotional intelligence as a psychological resource assuring the provision of a coping mechanism while facing the negative behavior of the leader.

This study opens ventures to discover hidden structures of despotic leadership. It might also evoke the related management

authorities to take counteractive measures to sort out such problematic situations.

The focus of the research is on the health sector of Pakistan which is mostly neglected in the research of management despite its importance. At the hands of despotic leadership, several employees in the health sector experience emotional exhaustion (Samad et al, 2021). This article tends to explore the effects of emotional exhaustion as a result of despotic leadership and its destructive outcomes on the career growth and life satisfaction of employees.

### **Literature Review**

Conservation of resource (COR) theory (Hobfull, 1989) states that a person tries to retain, defend, and use the psychological resources strategically that he values or is at threat of loss. These resources are the basic cause of psychological stress or satisfaction in an individual.

Resources can be of any type, physical, psychological, social, or individual, for instance, emotional intelligence, internal motivation, self-efficacy, confidence, time, or monetary resources (money). These are used to gain benefits and achieve valuable goals. Resources are extremely important, and when threatened due to stressors like psychological distress (Malik & Sattar, 2019) may affect employee and organizational performance blocking their career growth. According to COR theory, a person must go for coping strategies, use other available resources or retain the already present resources with other techniques.

Several researches (Kalshoven & Boon, 2012) prove the effect of positive leadership on job satisfaction and employee performance with relevance to social and leadership support (emotional resources). While scarce data is present on the negative leadership effect. This study building up the gap hypothesized the relationship between despotic leadership and its negative impact on employees' psychological resources and work outcomes supported by COR theory (Hobfall, 1989).

Life satisfaction is the positive feelings towards one own life which increase the well-being of an individual (emotionally, physically, and psychologically) at work and family (Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo, & Mansfield, 2012, Kazmi, Usmani & Raza, 2022).

Studying the reasons behind employee life satisfaction and dissatisfaction researchers have found its close relationship with leadership. It was found that transformational leadership may make a better environment yielding happy and satisfied employees (Amin, Yuanita, Ibrahim & Muda, 2013 Iqbal, Asghar & Asghar, 2022). While negative attitudes from leaders or more specifically exploitation,

manipulation, unjust burden, workplace bullying, and abusive language may cause emotional exhaustion (Islam & Chaudhary, 2022; Hall, Dollard, Tuckey, Winefield & Thompson, 2010; Leineweber, Baltzer, Magnusson, Hanson & Westerlund, 2012) in employees, in turn, reducing life satisfaction (Albashiti, Hamid & Aboramdan, 2021; Moore, Huebner, & Hills, 2012; Nauman et al., 2018; Mehta & Maheshwari, 2014). The unjust burden of work on employees will cause work-family conflict resulting in life dissatisfaction (Yucel, 2016).

Another research conducted in 2019 supported that employees giving their best performance look up to rewards and appreciation from the leaders for inner satisfaction and motivation (Kyani, Zafar, Aksar & Hassan, 2019). Whereas the despotic leader discourages them with their negative attitude leading to low life satisfaction. So, in the light of research, another hypothesis states that,

*H1. There exists a significant indirect relationship between despotic leadership and life satisfaction.*

Recently Rasool et al, (2018) studied an indirect relationship between despotic leadership and employee outcomes (whereas OCG is one of the dimensions of employee outcome) with mediating role of impression management. According to the self-motive theory (Zhou, Rasool, Yang & Asghar, 2021) employee is reluctant to perform tasks and show creativity because of the fear of retaliation, and negative behavior from the leader affects job performance (Naseer, Syed, Donia & Darr, 2016). The employee not allowed to perform to the highest capacity will lack in career growth. As the top management are the evaluators of job performance and decision makers so their wrongdoings directly affect employees' performance and career growth (Liu et al, 2010).

Keeping in view the COR theory, employees facing despotic leadership may feel that their resources are being lost or under threat to the negative behaviors of top management. The organization itself is an individual resource of an employee, and when they feel disconnected from it or worthless this reduces their job performance and the surety of developing their career (Nauman et al., 2019). This gives rise to another hypothesis,

*H2. There exists a significant indirect relationship between despotic leadership and organizational career growth.*

According to Chen and Wang (2019), emotional exhaustion is the drained-out physical and emotional condition of an individual because of negative life events, work-life imbalance or unlawful top management, excessive organizational work demand, and job stress. It

is said to be an important element of burnout (Volmer et al, 2016) creating issues not only on an individual level but also on organizational level performance.

Putting light on the literature on leadership and emotional exhaustion, Volmer et al., (2016) found a direct relationship between both. A despotic leader leaves subordinates alone to manage all organizational activities, dictate the rule, discriminate, demotivate, demote and devalue by not including them in organizational decision-making. This results in emotional exhaustion of employees (Charoensukmongkol & Phungsoonthorn, 2022 Mehta & Maheshwari,2014), burnout, turnover intention, and negative attitude towards the organization (Malik et al, 2019) leading to a reduction in innovation, opportunities (Mehta et al., 2014) individual performance, effort (Charoensukmongkol, 2022 Tourigny, Baba, hang & wang,2013), organizational well-being and life satisfaction (Shania & Andi, 2017; Nauman et al., 2019), organizational career growth (OCG) (Rasool et al, 2018). Lee and Chelladurai, (2017); Malik and Sattar, (2019); Hopeful (1989); Chi and Li (2013) state that despotic leaders look down upon employees' emotional needs causing societal and psychological stress in the employee, threatening resources (such as leaders support). This results in an insecure organizational environment for employees causing emotional exhaustion (Nauman et al., 2018).

Emotional exhaustion in turn causes life dissatisfaction and low career growth (Kalshoven & Boon, 2012). Individual tries to navigate the stress through coping mechanisms to reboot their condition. But due to despotism, they are unable to find resources (social support, internal motivation, leaders support), resulting in a reduction of life satisfaction, the hope of organizational career growth, and organizational connectedness. It is also seen that the loss of emotional resources causes a loss of coping capabilities (Ganster & Perrewé, 2011).

So, it is concluded that employees with limited emotional or social resources due to despotism goes under distress, and emotional exhaustion leading to life dissatisfaction and a negative impact on organizational career growth (Noman et al, 2019: Raja et al, 2019) generating a hypothesis,

*H3. There exists the mediation of Emotional exhaustion between the relationship of despotic leadership and life satisfaction.*

*H4. There exists the mediation of emotional exhaustion between the relationship of despotic leadership and organizational career growth.*

Emotional intelligence defines the control of an individual on one own emotion and understating the emotional perspective of others and acting rationally (Miao, Humphery, Qian & Pollack, 2019;

Salovey și Mayer 2016). Scholars define it as a multi-dimensional psychological characteristic. It is a positive attribute for organizations and individuals as the very person is considerate, calm, and can easily manage conflicts (Tanjo, 2022 Peter, 2010).

Research conducted in the academic field yielded that college students equipped with emotional intelligence and internal resource feel less academic stress or exhaustion than those who are unable to understand and cope with their and others' emotions (Kautz, 2016).

According to COR theory employees going through stressors try to retain and sustain their psychological well-being by using various resources (Jolly & Self, 2020). Whereas various scholars found that emotional resources such as impression management, silence, and emotional intelligence are used by individuals to cancel the negative effect of despotic leadership on organizational career growth (Rasool et al., 2018) job satisfaction (Albashiti, Hamid, & Aboramadan, 2021) and emotional exhaustion (Nauman et al., 2018; Yin et al., 2013) respectively. Dusseldorp, Meijel, & Derksen, (2011) also found emotional intelligence as a coping mechanism to enhance performance, and mental and physical health (Ma, Zeng & Fang, 2022 Martins, Ramalho, & Morin, 2010) during the stressful environment. Saher, Masih, and Raju, (2021) studied the coping mechanism of emotional intelligence against perceived stress negating the experience of despotic leadership. Emotionally intelligent employees can let go of the distress, the anxiety of work, and emotional exhaustion, understand the reasoning behind every issue, and cope with the problems in a diplomatic way (Monico & Santos, 2019).

In short, the effect of despotic leadership on emotional exhaustion is moderated by emotional intelligence in a way that decreases the effect of despotism on employees' emotional exhaustion (Alsayed, 2022 Pilkington & Rose, 2016). Proposing another hypothesis,

*H5: There exists significant moderation of emotional intelligence between the relationship of despotic leadership and emotional exhaustion.*

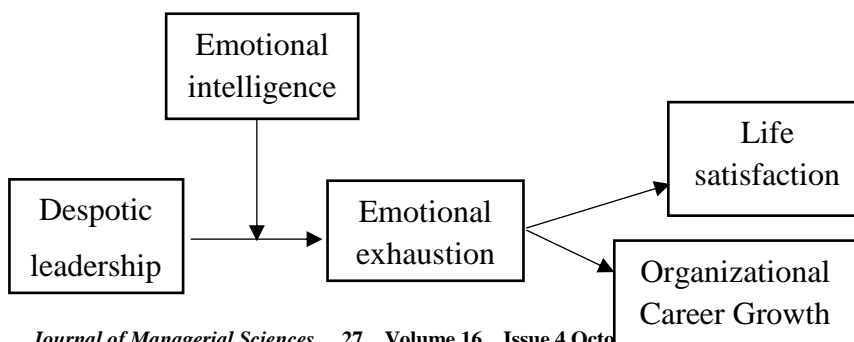


Figure:1

Emotional Exhaustion: An antecedent of demolishing life satisfaction and Organizational Career Growth of employees.

### Research Methodology

The study tangled 330 private and government-health sector employees from Sindh, Punjab, and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. The reason for choosing the health sector is that nurses are often victimized by despotic leadership and emotional exhaustion as compared to other professions (Rhéaume, 2022) due to a packed job schedule. Moreover, the health sector expenditures are raised by 3.38% as compared to the previous year in the GDP of Pakistan (WHO global health expenditure database-2022). However, by increasing GDP's ratio to the health sector, it can be considered a potentially protruding element in safeguarding the economy.

A large number of individuals are working in the health sector making a remarkable contribution towards the development (both economic and social) of the country. Therefore, Probability Sampling- a technique of simple random sampling was used for the collection of data. All the hospitals in the three provinces were selected randomly. The participants participated in a paper-based survey on despotic leadership, emotional intelligence, emotional exhaustion, life satisfaction, and organizational career growth. Participation was voluntary without any compensation. The confidentiality of the respondents was guaranteed and they were allowed to take a withdrawal from the research. The managerial staff within each hospital assisted in publicizing the study on different platforms like notices or soft boards to assure the participant can reach the survey without compromising on the ethical principles of research. The current research is survey-based and is cross-sectional (Easter by-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe, 2002).

**Table 1**

*Description of Demographic Variables*

Demographic Variables	Classes	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	66	20.0
	Female	264	80.0
Age	20-29	110	33.3
	30-39	110	33.3
	40-49	77	23.3
	50-59	33	10.0



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Education	FA/FSC	156	47.3
	BA/BSC	86	26.1
	Masters	50	15.1
	Above masters	38	11.5
Work shift	Day-time	286	86.7
	Night-time	44	13.3
Experience	5 or less	77	23.3
	6-10 Year	44	13.3
	10 and above	209	63.3
Hospital type	Government	132	40.0
	Private	198	60.0
Job status	Charge worker		
	Head nurse	131	39.7
	Nursing instructor	50	15.2
	Others	81	24.5
		68	20.6

The sample was diverse, including respondents with variations in gender, age, education, job status, and experience. 20% of males participated and the rest 80.0% were females. 66.6% of respondents were between the age group of 20-29 and 30-39. 39.7% were working as charge nurses while 24.5% were performing duties as nurse instructors 23.3% possessed work experience of less than 5 years while 13.3% had worked for 6-10 years and 63.3% had work experience of 11 years or above. Lastly, 47.3% of the participants had an intermediate level education, while 23.1%, 15.2%, and 11.1% had bachelor's, master's, or above master's certificates, respectively.

The data was collected from both sectors (public and private) once over days.

An individual employee was taken as the unit of analysis from public and private hospitals.

#### *Pilot Testing*

The conduction of pilot study was done beforehand to check the reliability of the instrument. Findings suggested minor modifications for constructing more reliable data. For the said purpose, some items were coded reversely for plotting data more sophisticatedly.

**Table 2***Reliability Analysis*

Variable	Cronbach $\alpha$	No. of Items
DL	.87	6
LS	.70	5
OCG	.73	15
EE	.78	6
EI	.81	16

DL=Despotic leadership, LS=Life Satisfaction, OCG=Organizational career growth, EE= Emotional exhaustion, EI= emotional intelligence

Adopted scales were used for the measurement of research variables. The measurement of the variables was done using a five-point Likert scale, ranging between “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. The following are the instruments;

Hoogh and Hartog (2008) scale was used for measuring despotic leadership. It has six items in it.

The four-dimensional organization career growth scale developed by Weng et al, 2010 was used for measuring the variable. The scale has fifteen items.

Life satisfaction scale developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffi (1985) was used for the variable measurement. It includes five items.

The scale used for measuring emotional exhaustion was adopted from Witt, Andrews and Carlson’s (2004) six items scale.

The variable emotional intelligence was measured using Wong and Law’s (2002) sixteen items scale.

The collected data was measured on SPSS software using inferential and descriptive statistics. The descriptive segment involved measures of central tendency, frequency distribution, reliability tests of variables, and measures of correlation (Pearson Correlation). However, the inferential analysis was comprised of regression, t-test, and significance level for hypotheses testing. Moreover, Process Hayes model 4 was run for direct analysis of mediation and moderation.

A leadership style where employees are encountered rigid and strict rules because of which they experience dissatisfaction at their job and distress (Tepper, 2000)

An outcome of constant profound physical, emotional and cognitive tension, for instance, prolonged exposure to specific job demands for a long period where the employee is unable to offer anything to others at an emotional level. (Bakker, Demerouti, Sanz-Vergel, 2014)

Goleman (2009) describes Emotional Intelligence as the aptitude to extricate the emotional condition of others, the ability to stimulate themselves, and the skill to manage emotions correctly in their selves and their relationship with others.

Life satisfaction is the state where employees feel pleasant about the life they spent, and has a strong connection to job satisfaction (Colquitt, Lepine, and Wesson, 2015).

OCG denotes point at which personnel go through the process of career growth within the current institute (Weng, McElroy, Morrow, & Liu, 2010).

### Results

Responses with outliers were identified and removed with the help of SPSS. Three responses have missing values. The missing values responses were then eliminated from the data.

A normality test was run for the examination of skewness and kurtosis. The data for DL depicted perfect normal distribution and values showed normality. The data for LS, OCG, EE, and EI was marginally negatively skewed however lied within the acceptable array of normality as the values meet the specific criteria for skewness and kurtosis.

**Table 3**

*Normality Test*

Variables	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
DL	1.50	4.83	3.64	.90	-.74	-.414
LS	1.20	4.20	2.78	.84	-.03	-1.03
OCG	2.00	3.87	2.89	.55	-.24	-1.13
EE	1.60	4.60	3.39	.72	-.52	-.273
EI	1.63	3.81	2.83	.53	-.11	-.425

Valid N

N=330 DL=Despotic leadership, LS=Life Satisfaction, OCG=Organizational career growth, EE= Emotional exhaustion, EI= emotional intelligence.

### *Common Method Bias*

Common method bias-a measurement error (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012) is liable for intimidating concluding results based on statistical data. The presence of systematic variance facilitates its prominence. The existence of systematic variance

**Table 4** Impact of Despotism Leadership  
*Harman Single Factor Test* Ambreen, Rabail, Sonia

Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
15.79	33.61	33.61

dilating the relationship between the constructs can be detected which raise doubtful suppositions (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). For the current research, to measure variables for the possible occurrence of CMB, Harman’s single-factor test was conducted. The 33.6% variance explained by a single factor displays no threat of CMB as the percentage falls within the accepted range (50%).

*Correlation*

Table5 showed mean, standard deviation (SD), and significance level amongst all the variables. The value of mean for DL is 3.64 from 1-5 while SD of .90 depicts an above-average respondent value. Additionally, mean values for OCG and LS are 2.89 and 2.78 with SD of .55 and .84 respectively. Whereas, 3.39 and 2.83 are the mean values of EE and EI with SD of .72 and .53 respectively. In correlation, DL is negatively correlated to OCG having  $r = -.368^{**}$  depicting significant relationship between variables. The correlation of DL with LS and OCG is significant but negative with  $r = -.411^{**}$  and  $-.879^{**}$  respectively. As per correlation results, EE has significant negative relationship with OCG and LS at  $r = -.400^{**}$  and  $-.549^{**}$  respectively whereas the correlation shows positive association with DL at  $r = .702^{**}$ . As for EI, there is significant negative correlation with SD, DL, LS and EE having  $r = -.611$ ,  $-.532$ , and  $.750$  but the variable has insignificant correlation with OCG. According to Graham (2008) smaller sample size idea is the major reason for weak or zero correlation. Larger sample facilitates reliable correlation. Correlation results depict a pathway to significance at 0.01 level. PROCESS (Hayes, 2012) was used for the analysis of the data.

**Table 5**  
 Overall Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation

Variable	Mea	S.D	DL	OCG	LS	EE	EI
s	n						
DL	3.64	.90	1				
OCG	2.89	.55	-.36**	1			
LS	2.78	.84	-.41**	-.87**	1		
EE	3.39	.72	.70**	-.40**	-.54**	1	

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EI	2.83	.53	-.61**	-.53	-.57**	.75**	1

\*\* . Significant correlation at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\* . Significant correlation at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

DL=Despotic leadership, LS=Life Satisfaction, OCG=Organizational career growth, EE= Emotional exhaustion, EI= emotional intelligence

#### Mediation Analysis for Life Satisfaction

**Table 6 Relationships Between Despotic leadership, emotional exhaustion and Life satisfaction**

Effect	B value	SE	t -value	P
DL →EE	.556	.0307	18.14	.000
EE→LS	-.603	.063	-9.47	.000
DL → LS (Direct effect)	-.382	.036	-10.54	.000
DL→EE→LS (Indirect effect)	-.0473	.053	-.880	.379

**Notes:** \*p < 0.001, DL=Despotic leadership, LS=Life Satisfaction, OCG=Organizational career growth, EE= Emotional exhaustion, EI= emotional intelligence, H— hypotheses, CI— Class interval, AB— path a×b, S.E— standard error.

For the mediation process, mediation analysis was conducted to evaluate the mediating role of EE on the relationship between DL and LS. The results in table 6 unwrapped the direct significant effect of DL on LS ( $\beta$  = -.382,  $t$  = -10.5437,  $p$  = .000) stating a unit change in DL caused .382 unit decrease in LS.

In the next step, impact of DL on EE depicted existence of direct relationship between input variable and mediator with  $\beta$  = .556 at  $p$  < 0.01. However, the relationship of EE with LS was negative ( $\beta$  = -.603,  $p$  < 0.01,  $t$ -value = -9.47). By including EE, the impact of DL on LS became insignificant ( $\beta$  = -.047,  $t$  = -.8803,  $p$  = .379). The indirect effect was verified for a partial-mediation of EE between DL and LS.

**Table 7 Relationships Between Despotic leadership, emotional exhaustion and Organization Career Growth**

Effect	B value	SE	t -value	P
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Impact of Despotic Leadership		Ambreen, Rabail, Sonia		
DL →EE	.556	.030	18.14	.000
EE→OCG	-.218	.056	-3.83	.002
DL → OCG (Direct effect)	-.225	.024	-9.37	.000
DL→EE→OCG (Indirect effect)	-.104	.046	-2.23	.026

**Notes:** \*p < 0.001, DL=Despotic leadership, LS=Life Satisfaction, OCG=Organizational career growth, EE= Emotional exhaustion, EI= emotional intelligence, H— hypotheses, CI— Class interval, AB— path a×b, S.E— standard error.

#### Mediation Analysis for Organization Career Growth

Mediation analysis was conducted to examine the mediating role of EE on the association between DL and OCG. The results (see table 6) showed the existence of significant direct effect of DL on OCG ( $\beta = -.225$ ,  $t = -9.37$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

Furthermore, impact of DL on EE revealed direct relationship between input variable and mediator with  $\beta = .556$  at  $p < 0.05$  and  $t$ -value = 18.14. However, the relationship of EE with OCG was negatively significant ( $\beta = -.218$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $t$ -value = -3.83). With the presence of EE, the impact of DL on OCG decreased ( $\beta = -.104$ ,  $t = -2.23$ ,  $p = .02$ ). The indirect effect remained significant causing a partial mediation to occur between DL and OCG.

#### Moderation Analysis

**Table 8: Moderation analysis of Despotic Leadership, Emotional Exhaustion and Emotional Intelligence**

Effect	B-Value	SE	t-value	P	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	3.4359	.0244	140.5907	.0000	3.3878	3.4839
DL→EE	.2769	.0325	8.5224	.0000	.2130	.3409
EI→EE	.6660	.0465	14.3096	.0000	.5744	.7575
Int_1	-.1480	.0448	-3.3019	.0011	-.2362	-.0598

**Notes:** \*p < 0.001, DL=Despotic leadership, LS=Life Satisfaction, OCG=Organizational career growth, EE= Emotional exhaustion, EI= emotional intelligence, H— hypotheses, CI— Class interval, Int\_1— path a×b, S.E— standard error.

The results for moderation depicted a variance of .669 in the whole model with significance level of  $.0000 < 0.05$ . The coefficient value of

DL ( $b = .2769$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) demonstrated significant positive relationship with EE. The relationship was further confirmed by LLCI and ULCI values directing in the same direction.

For moderating effect, we made interaction term. There was significant moderation occurred but in the opposite direction as shown by int-1 where coefficient value was coefficient  $b = -0.1480$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . The beta value of int-1 represented weakening of relationship between DL and EE with involvement of moderator variable. The value of LLCI and ULCI also showed the significant moderating effect of moderator variables respectively.

#### *Hypotheses Summary*

### **Table 9**

#### Hypotheses Testing Results

	Hypothesis Statements	Remarks
H 1	There exists a significant indirect relationship between DL and LS.	Accepted
H 2	There exists a significant indirect relationship between DL and OCG.	Accepted
H 3	There exists the mediation of Emotional exhaustion between the relationship of despotic leadership and life satisfaction.	Accepted
H 4	There exists the mediation of emotional exhaustion between the relationship of despotic leadership and organizational career growth.	Partially Accepted
H 5	There exists significant moderation of emotional intelligence between the relationship of despotic leadership and emotional exhaustion.	Accepted

### **Discussion**

The study above consolidates the impact of DL on LS and OCG in the presence of emotional exhaustion as a mediator and emotional intelligence as a moderating variable in the healthcare sector of Pakistan. The research also explored the healing role of EE in the association between despotic leadership and emotional exhaustion. Moreover, adding to negative leadership literature the results show a direct relationship between DL, LS, and OCG supported by previous research (Mehta et al., 2014; Yucel, 2016; Liu et al, 2010).

Firstly, the data analysis confirmed the indirect relationship between DL and LS. Additionally, the results revealed that emotional exhaustion partially mediated the impact of despotic leadership and life satisfaction. The despotic leader practicing inequality, dishonesty, negativity, and conflict will put a negative impact on employee life satisfaction for which all the mentioned aspects are needed. It is also congruent with the previous research (Nauman et al., 2018).

In the same way, OCG or employee hope and expectations to lead and grow in the future are lesser or none under despotic leadership as the leaders do not support or motivate the employees which provide extra evidence to support findings of previous research which confirmed the unconstructive impact of despotism Rasool et al, (2018).

The study predicted a different relationship between DL and LS, OCG in the presence of a mediator that is EE. The difference was quite clear and also supported by previous data Story and Reppetti (2006) and COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), that employees with a high rate of pessimistic approach will be an easy target of emotional exhaustion resulting due to despotic leadership, that will then indirectly trouble life satisfaction.

Studies indicated a direct relationship between DL and OCG (Rasool et al, 2018) adding to which our research found the mediating role of EE in between. An employee feeling emotionally exhausted due to the despotic behavior of the supervisors will indeed result in a loss of resources (Lem, 2017) adversely affecting performance and OCG.

The study results are in line with COR theory that states loss of resources is the reason for emotional exhaustion (while leaders' support and organizational environment are important resources for employees) and EE in turn decreases OCG (Hobfoll, 1989).

With the help of previous literature and moderation analysis, it is supported that moderator Emotional intelligence mitigates the negative effect of despotic leadership to some extent and the employees do not feel emotionally exhausted. The said negative relation has also been studied previously by Lee & Chelladurai (2016). This research also revealed the positive impact of emotional exhaustion on the relationship between DL and EE. Healthy emotions generate an upright boost to person's behavior during the task performance. The narrative is acknowledged by Zaid, Norazmi & Rasid (2020) in research evidencing that distressing emotions disrupt a task.

Correspondingly, the judgment by Gomendio (2017), says that upright work behavior is dependent on good control over emotions in the academic field. Teachers with remarkable control over emotions



can help in producing a quality work attitude. Norazmi, Zaid & Rasid (2019) are also in agreement with the opinion that excellent task performance is guaranteed by a positive work attitude.

In the light of COR theory, employees should regain and renew their resources in a negative environment while here emotional intelligence act as a coping resource for employees going through leaders' despotism.

Hence it is proved that employees with more resources like emotional intelligence can easily cope with a negative leader in turn weakening the relation with emotional exhaustion. Emotional intelligence act as a positive phenomenon against organizational negativity.

#### *Managerial Implication*

The results of the study provide empirical data for an organization to become prosperous with the help of inner stakeholders. As is seen that despotic leadership in any organization leads to negative results of emotionally exhausted employees turning into dissatisfaction and low performance (Rasool et al., 2018).

Findings suggest HR implement a worthy feedback system that will gain the confidential feedback of victims of despotic leadership. This can help HR to think of better ways of performance management and to mitigate the effects of employee despotism (emotional exhaustion) for instance through monetary and non-monetary benefits (Krasman, 2011).

On the other hand, this study also assists to develop a system for managerial-level development, particularly for the betterment of despotic leaders. With the help of training, development programs, practicing moral values, seminars/group projects motivating teamwork, and implementing rules (for centralized organizations), a leader's despotic practices can be mitigated, giving rise to friendly culture between employer and subordinates (Seidle, Perry & Fernandez, 2016).

The study gives insight for recruiters or top managers to hire employees with adequate emotional resources like emotional intelligence and low negative leader characteristics. As it is seen that emotional intelligence increases the positivistic approach reducing the effect of despotic leadership (COR theory, Hobfull, 1989). These sessions and efforts can promise life satisfaction as employees spend a major portion of their life in serving organizations which impacts the level of satisfaction.

Interviewing methods and interviewee methodologies should be high-tech. Top management activities of training can introduce techniques that may influence employees' and even leaders' emotional intelligence and the rise of care for each other, leading to beneficial and symbiotic relationships throughout organizations.

### *Limitations*

The data was collected with the help of a close-ended questionnaire, limiting respondents' experiences and minor details that can make a significant difference in results. Because of time and financial constraints, the research conducted was cross-sectional. This was another limitation of bounding the responses to a specific time, while emotional exhaustion is a construct to be tested with a longitudinal technique for evaluating the differences in outcome with respect to time.

Another limitation was, respondent bias, as the nurses were not able to give true responses against despotic leaders due to fear of losing jobs. The only targeted sector was the health sector which limits the effects of despotic leadership in the said field while leaving a gap for future study in various sectors like IT, banking, etc.

The focus of the study was particularly on the negative aspects of despotic leadership ignoring its positive side of it. Though it seems to be a negative behavior with the combination of variables or other mediators, it can put a positive impact on employees.

### *Future Directions*

The present research has room for elaboration if the sample is changed and the model is studied in cross cultures of different countries or different cities of Pakistan. Also, if the longitudinal study is made on such grounds, employee satisfaction level and emotional stability can be measured at various levels.

The current study focused on emotional intelligence as an emotional resource against employees' emotional exhaustion, future studies may focus on other emotional or physical resources and their impact on the said model. Researchers should put light on the constructive and coping impact of emotional intelligence or the need for resources in an organization against despotic leadership.

The only focus in previous research (Leal, Holzer, Bradley, Berrocal, & Patti, 2022) and the current study is on the positive impact of emotional intelligence in the presence of despotic leadership. In the future, it can be studied as a problem for the organization in distinct circumstances.

In the future researchers must utilize other software than SPSS 23 that as Stata, VOS viewer, or AMOS for consolidated outcomes.

Also, future studies can stress the significance of emotional intelligence as a constructive stimulus that can act as a coping mechanism for despotic leadership.

### *Conclusion*

The study proves in the light of previous literature, SPSS data, and COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), despotic leadership is a negative phenomenon affecting employees and organizations more than the positive factors (Hussain, 2017).

The present research concludes the evident positive relationship between the negative effect of despotic leadership on employees' emotional exhaustion and in turn decreasing organizational career growth and life satisfaction in the health sector. This simply shows that under negative management the organizational members go through mental stress leading to dissatisfaction and distrust about their safe future.

In such a negative environment where employees' resources are under threat (leaders' support, life satisfaction, and OCG), according to COR theory victims' emotional intelligence play a role of psychological resource to cope with the negativity of despotic leadership, in turn decreasing stress, and emotional exhaustion.

Study reveals that emotionally intelligent employees are least or not affected by leaders' despotism and negativity rather were more career oriented and able to heal the resources by thinking of success stories. In short current research provide insight into the organizations to instigate and inspire a friendly culture throughout especially among employee and supervisor and motivate emotional intelligence to cope with negative issues. Hence it is concluded that the negative effect of despotic leadership can be normalized with the help of psychological resources such as emotional intelligence.

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