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## Article

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## MANAGEMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Leadership and employee attitudes: The mediating role of perception of organizational politics

Uzair Khuwaja<sup>1</sup>, Kaleem Ahmed<sup>1\*</sup>, Ghulam Abid<sup>2</sup> and Ahmad Adeel<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Leadership practices/styles remain a key focus for organizational researchers from decades. Researchers believe that a leader's realization of his potentials following particular style bring influential consequences in performances. The present study aimed to add support to researcher's believe that certain leadership style (paternalistic and servant) will not only positively influence employee's attitude (job satisfaction and commitment), but also help to minimize negative perceptions (perceptions of organizational politics). Using a sample data of 320 employees working in largest public sector Electricity Distribution Company of Pakistan in 6 different districts and 115 offices, the study investigate the relationships between studied variables. Data was analyzed via structural equation modeling, providing evidence that both paternalistic and servant leadership styles has positive influence on employees job satisfaction commitment levels and negative political perceptions. The results also showed that relationship between paternalistic leadership style and employee attitude is mediated by perception of politics



Kaleem Ahmed

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Uzair Khuwaja received his MBA degree from University of Lahore recently and is involved in research activities regarding leadership styles and roles.

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### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Leadership role and style has always been an important aspect contributing to organizational performance and success. Research has shown the supervisor's attitude and behavior play an important role in developing and prospering employees or subordinates psychological attachments. Moreover, leader's behavior creates an air of fairness and equality within organizational boundaries that also helps them to feel energetic, committed and satisfied. This study contributes in defining and explaining the relationship of leader's style with employee commitment level in public sector organization. Since, public organizations in developing countries like Pakistan are greatly influenced by government bodies and political pressures, hence this study contributes on the factor that help them in identifying and explaining how employees can be more committed at work.

but not for servant leadership style. Our results contribute to literature by providing empirical evidences and identifying which particular leadership style benefits in public sector organizations in Asian countries. More investigations based on different contexts and employee attitudes are discussed and suggested in future research and implications.

**Subjects:** Leadership; Human Resource Management; Organizational Studies

**Keywords:** Paternalistic leadership; servant leadership; perception of organizational politics; commitment; satisfaction; public sector

## 1. Introduction

Over the years, one of the major attribute contribute in employees attitude and behavior investigated by social scientist was leadership style (Chen, Zhou, & Klyver, 2019; Kaya, Aydin, & Ongun, 2016; Saher, Naz, Tasleem, Naz, & Kausar, 2013; Saleem, 2015a; Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen, 2005; Warrick, 1981). Effective leaders are the need of today's organization. The traditional leadership styles are facing survival threats, as a dramatic change in leader's role and responsibilities has been seen in today's organization success (Saleem, 2015a). A perfect leader helps his/her subordinates to work with great efficiency and effectiveness without getting dissatisfied.

The present days increasingly interchanging organizational settings and environment has made it difficult to decision makers to follow a particular supervisory style that not only coordinate complex production networks but also mix market co-operations (Jing & Avery, 2016). It was also found that drivers for human behavior are more important to understand leadership in different countries and cultures (Arvey, Dhanaraj, Javidan, & Zhang, 2015). Appropriate adaption of leadership style depends upon the culture context, which varies from one continent to another (Jing & Avery, 2016). In Asia fertile critical arena is available because social values are significantly affected by leadership outcomes (Arvey et al., 2015). Hence in order to accomplish targeted results for organization, there ought to be leader follower relationship (Bass, 1990; Saleem, 2015a).

Paternalistic leadership (PL) and servant leadership (SL) are identified as such relational types of leadership style, which are recently emerged and are center of attraction for many researchers (Jackson, 2016; Liu, Hu, & Cheng, 2015; Mayer, Bardes, & Piccolo, 2008; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). PL is quite common and operative in many corporate cultures such as in Latin America, Middle East and Pacific Asia (Farh, Cheng, Chou, Wu, & Huang, 2004; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008; Uhl-Bien, Tierney, Graen, & Wakabayashi, 1990). Previous management scholars believe that manager's nature of being paternalistic and supporting is essential in order to assemble dynamic and satisfied work coalitions (Follett, 1933; Munsterberg, 1913). These arguments were further supported by lateral western and Asian scholars arguing paternalistic practices as best alternative to bureaucratic organizations (Weber, 1968; Weber, Henderson, & Parsons, 1947), as it provides additional care, support and protection to subordinates (Westwood & Chan, 1992). Though present in management literature since decades the work on PL style is still not enough and there exists number of issues that are still unexplored (W. Chou, Sibley, Liu, Lin, & Cheng, 2015). This style is normally associated with Chinese Confucianism and is typically found among the Asian leaders (Arvey et al., 2015). After the work of Cheng, Chou, and Farh (2000), this particular leadership style gained importance and since then is under investigation.

**Figure 1. Highlights the conceptual framework of the study.**

Likewise, the philosophy of SL had also gained prevalence among academics and industrial practitioners because of a developing enthusiasm for a more principled and public oriented management leadership style (Chiniara & Bentein, 2018; Graham, 1991; Liden, Wayne, Liao, & Meuser, 2014; Spears, 1995; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Because of its focus on empowerment and enhancement, SL style is prioritized by practitioners over other moral and value based styles (Amah, 2018; Brown & Bryant, 2015; Choudhary, Akhtar, & Zaheer, 2013). Servant leaders develop individuals and increase the quality of organizational results by focusing on human development characteristics (Kaya et al., 2016; Spears, 2004; A. G. Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004). Today SL phenomenon is being practiced in some of the highly ranked organizations because of its effective leader–follower relationship (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Although SL is quite revolutionize in workplaces but earlier writings on SL include prescriptive research and there exists a need of descriptive research to construct effective measures and mechanisms of SL.

Though these leadership styles have been explored and investigated by western researchers heavily yet evidences about these studies are very rare and few in Asian literature. Also the existing literature between these leadership styles and employees attitude (commitment and satisfaction) shows inconsistent results (Chen et al., 2019; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). The present study tries to investigate the relationship of these two important leadership styles with employee attitude (commitment and satisfaction). The study uses one of the largest public sector organizations of Pakistan as context to develop empirical evidence about which particular leadership styles will benefit the leaders/supervisor working in public sector. The public sector organization was objectively selected by the researchers in order to increase evidences for large size public organizations and debate on supervisory issues associated with them. Our study can be classified in two separate investigations: (1) finding the impact of particular leadership style on employee performance; (2) assessing the role of perception of organizational politics between leadership style and employee attitude. Since the work on leadership issues in public sector organizations of Pakistan are rarely touched by the local scholars so far, hence one of the significance of this work is also to fill some gaps in servant and paternalistic literature. The study is not aimed for developing/arguing an ideal leadership style for the industry that controls/reduces the perception of organization politics and improve commitment but to empirically find that whether specific leadership qualities/style have any impact on reducing this negative perception that hurdles the improvement in employee attitude. Leaders with context to Pakistan's society will be benefited from this work by deploying appropriate leadership style strategy where perception of organization politics is low and commitment and satisfaction of employees is increased resulting high output. It helps to formulate a valuable support to paternalistic and SL and organization behavior literature. Apparently, no previous study/work has been conducted on paternalistic and SL styles effect on employee attitudes with perception of organization politics in public sector of Pakistan.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Paternalistic leadership

PL style is defined as a “style that combines strong discipline and authority with fatherly benevolence” (Cheng et al., 2000). Since investigated, PL style is effectively practiced in organizations of Pacific Asia, Latin America and Middle East (Aycan, 2006; Chou et al., 2015; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). Farh and Cheng (2000) define PL style as “a style that combines strong discipline and authority with fatherly benevolence and moral integrity”. Farh and Cheng (2000) shared that these leaders were backed to affirm solid control and power over subordinates to keep up power status and consequently request respect without dispute. PL concept consists of three significant elements: benevolence, authoritarianism and morality (Chou et al., 2015).

The first component *Authoritarianism* refers to leader's behavior that asserts authority and control and in return demand respect and discipline from subordinates (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). The relationship of an authoritarian depends on power and exploitation, and subordinates express obedience to avoid penalty (Aycan, 2006). *Benevolence* refers to aptness of an individual to

help and show kindness to others. According to Pellegrini and Scandura (2008), the leadership behavior that displays personal and holistic concern for subordinates and being familial with them is known as benevolence. A benevolent leader shows a sincere apprehension for the well-being of the employees and in return employees exhibit loyalty by giving respect and gratitude to the employer (Aycan, 2006). In benevolent leadership, leader takes personal interest in subordinate's life and express caring and protective concern to identify and fulfill their needs and wants by understanding emotions. This attitude of the leader brings satisfaction and trust among subordinates and in result they show better performance. The third element, *morality*, is strong belief, moral character, integrity, personal virtues and exemplary behavior of the leader.

Aycan (2006) opposes the Western literature theory on paternalism that it is equal to authoritarianism and stated that it is not a unified construct. She portrayed overall paternalistic construct in four different styles: exploitative paternalism, benevolent paternalism approach, authoritarian paternalism approach and authoritative paternalism approach. Benevolent and exploitative paternalism comprises of "care and nurturance" behavior of leader while authoritarian and authoritative approach is based on "control" behavior of the leader. Researchers have conflicted opinions about different styles of PL but benevolent paternalism shows better outcomes in work organizations (Chen et al., 2019; Karakitapoglu Aygun, Gumusluoglu, & Scandura, 2018; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008).

## 2.2. Servant leadership

Burns (1978) explained SL as "leaders and followers engage with one another in a way in which they push others to higher levels of motivation and morality" (Rachmawati & Lantu, 2014). Servant leader convinces and persuade followers to get things done rather than using his or her power and authority (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Many researchers and academicians (Patterson, 2003; Spear, 1995) developed different models of SL (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Within these models, the theoretical contribution of Van Dierendonck (2011) suggesting six dimensional approaches for SL is commonly used. These characteristics are humility, empowerment, interpersonal acceptance, authenticity, stewardship and providing direction.

*Empowerment* means encouraging, entrusting and facilitating others. Empowerment is an essential component in SL (Bennis, 1997; Bennis & Nanus, 1997; Block, 1993; Clawson, 1999; Covey, 1990, 1996; De Pree, 1989; Fairholm, 1998; Ford, 1991; Kouzes & Posner, 1995, 1993; Manz, 1998; Maxwell, 1998; Melrose, 1997; Miller, 1995; Oster, 1991; Pollard, 1996; Rinehart, 1998; Russell & Stone, 2002; Snyder, Dowd, & Houghton, 1994; Winston, 1999). *Humility* is a second characteristic of servant leader. The word humility is originating from the Latin word "humilis", which means "low". Humility means demonstrating a low status of importance of one's self; this is a character or psyche whereby a person holds low regard or assessment of his own significance (Eragula, 2015). *Authenticity* is all about expressing true inner self. The word "authentic" commonly referred to anything of undisputed origin supported by real evidence, and not a copy. Authentic leaders earn loyalty of subordinates by building trusting relationship; they know their limitations, and help others to grow, succeed and learn (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997). *Interpersonal acceptance* refers to the "aptitude to understand and experience the feeling of others and where people are coming from" (Rachmawati & Lantu, 2014). Van Dierendonck (2011) considered interpersonal acceptance as an essential leadership behavior as it creates atmosphere in organization where there is room to learn and also to make errors. *Providing direction* means "challenging followers to work toward a higher purpose and inspire them to achieve their goals with collective effort" (Burke, 1986). *Stewardship* is all about focusing on others. It is the ability to take responsibility for the larger establishment and to go assistance instead of control and self-interest (Block, 1993; Spears, 1995; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Block (1993) defines stewardship simply as "accountability without control or compliance". These elements define behavior of servant leader and form a proper definition of SL with significant evidences in literature. Previous studies have identified that all these aspects of SL are significantly and positively related to employees attitudes (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Eva, Robin,



Sendjaya, Van Dierendonck, & Liden, 2018; Mayer et al., 2008; Zhang, Lee, & Wong, 2016). For the purpose of this study we used all the six dimensions of SL as identified by Van Dierendonck (2011).

### 2.3. Employee attitudes

Employees have attitudes and perspectives about numerous parts of their jobs, their professions and their associations (Saari & Judge, 2004). Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller (2012) define job attitudes as “job attitudes are assessments of one’s job that express one’s sentiments, convictions and attachment to one’s job”. Though there are numerous employee attitudes identified by researchers previous, yet job satisfaction and commitment are most commonly used and investigated (Saleem, 2015).

#### 2.3.1. Organizational commitment

Researchers had identified organization commitment as one of the main devoting variable influencing the progress of organization and efficient results at work. Throughout the years, organizational commitment had picked up an incredible significance as a result of its extraordinary arrangement and center with leader’s performance and workers outcomes (Lau, 2015). In many prior findings, it was upheld that those workers who understand that they are being treated impartial and with esteem, develop more enthusiastic connection with the organizations (Stup, 2006). Organization commitment is employee’s degree of participation in job (Muthuveloo & Rose, 2005). This will prompt lower rate of absenteeism and employment exchanging. Though organization commitment is checked by several researchers in various settings, yet the outcomes of numerous investigations bolster its positive connection with job performance and job satisfaction (Loui, 1995). Allen and Meyer (1990) defined organizational commitment as “the employee’s feelings of obligation to stay with the organization”. They conceptualized three approaches of commitment, i.e. *affective, normative and continuance*. Previous studies conclude that several elements of employee performance have very reliable and powerful association with commitment (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnysky, 2002). It was likewise ascertain that if employee stays in organization for longer period his/her affective commitment expands after sometime, though results of some investigations don’t provide support to transformation in person with passage of time (Roe, Solinger, & Van Olffen, 2009). Loyalty and commitment of employees towards their organization typically increases during initial period of their work/job due to their positive spirits about work attributes and feeling of having a right place. Hence affective commitment supports to make an emotional impression or trust behavior that benefits organization. Employees grasp in-job duties and additional job practices to show their fondness and strong connection with organization if their affective commitment is high in the workplace (McElroy, 2001; Neining, Lehmann-Willenbrock, Kauffeld, & Henschel, 2010).

#### 2.3.2. Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a positive and ideal approach of an employee towards the job (Armstrong, 2006; Aziri, 2011). Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences”. Aziri (2011) directly linked job satisfaction with mental and emotional state of employees. The workers behave according to their level of job satisfaction and their attitude towards job will affect the functions and actions of the organization. Chong and Monroe (2015) identified job satisfaction as a main factor promoting to job turnover. The result of the study conducted by Jain, Sharma, and Jain (2012) indicates that welfare policies, secure job environment and job stability are essential factors which expand the standard of job satisfaction. So, it is very important to preserve higher job satisfaction level in organization to affect the performance and growth of the business. If workers are satisfied at work place, they will work with dedication and show positive results. On the other hand, if employees are dissatisfied from their job then they will project a negative image of the organization and it will also directly affect the leadership and management. In return to these productive practices of employee’s, organizations deliver rewards, give incentives and provide promotions and believe to receive the same in future. An individual who is satisfied, loyal and committed towards his/her

organization will get pleasure from work when contrasted with one who is moderately less satisfied.

#### **2.4. Perception of organization politics**

Ferris, Fedor, Chachere, and Pondy (1989) recommended that politics are the foundation of stress that causes strain responses from employees, this attitude further encourages the political behavior within the organization which ultimately has *indirect* effects on turnover intentions and performance through more immediate outcomes. The whole situation is highly dependent on manager's supervisory vision as well as organization's financial capacity, so they are unique, heterogenic and low substitutability. Ferris and his colleagues developed research driven theoretical model for perceptions of organization politics in 1989. Ferris et al. further extended it in 2002. Organizational politics is debated in a scientific paradigm earlier from three decades. Work of many scholars reflects interest of the researchers in various attributes of the organizational politics. In 1960s, Burns discussed the concept of politics in organization. Pettigrew, Porter and Schein extended literature of organization politics in 1970s. Later many numerous scholars carried out research on organization politics in organization and at individual level in 1980s. Ferris and Kacmar (1992) studied relation of organization politics with in context of organizational behavior.

Organizational politics is defined as "actions by individuals that are directed toward the goal of furthering their own self-interests without regard for the well-being of others within the organization" (Kacmar & Baron, 1999, p. 4). Elbanna (2016) explained the political perspective of the organization and show how the members can influence organization decision making by using power or by performing actions which can exert creation of coalitions, groups, timing tactics, negotiations and outside consultants. The use of such power or act may cause negative impact to the overall control of the organization and manipulation of information. Stone (2002) assumed this view as organizational choice ensuing the formation of a method within which organization workforce have various choices and formation of coalitions protect those negative choices, therefore goals of most powerful prevails rather than goals of overall organization. Consistently, researchers and authors found political actions as a harmful usage of power looking for personal benefits, even to the place where it violates organizational rules and interests (Child, Elbanna, & Rodrigues, 2010). It encourages the individuals to work against the formal authority for the purpose of personal benefit and coalitions (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). However, apart for the negative impact it is also argue that organizational politics significance meant that there are huge benefits for individuals who stick up to gain or lose for firm from their consequences, materially or in reputation. According to Ferris, Harrell-cook, and Dulebohn (2000), different interest and ideas can cause some level of politics inside organization. Despite the fact that the work on literature of organization politics is enhancing day by day yet we may not have categorized organizational politics as exclusively negative or positive phenomena. Cultural disturbances and lack of rules and regulations increases politics in organization. In result, conflicts and lower job satisfaction factor arises in organizations. Conflicts are common in business places and their origin decides what the intentions behind them were. Thus the people who act politically are considered threatening opponents by those which do not involve themselves in promotional activities.

#### **2.5. Leadership and employee attitude**

Working environment for employee has become more challenging and intense due to the progression in organization complexities. Leadership styles and employee attitudes are the fundamental elements affecting and influencing overall performance and effectiveness of the organization (Lam & Eleanor, 2012). Farh et al. (2004) found a positive relation between benevolence and morality with organizational commitment while negative with authoritarian. Findings by Yousef (2000) with 30 Arab organizations stipulate empirical testimony that both job satisfaction and organization commitment are notably affected by leadership style. Susanj and Jakopec (2002) explained that if subordinates are treated fairly and with loyalty then their overall commitment level will be increased. Similarly, in a recent study conducted by Chen, Zhou and Klyver (2019), results of 238 participants in 52 different teams of manufacturing companies spread across China showed



positive relationship of organizational commitment with benevolence and morality and no relationship with authoritarian.

The style and approaches that are only concern or related to output and do not care about worker's feeling and trust, failed to attain best in them (Cumming, 2010). Jeanquart Miles and Mangold (2002) claimed that effective supervisory interactions with subordinates also facilitate the employee's attitude. Supervisors are viewed as competent, by employees, when the supervisor makes an engaging work environment, mutual will power and employment levels are satisfactory (Mitterer, 2018; Wong & Laschinger, 2013). Leadership with high level of fairness, loyalty, care and consideration upgrades overall level of commitment. Research positively reveals that leadership styles highly affect the commitment among employees. Study conducted by Pellegrini and his colleagues (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008) in North America suggested that PL style had positive effect on employee's commitment. Similarly, Yeh, Chi, and Chiou (2008) found a positive relation between organization commitment and three components of PL. Uhl-Bien et al. (1990) found an improved relationship between PL style and trust among and between employees, group harmony, lifetime commitment and affective motivation. Previous researches had also found a powerful positive relationship of leadership style with worker outcomes including job performance, satisfaction, involvement and commitment (Loui, 1995; Luthans, 2007; Wicker, 2011). According to the empirical findings of Cheng and Wu (2006), moral and benevolence leadership showed positive relationship with job satisfaction while negative with authoritarian attribute. In an another study conducted on 498 employees of Taiwan Science Park, a positive relation was found between PL style and job satisfaction (Chou, 2012).

To date, many researchers (Bambale, 2014; Bobbio & Manganelli, 2015; Cerit, 2009; Chiniara & Bentein, 2018; McAlearney & Robbins, 2014; Mitterer, 2018; Olesia, Namusonge, & Iravo, 2013; Parris & Peachey, 2013) ascertained that appropriate leadership style assist to develop strong commitment, higher job satisfaction, generate effective organizational performance, creates learning environment, energize and motivates employees, and lower turnover intentions. Based on the forth going discussion and arguments presented the following hypotheses were developed;

*Hypothesis 1(a): Paternalistic leadership (PL) is significantly positively related with organization Commitment (OC)*

*Hypothesis 1(b): Paternalistic leadership (PL) is significantly positively related with job satisfaction (JS)*

*Hypothesis 2(a): Servant leadership (SL) is significantly positively related with organization Commitment (OC)*

*Hypothesis 2(b): Servant leadership (SL) is significantly positively related with job satisfaction (JS)*

## **2.6. Leadership and perception of organizational politics**

According to studies, politics have to be treated as subjective assessment rather than an objective reality (Gandz & Murray, 1980). Entire situation depends in the eyes of beholder. Researchers argue as long as perception of politics in organization is increased employee's perception about justice, equity and morality will be decreased. Many studies used theory of procedural justice in order to relate perception of organization politics with leader member exchange relationship. However, leaders might have to distinguish between the level and activities politicize. In fact, leader's political skills far from being dysfunctional have now become important for achieving managerial targets. Not all political activities are against organizations. Ferris and Rowland (1981) stated that employee attitude is affected by leader's behavior which in return affects the job perception and performance. Hence leadership can play significant role in promoting fairness and justice in the organization causing decrease in perception of politics. Based on many leadership theories like the

expectation (Vroom, 1964), the leader-member exchange theory and social-exchange theory (Blau, 1964) claim that one of the primary responsibility of leaders, is creation of fair, healthy and supportive environment for the subordinates as well as for whole organizations. Promoting and enhancing the fair social exchange relations causes reduction in perception of organization politics and positively impact the organization's performance. Based on above understanding we create our third and third hypothesis for the study;

*Hypothesis 3(a): Paternalistic leadership (PL) is significantly related to perception of organization politics (POP)*

*Hypothesis 3(b): Servant leadership (SL) is significantly related to perception of organization politics (POP)*

## **2.7. Perception of politics and employee attitude**

Bozeman, Perrewew, Kacmar, Hochwarter, and Brymer (1996) and Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, and Toth (1997) conducted studies in public sector and originate a negative relation between perception of organization politics and employee attitude. Similar types of findings were proposed in which it was claimed that there exists a negative between these two (Drory, 1993; Ferris et al., 1989; Nye & Witt, 1993; Parker, Dipboye, & Jackson, 1995; Valle & Perrewew, 2000). When employees discern high politics in the organization, they have a tendency to be fewer involve in their jobs. The findings of Drory (1993) suggested that the negative impact of politics perception with organization commitment and job satisfaction became more evident and significant with lower level of employees. The reasons he claimed was the frustration which came in lower level worker was due to lack of stable power and position. Hence they normally use political means to remain focus and in power. However, this negatively created by political climate decrease the overall motivation level of workforce.

The variable i.e. perception of politics is very significant in determining and identifying the job satisfaction and commitment in employees of any organization (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974). Ferris et al. (1989) postulated that perception of organization politics might be linked to key outcomes factors like job anxiety, job dissatisfaction, job involvement reduction, stress, etc. The impact on employee attitude caused by perception of organization politics is actually a sense of how workers think about their organization, co-workers and leaders (Robb, 2011). Current research revealed that constructs of perception of politics are negative diviners of job satisfaction and commitment. Grounded on above discussion we conclude our fourth hypothesis for this study;

*Hypothesis 4(a): Perception of organization politics (POP) is negatively related to organization commitment (OC)*

*Hypothesis 4(b): Perception of organization politics (POP) is negatively related to job satisfaction (JS)*

## **2.8. The mediating role of perception of organization politics**

The perception of politics was taken as mediating variable previously by many researchers (Ferris & Rowland, 1981; Kimura, 2012; Saleem, 2015a; Talat, Rehman, & Ahmed, 2013). Similarly, Pillai, Schriesheim, and Williams (1999) in their findings establish that in working environment employee's perception of organization politics might possibly act as a mediator among style of leadership and job commitment and satisfaction.

Perceptions of organizational politics are influenced by elements of leadership which eventually pull the intensity of satisfaction and commitment of workers approaching their job. Most of the scholar used it as a mediator between transactional and transformational leadership with employee's attitudes towards job like job satisfaction, job commitment, etc. Gadot (2007) studied the mediating character of organization politics between organization citizenship behavior and leadership style. Empirically it was found that effect of leadership (transformational and

transactional) become less when perception of organization politics is introduced (Saleem, 2015a). We used perception of politics as mediator in order to check whether this affect the relationship between leadership (paternalistic and servant) and employee attitude, i.e. (1) job satisfaction and (2) job commitment or not. Studies (Gadot, 2007; Kimura, 2012; Saleem, 2015a; Talat et al., 2013) confirmed that relationship among leadership styles is intervened. In their findings, perception of organization politics plays a crucial role and found that perception of organizational politics act as a mediator among style of leadership and job satisfaction, employee commitment and performance. Based on the forth going discussion and arguments presented, fifth hypothesis for this study is as follow;

*Hypothesis 5(a): Perception of organization politics mediates the relationship between Paternalistic leadership (PL) and Organization Commitment (OC)*

*Hypothesis 5(b): Perception of organization politics mediates the relationship between Paternalistic leadership (PL) and Job Satisfaction (JS)*

*Hypothesis 5(c): Perception of organization politics mediates the relationship between Servant leadership (SL) and Organization Commitment (OC)*

*Hypothesis 5(d): Perception of organization politics mediates the relationship between Servant leadership (SL) and Job Satisfaction (JS)*

Based on the evidences and discussion presented by our arguments, we developed the following conceptual framework for the study.

### 3. Methodology

To achieve the desired objective of the research, employees working in one of the largest public sector electric supply company were targeted owing to the fact for providing evidences for impact of leadership styles employees' attitude. The company holds provisional, divisional and regional offices along with thousands of customer facilitation branches spread across the country. Based on conveniences and approachability, six major districts were sampled out for the purpose of this research. At first a written permission was sorted from competent authorities. After the approvals, self-administered 500 survey questionnaires were distributed in 115 different regional, zonal, area and circle offices of six districts within 17,408 employees working there. Responding employees were assured regarding confidentiality of their information through distribution of participation letter. Out of 500 questionnaires, 320 completely filled and useable were collected. The response rate was almost 64% which is highly acceptable. Out of 180 remaining survey/questionnaires, 90 were not received from respondents at all, 39 were half filled, 28 includes double responses and 23 questionnaires were received completely blanked.

The statistics from the above collection demonstrate various values for the acquired data from respondents. As a result, 238 male responded with a percentage of almost 74%, while 82 female participated in the survey with a percentage of almost 26%. Similarly with marital status column, 255 (80%) stand married. Almost 68% of the total respondents carry bachelors or master's degree, which clarifies that the respondents were well-educated and completely comprehend about the subject what they are reacting. Staff participated in our survey carry experience of over one year, and greater part of the respondents lie among two windows, i.e. 6–10 years of experience and 16 and above.

#### 3.1. Measures

PL was measured using 16-item scale developed by Cheng et al. (2000) comprising all the three dimensions mentioned in Section 2. Sample item includes "I never feel pressure or distress while working with him/her". SL was measured by 7-item instrument developed by Reinke (2004). Sample item includes "My supervisor listens to what employees have to say". *Perception of*

*organizational politics* was measured through Kacmar and Carlson (1997) “perceptions of organizational politics scale (POPS)” consisting of 10 items. Sample item includes “Favoritism rather than merit determines who gets ahead around here”. Employee attitude comprising commitment and satisfaction was measured using 3-item and 7-item scale developed by Meyer and Allen (1997) and Wicker (2011), respectively. Sample item includes “I feel loyal to the organization”; “In general, I am satisfied with this Job”. All the survey items were measured using five-point, Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

As our data relies on self-reporting, there were concerns of common method bias. The researcher took several procedural and statistical tools to minimize this biasness. As procedural remedy, we insured the participants that their answer will be anonymous and remain confidential (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). For statistical remedy, we performed Harman’s single factor test. According to results, the first factor explained 37.81% of the variance. The value is far below the 50% threshold. Hence common method variance is not a serious concern in this study (Hsiung, 2012).

#### 4. Results

The data collected from 320 respondents were then analyzed using statistical packages of SPSS 25 and AMOS 24. The reliabilities for different variables were tested, the values range from 0.78 to 0.87. None of the variable had reliability values below 0.70 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998).

##### 4.1. Correlation analysis

In order to test and build earlier support for our developed hypotheses, Pearson correlation analysis was performed as shown in Table 1. Accordingly, PL has negative relationship with perception of organization politics (coefficient =  $-0.550$ ,  $p < 0.005$ ). Similarly, PL has significant positive relationship with organization commitment and job satisfaction (coefficient =  $0.541$  and  $0.626$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). SL has a negative relationship with perception of organization politics but relationship is not statistically significant (coefficient =  $-0.060$ ). Moreover, SL has significant positive relationship with organization commitment and job satisfaction (coefficient =  $0.527$  and  $0.693$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Perception of organization politics has a negative relationship with organization commitment (coefficient =  $-0.480$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Similarly, perception of organization politics has a negative relationship with job satisfaction but this relationship is not statistically significant (coefficient =  $-0.105$ ).

A significant strong correlation is originating among leadership style (paternalistic and servant) and employee attitude (organization commitment and job satisfaction) provides support to our first two hypotheses i.e. H1 (a), H1 (b), H2 (a) and H2 (b). The perception of organization politics had significant relationship with paternalistic and SL style, which also justifies our claims and provides further support to our hypotheses H3 (a) and (b). Similarly, organization commitment and job satisfaction showed negative relationship with perception of politics; providing support to hypotheses H4 (a) and (b). It is also worth noting that all the correlational values are moderate in scope, confirming zero issues for multicollinearity, hence model is suitable for further analysis.

##### 4.2. Factor loadings, composite reliability and average variance extracted

CFA can be utilized to examine the factor loadings of every observed variable on the latent variable. This allows the evaluation of constructs in terms of validity. As evident in Table 2, all the items retained have loadings above the threshold value i.e. 0.50 (Hinkin, 1998). In addition, the CR and AVE for each variable was also significantly acceptable.

##### 4.3. Model fit indices

To test the structural validity of the measurement model, confirmatory factor analysis was performed. The results of model fit indices are presented in Table 3, showing the five factor model used in this research best matched with the data. Accordingly, the fit indices for five-factor model shows the values of all tests equal or greater than threshold figures including  $\chi^2/DF = 2.45$ ,  $CFI = 0.92$ ,  $TLI = 0.92$ ,  $GFI = 0.93$ ,  $IFI = 0.88$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.06$  and  $RMR = 0.04$ . All other models as presented in Table 3 have values in un-acceptable ranges except five-factor model. The

**Table 1. Correlation Matrix**

| Sr. # | Variables                | Mean | SD    | 1       | 2       | 3      | 4      | 5      | 6      | 7      | 8       | 9      |
|-------|--------------------------|------|-------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|--------|
| 1     | Gender                   | 1.26 | 0.437 | 1       |         |        |        |        |        |        |         |        |
| 2     | Marital Status           | 1.2  | 0.403 | .273**  | 1       |        |        |        |        |        |         |        |
| 3     | Qualification            | 2.89 | 1.060 | .221**  | 0.051   | 1      |        |        |        |        |         |        |
| 4     | Designation              | 1.99 | 0.962 | -0.002  | -0.060  | .500** | 1      |        |        |        |         |        |
| 5     | Experience               | 2.47 | 1.169 | -.409** | -.504** | -0.053 | 0.074  | 1      |        |        |         |        |
| 6     | Paternalistic Leadership | 3.42 | 0.591 | -0.027  | -0.061  | 0.052  | 0.039  | -0.085 | 1      |        |         |        |
| 7     | Servant Leadership       | 3.66 | 0.749 | 0.001   | -0.012  | 0.088  | 0.002  | -0.057 | .708** | 1      |         |        |
| 8     | Perception of Politics   | 2.97 | 0.762 | 0.091   | -0.077  | 0.051  | -0.022 | 0.040  | -.550* | -0.060 | 1       |        |
| 9     | Organization Commitment  | 3.95 | 0.768 | -0.022  | 0.042   | 0.048  | 0.009  | -.136* | .541** | .527** | -0.480* | 1      |
| 10    | Job Satisfaction         | 3.94 | 0.748 | -0.075  | -0.066  | -0.008 | -0.021 | -0.020 | .626** | .693** | -0.105  | .521** |

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

mentioned analysis exhibits the good reliability and validity of the variables in this research and is in the acceptable range.

## 5. Hypotheses testing

Using parameters of statistical standardized estimates, the results of structural equation model are represented in Figures 2 and 3. The range of these parameters falls between  $-0.80$  and  $0.50$ . Accordingly, paternalistic and SL style has positive relationship with organization commitment and job satisfaction, supporting our hypotheses 1, 2 (a) and (b). In addition, leadership style (paternalistic and servant) has negative relationship with perception of organization politics supporting our hypotheses 3. Moreover, perception of politics has a negative relationship with organization commitment and job satisfaction further supporting our hypotheses 4 (a) and (b).

### 5.1. Direct effects and indirect effects

Table 4 displays the outcomes of direct relations between the variables of the study. The significance of the hypotheses was tested using critical ratio and P. Based on the significance level of  $0.05$ , the critical value (CR) must be greater than  $1.96$ .

According to results, PL has the strongest direct relationship with organization commitment ( $\beta = 0.501, p < 0.001$ ), followed by job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.405, p < 0.001$ ). SL has also strongest direct relationship with organization commitment ( $\beta = 0.239, p < 0.05$ ) followed by job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.175, p < 0.05$ ). These results exhibits that as per our anticipations leadership style (paternalistic and servant) has a significant relationship with employee attitude (organization commitment and job satisfaction), which delivers extensive support to Hypothesis H1 (a), (b) and H2 (a) and (b). In addition, the results also showed that PL is negatively associated to perception of organization politics ( $\beta = -0.805, p < 0.001$ ). This confirms our hypothesis H3 (a), however, results between SL and perception of politics do not show significant outcomes; hence hypothesis H3 (b) was rejected.

Table 5 explains the indirect relationship of leadership styles (paternalistic and servant) with employee attitudes (organization commitment and job satisfaction) under the mediating role of perception of politics. As evident, the mediation between SL and organization commitment was not supported as lower and upper bound values contains  $0$ . Seeing the fact that zero cannot be amid the upper and lower bounds (Cheung & Lau, 2008) mediation was confirmed among PL and organization commitment, PL and job satisfaction and SL and job satisfaction.

## 6. Discussion

The aim of the study was to find the effects of PL and SL on organization commitment and job satisfaction with the mediating role of perception of politics. So the workers of an enormous public sector organization as the population for this study postulate an appropriate organizational setting for examining employees' job satisfaction and organization commitment. The results and findings from this study are not only statistically significant but only in line with the previous researches (Lau, 2015; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008; Saher et al., 2013). According to the findings, PL and SL are significantly related to the organizational commitment. A recent study by Chen et al. (2019) showed a positive relationship between PL and commitment. In another study by Wang et al. (2018), two separate samples from US and Taiwan were analyzed to check the relationship between PL and employee performance. The findings of their study revealed that subordinate performance is strongly affected by PL style. A similar kind of finding was reported for SL styles by Khattak, Abbas, and Kaleem (2019). Akram, Alam, Ali, and Mughal (2012) carried out a study in Pakistan public sector catering data from 66 cities establish similar kind of results showing leadership style's role on worker's performance. According to results, leadership styles (paternalistic and servant) are significantly related to organization commitment and job satisfaction (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Lau, 2015; McCann, Graves, & Cox, 2014; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008; Raja & Palanichamy, 2011; Vallejo-Martos, 2011). This shows that a public sector office where the manager/supervisor exhibits paternalistic and servant behavior or style, their



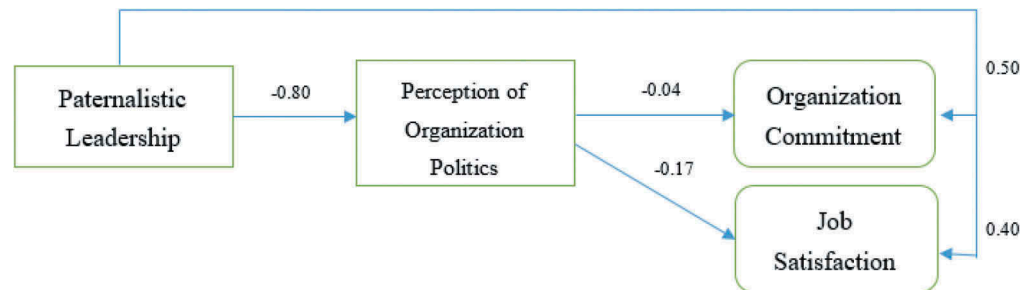
**Table 2. Factor Loadings, CR and AVE**

| Paternalistic leadership |         |      |      | Perception of Politics    |         |      |      |
|--------------------------|---------|------|------|---------------------------|---------|------|------|
| Items                    | Loading | CR   | AVE  | Items                     | Loading | CR   | AVE  |
| PL1                      | 0.75    | 0.89 | 0.78 | POP1                      | 0.73    | 0.87 | 0.70 |
| PL3                      | 0.78    |      |      | POP3                      | 0.75    |      |      |
| PL5                      | 0.79    |      |      | POP5                      | 0.82    |      |      |
| PL6                      | 0.80    |      |      | POP7                      | 0.79    |      |      |
| PL7                      | 0.84    |      |      | POP8                      | 0.79    |      |      |
| PL10                     | 0.82    |      |      | POP9                      | 0.76    |      |      |
| PL11                     | 0.88    |      |      | POP10                     | 0.81    |      |      |
| PL12                     | 0.77    |      |      | Organizational Commitment |         |      |      |
| PL14                     | 0.90    |      |      | OC1                       | 0.81    | 0.90 | 0.69 |
| PL16                     | 0.89    |      |      | OC3                       | 0.88    |      |      |
| Servant Leadership       |         | 0.77 | 0.65 | Job Satisfaction          |         |      |      |
| SL1                      | 0.86    |      |      | JS2                       | 0.75    |      |      |
| SL3                      | 0.83    |      |      | JS3                       | 0.81    |      |      |
| SL4                      | 0.85    |      |      | JS5                       | 0.80    | 0.86 | 0.76 |
| SL6                      | 0.80    |      |      | JS6                       | 0.77    |      |      |
| SL7                      | 0.81    |      |      | JS7                       | 0.73    |      |      |

**Table 3. Competition model of Confirmatory factor analysis**

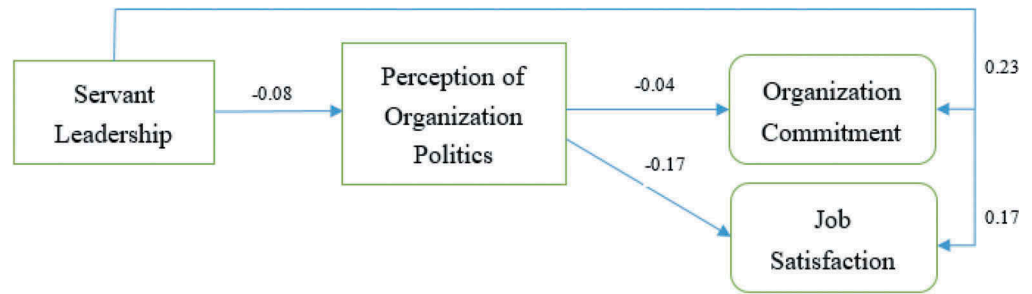
| MODELS  | X2/df | CFI  | TLI  | GFI  | IFI  | RMSEA | RMR  |
|---|-------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|
| <b>Five-Factor Model</b><br>(PL, SL, POP, OC, JS) | 2.45  | 0.92 | 0.92 | 0.93 | 0.88 | 0.06  | 0.04 |
| <b>Four-Factor Model</b><br>(PL, SL, POP, OC+JS)  | 4.20  | 0.74 | 0.74 | 0.70 | 0.69 | 0.91  | 0.87 |
| <b>Three-Factor Model</b><br>(PL, SL, POP+OC+JS)  | 5.71  | 0.69 | 0.63 | 0.60 | 0.69 | 0.13  | 0.16 |
| <b>Two-Factor Model</b><br>(PL+SL, POP)           | 6.92  | 0.54 | 0.58 | 0.55 | 0.49 | 0.41  | 0.52 |
| <b>Single-Factor Model</b><br>(PL+SL+POP+OC+JS)   | 12.40 | 0.43 | 0.41 | 0.46 | 0.40 | 0.26  | 0.21 |

**Figure 2. SEM Case 1  
(Paternalistic Leadership).**



staff has high level of commitment and they are highly satisfied with their job as compared to others. As paternalistic behavior holds both social as well as official relationship with the subordinates, hence, it improves their emotional attachment, involvement and loyalty with the organization (Anwar, 2013).

**Figure 3. SEM Case 2 (Servant leadership).**



**Table 4. Hypotheses Confirmation (Direct Effect)**

| Hypotheses | Path     | Regression Coefficient | CR     | Result   |
|------------|----------|------------------------|--------|----------|
| H1(a)      | PL → OC  | 0.501***               | 4.816  | Accepted |
| H1(b)      | PL → JS  | 0.405***               | 4.219  | Accepted |
| H2(a)      | SL → OC  | 0.239**                | 2.787  | Accepted |
| H2(b)      | SL → JS  | 0.175**                | 3.015  | Accepted |
| H3(a)      | PL → POP | -0.805***              | 9.513  | Accepted |
| H3(b)      | SL → POP | -0.084                 | -0.085 | Rejected |
| H4(a)      | POP → OC | -0.040                 | -0.896 | Rejected |
| H4(b)      | POP → JS | -0.174**               | -2.060 | Accepted |

Note: \*\*\*  $P < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $P < 0.05$ .

**Table 5. Hypotheses Confirmation (Indirect Effect)**

| Hypotheses | Path          | Beta Coefficient | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | Result   |
|------------|---------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| H5(a)      | PL → POP → OC | 0.274            | -3.319      | -3.911      | Accepted |
| H5(b)      | PL → POP → JS | 0.213            | -3.216      | -3.712      | Accepted |
| H5(c)      | SL → POP → OC | 0.706            | -2.403      | 1.703       | Rejected |
| H5(d)      | SL → POP → JS | 0.334            | -2.098      | -1.993      | Accepted |

In longer term, a level of confidence and trust is developed between supervisor and employee and whole positive environment start prevailing in the whole organization.

SL holds both serving as well as helping relationship with the subordinates and emphasizes personal development and empowerment of employees (Cerit, 2009). The employees are motivated, trusted and empowered and they appear to strengthen their beliefs on the skills and capabilities (Chacon, 2005). Moreover, SL highly develops self-efficacy among followers. Subordinates working under umbrella of SL enjoy benefits of working in a positive environment and they feel more secure and satisfied hence, organization effectiveness increases. Presence of SL practices in public service organization creates a strong employer-employee relationship, caring environment, respect for the workers, empathy for subordinates, increase job satisfaction, increase commitment and lower job stress.

The mediating effect of perception of organization politics is investigated by employing bootstrap method in this study. The mediation role of perception of organization politics was confirmed between PL and organization commitment, PL and job satisfaction and SL and job satisfaction. Mediation effect was found that lowers the effect of paternalism on organization commitment and job satisfaction and of servant ship on job satisfaction. Though, the mediation between SL and

organization commitment was not supported as lower and upper bound values contains 0. Many previous studies (Gadot, 2007; Saleem, 2015; Talat et al., 2013) worked on leadership style and employee attitudes including job satisfaction and organization commitment and found the mediating role of perception of organization politics.

## 7. Conclusion

Leaders, public leadership and public sector administrations have confronted numerous hurdles and transformation all over the years. For public sector institutes to endure, it is important that leaders, supervisors, managers and administrators hold appropriate leadership styles and prepare themselves to handle these transformations. Therefore, efforts to improve employee's commitment and job satisfaction must comprise reeducating leaders and managers/supervisors on leadership styles, specifically paternalistic and SL (Mohammed & Farooq, 2002). The role of public sector organization is very important to support the economic development of the country. Based on its importance and significance to the national performance, an intentional effort was made in this study showing empirical evidence of how an appropriate leadership style could positively impact the employee's attitude but also minimizes the negativities of political perceptions within organizational environment.

The results of the study explain and support public sector's major issue i.e. leadership and provide empirical evidence that how paternalistic and SL helps to improve job satisfaction and organization commitment. Apart from improving employee's commitment and satisfaction, these styles also help to reduce perception of politics which in most scenarios exert negative impact and damage relationships among key variables. The results of this study exhibit that by expanding organization commitment and job satisfaction through affective leadership styles, employees were more enthusiastic to help figure out organizational issues. Byrne (2005) results on 150 employees support the evidences that fairness and procedural justice improve the overall employee attitude and reduce the effect of political perception. Politics perception didn't always disfavor the organizations; however, in some cases where resources are scarce top managers using political cleverness manages things wisely. However, such kind and influencing behavior may be considered as political (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992). Even though political conduct might be seen as either positive or negative dependent upon perspective, the outcomes of negative political conduct have damaging effects on people and organizations (Byrne, 2005). Perception of organization politics may get flourish in non-formal nebulous environments; where controls are either absent or less predictable. Therefore, managers/supervisors in public sector offices are trained to improve stewardship, humility, authority and benevolence characteristics in order to promote environment of fairness.

## 8. Contributions

The present research work contributes in literature of organization behavior and leadership management to a large context. Previously, few research works on leadership and its effects on employee's attitude, behavior and perceptions were carried out (Chen, Eberly, Chiang, Farh, & Cheng, 2014; Kaya et al., 2016; Lau, 2015; Mitterer, 2018; Olesia et al., 2013; Saher et al., 2013). However, most of them are in other parts of the world and so far no empirical study was conducted on paternalistic and SL in Pakistan context in public sector organization. The results of the study are consistent with the prior studies conducted on the impact of paternalistic and SL on job satisfaction and organization commitment (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Cerit, 2010; Lau, 2015; Saher et al., 2013). Earlier literature had discussed its impact and various predictors; however, perception of politics has not been discussed as a mediator. Finally, the study provides the importance of PL and SL styles in eastern based public sector organizations which are controlled and operated under various political pressures.

## 9. Implications

### 9.1. Theoretical implication

The present study has many implications for the research scholars as well as for practitioners. The study tried to add support on already established relation among PL and organization commitment, PL and job satisfaction, SL and organization commitment, and SL and job satisfaction. This gives a great opportunity to researchers in focusing their intentions towards these famous leadership styles and found their potential benefits to different contexts.

To the best of researcher understanding, this is the first study conducted on PL and SL style, their impact on employee attitudes and mediating role of perception of organization politics using Pakistan public sector organization and within the Pakistan culture settings. Hence the research has great implication for both theoretical as well as managerial (practical) implications. Theoretically this work adds supportive literature of effect on employee attitudes as previous scholars did (Aycan, 2006; Liu et al., 2015; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008; Saleem, 2015b; Yousef, 2000). Also the research added support to the mediation effect of the perception of organization politics.

### 9.2. Managerial implication

Practically, since the work is done in Pakistan public sector organization, i.e. Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) that is one of the leading income and power generating public sector of the country, hence to further improve its efficiency and performance, management can encourage paternalistic/servant style managers or supervisors. The behavior of authority benevolence, morality, humility and stewardship improves the task achievement and will increase their loyalty, trust, satisfaction and commitment for the organization. This does not aim to comment that these leadership styles should be adopted or prevailed; however, it is argued that based on the results of our findings managers/supervisors should promote the environment of paternalism and servant ship in his/her public office. This will improve employee's commitment and satisfaction, somehow reduces perception of organization politics and eventually improve the organizational effectiveness.

### 9.3. Limitations and future directions

Despite of all the contribution and implications made by this research highlighted above, the research has some limitations as well. The first one is of generalizability of the results, although researcher tries to capture maximum number of public sector organization offices operating in Pakistan; however, only six districts was selected. Hence in future this research can be conducted at whole provincial and country level. Moreover, this research can be conducted in other public service institutions and also in private organizations in future. Another limitation for this research was using of only two dimensions of employee attitude i.e. satisfaction and commitment; hence in future studies other employee attitudes (e.g. OCB, turnover intentions) components can be checked with these leadership styles in different contexts. Finally, the study used cross-sectional research scheme to examine the actions of selected variables hence researchers can have carried out longitudinal research and conclude different results in future.

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