

## The Impact of Paternalistic Leadership on Innovative Work Behavior: A Test of Mediation Model

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**Abstract**

Leadership is a paramount factor in enhancing employee innovation and creativity. This study aims to test the impact of paternalistic leadership (PL) on employees' innovative work behavior (IWB) and to check the mediating role of employee Psychological Safety (PS). This study has employed a convenience sampling technique to collect data through questionnaires from 317 employees working in the Textile and IT industries. This research uses Partial Least Square Structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Findings suggest that psychological safety was positively related to innovative work behavior and psychological safety mediated this link. This study is among very few studies that have tested the paternalistic leadership style in the innovative context of Pakistan. Practitioners' significant contribution is knowing that paternalistic leadership will enhance employee innovative work behavior through psychological safety. Moreover, data from the textile and software industries also increased the relevance and originality of this study.

**Keywords:**

paternalistic leadership, innovative work behavior, psychological safety, textile designs, software industry

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**How to Cite:**

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## INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is a developing country that strives to improve its exports and curtail budget deficits. 50% of Pakistan's exports are comprised of Cotton and textile products. The share of the textile sector in the country's Grand National Income is 8.5%, and it has a 40% share of jobs in the overall employment sector which comprises 59 million workers in Pakistan (Majeed et al., 2019). The textile sector in Pakistan also has a 9.5% share of the gross domestic product (GDP), and Pakistan also contributes 5% to the global spinning capacity (Majeed et al., 2019).

Moreover, as per the data available on the website of the Pakistan Software Export Board (PESB), Pakistan is experiencing rapid growth in the export of Information Technology (IT) and Information Technology Enabled Services (ITeS). For example, compared to other countries in Southeast Asia, Pakistan experienced a 71% growth in IT and ITeS exports from 2013 to 2016. In contrast, during the same period, Indian and Sri Lankan growth rates in IT exports were 40% and 19.9%, respectively. A similar pattern was observed from 2016 to 2107.

However, the global Textile sector is rapidly changing such that the focus is being put on innovative ideas which promote climate-friendly production of textile goods (Huang, 2018). The academic literature acknowledges the importance of innovativeness in the Pakistani textile sector for competitive advantage and employment creation in Pakistan (Wadho et al., 2019). For example, though Wadho et al. (2019) investigated the innovation of young textile firms, research evidence on the determinants of innovative work behavior (IWB) of Textile designers and R&D staff is scarce. A recent study by Javed et al. (2017), analyzing the data of 180 employee supervisor dyads, found that inclusive leadership of line supervisors creates employee psychological safety (PS) and thus relates to their IWB. However, this study has several limitations: they did not measure data from specific textile designers and R&D staff. Instead, they collected data from small and medium enterprises in the textile sector.

In contrast, this study has approached major textile firms and met with R&D and Designs executives, experts, and employees to formulate a conceptual framework that delineates their IWB. Although the link between inclusive leadership and IWB has been tested in a variety of studies (Javed et al., 2019; Javed et al., 2017; Qi et al., 2019), none of these studies have tested the role of paternalistic leadership (PL) in innovative behavior link in Pakistani context. PL is based on the notion that organizations should treat the employee as fathers treat their children in a family by maintaining discipline, showing authority, and benevolence (Farh & Cheng, 2000; Wang et al., 2018; Liao et al., 2017). Academic journals have recently called for academic research on the determinants and outcomes of PL in the workplace (Jackson, 2016). Pakistan is also a collectivistic society with solid human values, and PL may be more relevant in the Pakistani context (Hofstede, 1983).

Wang et al. (2019) found support for the relationship between PL and employee creativity through the mediation of organizational identification. They also suggested

checking the mediating role of PS in PL and the creativity link. Bing (2004) shows that the boss in an organization performs the role similar to the father in the family. A father works as an authoritative figure and is also supportive of his children, and the boss should treat their employees similarly. Leaders are supposed to maintain discipline and care for the well-being of employees, while employees are supposed to obey their leaders unquestionably (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). Pellegrini & Scandura (2008) has defined PL as composed of authoritarianism, benevolence, and morality.

There is great debate regarding the relevance of PL with either Western or Non-western cultures. Paternalistic leaders may be significantly relevant to collectivistic societies. Because in these societies, the mutual obligation is an essential element of cultural values rather than individualistic culture (Hofstede, 1980; Jackson, 2016; Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2005). Pakistan is also a collectivistic society with a culture of mutual respect, payback, and gratitude. PL may be an essential leadership style for positive organizational outcomes. A recent review of literature on PL has supported its relevance for collectivistic societies such as China and Pakistan (Farh & Cheng, 2000). IWB refers to the "intentional generation, promotion, and realization of new ideas within a work role, group or organization aiming to benefit role performance of the group, or the organization" (Janssen, 2000). Janssen (2000) conceptualized it as a multi-dimensional construct consisting of interrelated dimensions such as "Idea generation, Idea promotion, and Idea realization" (Van der Vegt & Janssen., 2003).

Leaders increase job resources and positive energy in employees, supplementing their intrinsic motivation that may lead to innovative behavior (Janssen, 2004). PL is the concept that refers to the leader behavior that replicates parents in the family. Paternalistic leaders foster their authority, morality, and benevolence to motivate employees to promote extraordinary behaviors. Cheng et al. (2002) tested PL in the Taiwanese context and found that Principals of PL are measured in terms of authoritarianism, morality and benevolence were positively related to teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. Wang et al. (2019) tested PL in the banking sector in China. Structural equation modeling results found a positive relationship between moral and benevolence leadership and employee creativity.

Tian & Sanchez (2017) tested PL with two dimensions. They merged moral leadership and benevolent leadership into one construct and authoritarian leadership as a separate dimension. They surveyed 60 technology-based organizations in China and collected data from employees, supervisors, and peers. Results found a positive relationship between PL (authoritarian and moral leadership) and IWB. Authors suggest that PL is a highly relevant leadership style that may promote innovative employee behavior in technology-based organizations; they also stressed the need to test this variable in other cultures such as Pakistan.

PS refers to people's perception regarding the outcomes of interpersonal risk-taking in the organizational context (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). It is further described as the ability to invest the total energy in the workplace without fear of loss or injury (Chang

et al., 2013). The concept of PS is indebted to the social system that mainly provides different support mechanisms, trust, and cordial relationships (Chang et al., 2013). PS is developed when individuals experience trusting and supportive relationships that help them in times of uncertainty and risk (Chang et al., 2013). Such an environment of psychological safety promotes individual innovative behaviors (Chang et al., 2013). Results suggest that PL positively relate to employee trust in their leaders (Cheng, Shieh, & Chou, 2002).

PS refers to individuals' concerns about the repercussion of taking interpersonal risks stemming from interaction with others in the workplace (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). People take risks at the workplace by engaging in voice behavior, whistleblowing, or change and innovation-related behaviors. In such situations, they need an environment that ensures their safety against such risks. Research suggests that leaders play a pivotal role in developing employee PS, enhancing employee risk-taking behaviors such as voice, whistleblowing, and innovation. For example, Malik & Nawaz (2018) found that ethical leadership enhances employee PS, which fosters employee whistleblowing intention. Research also suggests that inclusive leadership is positively related to PS (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006) that further engages employees' creative tasks (Carmeli et al., 2010), IWB (Javed et al., 2017). In this Chinese context, PL has been found to be positively related to PS (Chong, 2013). This study proposes that in the collectivist culture of Pakistan too, PL, a father-like leadership style, will be positively related to employee PS. As PL entails leader behavior that promotes familial feelings in organizational relationships, it is believed that this leadership style would substantially impact PS.

Research suggests that whenever employees present new ideas in the workplace, other people, such as coworkers, may confront them (Janssen & Giebels, 2013). However, through their moral and benevolent leadership style, paternalistic leaders create an environment where employees are free from risk, intimidation, and uncertainty and engage in extraordinary work such as organizational citizenship behavior (Chou et al., 2005). Research suggests that PL enhances employee PS, further strengthening employees' ability to voice their ideas (Singh et al., 2013). Erkutlu & Chafra (2016) collected data from the hospitality sector and found a positive relationship between PS and benevolent leadership. Furthermore, at a higher level of PS, benevolent leadership was strongly related to employee well-being (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2016). Tian & Sanchez (2017) tested the interaction between benevolent and authoritarian leadership to know how this interaction relates to innovative behavior. Using data from Chinese technology-based organizations, they found that this interaction positively related to employee affective trust that further strengthened innovative behavior.

Based on the above literature review, this study intends to show whether PL will lead to employee IWB in Pakistan's the textile and software industries. This study also aims to check mediating role of PS while answering the calls for research (Javed et al., 2021; Javed et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2019). A study explored the role of collaborative efforts in enhancing the performance of the R&D sector in American and Chinese cultures

and also acknowledged the role of Paternalistic leadership in the R&D sector, especially in Asian cultures (Zhang et al., 2019). Therefore, this study develops a conceptual framework (figure 1.) to fill the research gap identified through critical analysis of various empirical studies reviewed above. This study is novel in that it checks the mediating role of psychological safety between PL and IWB, answering the call of researchers such as Wang et al. (2019). Methodologically, this study is a substantial contribution as it tests its hypotheses through PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2017).

Furthermore, no study from around the globe might have tested the role of paternalistic leadership in innovation literature using psychological safety as a mediator. Pakistan is a collectivistic society with strong benevolent values, and PL may be more relevant in the Pakistani context (Hofstede, 1983). Moreover, Pellegrini & Scandura (2008) argue that Paternalistic leadership is an area of research that is "emerging and fascinating." There is great debate regarding its validity and generalizability from various cultures. Aycan et al. (2013) used cross-cultural data from 6 countries belonging to individualistic and collectivist cultures. They found paternalistic leadership styles converging with other leadership styles like transformational, authoritarian, and nurturing task leadership. They also found paternalistic leadership was strongly related to task performance in high power distance countries than in low power distance cultures. Authors realize that there is a dearth of research from developing countries. More research examines the impact of paternalistic leadership on employee outcomes and attitudes. Those researches will further add to the understanding of paternalistic leadership (Aycan et al., 2013).

## METHODS

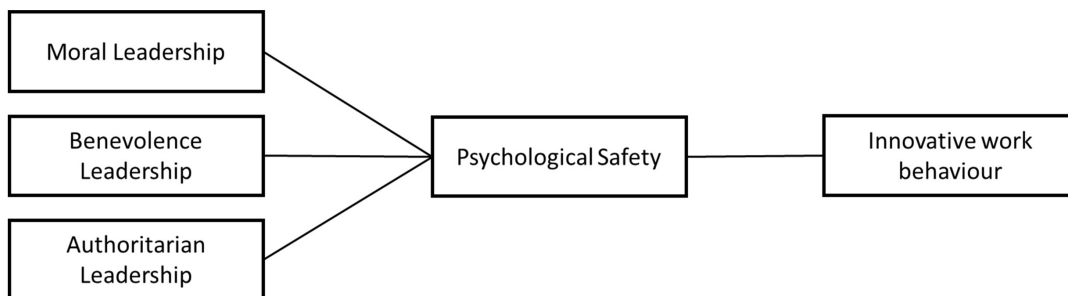
This study has utilized positivist philosophy to make a law like generalizations (Saunders et al., 2016). Using a deductive approach, we have collected quantitative data through structured questionnaires distributed online and via paper and pencil. Data were collected from textile designers and R&D sector employees of the textile and software industries. A convenience sampling technique was used to collect data. Employees were approached through relevant HR departments or executives after seeking prior permission. Support from the Pakistan Software Export board was sought for the data collection from the software industry.

Paternalistic leadership is defined as leader behavior representing a family environment where the supervisor takes care of their subordinates like the one the family head does in the family and expects obedience in return (Aycan, 2006). Paternalistic leadership was measured with a three-dimensional scale developed by (Farh et al., 2000) that contained 26 items. Sample items include: "My supervisor devotes all his/her energy to taking care of me" (Benevolent Leadership); My supervisor employs people according to their virtues and does not envy other's abilities and virtues (Moral Leadership); "My supervisor asks me to obey his/her instructions completely" (Authoritarian leadership). Innovative work behavior is defined as the intentional generation of valuable and novel ideas, getting support for those ideas, and

implementing those ideas in the organizations (Janssen, 2000). IWB was measured using 9 item scale developed by (Janssen, 2000). Sample items include "I create new ideas for difficult issues." Psychological safety is defined as a condition where employees feel safe from any risk in an organizational setting during advocating and embracing any new idea or raising voices in the organization (Edmondson, 2004). Psychological safety was measured using a 5-item scale (Carmeli et al., 2010). Sample items include "I am able to bring up problems and tough issues." Information regarding the reliability and validity of the scales and statistical analysis techniques is supplied in the results section of this study.

The theoretical framework of this study is shown in Figure 1. Paternalistic leadership is measured through its three dimensions: authoritarian leadership, benevolent leadership, and moral leadership. Paternalistic leadership is the independent variable of the study. The dependent variable is innovative work behavior. Psychological safety is a mediator between paternalistic leadership and innovative work behavior. Empirical paths that should be tested through structural equation modeling are from three dimensions to psychological safety and then psychological safety to innovative work behavior. Three mediation paths are also specified between the three dimensions of paternalistic leadership and innovative work behavior.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



In order to establish the validity and reliability of the model and test hypotheses, partial least square structural equation modeling was applied using Smart PLS software. PLS-SEM was applied using a two-step approach (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Preliminary analysis was conducted using SPSS software. A preliminary analysis indicated no missing values as online data collection has fewer chances of missing values (Hair et al., 2010). Paper and pencil questionnaires were also got filled in the presence of the research team, so every respondent was requested to make sure that no question was missed. They were also told about the confidentiality of the data.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section contains results. Frequency statistics are presented to show the demographic structure of the sample. Then hypotheses testing through a structural model is presented following a two-step approach (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Table 1 describes the characteristics of the sample. This sample comprised 317 respondents, including 147 females (46%). A considerable number of the respondents comprised those younger than 35 years (151; 48%). Two hundred fifty-seven respondents reported their experience as more significant than six years.

**Table 1. Frequency Distribution**

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	170	53.6
Female	147	46.4
<b>Age</b>		
Less than 25 years	31	9.78
26 to 30 years	46	14.5
31 to 35 years	75	23.7
36 to 40 years	86	27.1
41 to 45 years	53	16.7
46 years and above	26	8.2
<b>Education Level</b>		
Intermediate	38	12
Bachelor	177	55.8
Master	88	27.8
M.Phil./PhD	14	4.42
<b>Experience</b>		
Less than 1 year	27	8.52
1-5 years	55	17.4
6-10 years	121	38.2
11-20 years	107	33.8
21 years and above	7	2.21

A measurement model analysis was carried out to check the reliability and validity of the model (see Figure 2). The measurement model results are presented in Table 2 to report item reliability, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity. Estimates of factor loadings, composite reliability, and average variance were extracted. Results indicate that values of factor loadings are more significant than 0.50, values of CR are more remarkable than 0.70, and values of AVE are all greater than 0.50, indicating good reliability and validity of the model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2017).

**Table 2. Outer Loadings, Composite Reliability, Average Variance Extracted**

	Items	Outer loadings	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Authoritarian Leadership (AL)	AL1	0.789	0.923	0.572
	AL2	0.724		
	AL3	0.711		
	AL4	0.776		
	AL5	0.786		
	AL6	0.744		
	AL7	0.756		
	AL8	0.766		
	AL9	0.749		
Benevolent Leadership (BL)	BL1	0.598	0.918	0.517
	BL10	0.623		
	BL11	0.631		
	BL2	0.731		
	BL3	0.786		
	BL4	0.799		
	BL5	0.676		
	BL6	0.681		
	BL7	0.798		
Innovative Work Behavior (IWB)	IWB1	0.745	0.891	0.509
	IWB2	0.765		
	IWB3	0.716		
	IWB4	0.688		
	IWB5	0.745		
	IWB6	0.688		
	IWB7	0.632		
	IWB8	0.618		
	IWB9	0.613		
Moral Leadership (ML)	ML1	0.618	0.798	0.501
	ML2	0.646		
	ML3	0.742		
	ML4	0.567		
	ML5	0.605		
	ML6	0.594		
Psychological Safety (PS)	PS1	0.708	0.859	0.550
	PS2	0.699		
	PS3	0.780		
	PS4	0.785		
	PS5	0.732		

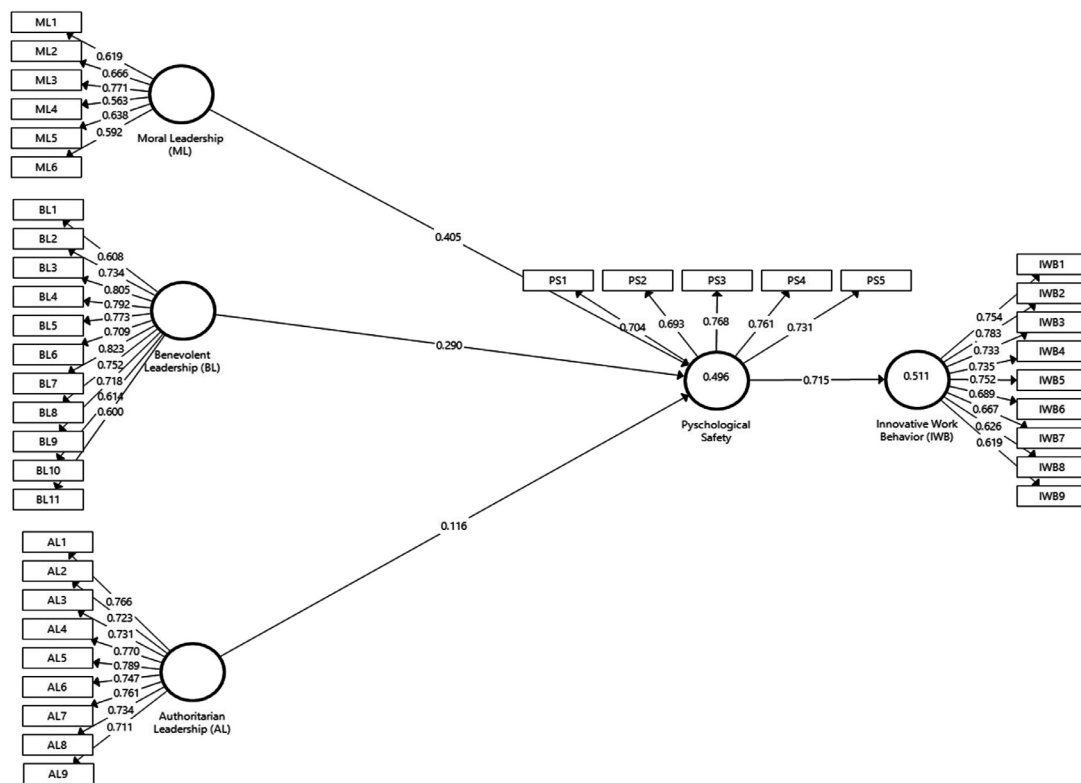


The Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations was calculated to assess the discriminant validity of constructs. Table 3 shows that all the HTMT values are less than 0.85, thus indicating the existence of discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2014).

**Table 3. Discriminant Validity (HTMT)**

	1	2	3	4	5
Authoritarian Leadership (AL)					
Benevolent Leadership (BL)	0.451				
Innovative Work Behavior (IWB)	0.475	0.702			
Moral Leadership (ML)	0.436	0.769	0.755		
Psychological Safety (PS)	0.486	0.753	0.754	0.780	

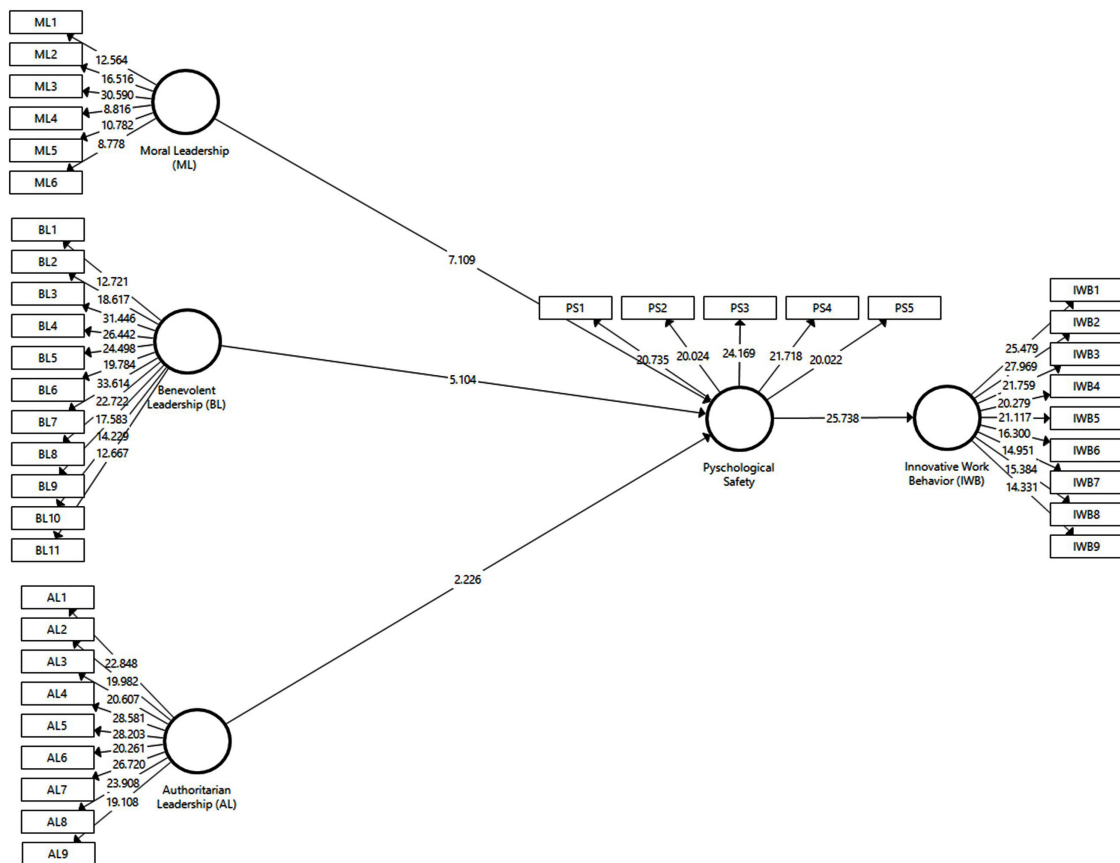
**Figure 2. Measurement Model**



Hypotheses are tested using structural model analysis (see Figure 3) through PLS-SEM using bootstrapping method (Hair et al., 2017). Results contained in Table 4 specify that AL has a direct positive and significant impact on PS ( $\beta = 0.151$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 3.653$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The relationship has a negligible effect size,  $F2 = 0.058$  (Wong, 2013). Regarding the second hypothesis, it is found that BL has a direct positive and significant impact on PS ( $\beta = 0.354$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 7.526$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).  $F2$  values of 0.157 indicate a moderate effect size for this relationship (Wong, 2013).

Moreover, ML has also direct positive and significant impact on PS ( $\beta = 0.339$ ,  $t\text{-value}=6.510$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Hence supporting H3. F2 values of 0.153 indicate a moderate effect size for this relationship. Finally, it was also found that PS had a direct positive and significant impact on IWB ( $\beta = 0.721$ ,  $t\text{-value}=28.842$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Hence supporting H4. F2 values of 1.081 indicate a large effect size for this relationship. Regarding mediating effects, it was found that PS mediated the relationship between AL and IWB ( $\beta = 0.109$ ,  $t\text{-value} 3.606$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

Figure 3. Structural Model



PS also mediated the relationship between BL and IWB ( $\beta = 0.255$ ,  $t\text{-value} 7.097$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The values indicate positive and significant indirect effects. This result indicates support for H6. Finally, the mediating (indirect) effect of PS is also found between ML and IWB ( $\beta = 0.244$ ,  $t\text{-value} 6.136$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This result indicates support for H7. The 95% confidence interval values presented in table 4 indicate that there is no zero between the upper and lower bound, thus confirming the significance of all paths (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The present study model explains 50.7% of the total variance in PS while 52.0% in IWB, indicating that large level of R2 (Chin, 1998).

This study tested the impact of PL on PS and IWB. This study found that three dimensions of PL, Moral leadership, benevolent leadership, and authoritarian leadership, were positively related to PS (H1, H2, and H3, respectively). Results of H1 and H2

are in line with established literature. Literature on PL has documented that moral and benevolent leadership styles create a psychologically safe environment that drives creative and innovative behaviors in the organizations. For example, Erkutlu & Chafra (2016) found a positive association between compassionate leadership and PS. Benevolent leadership has received greater attention from Asian researchers as it relates to the specific cultural context of Asian countries (Farh & Cheng, 2000). Chan & Mak (2011) also found compassionate leadership positively related to follower outcomes. Benevolent leaders show special care for their followers and have concerns about their individualized considerations, promoting feelings of being cared for and supported by the followers (Chan, 2017). Benevolent leaders are also concerned about the welfare of employees (Rao-Nicholson et al., 2016) and promote psychological well-being (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2016; Nazir et al., 2021). Therefore, the findings of this study add to the knowledge that benevolent leadership can also promote PS. Benevolent and moral leadership styles are correlated, and combined can promote positive behaviors in employees (Farh et al., 2000; Özçelik & Cenkci, 2014).

**Table 4. Significance & Relevance of path coefficient**

Relationships	Beta	Std Error	t value	p Values	LCI 5%	UCI 95%	f square	Effect size	Hypothesis
H1. AL → PS	0.151	0.041	3.653	0.000	0.067	0.228	0.058	Small	Supported
H2. BL → PS	0.354	0.047	7.526	0.000	0.261	0.439	0.157	Moderate	Supported
H3. ML → PS	0.339	0.052	6.510	0.000	0.237	0.435	0.153	Moderate	Supported
H4. PS → IWB	0.721	0.025	28.842	0.000	0.665	0.764	1.081	Large	Supported
H5. AL → PS → IWB	0.109	0.030	3.606	0.000	0.045	0.163	--	--	Supported
H6. BL → PS → IWB	0.255	0.036	7.097	0.000	0.188	0.326	--	--	Supported
H7. ML → PS → IWB	0.244	0.040	6.136	0.000	0.169	0.320	--	--	Supported

However, the authoritarian leadership style has been found to be negatively related to employees' positive outcomes. This study, contrarily, finds AL positively related to PS. One reason for this finding might be that the patriarchal society of Pakistan is characterized by high power distance (Hofstede, 1983), where people having authority are justified in using the power and authority. However, future research must uncover the potential mechanism behind positive aspects of authoritarian leadership, if any, for high power distance countries. Moreover, as part of paternalistic leadership, authoritarian leadership is considered as the parent who scolds their children for rightful matters that ultimately benefit them. In the workplace context, in high power distance countries, the employee feels that their leaders, elders in organizations, have the right to use coercion to guide their behaviors in the right direction. This "stigma of authoritarian leadership" is best clarified by Lin et al. (2019). They argue that Western cultures promoting equity and autonomy consider authoritarian leadership harmful to employee development. However, collectivist

Asian cultures value communalism, obedience, and respect for authority. In such cases, authoritarian leadership can promote positive behaviors. This result is further supported by Lau et al. (2019). They conducted a three-way interaction of three dimensions of PL and responded to complexity in the PL model due to authoritarianism. They argued that AL could not be straightforwardly considered negative (Lau et al., 2019), which is an essential component of PL.

Apart from the varied impacts of the three dimensions of PL, some studies which used PL as a single factor have found it positively associated with positive attitudes such as affective commitment and job satisfaction (Ünler & Kılıç, 2019; Chai et al., 2020). Recent research has found a positive association of PL with other positive behaviors like organizational identification (Zhuang et al., 2022). Hypothesis 4 was related to a positive relationship between PS and IWB. Findings supported this hypothesis. Extant literature suggests that creativity and innovation are demanding, and thus employees are exposed to a greater risk of interpersonal conflicts (Janssen, 2000). IWB, thus, is fostered in an environment that provides a risk-free atmosphere to employees (Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989). Previous research has considered a climate that fosters psychological safety among employees as a critical element for enhancing innovative employee behaviors in organizations (Baer & Frese, 2003; Moake et al., 2019; Mansur et al., 2017). Other research has found positive effects on the psychological safety climate for employee IWB (Moake et al., 2019)

Hypotheses 5 to 7 concerned the mediation of psychological safety between the dimension of PL and IWB. Results again have supported the hypotheses. These findings also indicate the importance of psychological safety for predicting IWB at the workplace and translating the effects of positive leadership styles to foster IWB. For example, recent research from Pakistan also found psychological safety as a mediator between inclusive leadership and IWB (Javed et al., 2017). Although specific studies on this link, i.e., mediation of PS between PL and IWB, are scarce and could not be found. Wang et al. (2019) found support for the relationship between PL and employee creativity through the mediation of organizational identification. They checked job insecurity as a moderator between leadership and identification. Another study from Pakistan found a positive association between benevolent leadership and creativity with the mediation of voice behavior (Soomro et al., 2021). As voice behavior is also the reflection of people's psychological safety, it is safe to say that psychological safety can also work as a mediator between PL and IWB. They also suggested checking the mediating role of PS in PL and the creativity link. This study provides evidence about the mediation of PS between PL and IWB and contributes to the knowledge about their relationships.

## **CONCLUSION**

Paternalistic leadership (PL) is an emerging leadership style and is also crucial for collectivist societies. There is a dearth of research regarding the role of paternalistic behavior in developing innovative work behavior (IWB) in the Pakistani context. This

study is a significant contribution to the literature as it is the first study that employs PL in innovative behavior research. Secondly, it is the first study that has tested the innovative behavior of employees of the software industry who were neglected in prior research. The outcomes of this study will benefit practitioners and academics in terms of identifying factors that foster employee innovative work behavior (IWB) in the Textile and software industries. Both industries have a significant role in economic development in Pakistan.

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