

Significance of Paternalistic Leadership, with Sustainable HR Practices on Employee Psychological Wellbeing During COVID-19 Pandemic.

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Abstract

This study has the main emphasis on examining the impact of paternalistic styles of leadership on employee psychological wellbeing in the presence of sustainable HR practices as a moderator. A quantitative study was conducted to examine the link with help of an adopted questionnaire with a sample of 394 working in the public sector hospital of Karachi Pakistan while the collected data was analyzed using smart PLS. Thus, after the analysis of the collected data, it has become evident that two styles of paternalistic leadership including the authoritarian and moral have a positive impact on employee psychological wellbeing whereas the benevolent leadership style has a negative yet significant effect on employee psychological wellbeing. Furthermore, it has been found that the relationship between the benevolent and moral style of leadership and employee psychological wellbeing has been moderated by sustainable HR practices. Whereas the link between the authoritarian style of paternalistic leadership and employee psychological wellbeing has not been moderated by sustainable HR practices. This study helps the practitioners and top management to formulate strategies to invest more in executing sustainable HR practices as this has been seen as an important factor among employees which in turn affects their wellbeing from the psychological stance during and after this pandemic. Similarly, the development of socially responsible HR practices can portray a positive image of the organization to the employees along with the timely use of the right aspect of leadership styles to boost the employee's psychological wellbeing.

Keywords:

Authoritarian paternalistic Style, Benevolent paternalistic Style, Moral paternalistic Style, Employee Wellbeing, Sustainable HR practices.

Article History:

Received: 17th Nov 2021

Accepted: 11th Jan 2022

1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Covid 19 has changed the dynamics of working as well as affected the organizational sustainability and employee's behavior and wellbeing. In this regard, Spagnoli et al. (2020) also specified that change in the working pattern from office to the remote working environment due to the sudden apprise of pandemic covid 19 cases which result in effect the wellbeing in the form of techno stress. Furthermore, remote working has been the new normal during Covid 19 which leads to extensive use of technology that henceforth leads to influence the wellbeing of employees from a psychological perspective (Prasad, Mangipudi, Vaidya, & Muralidhar, 2020).

On the other side, the increasing use of technology has been associated with negatively affecting the wellbeing of employees in the form of anxiety, stress, and discomfort (Salanova, Llorens, & Cifre, 2013). Additionally, it has been reported by a researcher that during Covid 19 remote working perhaps lead to adversely affecting the wellbeing of human resources due to constantly using technology and information load with frequent use of a system (Molino et al., 2020). Consistently, as per different researchers working remotely can lead to producing positive consequences like enhanced engagement as well as satisfaction, cost, and time-saving sideways saving the resources of the organization (Shamsi, Iakovleva, Olsen, & Bagozzi,

2021; Thulin, Vilhelmson, & Johansson, 2019).

Parallel to this view; the role of paternalistic leadership is very crucial in managing the workforce by providing them substantial support to perform well with maintained wellbeing (Jiang, 2021; Molino et al., 2020). Therefore, the paternalistic leadership influence is seen on both levels including individual as well as organization in the extant literature for instance on work-life of human resources (Mert, 2021), organizational silence (Ahmadi & Kaveh, 2019), organizational trust (Bektaş, Kanatlı, & İşi, 2021), voice behavior (Jia, Zhou, Zhang, & Jiang,

2020), organizational commitment (Chai, Jeong, & Joo, 2020), employee innovative behavior (Handayani & Hartijasti, 2021), turnover intention (Abbas, Habib, & Kazi, 2020; Fang, Fang, Chao, & Lin, 2019) and employee wellbeing (He, An, & Hewlin, 2019).

Moreover, as per the results of the study execution of sustainable practices for the management of HR can help to lessen the aspects of creating harm to the employees. Thus, the implementation of sustainable HR practices can help to minimize the adverse effect on the individual, organizational, and community levels (De Prins, Stuer, & Gielens, 2020). Furthermore, sustainable HR practices are seen as the main aspect that is comprised of bundles of practices to manage the HR to maximize the profit of the organization on one side whereas on the other side it reduces the negative effect on employees from the well-being viewpoint (Mariappanadar, 2003, 2012; Wagner, 2013). Accordingly, Tuan (2018) has asserted an interaction that exists between paternalistic leadership and HR practices can aid in improving the engagement level of employees.

Our study contributes to the extant literature from multiple perspectives. Firstly, the dimensions of paternalistic leadership are examined to sightsee their impact on employee psychological wellbeing. Though in the literature these facets are examined with other employee-related behaviors and organizational outcomes. Yet, a dearth of research is there, henceforth this study provides substantial insight regarding paternalistic leadership and employee psychological wellbeing. Secondly, there is a dearth of research regarding the moderating role of sustainable HR practices in the relation between paternalistic leadership dimensions and employee psychological wellbeing. Therefore, the objectives of our study have been explained below:

- To examine the effect of the authoritarian style of paternalistic leadership on employee psychological wellbeing.
- To assess the impact of benevolent style of paternalistic leadership dimensions on employee psychological wellbeing.
- To evaluate the impact of moral style of paternalistic leadership dimensions on employee psychological wellbeing.
- To investigate the moderating role of sustainable HR practices between authoritarian, benevolent, and moral dimensions of paternalistic leadership on employee psychological wellbeing.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Primarily, theoretical underpinning, afterward the method employed. Therefore, the findings of the study and discussion. Finally, the conclusion, implications, limitations, as well as suggestions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Paternalistic Leadership

The notion of paternalism is gaining importance among the researchers and practitioners as this signifies the characteristics related to social-cultural facets that go beyond being a leadership style and this style has been more prevalent in the collectivist cultures like in the Middle East as well as Asia and Latin America (Pellegrini, Scandura, & Jayaraman, 2010). Leadership role has emerged as an immense key during the emergence of Covid 19 to keep the followers (subordinates) motivated enough to perform well together with that keeping the major concern in mind to ensure the wellbeing of human resources working in the organization.

Thus, when assessing the definition of paternalistic leadership in the literature such as Zhang, Huai, & Xie (2015) has defined paternalistic leadership as a combination of being disciplined as well as having authority with paternal benevolence. Henceforth, paternalist leaders (PL) are demarcated by Farh and Cheng (2000) as the leaders responsible to exert robust impact on subordinates and allowing them to share their ideas on one side of the veil yet by keeping strong control over their subordinates to fulfill the specified goals. According to Hou, Hong, Zhu, & Zhou (2019), paternalistic leadership has a substantial influence on the subordinates due to the display of the highest virtues of morality, integrity as well as self-discipline. Therefore, perhaps the most important aspect of paternalistic leadership permits it to be apparent as a legitimate power to exercise control to accomplish the goals (Saygili, Özer, & Karakaya, 2020).

As per Bedi (2020) the explanation related to paternalistic leadership is comprised of three folds such as authoritarianism, benevolence as well as morality. Referring to the first fold of paternalistic leadership i.e., authoritarianism is seen as a characteristic that a leader has the authority to exercise control in the form of strict guidelines in the workplace to comply with by their subordinates (followers). The second fold is explaining the benevolence dimension of paternalistic leadership that is linked to having concerns for maintaining the follower's (subordinates) wellbeing at both levels personal as well as professional. Lastly, the moral dimension of paternalistic leadership is linked to the display of integrity along with high virtues to do good for their followers rather than focusing on fulfilling their self-interest. Correspondingly, Chen, Zhou, & Klyver (2019) also shared similar dimensions of paternalistic leadership including authoritarian, benevolent, and moral facets. In our study, three above-mentioned dimensions of paternalistic leadership have been used to assess their link with employee psychological wellbeing along with a moderator sustainable HR practice.

Paternalistic Leadership and Employee Psychological Wellbeing

According to Rasool, Wang, Tang, Saeed, & Iqbal (2021), employee wellbeing is an important notion nowadays for accelerating organizational success. So, the apprehensions linked to depression and fatigue both are linked to the psychological wellbeing of an individual which perhaps results in affecting the overall health and wellbeing. Wellbeing intricate numerous dimensions such as psychological, social, spiritual as well as physical wellbeing along with personal circumstances (Linton, Dieppe, & Medina-Lara, 2016; Ponting, 2020). Therefore, employee wellbeing particularly the psychological as well as physical has a larger impact on both firstly at the organization level and on the other side the economic level (Ponting, 2020); as in the business arena, the prosperity of organization and economic prospects are highly reliant on the abilities of employees to adjust themselves with the changes happening in the internal and external environment. However, with the important role of employees to meet the need of the changing environment simultaneously leadership has an important role to play. Keeping this quarrel in a vein Irawanto & Novianti (2021) has elucidated that leadership might help in managing the innovation and changes happening in the environment effectually on one side while enhancing the wellbeing of employees on the other side of the veil (Xumin, Liu, & Irawan, 2021).

He et al. (2019) found that paternalistic leadership- two dimensions benevolent and moral has a meaningful impact on employee wellbeing whereas authoritarian has a negative influence. Moreover, Thoits (1991) reported that leader authoritarian behaviors might perhaps lead to cause an identity crisis along with hurting the employee's psychological well-being. Furthermore, uneasiness, as well as negative sentiments among the subordinate and leaders' relations, can lead to affect the motivation which in turn affect the psychological wellbeing which is more common in collectivist culture especially in the presence of authoritarian behavior as compared to benevolent and moral dimensions of PL (Niu, Wang, & Cheng, 2009). Accordingly, Fletcher & French (2021) also unearthed in their study that leadership can lead to affect the psychological and emotional aspects of wellbeing. Thus, the following hypotheses have been projected:

H1: Authoritarian style of paternalistic leadership affect the psychological wellbeing of employees.

H2: Benevolent style of paternalistic leadership affects the psychological wellbeing of employees.

H3: Moral style of paternalistic leadership affects the psychological wellbeing of employees.

Sustainable HR Practices as a Moderator

The notion of sustainability has been incorporated in various areas for the accomplishment of sustainable development goals through employing the effective use of scarce resources for production to bring social and individual welfare via preserving the environment (Gorgenyi-Hegyey, Nathan, & Fekete-Farkas, 2021). So looking at well-being the main aspect is health which needs some effective governmental and corporate policies to maintain by addressing the diverse set of social and environmental problems. Therefore, a social sustainability factor can be seen at three levels to ensure wellbeing as elucidated by Toussaint, Cabanelas, & González-Alvarado (2021) which are explained below:

- By the development of networks within the healthcare system and health policy at the governmental level.
- By executing the HRM practice that is primarily grounded on the promotion of wellbeing and corporate social responsibility at the workplace at the corporate level.
- By shaping the attitude as well as habits at the consumer level.

Henceforth, the incorporation of the sustainability aspect at the organizational level is primarily built on improving continuously the HR management practices in an organization that is socially as well as environmentally responsible (Gorgenyi-Hegyey et al., 2021). Conferring to the aforementioned argument Sorribes, Celma, & Martínez-García (2021) study has shown empirical evidence that sustainable HR practices can have a meaningful impact on the wellbeing of employees, especially in the time of crisis like Covid 19. In addition, researchers explicated that implementation of sustainable HR practices during and after Covid 19 postulates to have a positive effect on the well-being of employees because focusing on building sustainable

management practice can lead to enables critical thinking as well as a demonstration of positive (social) behavior by employees due to having positive feeling which might produce consequences for organization as well (Jaškevičiūtė, Stankevičienė, Diskienė, & Savickė, 2021).

So, the role of leadership is important for the execution of sustainable HR practices. As Salas-Vallina, Alegre, & López-Cabrales (2021) have mentioned that leadership behavior can play a fostering role in the implementation of wellbeing-oriented HR practices and hence affect the performance of the employee. However, Singh, Pradhan, Panigrahy, & Jena (2019) in their study has stated that the link between self-efficacy and employee wellbeing is stronger in the presence of sustainability practices among the executives. So, the leadership supportive behavior has an imperative effect on the well-being of the employee through the execution of management practices (Hauff, Felfe, & Klug, 2020). Thus, for the organization, it has become important to emphasize the well-being of stakeholders, especially employees who play a crucial role in creating success in the long run. This can attain through institutionalizing sustainable HR practices. Henceforth, sustainable wellbeing is seen as a moderator in our study between paternalistic leadership dimensions and employee psychological wellbeing. Therefore, the following hypotheses has been proposed for analysis:

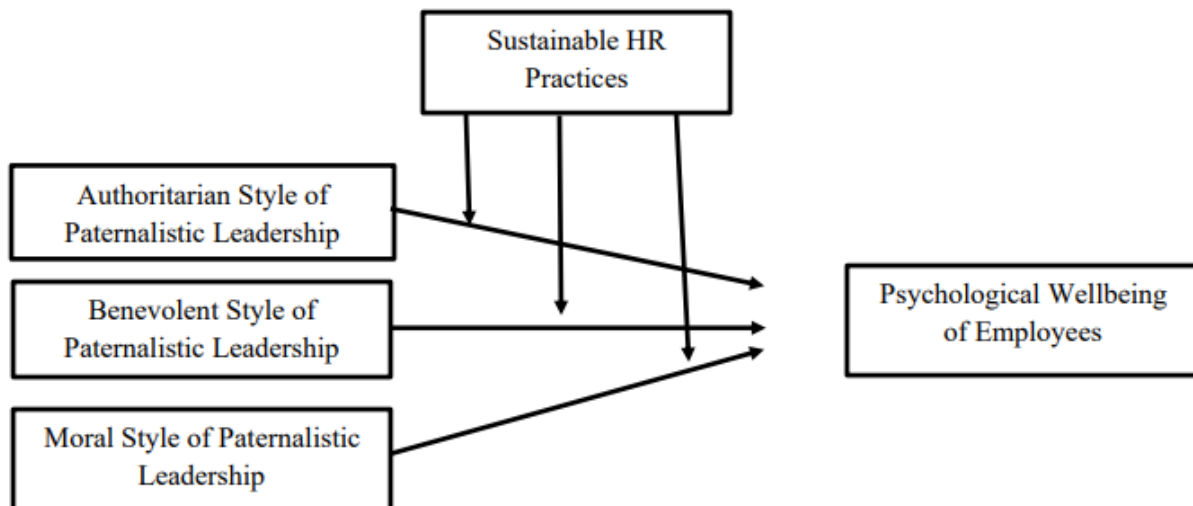
H3: Authoritarian style of paternalistic leadership affects the psychological wellbeing of employees is moderated by sustainable HR practices.

H4: Benevolent style of paternalistic leadership affects the psychological wellbeing of employees is moderated by sustainable HR practices.

H5: Moral style of paternalistic leadership affects the psychological wellbeing of employees is moderated by sustainable HR practices.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study variables are explained below in the diagrammatic form including the independent variables such as authoritarian, benevolent, and moral style of paternalistic leadership and psychological wellbeing of employees as a dependent variable along with sustainable HR practices as a moderator.



4. METHODOLOGY

For the testing of the projected hypotheses, quantitative research was conducted by adopting the deductive approach. Besides, a total of 394 respondents have participated based on the convenience and their willingness to participate after an explanation of the importance of the study, particularly employees who are working in the public sector hospitals in Karachi. While the collected data was analyzed using smart PLS. In our study, the sample is comprised of 54.6% male and 45.4% female.

Measures

Paternalistic Leadership

In order to assess paternalistic leadership Cheng, Chou, Wu, Huang, & Farh (2007) scale was used to measure the related dimensions. The adopted scale is comprised of 24 items with a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The sample item employed in our study was “My supervisor is like a family member when he/she gets along with us”.

Sustainable HR Practices

For assessment of sustained HR practices an adopted scale was taken from the study of De Prins et al. (2020) with a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The sample item employed in our study was “This organization truly cares about the well-being of employees”.

Employee Psychological Wellbeing

Scale to measure psychological wellbeing was adopted from Haider, Jabeen, & Ahmad (2018) with 7 items containing a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The sample item employed in our study was “In the last six months, I have been feeling joyful”.

Findings

Measurement Model

Table 1 specifies the validity as well as reliability of the variables incorporated in our study. For assessing the convergent validity, the composite reliability, items loadings, and average variance extracted were executed. As per the outcomes of our study, all items fell within the acceptable threshold values whereas the composite reliability values also fell within the range which indicates good reliability, and values of AVE were also greater than 0.5 as recommended by Hair et al. (2019).

Table 1. Measurement Model

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Criteria (Threshold Values)		≥ 0.5	≥ 0.7	≥ 0.5
Authoritarian style of paternalistic leadership	APL1	0.839	0.944	0.771
	APL3	0.871		
	APL4	0.904		
	APL6	0.904		
	APL8	0.87		
Benevolent style of paternalistic leadership	BL10	0.701	0.886	0.526
	BL2	0.732		
	BL3	0.679		
	BL5	0.652		
	BL6	0.72		
	BL8	0.748		
	BL9	0.834		
Moral style of paternalistic leadership	MPL1	0.853	0.952	0.799
	MPL2	0.884		
	MPL3	0.873		
	MPL4	0.946		
	MPL5	0.911		
Employee Psychological wellbeing	EPW1	0.737	0.908	0.664
	EPW2	0.864		
	EPW3	0.875		
	EW4	0.796		
	EPW6	0.8		

In addition, discriminant validity was assessed through using Fornell and Larcker criteria (1981). Table 2 specifies the square root of each AVE in the diagonal with the correlation coefficients (off-diagonal) for each construct (in the relevant rows and columns) must be greater than the inter construct correlation. Thus, the discriminant validity is proven.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity

	1	2	3	4
Authoritarian style of paternalistic leadership (1)	0.878			
Benevolent style of paternalistic leadership (2)	0.756	0.726		
Employee Psychological wellbeing (3)	0.667	0.468	0.815	
Moral style of paternalistic leadership (4)	0.903	0.788	0.663	0.894

As per the result shown in table 3, the three of the projected hypotheses have been accepted which shows that the authoritarian style of paternalistic leadership has a significant effect on employee psychological wellbeing ($\beta = 0.419$ and $p < 0.01$) whereas the benevolent style of paternalistic leadership has a significant yet negative effect on employee psychological wellbeing ($\beta = -0.204$ and $p < 0.01$) and lastly, moral style of paternalistic leadership has a significant effect on employee psychological wellbeing ($\beta = 0.449$ and $p < 0.01$).

Table 3. Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	Std Beta	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	CI LL	CI UL
APL -> EPW	0.419	0.097	4.378	0.000	0.221	0.593
BPL -> EPW	-0.204	0.076	2.8	0.005	-0.346	-0.055
MPL -> EPW	0.449	0.145	2.935	0.003	0.188	0.758

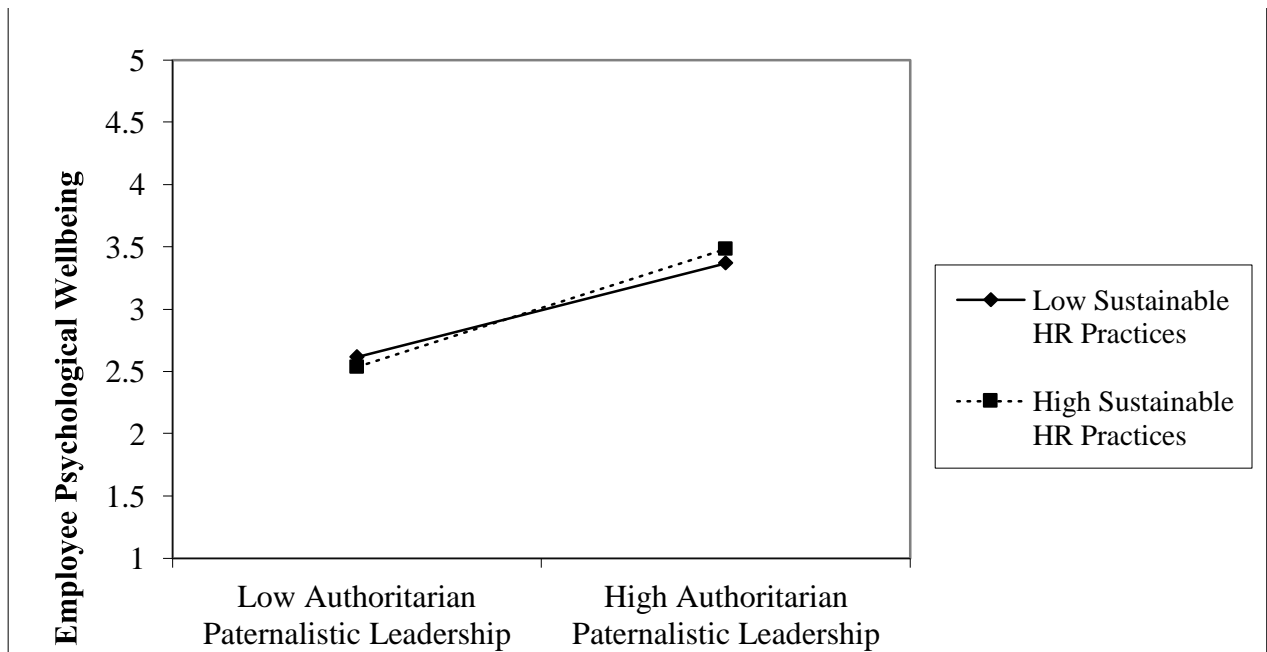
Moderation Analysis

To examine the moderating effect, bootstrapping was run. Thus, as per the outcomes of the study sustainable HR practices do not strengthen the link between the authoritarian style of paternalistic leadership and employee psychological wellbeing as the p-value is > 0.05 .

Relationship	Std Beta	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	CI LL	CI UL
APL -> EPW	0.425	0.101	4.24	0.232	0.628
APL -> SHRP-> EPW	0.048	0.041	1.306	-0.041	0.12
SHRP -> EPW	0.009	0.141	0.176	-0.305	0.244

While figure 1 shows that the sustainable HR practice has a steeper gradient for low sustainable HR practices. This shows that the positive relationship between the authoritarian style of paternalistic leadership and employee psychological wellbeing is higher in the presence of low sustainable HR practices. Thus, hypothesis 3 is not confirmed.

Figure 1. Authoritarian Paternalistic Leadership Interaction

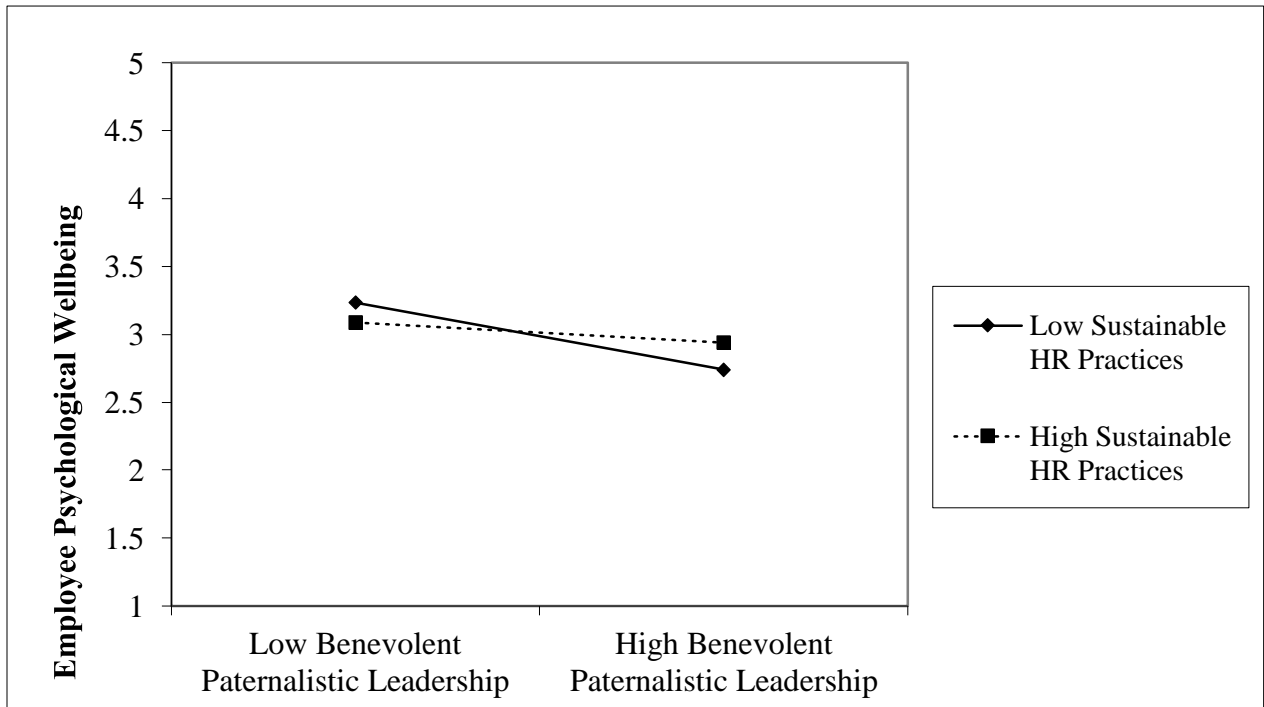


Moreover, as per the results of the study sustainable HR practices do strengthen the link between the benevolent style of paternalistic leadership and employee psychological wellbeing as the p-value is <0.05.

Relationship	Std Beta	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	CI LL	CI UL
BPL -> EPW	-0.161	0.072	2.354	-0.316	-0.02
BPL -> SHRP -> EPW	0.086	0.035	2.682	0.028	0.162
SHRP -> EPW	0.013	0.125	0.196	-0.219	0.236

Despite the fact figure 2 shows that the positive relationship between the benevolent style of paternalistic leadership and employee psychological wellbeing is moderated in the presence of execution of sustainable HR practices. Thus, hypothesis 4 is confirmed.

Figure 2. Benevolent Paternalistic Leadership Interaction

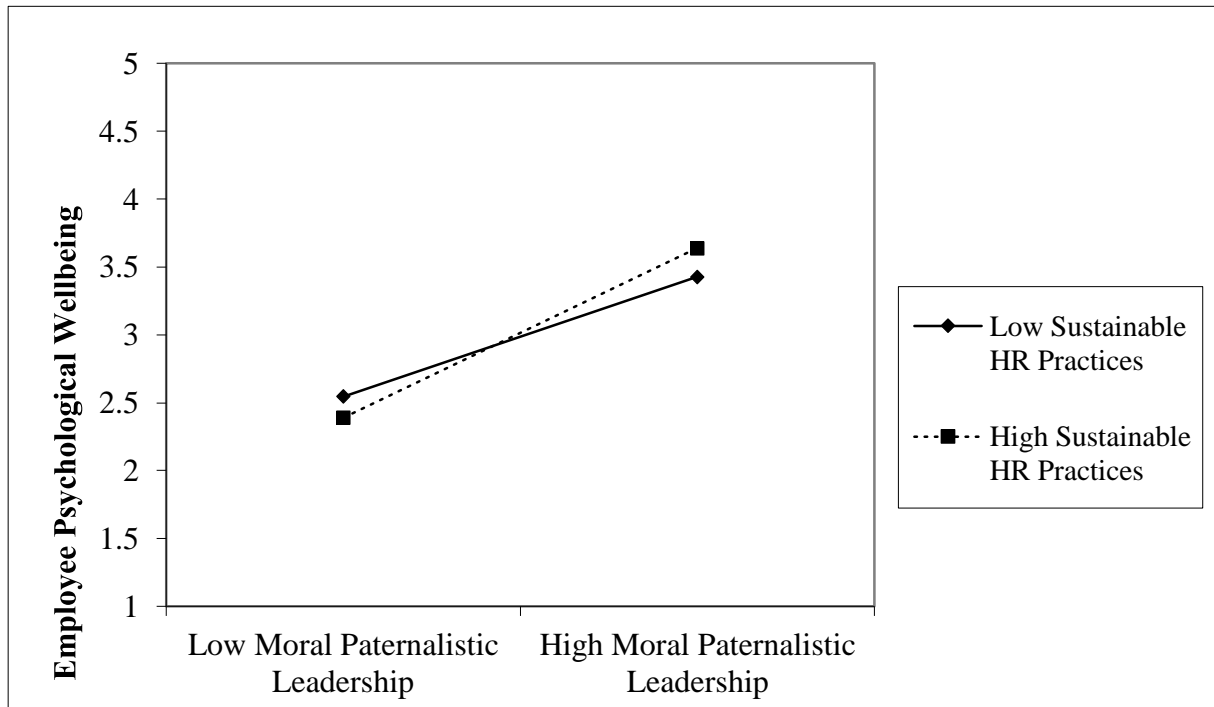


Furthermore, as per the results of the study sustainable HR practices do strengthen the link between the moral style of paternalistic leadership and employee psychological wellbeing as the p-value is <0.05.

Relationship	Std Beta	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	CI LL	CI UL
MPL -> EPW	0.533	0.149	3.51	0.262	0.863
MPL -> SHRP-> EPW	0.092	0.039	2.51	0.01	0.159
SHRP -> EPW	0.014	0.132	0.202	-0.262	0.236

Besides figure 3 shows that the positive relationship between the moral style of paternalistic leadership and employee psychological wellbeing is moderated in the presence of execution of sustainable HR practices. Thus, hypothesis 5 is confirmed.

Figure 2. Moral Paternalistic Leadership Interaction



5. DISCUSSION

In our study, the paternalistic leadership styles' impact on employee psychological wellbeing along with that, the moderating role of sustainable HR practices between paternalistic leadership styles and employee psychological wellbeing has been examined. According to the results, it has been established that all the three styles of paternalistic leadership including authoritarian and moral have a positive impact on employee psychological wellbeing whereas the benevolent leadership style harms employee psychological wellbeing.

Thus, the outcome of the study is compatible with the study of He et al. (2019) concerning the moral and benevolent style of paternalistic leadership in terms of significance whereas the results related to the authoritarian style of paternalistic leadership are not compatible with our results. Furthermore, the results are not in accord with the study of Thoits (1991), as in their study the author explicated that the authoritarian aspect in leadership can lead to harm the wellbeing of employees. Likewise, as per the unearthed results of Niu et al. (2009), the authoritarian aspect can lead to harm the employee's psychological wellbeing as compared to other dimensions like benevolent and moral in a collectivist culture. But in our study, the benevolent style of leadership is primarily responsible for creating a negative effect on the employee's psychological wellbeing. This means that leadership style has the potential to affect the well-being of employees as Fletcher & French (2021) also shared a similar view.

Furthermore, it has been found that the relationship between the benevolent and moral style of leadership with employee psychological wellbeing has been moderated by sustainable HR practices. Whereas the link between the authoritarian style of paternalistic leadership and employee psychological wellbeing has not been moderated by sustainable HR practices. This means that sustainable HR practices are a crucial factor affecting the wellbeing of an employee while this view is in accord with the study of Jaškevičiūtė et al. (2021) and Sorribes et al. (2021). Along with that paternalistic leadership styles have an impact on employee psychological wellbeing in the presence of the sustainable HR practices execution as this aspect is in line with the study of Hauff et al. (2020).

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study has the main emphasis on examining the impact of paternalistic styles of leadership on employee psychological wellbeing in the presence of sustainable HR practices as a moderator. Thus, after the analysis of the collected data, it has become evident that two styles of paternalistic leadership including the authoritarian and moral have a positive impact on employee psychological wellbeing whereas the benevolent leadership style has a negative yet significant effect on employee psychological wellbeing. Furthermore, it has been found that the relationship between the benevolent and moral style of leadership and employee psychological wellbeing has been moderated by sustainable HR practices. Whereas the link between the authoritarian style of paternalistic leadership and employee psychological wellbeing has not been moderated by sustainable HR practices. It has been concluded that the paternalistic style of leadership plays a crucial role in improving employee psychological well-being whereas the execution of sustainable HR practices strengthens the link between the paternalistic style of leadership and employee psychological well-being.

This study helps the practitioners and top management to formulate strategies to invest more in executing sustainable HR practices as this has been seen as an important factor among employees which in turn affects their wellbeing from the psychological stance during and after this pandemic. Similarly, the development of socially responsible HR practices can portray a positive image of the organization to the employees along with the timely use of the right aspect of leadership styles can lead to boosting the employee's psychological wellbeing.

This study has like other studies have few limitations; firstly, the impact of paternalistic leadership styles has been examined on employee psychological wellbeing only. Future researchers may examine the paternalistic leadership styles' impact on other employee wellbeing facets like social and spiritual wellbeing. In addition, the above-mentioned study model is restricted to public sector hospital employees. Future researchers may examine another service sector to further broaden the prospects of this study.

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