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Paternalistic vs. Servant Leadership: Pathways to Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment through Reduced Political Perceptions

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Abstract

For many decades, leadership behavior and style have remained central topics for organizational scholars. Academics maintain that when leaders apply a particular approach that aligns with their potential, it can substantially shape organizational performance. This research explores whether two specific leadership styles—paternalistic and servant leadership—positively affect employees' work attitudes (including job satisfaction and commitment) and simultaneously reduce negative workplace perceptions, such as organizational politics. Using responses from 320 employees representing six districts and 115 offices of Pakistan's largest public electricity distribution company, the relationships among the studied factors were assessed. Analysis through structural equation modeling confirmed that both leadership types enhance employee satisfaction and commitment while diminishing political perceptions. Moreover, the findings revealed that perceived organizational politics mediates the link between paternalistic leadership and employee attitudes, but no such mediation appeared for servant leadership. These findings enrich current literature by offering empirical insights into which leadership styles are most advantageous for public institutions in Asian contexts. Future studies and implications are also discussed.

Keywords: Paternalistic leadership, Servant leadership, Organizational politics, Job satisfaction, Commitment, Public organizations

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Introduction

Throughout history, social scientists have examined leadership style as one of the most crucial factors shaping employee attitudes and conduct [1-6]. The demand for capable leadership remains high in modern organizations. Traditional leadership patterns are losing relevance as today's dynamic work environments require flexibility and changing leader responsibilities [4]. A competent leader enables employees to work productively and stay motivated.

The rapidly evolving and interconnected nature of organizations makes it difficult for managers to stick to one universal supervisory model that can handle complex systems while maintaining collaboration [7]. Understanding cultural and behavioral factors is, therefore, essential to grasp how leadership operates across societies [8]. The effectiveness of leadership often depends on the surrounding cultural environment, which differs widely between regions [7]. Asian societies provide a strong context for such inquiry, as social norms deeply influence how leadership is practiced and perceived [8]. Achieving organizational objectives thus relies heavily on maintaining a healthy leader–follower relationship [4, 9].



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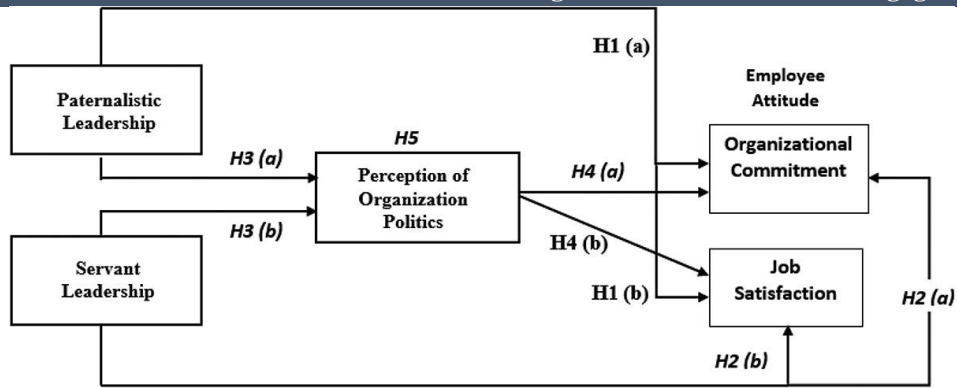


Figure 1. presents the conceptual framework of this research

Among the leadership forms gaining renewed academic interest, paternalistic leadership (PL) and servant leadership (SL) are two relational styles often examined for their impact on workplace dynamics [10-13]. PL is prevalent in various cultural regions, including Latin America, the Middle East, and East Asia [13-15]. Early management thinkers emphasized that a caring and protective leadership approach encourages loyalty and cooperation among workers [16, 17]. Later Western and Asian scholars supported this view, suggesting that paternalistic practices serve as a humane alternative to rigid bureaucratic systems [18, 19], as they offer employees guidance, protection, and personal attention [20].

Although research on PL has existed for decades, many aspects remain underexamined [21]. Rooted in Confucian principles, this form of leadership is particularly common among Asian managers [8]. Following the influential study of Cheng *et al.* [22], interest in paternalistic leadership has grown considerably and continues to evolve in organizational research.

Likewise, the philosophy of SL

The concept of servant leadership (SL) has also gained notable traction among both scholars and organizational practitioners, primarily due to a growing interest in leadership models grounded in ethics and community-oriented management [23-27]. Because it emphasizes empowerment, personal growth, and value creation, many managers prefer SL to other moral leadership approaches [28-30]. Servant leaders concentrate on nurturing individuals and strengthening organizational outcomes through the development of human potential [2, 31, 32]. In modern times, SL practices have become part of leading global organizations because of the model's emphasis on strong leader-follower bonds [33]. Although SL has transformed managerial thinking, most early contributions were prescriptive, highlighting the need for further descriptive and empirical work to refine the mechanisms and measurable dimensions of this style.

Despite substantial Western exploration of these leadership forms, empirical studies in Asian contexts remain scarce, and findings linking these leadership approaches with employee outcomes such as satisfaction and commitment have been inconsistent [1, 13]. This research, therefore, investigates how these two leadership styles—paternalistic and servant—relate to employees' attitudes, specifically commitment and satisfaction. The study utilizes one of Pakistan's largest public sector organizations as a case to provide data-driven evidence on which style is most advantageous for supervisors and leaders in the public domain. The organization was deliberately chosen to contribute evidence from large-scale public institutions and extend the ongoing discussion around supervisory challenges.

The research can be categorized into two major strands:

1. Assessing how specific leadership styles influence employee performance.
2. Examining the mediating function of perceived organizational politics in the link between leadership and employee attitudes.

Given that local Pakistani research on leadership in public institutions is limited, this study also helps fill conceptual and empirical gaps within both paternalistic and servant leadership literature. Rather than proposing an "ideal" model to eradicate organizational politics or maximize commitment, the objective is to empirically evaluate whether these leadership approaches meaningfully reduce negative perceptions that hinder employee morale. The outcomes will be valuable for leaders operating in Pakistan's public sector, guiding them toward styles that minimize political perceptions while improving commitment and satisfaction, ultimately enhancing performance. The findings strengthen both the theoretical and practical contributions to organizational behavior literature. To date, there has been no empirical research exploring the combined impact of paternalistic and servant leadership on employee attitudes and perceived organizational politics in Pakistan's public sector.

Literature review

Paternalistic leadership

The paternalistic leadership (PL) approach is characterized as a management style that merges authoritative discipline with benevolent father-like care [22]. Empirical studies indicate that PL is extensively applied across organizations in Pacific Asia,

Latin America, and the Middle East [13, 21, 34]. Farh and Cheng [35] define it as a leadership method that fuses moral integrity and caring behavior with authority and discipline. They noted that paternalistic leaders often maintain strong control and command respect from subordinates, ensuring order and compliance.

The PL model is composed of three fundamental elements: authoritarianism, benevolence, and morality [21].

- Authoritarianism reflects a leader's assertion of authority and demand for discipline and obedience [13]. In such contexts, subordinates adhere to directives largely to avoid negative consequences [34].
- Benevolence refers to a leader's genuine concern for employees' well-being and a readiness to assist them personally and professionally. Pellegrini and Scandura [13] describe it as a leadership quality involving holistic and familial concern for subordinates. A benevolent leader engages emotionally, understands employees' personal circumstances, and offers protection and support, which in turn builds trust, satisfaction, and loyalty [34].
- Morality embodies the leader's ethical standards, integrity, and virtuous conduct that set a moral example for others.

Aycan [34] challenged the Western notion that paternalism is synonymous with authoritarianism, suggesting instead that it represents a multifaceted construct. She categorized paternalism into four distinct approaches: exploitative, benevolent, authoritarian, and authoritative. The first two emphasize nurturing and support, while the latter two focus on control and discipline. Although opinions differ on which subtype is most effective, research indicates that benevolent paternalism tends to yield more favorable organizational outcomes [1, 13, 36].

Servant leadership

Burns [37] described servant leadership (SL) as an interactional process in which both leaders and followers elevate one another toward greater levels of ethical and motivational development [38]. A servant leader influences and inspires followers through persuasion and example rather than by relying on authority or formal power [27]. Numerous scholars [26, 39] have proposed various theoretical frameworks for SL, among which Van Dierendonck's [27] six-dimensional model has become one of the most widely referenced. The six components he identified include humility, empowerment, interpersonal acceptance, authenticity, stewardship, and providing direction.

Empowerment refers to encouraging, trusting, and equipping individuals to act independently. This feature is considered central to the SL framework [40-60]. Humility, derived from the Latin *humilis* meaning "low," involves acknowledging one's limitations and maintaining a modest sense of self-importance [61].

Authenticity concerns being genuine and self-aware. The term "authentic" implies originality and truthfulness supported by verifiable evidence. Authentic leaders build trust-based relationships, recognize personal constraints, and guide others toward growth and learning [62]. Interpersonal acceptance reflects the capacity to empathize with others and understand their experiences and emotions [38]. Van Dierendonck [27] considered this an essential leadership trait as it nurtures an environment where individuals feel safe to experiment and learn from mistakes.

Providing direction involves motivating followers toward shared goals and helping them pursue higher objectives through collaboration [63]. Stewardship, the final element, focuses on service to others and accountability for the welfare of the larger institution rather than self-interest [26, 27, 42]. Block [42] defines stewardship as "responsibility without the need for control." Collectively, these attributes describe the behavioral essence of servant leadership and have received extensive empirical validation. Prior studies have shown that these dimensions of SL are positively associated with favorable employee attitudes and behaviors [12, 64-66]. In the present study, all six dimensions outlined by Van Dierendonck [27] are adopted.

Employee attitudes

Employees develop a variety of beliefs, emotions, and judgments about different aspects of their job roles, careers, and organizations [67]. According to Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller [68], job attitudes are "evaluations of one's work that convey one's emotions, beliefs, and level of attachment to it." Although numerous forms of job attitudes have been explored, job satisfaction and organizational commitment remain the most frequently studied constructs [4].

Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment has been recognized as a key determinant of organizational success and employee performance. Over the years, it has gained significant attention for its link to leadership behavior and work-related outcomes [69]. Past research suggests that when employees perceive fairness and respect within the organization, they develop stronger emotional bonds and attachment [70]. Muthueloo and Rose [71] describe commitment as the degree to which an individual identifies with and participates in their work, which subsequently reduces turnover intentions and absenteeism.

Although organizational commitment has been examined across numerous contexts, findings consistently show its positive relationship with both job satisfaction and performance [72]. Allen and Meyer [73] conceptualized commitment as "an employee's psychological attachment and sense of responsibility to remain with the organization," identifying three core dimensions: affective, normative, and continuance commitment. Later studies reaffirmed the strong link between employee performance variables and commitment [74, 75].

Research also indicates that affective commitment—the emotional attachment to an organization—tends to deepen as tenure increases, though some findings do not fully support this progression [76]. Typically, employees experience higher levels of loyalty and commitment early in their tenure, driven by enthusiasm and a sense of belonging. This affective bond encourages behaviors rooted in trust and emotional investment that benefit the organization. Employees with stronger affective commitment are more likely to take initiative and engage in extra-role activities, demonstrating dedication beyond formal job requirements [77, 78].

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to an employee's favorable and constructive outlook toward their work [79, 80]. Locke [81] characterized it as “*a positive or pleasurable emotional state arising from the evaluation of one's job or job experiences.*” Aziri [80] linked satisfaction directly with workers' emotional and psychological conditions. Employees' behaviors and performance largely depend on their satisfaction level, which consequently affects the organization's overall operations. According to Chong and Monroe [82], satisfaction at work is a significant determinant of employee turnover. Jain *et al.* [83] found that effective welfare programs, a stable work environment, and job security substantially enhance satisfaction levels. Thus, maintaining high employee satisfaction is vital for the organization's growth and effectiveness. When employees feel content with their job, they tend to work diligently and deliver positive results. Conversely, dissatisfaction leads to negative behavior that can harm the organization's image and disrupt managerial efficiency. In exchange for employees' productive attitudes, organizations usually provide rewards, promotions, and other benefits, expecting similar future contributions. A worker who feels loyal, committed, and happy in their role is more likely to find fulfillment in their work compared to someone who experiences lesser satisfaction.

Perception of organizational politics

Ferris *et al.* [84], proposed that political activities serve as stressors that generate strain responses among employees, which, in turn, foster political behavior in workplaces—indirectly influencing turnover intentions and overall performance. These outcomes depend heavily on managerial perception and the organization's financial capacity, making each case unique and difficult to replicate. Ferris and colleagues first introduced a theory-driven framework for organizational politics in 1989, which was later refined in 2002 [85]. The subject of organizational politics has been explored for nearly three decades, with early discussions dating back to Burns in the 1960s. Theoretical developments by Pettigrew, Porter, and Schein in the 1970s and empirical research in the 1980s—particularly by Ferris and Kacmar [86]—advanced understanding of politics within organizational behavior.

Organizational politics has been defined as “*actions by individuals directed toward advancing their personal interests without considering the welfare of others in the organization*” [87]. Elbanna [88] viewed politics as a process where individuals influence decisions by utilizing power through coalitions, negotiation, timing tactics, and external consulting. Such behavior can distort control systems and information flow within organizations. Stone [89] described this as a decision-making process where dominant coalitions shape choices in favor of the powerful rather than organizational welfare. Many scholars view these political acts as the misuse of power for personal benefit, often undermining formal authority [90, 91]. However, politics is not inherently negative; it can sometimes yield advantages for individuals or firms depending on the context. Ferris *et al.* [85] argued that diverse interests inevitably generate political behavior in organizations. Despite the growing literature, scholars still debate whether politics should be perceived as entirely detrimental or potentially beneficial. Weak institutional controls and cultural instability typically intensify workplace politics, resulting in reduced job satisfaction and increased conflict. These conflicts often stem from differing motives, and those who engage in political maneuvers are commonly perceived as adversaries by less politically active employees.

Leadership and employee attitude

Modern workplaces have become increasingly demanding due to growing organizational complexities. Leadership approaches and employee attitudes play a central role in shaping overall productivity and success [92]. Farh *et al.* [14] found that benevolence and moral integrity in leadership are positively correlated with organizational commitment, whereas authoritarian tendencies have an inverse relationship. A study by Yousef [93], involving 30 Arab organizations, provided empirical support that both job satisfaction and organizational commitment are significantly influenced by leadership style. Similarly, Susanj and Jakopec [94] revealed that fair and loyal treatment of subordinates enhances their level of commitment. In another investigation by Chen *et al.* [1] across 52 manufacturing teams in China (n = 238), results demonstrated a positive connection between organizational commitment and benevolent and moral leadership, but no notable association with authoritarian behavior.

Leadership patterns that emphasize mere productivity outcomes without acknowledging employees' emotions, trust, or engagement often fail to unlock their full potential [95]. Jeanquart Miles and Mangold [96] suggested that supervisors who maintain constructive and communicative interactions with their subordinates help strengthen positive employee outlooks.

Workers tend to perceive their supervisors as effective when they foster participative environments, mutual respect, and overall satisfaction with work conditions [97, 98]. Leaders who show integrity, loyalty, empathy, and fairness tend to elevate the sense of belonging and dedication among their teams. Empirical research consistently demonstrates that leadership style has a profound influence on employee commitment. For example, a study by Pellegrini and Scandura [13] in North America confirmed that paternalistic leadership (PL) enhances employee commitment. Similarly, Yeh *et al.* [99], found a positive association between organizational commitment and the three dimensions of PL. Uhl-Bien *et al.* [15] highlighted that PL promotes trust, team unity, long-term attachment, and intrinsic motivation among employees.

Previous literature also reveals that leadership behavior significantly contributes to employee-related outcomes such as satisfaction, involvement, performance, and loyalty [72, 100, 101]. Cheng and Wu [102] observed that benevolent and moral leadership dimensions are positively related to job satisfaction, while authoritarian tendencies show the opposite trend. In a separate study involving 498 employees from Taiwan Science Park, Chou [103] confirmed that PL had a strong positive relationship with job satisfaction.

Multiple studies [23, 97, 104-109] have consistently established that the right leadership style can enhance job satisfaction, strengthen commitment, improve organizational output, foster learning, and minimize turnover. Based on this discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1(a): Paternalistic leadership (PL) is positively associated with organizational commitment (OC).

- H1(b): Paternalistic leadership (PL) is positively associated with job satisfaction (JS).
- H2(a): Servant leadership (SL) is positively associated with organizational commitment (OC).
- H2(b): Servant leadership (SL) is positively associated with job satisfaction (JS).

Leadership and the perception of organizational politics

Politics within organizations is primarily perceptual rather than an absolute reality [110]. In other words, political understanding differs across individuals. Scholars note that as perceptions of politics grow stronger, employees' sense of fairness, justice, and ethical behavior within the organization tends to weaken. Several models, particularly those grounded in procedural justice, link perceived politics with leader-member relationships. Yet, leaders must differentiate between productive political activity and manipulative behaviors. In practice, political awareness has evolved into a vital managerial capability rather than a destructive force.

Ferris and Rowland [111] argued that leadership behavior directly influences how employees perceive their work environment, shaping both job perception and performance. Consequently, leadership serves as a key mechanism for promoting fairness and transparency while reducing perceptions of internal politics. Based on Expectancy Theory [112], Leader-Member Exchange Theory, and Social Exchange Theory [113], one of the essential functions of leadership is to create a supportive and equitable climate for both subordinates and the broader organization. When fair social exchanges are encouraged, perceived organizational politics decline, ultimately improving performance outcomes. Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H3(a): Paternalistic leadership (PL) is significantly associated with perception of organizational politics (POP).
- H3(b): Servant leadership (SL) is significantly associated with perception of organizational politics (POP).

Perception of politics and employee attitudes

Research in public sector organizations by Bozeman *et al.* [114], as well as by Cropanzano *et al.* [115], reported that perceived organizational politics (POP) negatively influences employee attitudes. Similar findings have been replicated in various studies [84, 116-119], suggesting that when employees perceive high levels of politics, their work engagement and satisfaction decline. Drory [116] further noted that this negative relationship is particularly evident among lower-level employees who often experience frustration due to limited control or influence. To retain power or visibility, such employees may resort to political tactics, but these behaviors contribute to a climate that lowers overall motivation.

Perceived politics remains a major determinant of employee satisfaction and commitment levels [120]. Ferris *et al.* [84] proposed that perceived organizational politics are linked with outcomes such as stress, dissatisfaction, and reduced engagement. Employees' attitudes toward their job, colleagues, and management are shaped by these perceptions [121]. Modern research confirms that organizational politics perceptions are negative predictors of job satisfaction and commitment. On this basis, the final hypotheses are proposed:

- H4(a): Perception of organizational politics (POP) is negatively related to organizational commitment (OC).
- H4(b): Perception of organizational politics (POP) is negatively related to job satisfaction (JS).

The mediating role of perceived organizational politics

A number of prior investigations [4, 111, 122, 123], have recognized perceived organizational politics (POP) as a mediating construct in examining leadership-employee relations. Similarly, Pillai *et al.* [124] observed that employees' perceptions of

politics at work could serve as a linking mechanism between leadership behavior and job-related outcomes such as satisfaction and commitment.

Leadership behavior strongly shapes how employees interpret political activities within an organization, which, in turn, influences how committed and content they feel toward their work. Several researchers have utilized POP as an intervening factor between transactional or transformational leadership and outcomes such as job satisfaction or organizational commitment. For instance, Gadot [125] explored the mediating influence of organizational politics in the connection between leadership approach and organizational citizenship behavior. Empirical results show that when POP is accounted for, the direct relationship between leadership style and employee attitudes becomes weaker [4].

In the current study, POP is treated as a mediating variable to determine whether it alters the association between paternalistic leadership (PL) and servant leadership (SL) with two indicators of employee attitude: (1) job satisfaction and (2) organizational commitment. Previous research [4, 122, 123, 125] consistently shows that POP performs a bridging function in leadership–outcome relationships. Findings from these works emphasize that POP mediates the effect of leadership on satisfaction, commitment, and overall performance.

Based on these arguments, the following hypotheses were proposed:

- H5(a): Perception of organizational politics mediates the link between Paternalistic Leadership (PL) and Organizational Commitment (OC).
- H5(b): Perception of organizational politics mediates the link between Paternalistic Leadership (PL) and Job Satisfaction (JS).
- H5(c): Perception of organizational politics mediates the link between Servant Leadership (SL) and Organizational Commitment (OC).
- H5(d): Perception of organizational politics mediates the link between Servant Leadership (SL) and Job Satisfaction (JS).

Drawing on the discussion above, a conceptual framework was developed to represent the relationships proposed in this study.

Materials and Methods

To accomplish the research objectives, this study targeted employees from one of the largest state-owned electricity distribution organizations. This context was chosen due to its hierarchical structure and large workforce, which makes it suitable for examining leadership impacts on employee behavior. The organization operates through provincial, divisional, and regional offices, supported by numerous customer service branches. For practical reasons, six major districts were selected as the sampling area.

Formal authorization was obtained from the management before initiating data collection. Afterwards, 500 structured questionnaires were distributed to employees across 115 offices—including regional, zonal, circle, and area offices—covering approximately 17,408 staff members. A cover letter explained the voluntary nature of participation and ensured confidentiality and anonymity. In total, 320 fully completed questionnaires were returned, resulting in a 64% response rate, which is statistically sound. The remaining 180 questionnaires were either unreturned (90), partially completed (39), included duplicate entries (28), or were entirely blank (23).

Demographic data revealed that 238 participants (74%) were male and 82 (26%) were female. Regarding marital status, 255 respondents (80%) were married. In terms of education, around 68% possessed either bachelor's or master's degrees, indicating a well-educated sample capable of comprehending the study's questions. All participants had at least one year of experience, with the majority falling within the 6–10 years and 16+ years categories.

Measurement instruments

- Paternalistic Leadership (PL): Evaluated using the 16-item measure by Cheng *et al.* [22], covering three core dimensions outlined earlier. A representative item is “I never feel pressure or distress while working with him/her.”
- Servant Leadership (SL): Measured through a 7-item scale created by Reinke [126]. A sample statement reads, “My supervisor listens to what employees have to say.”
- Perceived Organizational Politics (POP): Measured using the Perceptions of Organizational Politics Scale (POPS) by Kacmar and Carlson [127], which includes 10 statements, such as “Favoritism rather than merit determines who gets ahead around here.”
- Employee Attitude: Assessed through organizational commitment and job satisfaction, using a 3-item scale from Meyer and Allen [128] and a 7-item scale from Wicker [101], respectively. Examples include “I feel loyal to the organization” and “Overall, I am satisfied with my job.”

Each variable was rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Because all responses were self-reported, potential common method bias was addressed through procedural and statistical techniques. Respondents were assured of privacy and anonymity [129]. Statistically, Harman's single-factor test indicated

that the first factor explained 37.81% of total variance, well below the 50% benchmark, suggesting that common method variance was not a major issue [130].

Results and Discussion

The data obtained from 320 respondents were analyzed utilizing SPSS 25 and AMOS 24. Reliability analysis indicated that all variables exceeded the 0.70 benchmark, ranging between 0.78 and 0.87, confirming acceptable internal consistency [131].

Correlation analysis

To preliminarily assess the hypotheses, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed (**Table 1**). The results indicate that Paternalistic Leadership (PL) is inversely related to Perception of Organizational Politics (POP) ($r = -0.550$, $p < 0.005$). PL also shows a positive and significant association with Organizational Commitment (OC) and Job Satisfaction (JS) ($r = 0.541$ and 0.626 , $p < 0.001$, respectively).

Servant Leadership (SL) exhibits a negative correlation with POP ($r = -0.060$), but this does not reach statistical significance. In contrast, SL maintains a strong positive connection with OC and JS ($r = 0.527$ and 0.693 , $p < 0.001$). POP demonstrates a significant negative relationship with OC ($r = -0.480$, $p < 0.05$) and a negative but non-significant link with JS ($r = -0.105$).

Table 1. Correlation Matrix

S. No.	Variable	M	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	Organizational 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**	1

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

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

The moderate to strong correlations observed between leadership styles (PL and SL) and employee outcomes (OC and JS) provide empirical support for H1(a), H1(b), H2(a), and H2(b). The relationships between leadership styles and POP substantiate H3(a) and H3(b). Likewise, the negative associations between POP and both OC and JS validate H4(a) and H4(b). Correlational values were within acceptable ranges, indicating no multicollinearity issues and confirming suitability for further analysis.

Factor loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extracted

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed to evaluate the factor loadings of observed items onto their respective latent constructs. All items retained factor loadings above 0.50, meeting the minimum criterion for construct validity [132]. Additionally, the Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs were within acceptable limits, demonstrating satisfactory reliability and convergent validity.

Table 2. Factor Loadings, CR, and AVE

Paternalistic Leadership				Perception of Organizational Politics			
Item	Factor Loading	Composite Reliability	AVE	Item	Factor Loading	Composite Reliability	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										
PL14	0.90										
PL16	0.89										
Servant Leadership		Organizational Commitment				Job Satisfaction					
Item	Factor Loading	CR	AVE	Item	Factor or Loading	CR	AVE	Item	Factor Loading	CR	AVE
SL1	0.86	0.90	0.77	OC1	0.81	0.90	0.69	JS2	0.75	0.86	0.76
SL3	0.83			OC3	0.88			JS3	0.81		
SL4	0.85							JS5	0.80		
SL6	0.80							JS6	0.77		
SL7	0.81							JS7	0.73		

Model fit indices

The structural validity of the measurement model was examined via CFA. As shown in **Table 3**, the five-factor model exhibited the best fit to the data. The goodness-of-fit statistics were as follows: $\chi^2/df = 2.45$, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.92, GFI = 0.93, IFI = 0.88, RMSEA = 0.06, and RMR = 0.04. Alternative models failed to achieve acceptable fit indices. These results confirm that the constructs demonstrate strong reliability and validity for further SEM analysis.

Table 3. Competing Models for CFA

Model	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	GFI	IFI	RMSEA	RMR
Five-Factor Model (Paternalistic Leadership, Servant Leadership, Perception of Politics, Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction)	2.45	0.92	0.92	0.93	0.88	0.06	0.04
Four-Factor Model (Paternalistic Leadership, Servant Leadership, Perception of Politics, Organizational Commitment + Job Satisfaction)	4.20	0.74	0.74	0.70	0.69	0.91	0.87
Three-Factor Model (Paternalistic Leadership, Servant Leadership, Perception of Politics + Organizational Commitment + Job Satisfaction)	5.71	0.69	0.63	0.60	0.69	0.13	0.16
Two-Factor Model (Paternalistic Leadership + Servant Leadership, Perception of Politics)	6.92	0.54	0.58	0.55	0.49	0.41	0.52
One-Factor Model (Paternalistic Leadership + Servant Leadership + Perception of Politics + Organizational Commitment + Job Satisfaction)	12.40	0.43	0.41	0.46	0.40	0.26	0.21

Hypotheses testing

The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) results, illustrated in **figures 2 and 3**, present standardized path coefficients ranging from -0.80 to 0.50. Findings indicate that both PL and SL positively influence OC and JS, providing support for H1 and H2(a-b). Additionally, both leadership styles are negatively associated with POP, confirming H3. Finally, POP negatively affects OC and JS, further supporting H4(a) and H4(b).

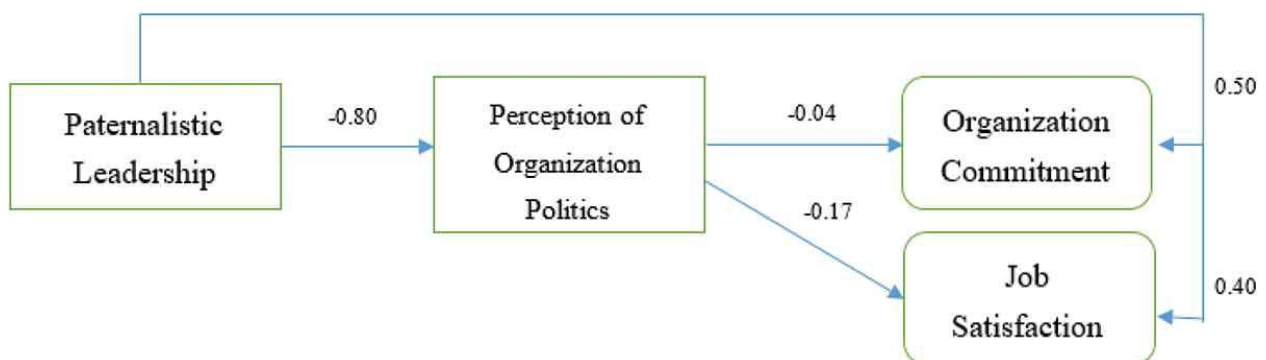


Figure 2. SEM Case 1 – Paternalistic Leadership

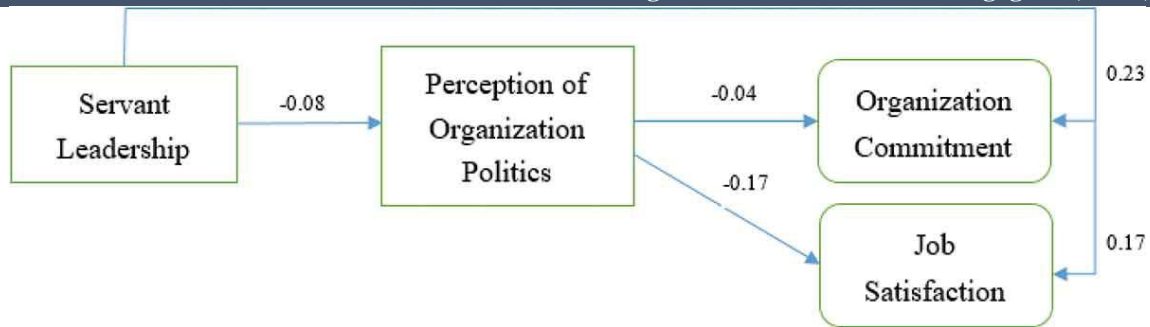


Figure 3. SEM Case 2 – Servant Leadership

Direct and indirect impacts

The statistical outcomes of the model's direct associations are summarized in **Table 4**. Each hypothesis was examined using the *critical ratio (CR)* and *p-value*. At the 0.05 significance threshold, a *CR* greater than 1.96 indicates statistical validity.

Table 4. Verification of Hypotheses (Direct Effects)

Hypothesis	Path	β	Critical Ratio	Decision
H1(a)	Paternalistic Leadership → Organizational Commitment	0.501*	4.816	Supported
H1(b)	Paternalistic Leadership → Job Satisfaction	0.405*	4.219	Supported
H2(a)	Servant Leadership → Organizational Commitment	0.239	2.787	Supported
H2(b)	Servant Leadership → Job Satisfaction	0.175	3.015	Supported
H3(a)	Paternalistic Leadership → Perception of Politics	-0.805*	9.513	Supported
H3(b)	Servant Leadership → Perception of Politics	-0.084	-0.085	Not Supported
H4(a)	Perception of Politics → Organizational Commitment	-0.040	-0.896	Not Supported
H4(b)	Perception of Politics → Job Satisfaction	-0.174	-2.060	Supported

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

Analysis revealed that PL exerted the highest direct influence on organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.501$, $p < 0.001$), while its effect on job satisfaction ranked next ($\beta = 0.405$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, SL demonstrated a notable positive link with organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.239$, $p < 0.05$) and with job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.175$, $p < 0.05$). These findings confirm that both paternalistic and servant leadership patterns play a significant role in shaping employee responses—specifically commitment and satisfaction—thus upholding H1 (a, b) and H2 (a, b).

Additionally, PL showed a negative correlation with the perception of organizational politics ($\beta = -0.805$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3 (a). However, SL failed to display a meaningful association with the same variable, leading to the rejection of H3 (b).

The indirect relationships are shown in **Table 5**, where the mediating role of perceived politics was evaluated between leadership styles and employee attitudes. The mediation between SL and organizational commitment was not verified since the confidence interval contained zero. According to Cheung and Lau [133], zero within the limits implies the absence of mediation. On the contrary, mediation was confirmed in the paths PL → organizational commitment, PL → job satisfaction, and SL → job satisfaction, as zero did not fall within the boundary range.

Table 5. Verification of Hypotheses (Indirect Effects)

Hypothesis	Indirect Path	β (Indirect)	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Decision
H5(a)	Paternalistic Leadership → Perception of Politics → Organizational Commitment	0.274	-3.319	-3.911	Supported
H5(b)	Paternalistic Leadership → Perception of Politics → Job Satisfaction	0.213	-3.216	-3.712	Supported
H5(c)	Servant Leadership → Perception of Politics → Organizational Commitment	0.706	-2.403	1.703	Not Supported
H5(d)	Servant Leadership → Perception of Politics → Job Satisfaction	0.334	-2.098	-1.993	Supported

This study explored how paternalistic (PL) and servant (SL) leadership influence organizational commitment and job satisfaction, considering the mediating role of perceived organizational politics. Data were obtained from personnel working in a large public-sector entity, which offered an ideal environment for examining the behavior and attitudes of employees.

The empirical outcomes were not only statistically significant but also aligned with prior investigations [3, 13, 69]. Both leadership styles exhibited a meaningful connection with organizational commitment. For instance, Chen *et al.* [1] demonstrated a positive relationship between PL and commitment. Likewise, Wang *et al.* [134], analyzing two distinct datasets from the U.S. and Taiwan, found that PL had a strong influence on employee performance. Comparable conclusions were

drawn regarding SL by Khattak *et al.* [135]. A separate investigation by Akram *et al.* [136] involving public institutions across 66 cities in Pakistan also emphasized the pivotal role of leadership behavior in determining workforce performance.

The current results are consistent with prior findings [13, 69, 73, 137-139], highlighting that paternalistic and servant leadership are both significantly associated with commitment and job satisfaction. In public organizations where managers adopt these styles, employees generally exhibit higher satisfaction levels and greater loyalty toward their institutions. Since paternalistic leaders maintain both interpersonal warmth and formal guidance, they enhance subordinates' emotional bonding, dedication, and trust [140]. Over time, this mutual reliance cultivates a cooperative culture and a more positive organizational climate overall.

SL encompasses both supportive and service-oriented interactions with subordinates, prioritizing their personal growth and empowerment [106]. Employees under this leadership model tend to feel trusted, inspired, and encouraged, which reinforces their confidence in their own abilities and competencies [141]. Furthermore, SL enhances the self-efficacy of team members, creating a workplace culture that is positive and nurturing. Individuals operating within such an atmosphere report greater satisfaction and security, leading to improved organizational performance. When servant leadership is practiced within public institutions, it fosters mutual respect, compassion, and strong leader–employee bonds, while also elevating job satisfaction and commitment, and diminishing workplace stress levels.

The mediating influence of perceived organizational politics was analyzed in this research through the bootstrap approach. Results revealed mediation between PL and organizational commitment, PL and job satisfaction, and SL and job satisfaction. This mediating process appeared to diminish the direct effect of paternalistic leadership on both commitment and satisfaction, as well as the influence of servant leadership on job satisfaction. However, the indirect link between SL and organizational commitment lacked support because zero fell within the confidence interval. Previous investigations [4, 123, 125] have also confirmed the mediating role of organizational politics in the connection between leadership style and employee attitudes, including satisfaction and commitment.

Conclusion

Throughout time, leaders, administrators, and public managers have encountered ongoing challenges and organizational transformations. To sustain performance within the public sector, it is crucial for leaders, supervisors, and managers to adopt appropriate leadership frameworks and enhance their readiness to navigate such changes. Thus, initiatives aimed at strengthening employee commitment and job satisfaction should involve retraining managerial personnel in effective leadership approaches, especially paternalistic and servant leadership [142]. Given that public organizations play a pivotal role in supporting national economic growth, this study intentionally provides empirical insights into how adopting suitable leadership methods can not only improve employee attitudes but also reduce the negative effects of political perceptions within workplace settings.

The findings address a key concern of the public sector—leadership effectiveness—and present empirical evidence showing that both paternalistic and servant leadership positively influence organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Beyond enhancing employee morale and engagement, these styles contribute to lower levels of political perception, which frequently harm interpersonal relations and disrupt vital variables. The study also illustrates that by promoting commitment and satisfaction through affective leadership, employees become more proactive in resolving institutional problems. Byrne [143], through analysis of 150 employees, observed that procedural justice and fairness enhance employee attitudes while decreasing political perception effects.

Although organizational politics do not always yield negative outcomes, in situations with limited resources, senior managers may utilize political skills to achieve goals effectively. Nevertheless, such strategic actions might still be perceived as political behavior [86]. Depending on the viewpoint, political conduct can have constructive or destructive implications, though its adverse forms tend to harm both individuals and institutions [143]. The perception of politics often thrives in unclear or loosely structured systems, where controls and procedures are inconsistent or weak. Therefore, it becomes essential that public-sector supervisors and managers cultivate benevolence, stewardship, humility, and integrity, thereby encouraging a transparent and just organizational climate.

Contributions

This study makes a significant addition to the broader discourse on organizational behavior and leadership management. While prior research has explored leadership styles and their influence on employee attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions [2, 3, 69, 97, 108, 144], such investigations have largely been conducted outside Pakistan. To date, no empirical research has specifically examined paternalistic leadership (PL) and servant leadership (SL) within public sector institutions in Pakistan. The findings of this study are aligned with earlier works that linked PL and SL with job satisfaction and organizational commitment [3, 69, 145, 146]. Although prior studies identified several predictors of these relationships, the mediating influence of organizational politics perception has not been previously explored. Therefore, this research highlights the

relevance of PL and SL leadership styles within Eastern, politically influenced public organizations, demonstrating their value in such administrative settings.

Implications

Theoretical implications

This research offers multiple theoretical contributions for both academicians and practitioners. It reinforces the established links between PL and organizational commitment, PL and job satisfaction, SL and organizational commitment, and SL and job satisfaction. These findings provide a basis for scholars to further examine these leadership styles across different work environments.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this represents the first empirical examination of the combined effects of PL and SL on employee attitudes, alongside the mediating role of organizational politics perception, within Pakistan's public sector and cultural context. Theoretically, the study extends prior literature on leadership and employee attitudes [4, 11, 13, 34, 93] and validates the mediating influence of perceived organizational politics. Hence, this work contributes new understanding to leadership theory in developing-country institutions.

Managerial implications

From a practical perspective, since the research was conducted within Pakistan's public sector, specifically in the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA)—a key national energy and income-generating organization—the findings offer valuable managerial insight. To enhance performance and efficiency, leaders and supervisors could adopt characteristics typical of paternalistic and servant leadership, such as benevolence, moral conduct, humility, and stewardship. These traits promote higher employee trust, satisfaction, commitment, and loyalty, ultimately benefiting overall organizational performance.

The study does not prescribe the exclusive adoption of these styles but suggests fostering a work culture rooted in paternalism and service-oriented leadership. Such an environment may reduce perceptions of organizational politics, improve employee morale, and strengthen institutional effectiveness.

Limitations and future directions

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. The foremost issue concerns generalizability. Although data were collected from multiple public sector offices, only six districts were included. Future research should therefore encompass a broader provincial or national sample for greater representativeness. Similarly, the investigation could be extended to other public service bodies or private organizations to test the robustness of the results. Another limitation lies in the focus on only two dimensions of employee attitudes—job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Subsequent research could incorporate other outcomes such as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) or turnover intentions to expand understanding. Moreover, as this work employed a cross-sectional research design, it captures relationships at a single point in time. Future scholars are encouraged to adopt longitudinal methods to better explore causal relationships among variables and observe how leadership effects evolve over time.

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