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The Influence of Conventional Leadership Approaches on Employee Work Behavior in Islamic Banks of Sindh, Pakistan

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Abstract

Effective leadership plays a vital role in guiding the behavior of organizational members toward achieving organizational goals. Behavioral leadership theories suggest that organizations can develop effective leaders by adopting specific leadership behaviors. To identify which leadership style is more effective, a study on leadership styles was conducted in the state of Iowa. A closed-ended questionnaire was administered to collect data from 160 employees working in Islamic banks located in three major cities of Sindh. SPSS software was used to analyze the data, employing methods such as Pearson correlation, descriptive statistics, and chi-square tests. The findings showed that democratic leadership and laissez-faire leadership styles were associated with higher employee commitment. Job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior were more prominent in the democratic leadership style, while deviant workplace behaviors were associated with autocratic leadership. The study showed that leadership styles did not have a significant impact on productivity. Autocratic leadership was associated with regularity, and laissez-faire leadership was associated with commitment, but neither style positively influenced other work behaviors. Based on these results, the study suggests that democratic leadership is the most preferred style that has a positive impact on employees' work behaviors in Islamic banks.

Keywords: Employees' work Behavior, Leadership, Autocratic, Democratic, Laissez-faire.

Introduction

Leadership plays a critical role in shaping the trajectory of an organization, much like how a navigator can either guide a ship to safety or let it sink. The leadership style within an organization significantly influences the behavior of employees, either fostering positive outcomes or leading to dysfunction [1-3]. Leadership involves the ability to shape and direct the thoughts and actions of individuals. Effective leadership is essential for an organization's growth and stability, as it drives motivation and unlocks the team's potential for progress and success.

Trait theories, which suggest that leaders are born with certain characteristics, have been widely criticized. These theories were later challenged by behavioral theories, which argued that leadership can be learned and developed. According to these theories, effective leaders can be created through proper training and by studying the behaviors of successful leaders.

This research seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of three traditional leadership styles that are commonly seen in conventional organizations. While various leadership styles and behavioral theories have been proposed by theorists, the Iowa State leadership theories have had a significant impact and are often studied for their practical applications. The Iowa leadership studies, conducted in 1938 by Lewin, Lippitt, and White, focused on three leadership styles—democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire—and explored how these styles impacted employees' satisfaction, frustration, and emotional responses. These three leadership styles, as defined by their research, form the basis of this study.

Autocratic Leadership

This leadership style is characterized by a high level of authority where the leader makes all key decisions independently, with minimal input from the team. The choices made are based entirely on the leader's judgment and perspective.

Democratic Leadership

This leadership approach is participatory, where the leader provides guidance and support while encouraging followers to play an active role in decision-making and implementation processes.

Laissez-Faire Leadership

In this style, leaders take a hands-off approach, allowing employees to make decisions and take actions independently, with minimal interference from the leader.

In 1948, Muhammad Ali Jinnah highlighted the benefits of Islamic principles and expressed his enthusiasm for integrating Islamic ideas into banking practices during the inauguration of the State Bank of Pakistan [4]. Zubair and Chaudhry [5] explored the similarities between conventional and Islamic banking systems and concluded that Islamic banking institutions are essential for Islamic societies, operating on principles aligned with Shariah.

Over the past three decades, the Islamic banking system has emerged as a significant alternative to conventional banking [6]. Effective leadership is crucial for sustaining organizational behavior and ensuring the success of the Islamic banking sector. This research aims to explore how three traditional leadership styles—Democratic, Autocratic, and Laissez-Faire—affect employee behavior in Islamic banks.

The study uses six key work behaviors identified by Robbins and Judge [7] in their widely cited book Organizational Behavior, which serves as a primary reference for business schools. These behaviors are:

Productivity

The ability to produce valuable outputs effectively and efficiently from available inputs.

Commitment

An employee's alignment with the organization's goals and a desire to remain part of the organization.

Regularity

The tendency of employees to show up for work and maintain a consistent attendance record.

Job Satisfaction

An employee's positive feelings towards their job are based on an assessment of their attributes.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

Voluntary actions that go beyond an employee's formal duties contribute to the organization's overall success. OCBs are key to improving organizational performance [8].

Deviant Workplace Behavior

Deliberate actions disrupt organizational norms and harm the organization's interests, creating a negative work environment [9]. While OCB and deviant behavior are opposites, individuals may exhibit both under various influences [10].

This study aims to determine the leadership styles perceived to be employed in Islamic banks and to examine their impact on employees' work behaviors. Additionally, the research seeks to identify which leadership style is preferred by employees working in Islamic banks across Sindh.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Lewin *et al.* [11] experimented with schoolchildren where three leadership styles were applied. Their findings showed that a democratic leadership style was preferred by 19 out of 20 participants, highlighting its positive impact. In contrast, the laissez-

faire style was favored by 7 out of 10 boys over the autocratic style, as they preferred the ambiguity and flexibility it offered over the rigid and harsh nature of autocracy. In terms of behavior, the autocratic style resulted in more aggression, hostility, and indifference. However, laissez-faire leadership also led to higher levels of hostility compared to the democratic approach. Kundu *et al.* [12] emphasized the importance of empowering leaders in banking settings to improve employee performance. Similarly, Ha [13] found that empowering leadership contributes to enhanced team performance. Idiegbeyan [14] observed that leadership style plays a significant role in job satisfaction, with democratic leadership being associated with higher levels of satisfaction. Elbaz and Haddoud [15] concluded that not all leadership styles have a positive impact on employee satisfaction.

Churchill [16] argued that a deeper understanding of leadership styles is necessary to prepare for future challenges. Kakhki *et al.* [17] suggested that leadership plays a key role in fostering motivation in public libraries. Nawaz *et al.* [18] noted that the abuse of authority in autocratic environments leads to deviant workplace behavior. Autocratic organizations tend to exhibit frustration and anger, whereas democratic organizations tend to have more submissive employees. Smith and Peterson [19] found that autocratic leadership may be the most efficient for productivity, but the democratic style fosters better self-esteem and smoother organizational operations. Laissez-faire leadership, with its minimal guidance, leads to lower self-esteem and a lack of focus among employees.

Mgbodile [20] highlighted that the democratic style is people-oriented and encourages the active participation of employees in decision-making, unlike the autocratic style, which is more self-centered and limits follower involvement. Omolayo [21] concluded that employees under democratic leadership experience less job-related stress and a greater sense of community compared to those under autocratic leadership, based on a study of 200 workers in Nigeria. Fiaz *et al*. [22] recommended that institutions adopt democratic leadership and development programs to strengthen the organization.

Kwanya and Stilwell [23] found that effective leadership styles are crucial for an organization to progress and adapt to modern challenges. Identifying the right leadership style is, therefore, critical. Shamaki [24] found that employees under democratic leadership exhibited higher productivity than those under autocratic leadership in a study of 165 Nigerian public school teachers. Democratic principals were found to have a more significant impact on teachers' productivity by improving discipline, interpersonal relationships, problem-solving, and job satisfaction. Nasrah [25] stated that participative leaders motivate and empower employees by involving them in decision-making, making them feel valued, and increasing their sense of belonging.

Hinkin and Schriesheim [26] criticized the laissez-faire leadership style for its lack of essential leadership qualities. Shafie *et al.* [27] argued that organizations need strong and influential leaders, as laissez-faire leadership, where every employee assumes a leadership role, can impede progress and negatively affect employee behavior. On the other hand, Wong and Giessner [28] pointed out that followers often perceive laissez-faire leadership and empowerment as similar rather than opposing concepts.

Mohammed *et al.* [29] stressed the importance of maintaining positive relationships between employees and leaders, which can improve employee behavior and, in turn, contribute to organizational growth. Leaders who present a clear vision for employee progress are more likely to succeed in guiding their teams effectively.

Wu and Parker [30] posited that leader indulgence can foster proactive behaviors at work. Supporting this idea, studies by Basuil *et al.* [31], Jang and Kandampully [32], and Kim and Beehr [33] affirmed that a leader's support is crucial in shaping employee outcomes, particularly their commitment to the organization. Frear *et al.* [34] further argued that leaders can increase employees' commitment by enhancing their sense of duty towards the organization. Similarly, Sylvia and Cam [35] and Wu [36] emphasized that leaders help employees achieve their work targets. Lythreatis *et al.* [37] and Tahir *et al*. [38] contended that leaders play an essential role in guiding employees to meet organizational goals and strategies. Additionally, Choudary *et al*. [39] and Priyankara *et al.* [40] maintained that leaders can improve organizational citizenship behaviors.

Palupi *et al.* [41] suggested that leadership affects both job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In their findings, Javaid and Mirza [42] showed that transformational leadership positively influences employee commitment, while transactional leadership has a less significant impact. In line with this, Kawiana *et al.* [43] also confirmed that leadership positively affects organizational commitment. However, Makhdoom [44, 45] found no significant relationship between leadership and employee commitment. Meanwhile, Parker [46] argued that leaders' decisions and actions have a strong impact on workforce commitment.

Pradeep and Prabhu [47] recommended that leaders can improve productivity by adapting their behaviors to positively influence employees' actions within the organization. Moreover, the role of leadership is crucial for organizations to stay competitive and navigate modern challenges, making it essential to identify the most effective leadership styles.

Conceptual Model
Figure 1 illustrates a conceptual model showing the traditional leadership styles from the Iowa Studies—autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles—as independent variables. Employee work behaviors, as described by Robbins

and Judge [7] and examined by several researchers to assess the impact of leadership and other factors, are presented as dependent variables in this model.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for traditional leadership styles and employee behavioral outcomes

Hypotheses

H1: The autocratic leadership style significantly influences employees' productivity, commitment, regularity, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship, and deviant workplace behavior.

H2: The democratic leadership style is significantly correlated with employees' productivity, commitment, regularity, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship, and deviant workplace behavior.

H3: The laissez-faire leadership style does not show a significant correlation with employees' productivity, commitment, regularity, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship, or deviant workplace behavior.

H4: The democratic leadership style is the most preferred style among employees.

Materials and Methods

Sample

The current research adopts a quantitative approach, with a sample of one hundred sixty employees from Islamic banks across three major cities in Sindh: Karachi (58 respondents), Hyderabad (55 respondents), and Sukker (47 respondents). The survey was conducted across 16 branches, specifically eight from Meezan Bank Limited and 8 from The Bank Islami.

Instrument

Data collection was facilitated through a structured, closed-ended questionnaire consisting of 12 items. Respondents rated their views on a four-point Likert scale, with ratings ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The survey focused on assessing six variables: productivity, regularity, commitment, deviant workplace behavior, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior. Participants were also asked to evaluate the type of leadership they encountered and their perception of the autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles.

Results and Discussion

The study explored the prevalent leadership style in the Islamic banking sector. As indicated in **Table 1**, the autocratic leadership style was identified most frequently, with a mean of 3.1000 (SD = 0.89864). Nearly 44% of respondents strongly agreed that the autocratic leadership style was dominant in their workplace, 33% favored a democratic leadership approach, and 16% identified with a laissez-faire style. The remaining 7% did not strongly align with any particular style.

Table 1. The most common style of leadership

		Autocratic	Democratic	Laissez-faire
N	Valid	160	160	160
	Missing	0	0	0
	Mean	3.10	2.98	2.58
	Std. deviation	0.89	0.85	0.85

H1: There is a notable connection between the autocratic leadership style and employees' productivity, regularity, commitment, organizational citizenship, satisfaction, and deviant workplace behavior.

The null hypothesis was dismissed since all variables had P < .05, indicating a significant correlation between the autocratic leadership style and the employees' behavior in Islamic Banks across Sindh (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Autocratic style: chi-square tests and Pearson correlation

	Productivity	Commitment	Regularity	JS	OCB	DWB
Pearson chi-square	58.75	51.73	37.91	21.07	42.66	75.26
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.012	0.000	0.000
Pearson correlation	0.069	-0.533	0.407	-0.261	-0.414	0.576
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.383	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000
N	160	160	160	160	160	160

Note. JS = job satisfaction, OCB = organizational citizenship behavior, DWB = deviant workplace behavior

The Pearson correlation coefficient for Productivity is .069 with a p-value above .05, suggesting an extremely weak and insignificant link between Productivity and Autocratic Leadership Style. A notable moderate negative correlation is seen with Commitment (r = -0.533), whereas Regularity exhibits a moderate positive correlation (r = 0.407). Satisfaction shows a weak negative correlation (r = -0.261), and Organizational Citizenship Behavior displays a moderate negative correlation (r = -0.414). Additionally, Deviant Workplace Behavior shows a significant moderate positive correlation (r = 0.576) (**Table 2**).

H2: There is a significant relationship between democratic leadership style and employees' productivity, regularity, satisfaction, commitment, deviant workplace behavior, and organizational citizenship.

The null hypothesis is rejected for all variables except for regularity, which has a p-value exceeding .05. This suggests a significant connection between democratic leadership style and employees' productivity, satisfaction, commitment, deviant workplace behavior, and organizational citizenship, with no significant relationship observed for Regularity (**Table 3**).

Table 3. Democratic style: chi-square tests and Pearson correlation

	Productivity	Commitment	Regularity	JS	OCB	DWB
Pearson chi-square	16.88	76.96	6.02	78.37	97.85	30.88
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	0.050	0.000	0.737	0.000	0.000	0.000
Pearson correlation	0.257	0.519	-0.094	0.464	0.641	-0.415
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.000	0.236	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	160	160	160	160	160	160

Note. JS = job satisfaction, OCB = organizational citizenship behavior, DWB = deviant workplace behavior

The democratic leadership style demonstrates a weak positive correlation with productivity (r = 0.257) and a moderate positive relationship with commitment (r = 0.519). It also shows a very weak negative correlation with regularity (r = -0.094, P = 0.236), and a notable positive correlation with satisfaction (r = 0.464). A strong positive link with organizational citizenship behavior (r = 0.641) is found, while a moderate negative correlation with deviant workplace behavior is observed (r = -0.415) (**Table 3**).

H3: There is no significant relationship between Laissez-faire leadership style and employees' productivity, regularity, commitment, satisfaction, organizational citizenship, or deviant workplace behavior.

The null hypothesis is rejected for five of the variables with P < .05, though one variable showed a P > .05, suggesting a significant connection between Laissez-faire leadership and employee behavior in Islamic Banks of Sindh (**Table 4**).

Table 4. Laissez-faire style: pearson correlation

	Productivity	Commitment	Regularity	JS	OCB	DWB
Pearson chi-square	19.50	50.72	17.38	30.13	16.58	30.11
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	0.021	0.000	0.043	0.000	0.056	0.000
Pearson correlation	-0.017	0.329	-0.101	0.124	0.061	-0.173
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.827	0.000	0.205	0.118	0.445	0.028
N	160	160	160	160	160	160

Note. JS = job satisfaction, OCB = organizational citizenship behavior, DWB = deviant workplace behavior

A minimal negative correlation was observed with productivity (r = -0.017), regularity (r = -0.101), and deviant workplace behavior (r = -0.173). There was also a slight positive correlation between satisfaction (r = 0.124) and organizational

citizenship behavior (r = 0.061). However, a notable moderate positive correlation was found with commitment (r = 0.329), as detailed in **Table 4**.

H4: Employees prefer the democratic leadership style the most.

Table 5. Favorite style of leadership

		Liked autocratic leader	Liked democratic leader	Liked laissez-faire leader
N	Valid	160	160	160
	Missing	0	0	0
	Mean	2.76	3.33	2.51
	Std. deviation	.90	.63	.83

Democratic leadership style was found to be the most preferred by employees in Islamic Banks in Sindh, with a mean score of 3.3375 (SD = 0.63333), supporting the fourth hypothesis of the research. In comparison, the Laissez-faire style emerged as the least favored, with a mean score of 2.5188 (SD = 0.83155), and the autocratic style had a mean of 2.7688 (SD = 0.90576) (**Table 5**).

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the impact of three traditional leadership styles, as outlined by Iowa studies, on employee behavior in Islamic Banks in Sindh. The results revealed that although the autocratic style is widely practiced, the democratic style is the preferred leadership approach among employees.

The Laissez-faire style, which received the least support, was found to have minimal significant impact on most of the studied variables, except for commitment. This suggests that employees might stay with passive leaders, but other dimensions of leadership require more active engagement.

The autocratic style was significantly associated with regularity, indicating that employees under authoritative leaders are more likely to remain in the organization. However, the negative correlation with commitment suggests that employees become disengaged when faced with authoritarian leaders, performing only the minimum required duties. Additionally, the autocratic style exhibited negative correlations with organizational citizenship behavior and positive correlations with deviant workplace behavior, highlighting its potential to foster destructive outcomes.

In contrast, the democratic style displayed positive associations with behaviors beneficial to the organization, such as commitment, satisfaction, and organizational citizenship, suggesting that employees under democratic leadership are more satisfied, committed, and willing to exceed expectations. It also showed a negative correlation with deviant workplace behavior, implying that democratic leadership can reduce rule-breaking behaviors. However, productivity did not exhibit significant relationships with any leadership style, possibly due to other underlying factors or difficulties in interpretation.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that democratic leadership be embraced in Islamic Banks to support organizational growth. Future studies could expand on this research by examining larger, more diverse samples, exploring other industries, and evaluating additional leadership styles in Islamic Banks.

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