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### IMPACT OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND ABUSIVE SUPERVISION ON ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR: MEDIATING ROLE OF LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE

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### ABSTRACT

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Abusive Supervision, Leader-Member Exchange, Organizational Citizenship Behavior Based on the social exchange theory, a leader-member exchange is an essential mediator for different leadership behavior and work outcomes. The current study aims to determine the impact of ethical leadership and abusive supervision on organizational citizenship behavior in the presence of leader-member exchange as a mediator. It is studied in the context of public sector universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to recognize the behavior of chairpersons toward faculty members. Data is collected from teaching faculty through a questionnaire using multi-stage cluster sampling. Regression analysis assumptions were tested before hypotheses testing. All the hypotheses were supported. This study also suggests some practical implications as well. Ethical leadership is an independent variable that positively impacts job outcomes. Secondly, abusive behavior has a negative effect on positive outcomes, reducing overall university performance. These behaviors compel teaching faculties to quit their job. Thirdly, LMX plays a pivotal role in ethical leadership and abusive supervision. Thus, universities arranging various programs are required to realize the importance of in-groups and how to avoid out-groups to improve their skills and make the environment professional and friendly.

# **INTRODUCTION**

Leadership acts as an immunization system in developing countries to determine academic standards and success. It is a binding force that motivates employees to work together (Siddique, Aslam, Khan, & Fatima, 2011). Leadership must adopt suitable leadership styles for effective and inspirational effects on institutions, individuals, and groups. The existing styles are the combination of different traits important for effective leadership. In literature, different leadership styles are discussed and a leader adopts a particular style depending on the situation. Different leadership styles are transformational leadership, ethical leadership,

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empowering leadership, servant leadership, etc. Leadership behaviors may change from one department to another and within a department, depending on the situation (Atkinson, 1999). The top leadership faces different stakeholders, i.e., faculty members and students who are upcoming leaders.

Universities find ways to retain and develop their staff to achieve institutional objectives. Ethical leadership (EL) is a behavior used to improve organizational effectiveness. It has several positive outcomes for organizations, leaders, and followers (Trevino, Brown, & Hartman, 2003). These outcomes are job satisfaction with the leader, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and job satisfaction (JS) (Dehoogh & Denhartog, 2009; Trevino, Hartman, & Brown, 2000). Moreover, previous studies of employees' perception of ethical leaders yield behavioral outcomes and show a significant correlation with OCB and in-role performance, while a negative correlation with counter-work behavior (Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009; Trevino et al., 2003).

Different leadership behaviors focus on the positive aspect of leadership. However, the negative or dark side of leadership is still in its infancy (Tepper, 2007). In the workplace, many mistreatment behaviors create severe problems for organizations, such as bullying, violence, incivility, aggression, and abusive supervision (AS). According to Romano (1994), approximately 21% is physical violence in organizations, and 41% of employees in the U.S. experience nonphysical aggression annually (Schat, Frone, & Kelloway, 2006). Mistreatment occurs in an organization by different sources, and the latest research reveals that the effect of it is more significant when committed by a superior as opposed to colleagues or outside of the organization (e.g., customer, client, patient) (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010). Mistreatment by supervisors results in job dissatisfaction, turnover intention, job performance, and psychological distress. The turnover cost has been estimated at 5% of the company's operating budget (Hinkin & Tracey, 2000). AS is one of the specific forms of workplace mistreatment, which is having continuous trouble and distress for organizations due to its adverse results for supervisors, followers, and the working environment. In the U.S, 10-16% of the workers are regularly experiencing abusive supervision (Tepper., Duffy, Hoobler, & Ensley, 2004), and approximately \$23.8 billion annual cost for organizations (Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert, 2006). Due to these issues, additional research is required to understand abusive supervision to minimize and prevent its occurrence.

The relationship between leadership style and OCB is explained through leader-member exchange (LMX), which is the quality of the relationship between leader and subordinates.

High-quality LMX establishes an in-group and even reduces the abusive behavior of the supervisor. The concept of EL, AS, LMX, and OCB is discussed in detail in the next section.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

# Ethical Leadership (EL), Abusive supervision (AS), and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

According to Brown, Trevino, and Harrison (2005), EL is the display of normatively appropriate conduct using interpersonal relationships and actions and transforming such behavior to subordinates through reinforcement, two-way communication, and decision-making. This definition focuses on the perceived behavior of leaders towards subordinates. Ethical leaders are role models and treat their subordinates with care. It is based on Bandura's social learning theory (SLT) and considers a leader a moral person and manager (Brown et al., 2005; Trevino et al., 2000). The first portion is that a moral person is a person who engages in suitable activities, helps others, and makes good decisions for individuals and organizations (Trevino et al., 2000). It provides a base for EL and a positive reputation for its development. EL emphasizes the importance of moral leaders who are honest, self-disciplined, and care about the future (Riggio, Zhu, Reina, & Maroosis, 2010).

Moreover, ethical leaders should act like moral managers. They help communicate ethical values to their subordinates, promote high ethical standards, treat their employees with care, and reshape the importance of their followers by acting as a role model and taking care of society (Brown & Trevino, 2006). These leaders are famous in both their personal and professional lives. All the stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, employers, and employees react positively to EL (Ng & Feldman, 2015). A moral person has good, altruistic behavior, personal ethics, personality trait, interpersonal conduct, and attractive moral character (Brown et al., 2005). They suggested that the qualities of ethical leaders are personal rather than professional, and it helps transfer ethical knowledge in the public sector. But ethical expertise is unique and individual, difficult to encode, implicit, intangible, and structure methods are challenging to impart (Lee & Cheng, 2010).

Furthermore, it is stated that ethical codes are the leader's character (Jones, 1995). So, leadership must recognize the already defined codes and act accordingly. The study of Walumbwa and Schaubroeck (2009) uses two personality attributes essential for a supervisory ethical leader, i.e., agreeableness and conscientiousness. So, they suggest that leadership's responsibility is to train individuals in these two traits to be prosperous. But only traits are not ethical leadership, it goes beyond value based inspirational leadership and



integrity (Trevino et al., 2003). In a moral manager, the leader uses role modeling to share ethics and values with followers. They practice already formulated ethical standards, and subordinates are accountable through a reward and punishment system (Brown & Trevino, 2006). Similarly, Espartinez (2014) states that a leader's knowledge has little worth to followers, and their role has the highest value in the people's lives. It is also considered in social exchange terms, which means that the subordinates will reciprocate like the leader (Hassan, Mahsud, Yukl, & Prussia, 2013). A social exchange relationship is built on a chain of reciprocal exchange (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000). Over time, this mutual exchange relationship makes subordinates caring and fair, and this desirable behavior is visible to the leader (Walumbwa et al., 2011). A mutual exchange relationship does not mean following the leader personally; e.g., the leader focuses on OCB but at the same time gets involved in constructive behavior whose purpose is to encourage teamwork or organization as a whole (Kalshoven & Den Hartog, 2013).

According to Tepper (2000), AS is the demonstration of the supervisor's hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviors. Literature on AS shows that it negatively affects employees and affects an organization's overall performance (Tepper, 2007). It is based on the theory of negative reciprocity (Blau, 1964). According to social exchange theory (SET), employees' behavior varies and depends upon how they are treated by their supervisors (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). These supervisors criticize their faculty, show aggressive eye contact, give them silent treatment, and ridicule them, which results in a feeling of victimization and a barrier to expressing extra-role behavior (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Thus, according to social exchange theory, employees who suffer from abusive behavior react negatively toward their leader and reduce their OCB (Gregory, Osmonbekov, Gregory, Albritton, & Carr, 2013).

OCB is the outcomes variable, an extra role behavior of subordinates not mentioned in the job description (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Extra-role behavior is helping employees have a heavy workload, participating in meetings voluntarily, etc. (Organ, 1988). OCB has been studied for the last thirty years and different researchers have identified various dimensions (Hoffman, Blair, Meriac, & Woehr, 2007). The most common definition studied is defined by Organ (1988), which identified five dimensions of OCB. These dimensions were conscientiousness, sportsmanship, altruism, courtesy, and civic virtue.

H1: Ethical leadership positively impact OCB.

H2: Abusive supervision negatively impacts OCB.

### The Mediating Role of LMX

According to Amaliyah and Kuntoro (2015), LMX combines three domains: leader, member, and exchange or relationship, which focuses on maintaining a quality relationship between an organization's leader/manager and follower. The quality of the relationship between leader and follower is of different intensity (Lee & Stacy, 2020). High-quality LMX is characterized by trust, affection, and obligation, known as an in-group. In contrast, low-quality LMX doesn't have these characteristics, known as an out-group. Responsibility, access to secrets, and high decision influence are the characteristics of high-quality LMX, and employees having high-quality LMX will devote more time and energy than their colleagues (Wong & Berntzen, 2019).

H3: Ethical leadership has a positive impact on LMX.H4: Abusive supervision has a negative impact on LMX.

H5: LMX has a positive impact on OCB.

Different studies use LMX as a mediator (Qian, Wang, Han, & Song, 2017; Yuan, Vu, & Nguyen, 2018). It is used in public sector universities, which shows this study's novelty. The in-group and out-group of quality relationship is better determined through LMX between a leader and subordinate. In previous studies, LMX is used as a mediator in the relationship of ethical leadership, abusive supervision on OCB (Xu, Huang, Lam, & Miao, 2012; Yang, Ding, & Lo, 2016). The following two hypotheses are developed based on the literature review.

*H6: LMX* has a mediating impact on *EL* and *OCB*. *H7: LMX* has a mediating impact on *AS* and *OCB*.

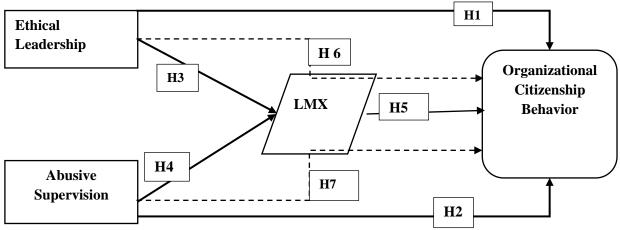


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework



### METHODOLOGY

#### Sample and Data Collection Procedure

The data was collected from the teachers of public sector universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Employees in universities are the teaching staff who serve students directly and administrative staff who indirectly support the system. Data was collected from the teaching faculty to obtain information about their chairpersons' behavior. It was collected by dividing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa into seven clusters (Based on division) and randomly choosing a cluster (Malakand division). After selecting the Malakand division, data was collected through simple random sampling from teaching staff working in different departments through a questionnaire. The total number of questionnaires floated were about 430, out of which 370 were received. These questionnaires had multiple issues, and 20 responses were deleted. The respondents' demographic information shows that 83% were male, 93% were married, 56% had a permanent job, 71% had above 35 years, and only 57% of teaching faculty had ten years of experience.

#### **Measurement Instruments**

The research instrument is adopted from previous studies. The five-point Likert scale is used to measure all variables. EL is measured from study of Brown et al. (2005), who used 10 items scale. AS is measured from the study of Tepper (2000), who used 15 items scale. OCB is measured from the study of Argentero, Cortese, and Ferretti (2008), who used 15 items scale. it is modified from the study of Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990). Finally, LMX is measured from the study of Liden and Maslyn (1998), who measured 12 items scale.

#### RESULTS

In social sciences, different methods are used for analyzing the data. The most commonly used are CB-SEM (Covariance Based- Structural Equation Modeling) and PLS-SEM (Partial Least Square- Structural Equation Modeling), which have varying significance. This study used PLS-SEM through Smart PLS 4 because it is the most frequently used and has certain advantages over other methods (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019). Firstly, the test for normality is a prerequisite requirement in CB-SEM, whereas PLS-SEM does not have any prerequisite of normality (Monecke & Leisch, 2012). Secondly, CB-SEM requires an appropriate sample size, whereas PLS-SEM can operate with a small sample size (Rigdon, 2016). Thirdly, CB-SEM requires at least three items per variable, whereas PLS-SEM can be used with a single item per variable. Besides these, PLS-SEM is effective even if there is

little understanding of theory, missing values in the data, and influential for both formative and reflective models (Sarstedt, Hair, Ringle, Thiele, & Gudergan, 2016). A single issue in Smart PLS 4 is fit indices which are more advanced in CB-SEM.

### Measurement Model

The results were obtained through Smart PLS 4 and figure 2 shows that AVE greater than 0.5, which is a threshold value (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2021; Sarstedt, Ringle, Smith, Reams, & Hair, 2014). It shows that the data is capable of further analysis. Table 1 shows Fornell Larcker Criterion, which is also acceptable because the bold values are greater in each column. It is used for the discriminant validity of the data.

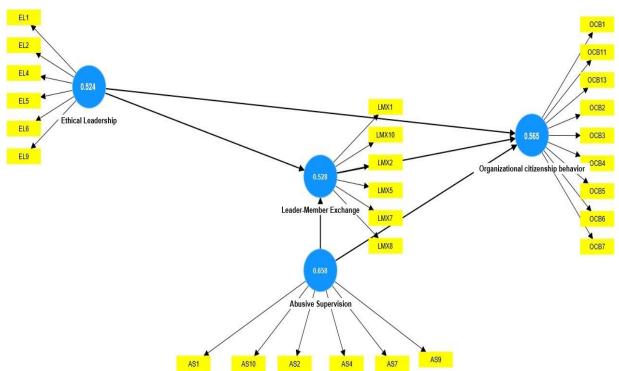


Figure 2. Average Variance Extracted

	AS	EL	LMX	OCB
AS	.81			
AS EL	25	.72		
LMX	28	.68	.73	
OCB	45	.65	0.69	0.75
ä				

### Structural Model

The structural model is a part of path model used to show the relationship between various constructs. This model diagnoses the collinearity issues among all independent constructs. The data cannot be used for further analysis if there is a multicollinearity issue. In this study, VIF values are used to diagnose multicollinearity issues; if it is > 5 then there is an issue of multicollinearity (Becker, Ringle, Sarstedt, & Völckner, 2015). Table 2 shows VIF values for *www.ijbms.org* 7



all independent constructs, which shows that non of the value is greater than 5. The data can be used for further analysis because it has no issue of multicollinearity.

	VIF		VIF
AS1	2.89	EL5	3.62
AS10	2.51	EL6	1.68
AS2	2.10	EL9	1.35
AS4	3.10	LMX1	1.24
AS7	2.46	LMX10	1.36
AS9	2.66	LMX2	2.47
EL1	1.65	LMX5	2.16
EL2	1.65	LMX7	1.67
EL4	3.76	LMX8	1.92

 Table 2. Collinearity Statistics

Table 3 of the study shows the path coefficients of different relationships, with values between -1 and +1. T-values indicate whether the hypothesis has a significant or nonsignificant relationship, and its results are given in either supported or not in the decision column. The results show that the direct impact of independent variables on dependent variables is significant, and the current study supports it. The indirect impact is measured through LMX and has also supported the current study. Hence, it is concluded that all hypotheses for the current study are supported. It has also accepted values of standardized root mean square 0.07 and normal fit index 0.90. The  $R^2$  value is approximately 68% and  $Q^2$  (0.64) is also in the accepatable range (Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009).

	β	<b>T-statistics</b>	P-Values	Decision
AS->LMX	-0.110	2.521	0.012	Supported
AS -> OCB	-0.235	6.791	0.000	Supported
EL -> LMX	0.688	20.181	0.000	Supported
EL -> OCB	0.347	6.007	0.000	Supported
LMX -> OCB	0.436	7.205	0.000	Supported
AS -> LMX -> OCB	-0.048	2.651	0.008	Supported
EL-> LMX -> OCB	0.300	6.705	0.000	Supported
		DISCUSSION		

#### DISCUSSION

This research focuses on the impact of ethical leadership and abusive supervision on OCB in an academic context. It also considered the mediating impact of LMX in an academic setting and how it impacts subordinates (i.e., university teachers) OCB. This study shows a positive impact of EL on OCB (H1), which is also supported in previous studies (Huang, Qiu, Yang, & Deng, 2021). It is based on social learning theory and reveals that the ethical behavior of the chairperson improved teachers' extra-role behaviors and encouraged a friendly working environment in universities. This study also provides support for hypothesis 2, which states that abusive supervision has a negative impact on OCB. Abusive supervision is based on social learning theory but with negative reciprocity (Gallegos, Guardia, & Berger, 2022). If the behavior of the chairperson is abused with the teaching faculty, in response, they will also behave negatively and be demotivated from showing extra-role behavior.

Similarly, Hypothesis 3 is supported in the current study, which shows that EL positively impacts LMX and is supported by a previous study (Yuan et al., 2018). It is accepted that the ethical behavior of the chairperson improves the relationship with faculty members and is based on the theory of social exchange relationships. Next, hypothesis 4 is also supported by the current study, which states that abusive supervision negatively impacts LMX and is supported by a previous study (Xu, Loi, & Lam, 2015). It is based on social exchange theory and reveals that abusive behavior harms the relationship between the chairperson and the teaching faculty. Next, hypothesis 5 is supported by the current study, which states that LMX positively impacts OCB, and supported by a previous study (Senen, Masharyono, & Khotijah, 2021). It is based on social exchange theory and reveals that high-quality relationships between the chairperson and teaching faculty encourage to show more citizenship behavior. The relationship is based on trust, support, informal influence, etc.

After testing the direct relationship, the mediating variable is used between independent and dependent variables. Hypothesis 6 is supported by the current study, which states that LMX mediates between EL and OCB, which is also supported by a previous study (Yang et al., 2016). LMX helps determine how the ethical leader and OCB relationship is enhanced, and it is based on social learning and social exchange theories. It revealed that the chairperson's ethical behavior builds strong relationships in the presence of LMX with teaching faculty and encourages more extra-role behavior. Similarly, Hypothesis 7 is also supported for the current study, which states that LMX mediates the relationship between abusive supervision and OCB, which is also supported by the previous study (Xu et al., 2012). The result of mediating impact shows that the relationship between abusive supervision and OCB is significant, which means that the quality of the working relationship does not change the negative behavior into positive behavior but only reduces the negative behavior.

#### CONCLUSION

This study's results and discussion suggest that the ethical leadership behavior of the chairperson plays a pivotal role in shaping the behavior of faculty members and encouraging



them to participate in extra-role behavior. Similarly, LMX enhances the relationship between EL and OCB by increasing the quality of relationship between chairperson and faculty members and establishing an environment where teaching faculty improve their professional skills, mutual trust, and maintain a high level of communication. Social learning theory plays its role in enhancing citizenship behavior, and LMX, due to social learning theory reshaped the relationship.

Furthermore, the result also revealed that the abusive behavior of the chairperson plays a negative role in teaching faculty citizenship behavior and discourages them from showing citizenship behavior. Universities, where teachers are abused by their chairpersons, result in low performance and increasing turnover rate, ultimately suffering students. LMX is also used as a mediator in the relationship between abusive supervision and OCB. It is revealed from the results that the mediating impact is reduced but remains, which shows that a high-quality relationship can only reduce abusive behavior. Thus, it is concluded that LMX plays its role in reducing the harmful impact of abusive supervisory behavior on the OCB of the teaching staff.

### Implications of the study

The current study test impact of abusive supervision and ethical leadership on organizational citizenship behavior in the presence of mediating variable LMX. It is conducted in public sector universities, whereas the previous studies were conducted in other sectors like an airline, IT, banking etc (Kashif, Khan, & Rafi, 2011). This research endeavor has contributed to study it in the context of universities. Secondly, OCB is studied as OCB-I and OCB-O (Yang et al., 2016), whereas this study combined OCB-I and OCB-O into a single OCB and revealed that both produce the same results. Finally, this study's most important noticeable contribution is using LMX as a mediator. It shows how ethical leadership and abusive supervision affect OCB and shows that LMX can improve positive behavior and is very helpful in reducing negative behavior.

This study also suggests some practical implications as well. Ethical leadership is an independent variable that positively impacts job outcomes. It is not an ideological construct but has the functional relevance of affecting teachers' work behavior. So, the Vice-chancellors, Deans, and other administrative heads must train the chairperson through role modeling techniques, supportive behaviors, etc. Secondly, abusive behavior has a negative effect for positive outcomes, reducing overall university performance. These behavior compel teaching faculties to quit their job. Besides arranging training on outcomes of ethical

leadership, it is also necessary to organize training programs for chairpersons to realize the consequences of abusive behaviors. The top management is responsible for arranging different sessions on anger management for the chairperson of different sections. Thirdly, LMX plays a pivotal role in ethical leadership and abusive supervision. Thus, universities arranging various programs are required to realize the importance of in-groups and how to avoid out-groups to improve their skills and make the environment professional and friendly.

# Limitations

This study has a few limitations; firstly, it is conducted in public sector universities, whereas the private sector is not considered. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, there are private-sector universities that are also contributing to society. Secondly, this study has assessed the public sector universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, whereas the other provinces have more universities with different cultures. Thirdly, this study has cross-sectional nature due to time constraints. It required a longitudinal study because LMX is a quality relationship that is improved over time. Fourthly, LMX is an important mediator, but other constructs can improve the behavior of chairpersons. Fifth, this study used a quantitative research method and the instrument is based on European context which required context-specific instrument.

### Directions for future research

Future research directions are suggested based on the discussion and limitations of this study. First, the quality of LMX is built over time and requires long-term orientation, so it requires longitudinal research design. Second, this study used the mono method and adopted instruments from the Europeon context, so future studies consider a mixed approach and develop an instrument for the Pakistani context. Thirdly, LMX is used as a mediator for the current study. Future studies consider other important mediators like psychological empowerment, job autonomy, trust in the leader, self-efficacy, etc. Moreover, different mediators can be simultaneously tested through software like Smart PLS, so it is suggested to consider more than a single mediating variable. Fourthly, the private sector is recommended for future studies, and a comparison is required between the public and private sectors. Lastly, the data for LMX should be collected from chairpersons and faculty members to understand the dyadic relationship.

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