



## Paternalistic Leadership and Employee Creativity: The Mediation Role of Perceived Organizational Support and Justice

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article History:</b>            Received: February 22, 2025            Revised: March 26, 2025            Accepted: April 04, 2025            Available Online: April 06, 2025</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b>            Paternalistic leadership, Employee Creativity, Perceived Organizational Support and Justice</p> <p><b>Corresponding Author:</b>            Muhammad Tayyab  <b>Email:</b>  <a href="mailto:70111617@student.uol.edu.pk">70111617@student.uol.edu.pk</a></p>	<p><i>This study aimed at investigating the influence of paternalistic leadership on employees' creativity in the mediation role of perceived organizational support and justice in the context of telecommunication sector of Pakistan. A structured questionnaire was employed to collect data from lower, middle and upper level employees from different organizations of telecommunication sector. The collected data was analyzed through regression analysis by employing four steps proposed by Baron and Kenny, (1986). The findings of this study revealed that paternalistic leadership has both direct as well as indirect effect on employees' creativity in the mediation role of perceived organizational support; however, the mediation effects of perceived organizational justice is not proved. Future researchers are recommended to evaluate the impact of three dimensions of paternalistic leadership on employees' creativity, instead of assessing combined effect.</i></p>



### Introduction

Recent researchers have extensively highlighted the paramount significance of employees' creativity (EC), especially in Pakistan (Anwar, 2013; Khan & Gul, 2020; Nazir, Shafi, Asadullah, Qun, & Khadim, 2020; Soomro, Memon, & Shah, 2020). With the passage of time, competition level among organizations have increased, which further increased the importance of creative behaviors in order to get competitive advantage – as consumers' preferences, needs and wants are changing day by day, which have made innovation and creativity, not a good quality but a must quality among employees, especially in telecommunication sector (Karim & Sarfraz, 2016). For this purpose, different researchers have noted that leadership plays a significant role to influence and motivate employees towards creative behaviors (Ma & Jiang, 2018). However, some leadership types like autocratic, laissez faire and transactional leadership proved to be inefficient

or even destructive for the creativity level of employees (Radwan, 2020; Tung, 2016). Therefore, amongst leadership styles with positive impacts, paternalistic leadership (PL) has significance to increase employees' engagement, commitment, organizational citizenship and innovative behavior (Anwar, 2013; Nazir et al., 2020; Wang, Tang, Naumann, & Wang, 2019).

Apart from this, employees put their best effort to attain organizational goals, especially the competitive advantage through their commitment and innovative ideas; however, these efforts are often pushed by the perception of organizational support as well as justice (Nazir, Shafi, Atif, Qun, & Abdullah, 2019). Employees, who perceive that their organization supports them through providing sufficient facilities, provides sources for their appreciation and behave impartially, are more enthusiastic and innovative to enhance overall performance of the organization (Hameed et al., 2019). Conversely, lack of these perceptions lead to absence of commitment & engagement (Soyalin & Battal, 2020), organizational citizenship behavior (Kittikunchotiwut, 2017; L. Zhang, Qiu, & Teng, 2017), creative behaviors (Nazir et al., 2019), motivation and productivity (Jones-Carmack, 2019; Tolga, 2020); while, more stress level and cynicism (Biswas & Kapil, 2017).

Although, many researchers evaluated the impact of paternalistic leadership on employees' creativity or innovative behaviors; however, there is little evidence regarding the employing perceived organizational support (POS) and perceived organizational justice (POJ) along with both PL and EC. In addition, there is no previous study to investigate the mediator effects of POS and POJ in the relationship between PL and EC in the context of telecommunication sector in Pakistan. Thus, this study aimed at evaluating the effects of PL on EC in the mediation role of POS and POJ in telecommunication sector of Pakistan.

## **Literature Review and Hypotheses**

### **Paternalistic Leadership and Employee Creativity**

PL is amongst the important leadership types which focuses on employing authoritarian leadership style along with fatherly benevolence in order to appreciate individuals, getting better performance and treating them well (Chen, Zhou, & Klyver, 2019). Primarily, PL is emerged as the famous theory in China; however, later on got popularity in other areas of the world. The prime theme behind PL approach is the belief that leader has higher authority and knowledge regarding the good performance of an organization – he knows how to perform it well to obtain good results as leader plays a father role similar to the role of a father at a home (Jackson, 2016; Mansur, Sobral, & Goldszmidt, 2017; Y. Zhang, Huai, & Xie, 2015).

There are three different dimensions of PL including authoritarian, benevolence and morality which are together form paternalistic leadership. The first one is regarded as the ultimate decision making power possessed by leader only; while, second dimension regarded as the concern of leader towards his/her employees' welfare (Chan, Huang, Snape, & Lam, 2013; Farh & Cheng, 2000). And third dimension leads to the approach of giving respect to every employee as their self-respect and value in organization is important. These all three characteristics together play significant role to influence the motivation, engagement, commitment, organizational citizenship behavior and innovative behavior (B. S. Cheng, Chou, Wu, Huang, & Farh, 2004).

Previous authors have proposed a significant and positive relationship among PL and EC. For instance, Nazir et al. (2020) has recently contributed towards finding a significant relationship between PL and innovative behaviors of individuals. They found that fatherly behavior of leader creates a sense of belongingness among employees, which motivates them to do more for their organization in every manner, especially employing innovative ideas to gain competitive edge and

improving organization's productivity level. Similarly, Wang et al. (2019) has found that PL has strong positive influence over employees' creativity level; while, this relationship is moderated by perceived job security. Thus, based on above, literature, following hypothesis is developed.

*H1: Paternalistic leadership is positively related to employee creativity.*

### **Mediation Effects of Perceived Organizational Support**

POS is regarded as the degree to which employees in an organization perceive that their organization appreciate their contributions and also available to support them (Kim, Eisenberger, & Baik, 2016; Kurtessis et al., 2017). The relationship of perceived organizational support along with leader can be described with the help of social exchange theory. This theory states that relationship is a two way process in which one party fulfills his duties in exchange and expectation of something else. For instance, employees fulfill their duties and pay their best effort to achieve organizational goals in order to get their benefits both monetary and non-monetary (Cook, Cheshire, Rice, & Nakagawa, 2013). Conversely, leader fulfill the needs and wants of employees, appreciate their efforts and give them respect in exchange of good productivity, engagement, commitment and innovative behavior to achieve organizational goals. In case of one party is unable to fulfill its duties, other party perceive it as breaking social agreement, and retaliate destructively, which also affects the other party (Emerson, 1976).

Previous studies have also evaluated the relationship between PL and POS. For instance, Chai, Jeong, and Joo (2020) noted that employees are strong reactors in exchange of good treatment and support. If they are treated well and appreciated for their efforts, they are quick to return it in good productivity and innovative behavior which improve the creativity level of overall organization. Similarly, Tang and Naumann (2015) proposed that benevolence leadership significantly changes the perception of individual and they perceive that their organization values their efforts, which in exchange increases their confidence level, their commitment and creativity level. As POS has relationship between both PL and EC; thus, based on above literature, following three hypotheses are developed.

*H2: Paternalistic leadership is positively related to perceived organizational support.*

*H3: Perceived organizational support is positively related to employee creativity.*

*H4: Perceived organizational support significantly mediates the relationship of paternalistic leadership and employee creativity.*

### **Mediation Effects of Perceived Organizational Justice**

POJ is the degree to which extent workers or employees in an organization consider that their organization treats them fairly without any bias or impartial treatment (Dai & Qin, 2016). It has three forms including distributive, interactional and procedural justice (DeConinck, 2010). The first form is regarded and connected with the perception of employees that resources, skills, benefits and facilities are distributed without any bias; however, second form is regarded as whether leader interact with all employees equally, without giving importance to certain individuals or making feel inferior to some others. And the third form is connected with all the processes which are adopted to treatment with employees – if regarded as equal, perception of employees is developed regarding justice; otherwise, it reduces the innovative behavior of those employees who do not perceive as equal treatment.

Zhou and Long (2007) has found that employees are perceive that their organization treats them with equality, are more likely to involve in creative behaviors. Apart from this, they found that

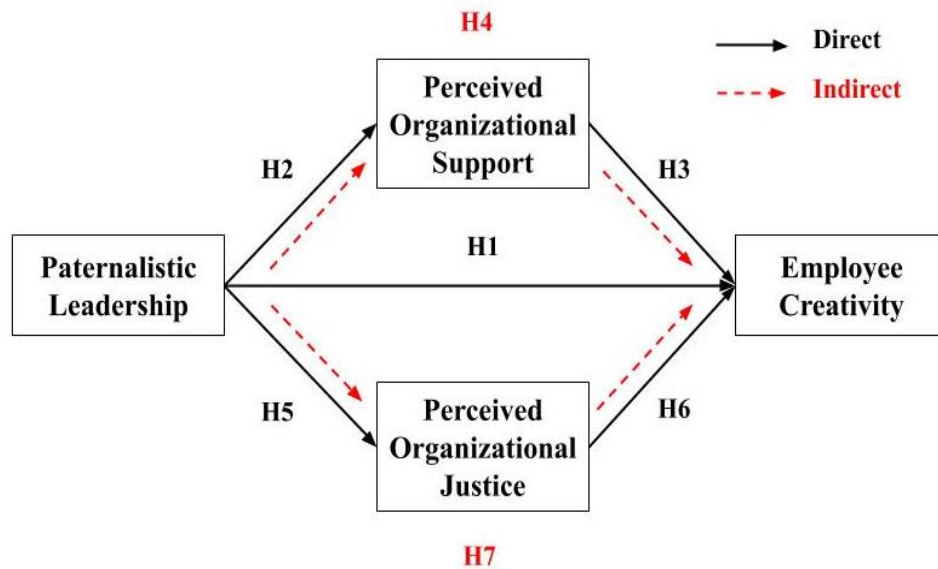
paternalistic leadership positively enhances the perception of individuals regarding equal treatment. It is also found that employees who do not receive equal treatment, they lose their engagement, commitment and creativity level. Apart from this, their stress level increased and sometimes lead to turnover intention. Similarly, Çaliskan (2010) found that fatherly treatment with employees enhances their positive perception regarding equal treatment, which increases their commitment level in addition to motivate them for adopting creative ways to deal with organizational goals. Thus, based on literature above, following hypotheses are developed.

*H5: Paternalistic leadership is positively related to perceived organizational justice.*

*H6: Perceived organizational justice is positively related to employee creativity.*

*H7: Perceived organizational justice significantly mediates the relationship of paternalistic leadership and employee creativity.*

Based on the developed hypotheses, following research framework is developed. In this framework, PL is independent variable; while, EC is dependent variable. POS and POJ are the mediators of this study. Both direct as well as indirect effects along with hypotheses are mentioned in figure 1 below.



**Figure 1: Research Framework**

### **Methodology**

This study is based on a targeted population of all telecommunication companies existed in Pakistan. Researcher adopted positivism philosophy to avoid any bias and also collected data through cross-sectional time horizon. Study adopted the deductive approach and used survey strategy to collect data. A structured questionnaire was employed to collect data. For this purpose, each scale was adopted from previous used instruments. For PL, a 3 item scale was adopted which was developed by B.-S. Cheng, Chou, and Farh (2000). In this scale, questions were asked about three dimensions of PL including authoritarian, benevolent and moral leadership. Similarly, for POS, a 3 items scale was adopted, which was developed by Eisenberger, Fasolo, and Davis-LaMastro (1990). While on the other hand, a 3 items scale, developed by Moorman (1991), was adopted from POJ. This scale was divided into two dimensions including distributive justice and procedural justice. Finally, a 3 items scale was adopted, out of which 2 items were developed by

Scott and Bruce (1994), while 1 item was developed by George and Zhou (2001). All of these variables were measured on a 5-points Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Researcher visited different telecommunication companies to collect data. The questionnaire was distributed among lower, middle and top level employees among these organizations. A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed; however, 8 questionnaires were found inappropriately filled like selected more than one options or left blank; therefore, these 8 questionnaires were dropped, counted to 442 final sample size. Collected data was analyzed through different statistical tools including descriptive statistics, reliability, correlation, collinearity test and regression analysis. Researcher followed all the research ethical principles, like respondents were promised to keep their personal information confidential. They were asked to participate willingly, without any monetary reward. Moreover, previous authors were acknowledge for their work and their references were placed.

## **Results and Findings**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

This study adopted different statistical tests to evaluate the collected data. Firstly, an overall assessment of the constructs was made through descriptive statistics, in which mean values and standard deviation are primary important. Tiku (1967) noted that mean values represent the average responses of the participants, which also represent their preferences and variables' inclination from either side of positive or negative responses. While, Wan, Wang, Liu, and Tong (2014) highlights that standard deviation shows the variance from average values. It also represent weather the data is normally distributed or not. From table 1 below, PL has lowest mean value 3.676 (SD=0.887); while employee creativity has highest mean value 4.177 (SD=0.797). Amongst predictors, perceived organizational support has highest mean value 4.167 with standard deviation 0.701.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability**

	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
Paternalistic Leadership	1.80	4.87	3.6760	.47110	.887
Perceived Organizational Support	2.20	5.00	4.1667	.36743	.701
Perceived Organizational Justice	3.21	4.44	3.8288	.21364	.759
Employee Creativity	2.07	5.00	4.1767	.41170	.797
Valid N (listwise)					

### **Reliability**

In addition to descriptive statistics, table.1 also shows the values of Cronbach's alpha which is extensively utilized to measure the internal consistency of the scale (Larsson, 2015). In other words, the accuracy of the items' measurement to assess whether they are measuring the exact construct for which they are developed, reliability has significance (Melchers & Beck, 2018).

Previous authors have recommended that values of Cronbach’s alpha show acceptable reliability of the instrument, if they are above 0.7 (Barbaranelli, Lee, Vellone, & Riegel, 2015; McNeish, 2018; Padilla & Divers, 2016). Table 1 shows that all the values of alpha are in accordance with the prescribed threshold value; thus, shows the internal consistency.

**Correlation Coefficients**

Before measuring inferential statistics, it is important to evaluate the association amid all the latent constructs (Benesty, Chen, Huang, & Cohen, 2009). Table 2 below shows the strength of association amid four constructs of this study. For the acceptability of the associations, p-values should be lower than 0.05. In other words, all the relationships are represented with at least 95% confidence interval. For this purpose, table 1 shows asterisk symbols. Double asterisk shows that relationship is represented with p-value less than 0.01, which means 99% confidence interval. According to this table, PL has 37.6% weak significant association with POS. This effect is significant at p-value less than 0.01. However, PL has no significant association with POJ as significance value is higher than 0.05.

**Table 2. Correlations**

	1	2	3	4
Paternalistic Leadership				
Perceived Organizational Support	.376**	1		
Perceived Organizational Justice	.042	-.002	1	
Employee Creativity	.632**	.547**	-.034	1

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

Apart from above, PL has 63.2% strong positive relationship with EC. This relationship is explained with 99% confidence interval as p-value is less than 0.01. Moving ahead, POS has no significant association with POJ as p-value is greater than 0.05 because there is no asterisk symbol; thus, represents no significance. However, POS has 54.7% strong and positive relationship with EC, which is explained with 99% confidence interval. Finally, POJ has no significant relationship with EC as significance value is higher than 0.05. The positive relationship shows that increasing one variable leads to enhancement of other variable as well. However, negative relationship shows that if one variable increases, the other variable will decrease.

**Multicollinearity**

This issue is relevant to such strong correlation amid two constructs that there may be difficulty to differentiate amid two variables. This issue is identified through commonly utilized Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), whose values should be in the range of 1 to 3 in order to be acceptable (O’Brien, 2007; Salmerón, García, & García, 2018). Following table 5 shows the values of VIF which are in the threshold range; thus, there is no multicollinearity issue in the data.

**Hypotheses Testing**

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, researcher developed seven different hypotheses which were tested through employing regression analysis. Baron and Kenny (1986) has proposed four steps to evaluate the mediation effects; however, these four steps are also important to assess the direct effects as well. The steps are employed while using regression analysis which is

commonly utilized to evaluate the impact of predictors on outcome variable. These four steps are elaborated below, which are related to table 3, 4 and 5. Also these four steps are explained in different four models which are combined to following tables.

**Step 1:**

In the first step, Baron and Kenny (1986) proposed to evaluate the impact of independent variables on dependent variable. In our case, the independent variable is PL, while the dependent variable is EC. This relationship is presented in the first model in table 3, 4, and 5. According to table 3 below, R-square value shows that 40% variance in EC is explained by PL. However, table 4 shows that the first model is significant at  $p < 0.05$ . Also, ANOVA table shows the significance of the variance. Model 1 in table 5 below shows that PL has 55.3% positive and significant effect on EC and this effect is approved as t-calculated (17.126) is higher than t-tabulated (1.96). Also, the p-value is lower than 0.01; thus, this relationship approves the first hypothesis of this study.

**Table 3. Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.632 <sup>a</sup>	.400	.399	.31927
2	.376 <sup>a</sup>	.142	.140	.34080
2	.042 <sup>a</sup>	.002	.000	.21369
3	.548 <sup>a</sup>	.300	.297	.34515
4	.715 <sup>a</sup>	.511	.508	.28877

**Step 2:**

In the second step, Baron and Kenny (1986) recommends to evaluate the impact of independent variables on mediators. In this study, the independent variable is PL; while, there are two mediators including POS and POJ; they both are considered as outcome variable in second step. The related results are represented in second model in table 3, 4 and 5. Firstly, the effects of PL is evaluated on POS, then its impact is evaluated on POJ. According to table 3, second model shows R-square value to be 0.142, which shows that 14.2% of variance in POS is explained by PL. Second model in table 4 shows the significance of the variance and model fitness through F-value. While, in table 5, the second model shows that PL has 29.4% positive and significant influence over POS with significance value less than 0.01; thus, it approves the second hypothesis of this study. Apart from this, the second model in table 3 shows R-square value 0.002, which shows that only 0.2% variance in POJ is explained by PL; however, this variance is not significant as significance value is not less than 0.05 in table 4, second model. Moreover, table 5 shows that there is no significant impact of PL on POJ; therefore, fifth hypothesis of this study is rejected.

**Table 4. ANOVA**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	29.896	1	29.896	293.293	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	44.851	440	.102		
	Total	74.747	441			
2	Regression	8.432	1	8.432	72.599	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	51.105	440	.116		
	Total	59.537	441			
2	Regression	.036	1	.036	.792	.374 <sup>b</sup>

	Residual	20.092	440	.046		
	Total	20.128	441			
3	Regression	22.449	2	11.225	94.221	.000b
	Residual	52.298	439	.119		
	Total	74.747	441			
4	Regression	38.224	3	12.741	152.797	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	36.523	438	.083		
	Total	74.747	441			

**Step 3:**

In the third step, Baron and Kenny (1986) proposed that mediators should be considered as predictors and their impact on dependent variable should be evaluated. This relationship is relevant to third model in tables 3, 4 and 5. In this study, the influence of POS and POJ is evaluated on EC.

**Table 5. Coefficients**

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
		Coefficients		Coefficients				
		B	Std. Error	Beta				
1	(Constant)	2.145	.120		17.935	.000		
	Paternalistic Leadership	.553	.032	.632	17.126	.000	.857	1.167
2	(Constant)	3.088	.128		24.186	.000		
	PL - POS	.294	.034	.376	8.520	.000	.857	1.167
	(Constant)	3.899	.080		48.713	.000		
3	PL - POJ	-.019	.022	-.042	-8.990	.374	.857	1.167
	(Constant)	1.865	.349		5.341	.000		
4	Perceived Org. Support	.613	.045	.547	13.701	.000	.858	1.165
	Perceived Org. Justice	-.063	.077	-.033	-8.823	.411	.998	1.002
	(Constant)	.990	.299		3.309	.001		
4	Paternalistic Leadership	.434	.032	.496	13.754	.000	.857	1.167
	Perceived Org. Support	.404	.040	.360	9.991	.000	.858	1.165
	Perceived Org. Justice	-.023	.064	-.012	-3.62	.718	.998	1.002

According to third model of table 3, R-square value shows that 30% variance in EC is explained by both POS and POJ, and this variance is also significant as the p-value is third model in table 4 is below 0.05. According to table 5, POS has 61.3% strong positive influence on EC with significance value  $p < 0.01$ . Thus, the third hypothesis of this study is accepted. However, POJ has no significant influence over EC; therefore, sixth hypothesis of this study is rejected.

**Step 4:**

In the last step, Baron and Kenny (1986) proposed that mediators should also considered as predictors along with independent variables and their combined effect on dependent variable should be analyzed. In this study, PL, POS and POJ are considered as independent or predictors in model 4 and the outcome variable is EC. According to model 4 in table 3, R-square value shows that 51.1% variance in EC is explained by PL, POS and POJ. The model fitness is presented in model 4 of table 4 as F-calculated (152.797) in higher than F-tabulated (4). While, model 4 of table



5 shows the individual effects of all these predictors on EC. According to table 5 (model 4), PL has 43.4% positive and significant influence over EC with  $p < 0.01$ . While, POS has 40.4% positive and significant influence over EC with  $p < 0.01$ . Conversely, POJ has no significant influence over EC. Baron and Kenny (1986) noted that the difference between the effects of independent variable in model 1 and model 4 shows the mediation effects. If the effect of independent variable on dependent variable is decreased due to including mediators as predictors, the mediation is proved and it will depend upon the significance value.

Through model 1 and 4, it can be assessed that owing to involving mediators in the model, the effects of PL on EC is decreased from 55.3% to 43.4%. Therefore, PL has both direct as well as indirect effect on EC; however, the mediation effects of POJ is not proved as PL or EC has no association with this construct. Only the mediation effects of POS are approved. Thus, the hypothesis four is approved; however, seventh hypothesis is rejected. Following is the summary of all the hypotheses along with their acceptance or rejection status.

**Table 6. Summary of Hypotheses Status**

Hypothesis	Logical Relation	Status
H1	Paternalistic Leadership → Employee Creativity	Accepted
H2	Paternalistic Leadership → Perceived Organizational Support	Accepted
H3	Perceived Organizational Support → Employee Creativity	Accepted
H4	Paternalistic Leadership → Perceived Organizational Support → Employee Creativity	Accepted
H5	Paternalistic Leadership → Perceived Organizational Justice	Rejected
H6	Perceived Organizational Justice → Employee Creativity	Rejected
H7	Paternalistic Leadership → Perceived Organizational Justice → Employee Creativity	Rejected

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study has aimed at evaluating the direct as well as indirect effects of PL on EC in the context of telecommunication sector of Pakistan. The results revealed that PL has significant influence on EC and POS; while, POS has also significant influence over EC and also plays a mediation role between PL and EC. These results are similar to previous studies. For instance, Wang et al. (2019) conducted a study in China and found that PL has positive and significant influence over EC; however, this relationship is moderated by perceived job security. Apart from this, Qi, Liu, Wei, and Hu (2019) conducted a study to evaluate the relationship amid PL, POS and EC. Their results revealed that PL has positive impact on innovative behaviors of employees both directly as well as in the mediation role of POS.

This study has also revealed that there is no significant relationship amid PL and POJ in addition to insignificant relationship amid POJ and EC. However, these findings are inconsistent with previous studies. For instance, Wu, Huang, Li, and Liu (2012) proposed that perceived organizational justice has significant influence over paternalistic leadership and trust. Similarly, Çaliskan (2010) has found a significant and positive relationship amid POJ and PL in addition to

the relationship amid POJ and employees' innovative behavior. Moreover, Zhou and Long (2007) have found that benevolent leadership has important role to motivate and appreciate employees for their efforts along with fulfilling their needs and wants. This condition changes the perception of employees positively. Also, paternalistic leadership, if provide justice and fair treatment among employees, they are more likely to enhance employees' perception regarding organizational justice, which ultimately leads to their more effort, engagement, commitment and innovative behaviors.

This study has some limitations; like this study is conducted in the context of telecommunication sector of Pakistan, therefore, these findings cannot be generalized upon other sectors in Pakistan. Apart from this, these findings may also differ from other countries. Thus, future researchers are recommended to use either other sectors of Pakistan or mixed sectors study. Also, future researchers are highly recommended to evaluate the individual effects of all dimensions of paternalistic leadership on employee creativity.

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