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## LEADERSHIP STYLES: RELATIONSHIP WITH ORGANIZATIONAL DISSENT AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT MEDIATION ANALYSIS VIA CB-SEM APPROACH

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the causal effects of leadership styles on organizational dissent, with the mediating role of conflict management. Aim population was the healthcare sector of doctors and paramedic staff of Sindh (N=480). The study is explanatory in design and quantitative in nature. Hypotheses were assessed through Covariance based-structural equation modeling (CB-SEM), which is a comprehensive statistical approach to assess the measurement and structural part of the model. The study outcome revealed that there is a negative relationship between leadership styles and organizational dissent (path-c). A positive significant relationship was observed between leadership styles and conflict management (path-a). Conflict management has a negative effect on organizational dissent (path-b) and lastly, conflict management mediates the relationship between leadership styles and organizational dissent among employees of the healthcare sector of Sindh (path-c'). The study results are essential for the healthcare sector to reduce prevailing dissent among organizations.

**Disciplinary:** Management Sciences (HRM).

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Human behavior in knowledge-based organizations is often a reflection of the way they are being gone in front. Thus, the styles of leading people are very much important. Modern business leadership affects a lot the organizations' aggregate environments (Bennis, 2007). Positive or negative perceptions of employees provoke attitudes toward professional contributions and organizational productivity. Retaliating behavior among professionals reflects the negative approaches to leadership practices. Leadership styles are extremely crucial constructs in examining organizational performance. Many studies were done during the period of post-world war-II

(Cannella & Rowe 1995; Bass, 1985). Organizational performance vitally depends on successful leadership and helps to achieve organizational goals (Gordon & Yulk, 2004; Bass 1985). According to Yukl and Mahsud (2010), outcomes of apt & prompt leadership may increase the organization's output on several traits. Behind every positive perception, attitudes, and norm among employees, there is always a contribution of effective leadership. The negative behavior of employees is an exhibition of ineffective and inefficient leadership. Yukl et al. (2010) and Amabile et al. (2004) confirm negative outcomes of the workplace inefficient leadership such as absenteeism, work-related stress, and aggressive attitudes among employees. This study has considered leadership styles as an independent variable along with key dimensions suggested by Hersey & Blanchard Theory (like facilitating, coaching, and delegating and directing leadership styles). Employee's voice works as an indicator for organizations to overcome any misconduct and act as an imperative form of counteractive response for organizations. Concerns or questions, ideas, withholding information, and information about work-related issues are measured as very common among employees. However, there may be several reasons behind employees' choice to remain silent; they may start to believe that expressing their views would be a futile exercise, or they somehow do not want to be negatively viewed by others, or fear of retaliation or employees are not at a stage to destruct the work-related relationship, or they do not want to disturb anyone (Milliken et al., 2003). Conflict is a naturally occurring phenomenon (Rahim, 2010). Human behaviors have certain instincts to disagree with a particular stance, and this continuous disagreement can be managed but may not be completely eliminated (Rahim, 2010). Thus, conflict management strategies play a pivotal role to reduce the organizational dissent (Cox, 2003). According to Kolb and Putnam (1992) conflict is an inevitable factor in human life due to dissimilar associations with culture, norms, and value. Hence, conflict can't be detached from people's life. In nutshell, this study investigates the effects of leadership styles on organizational dissent among people engaged in the healthcare sector of Sindh by taking conflict management as a mediating variable that may settle down the negative effects of a particular leadership style on organizational dissent thus turning the situation positively.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Information flow within the organization has always been given great attention in organizational studies; the voice of employees is a sound, a bit unique, and a comparatively new term in behavioral studies. Harshman's (1970) model serves as the basis for the "exit or voice" model study that explores employees' reactions to problems faced at the workplace. Dissatisfaction with internal or external audiences can be expressed. There was a dearth on research focus in the 1980s: while whistleblowing established considerable scholarly attention, at the same time the issue and expression of "Dissent" within an organization were rarely studied (Sprague & Ruud, 1988; Stewart, 1980). Once the literature on "organizational dissent" began and got mature, the notion about organizational differences became inconsistent. In this regard, Kassing (1997) attempted to summarize the previous research and put forward the differences with necessary clarifications by proposing a theoretical model on organizational dissent.

### **2.1 LEADERSHIP STYLES**

The modern literature provides evidence that organizational success is largely recognized with the performance of its employees. However, scholars have struggled to create a certain association

between leadership styles and organizational dissent. The impact and significance of leadership styles in today's organizations are diverse and need to explore the usefulness and effectiveness of several leadership styles. The applications and understanding of each single leadership style may be examined in terms of its level of adaptability among different conditions. Changes in businesses have allowed leaders to review their leadership style for maximum performance and better employee participation (Ashkenas et al., 2002). According to Yukl (2010), the scholars are yet to offer an all-encompassing definition to grasp leadership; they seemed busy in redefining the existing leadership concepts. Hersey and Blanchard (1969) documented the concept of situational leadership, they found that some factors are still missing to validate the practical concept of this theory. Blanchard (2002) developed an updated version of situational leadership theory, termed SLII. Wyld (2010) reported that the roles of followers are taken as a central view of situational leadership.

## **2.2 DIRECTING/TELLING STYLE**

Directing leadership style provides explicit directions for the goals and roles of employees, and also tracks the performance of followers to collect immediate response and feedback regarding followers' job outcome. Moreover, directing leaders have to work day and night with subordinates and making them learn.

## **2.3 COACHING/SELLING STYLE**

Coaching leadership style is exhibited when the leader explain why s/he is seeking suggestions. It appreciates the right behavior and directs subordinates to the job. The subordinates need supportive and sympathetic leaders capable to usher the congenial working environment.

## **2.4 SUPPORTING/PARTICIPATING STYLE**

Supporting leadership encourages employees and leaders to work and decide together. The leader's roles are to assist, encourage, listen, and facilitate the followers. The followers intend to work on their skills, however yet they need certain motivation from the leader.

## **2.5 DELEGATING STYLE**

Delegating leadership style occurs when the leader gives necessary training to employees to work independently with the given resources. So this style empowers the employees. Moreover, leaders would be just responsible for setting goals without intervening in the work of followers.

## **2.6 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

There are several ways to manage conflicts that can be classified between winners and losers (Jones & White, 1985). The mutual decisions usually make the stakeholders optimistic. The result of a win-lose is achieved when one party exercises its dominant majority, power, and authority over the other. On the other hand, the result of lose-lose occurs when both parties have failed to achieve their goals and each party seeks a compromise or withdrawal. Robbins (1996) suggested that conflict management practices depend on their intentions to dominate compromise, abstain, collaborate, or take advantage of conflict-related opportunities. Black and Mountain (1964) introduced a conflict resolution grid that focused on mutual conflicts. The conflict grid consists of two axes, namely the care of people and the care of production. The parties were estimated to have five different aspects of

conflict management, including (1) competing (or forcing); (2) collaborating (or problem-solving); (3) compromising; (4) accommodating (or smoothing); and (5) avoiding (or withdrawing). Additionally, Black and Mountain (1964) stated that problem-solving or collaborating considered the “best way” to solve conflicts. Therefore, the purpose of dispute resolution was to help organizers work in a win-win approach (collaboration) rather than avoiding positions (win-loss) related to the conflict. Rahim (1985) identified five conflict management strategies, namely avoiding, dominating, compromising, obliging, and integrating. On the contrary, in the Black and Mountain (1964) conflict theory, Rahim (1985) confirmed that a particular style cannot be considered an ideal style for conflict management, but each style depends on the situation.

## **2.7 ORGANIZATIONAL DISSENT**

Organizational dissent is considered as an intrinsic moral value of the expression. According to Sprague and Ruud (1988), dissent contains expressions that can be regarded as a violation of moral responsibility, loyalty conviction, a minor inconvenience, and political rights. Numerous concepts regarding the organizational environment, like whistleblowing, employee voice, organizational conflicts, employee resistance, and upward influence are exactly associated with the concept of organizational dissent. Scholars who essentially investigated the insights of the organizational environment have advocated different definitions of organizational dissent (Hegstrom, 1990; Redding, 1985; Graham, 1986). These scholars comprehensively reported five assumptions: 1) Dissent arises because of an existing level of dissatisfaction, 2) intentionally non-organizational status is maintained which causes dissent, 3) Dissent consists of open protest, 4) Dissent contains a particular clash, and 5) unanimous messages (reflecting dissent) are mostly about issues of principles. Moreover, Kassing (1997) recommended that dissent need to be re-accepted to avoid particular confusion from one place to another. Kassing (1998) considered dissent as conflicting expressions generated by employees on different organizational procedures, policies, and practices. The three main categories of dissent that are classified according to their recipients are described as articulated (upward), latent (lateral), and displaced. Dissenting factors can be directly involved with the supervisor (Articulated dissent), or the colleagues having similar status (latent dissent), or people outside the organization like media, family, and friends (Displaced dissent). Employees are different in their tendency to express disagreement and their unwanted decisions are influenced by various factors like organizational, relations, and individual levels. For example, employees who have internal control tend to be more intolerant, whereas those with external control are more likely to respond as lateral dissent (Kassing & Avtgis, 2001). Similarly, the upward dissent is found to be negatively associated with aggression and positively related to argumentation (Kassing & Avtgis, 1999).

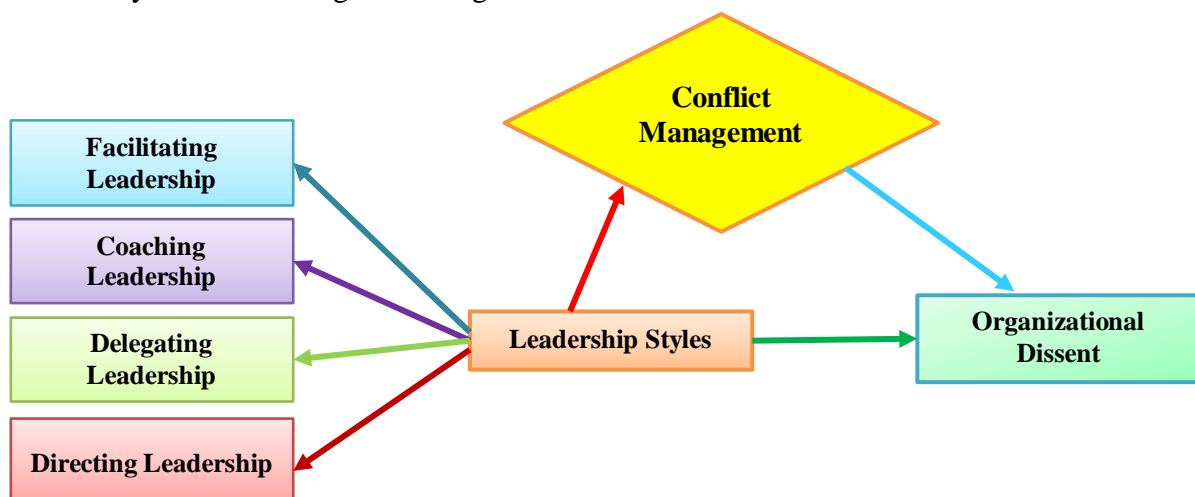
## **2.8 LEADERSHIP, CONFLICT MANAGEMENT, AND ORGANIZATIONAL DISSENT**

Healthcare sector is a major service sector, and the issue of organizational dissent can be resolved by adopting some appropriate leadership styles. Dube (2013) studied transformational & transactional leadership (full range leadership theory), using a mixed method of research. The study revealed that transformational leadership style is more dominating than transactional leadership style in public sector organization (South Africa). This study observes a contextual difference and has focused on Hersey & Blanchard leadership model of leadership styles. Novac and Bratanov (2014)

studied HRM, Hersey-Blanchard leadership model (situational leadership, 1999) and organizational climate (survey based study). Their study concluded a strong relationship between leadership styles & organizational climate in public sector. Jameson (2010) studied some crucial construct of organizational behavior such as trust, leadership, power; organizational silence (displaced dissent). Hamilton (2011) documented employee dissent, loyalty, communication, and organizational culture at Canadian services sector. Using qualitative approach, he concluded that formal policy and training had less influence on dissent than organizational culture, employee experience & perceived career & relationship risks. Payne (2014) reported that trust in supervisors was significantly related to employee's use of articulated dissent & negatively related to latent & displaced dissent. Turnage and Goodboy (2016) applying the leader member exchange theory (LMX), reported that the quality of superior-subordinate relationship is important in determining how dissent is communicated. Moreover, communicating the dissent in person to supervisor instead of email is sign of better working relationship. Additionally, it is observed in the literature that leadership styles, conflict management and organizational dissent have been studied separately into different parts of the world. Islam and Rimi (2017) documented evidences on conflict management as collaborating, compromising, avoiding, accommodating, and competing. They revealed evidences of conflict management in banking sector through application of Thomas-Kilman's conflict management model. Furthermore, Ajike et al. (2015) studied Conflict, conflict management, organizational performance and reported that conflict management has significant positive impact on organizational performance. The outcomes suggested that female top management of educational institutions in USA used compromising as most preferred way of conflict management (Monn, 2012). These studies have focused health care sector with conflict management as intervening variable irrespective of gender. Lizasoain et al. (2015) studied conflict management, emotional intelligence, leadership styles & service quality. Study was mainly based on quantitative, descriptive and co-relational. A high correlation was found between conflict management styles, emotional intelligence and leadership styles and their study results recommended to contribute better service quality in higher education. Jameson (2010) studied trust, leadership, power, organizational silence (displaced dissent).

## 2.9 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study framework is given in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual framework.

From discussion, the hypotheses are formulated

- H<sub>1</sub>: Leadership Styles negatively & significantly influences the organizational dissent;  
H<sub>2</sub>: Leadership Styles positively & significantly influences the conflict management;  
H<sub>3</sub>: Conflict Management negatively & significantly influences the organizational dissent;  
H<sub>4</sub>: Conflict Management mediates the relationship between leadership style and organizational dissent.

### 3. METHOD

To study the causal effects of leadership styles and conflict management on organizational dissent, the cross-sectional survey was executed to gather the data. The target population is drawn from the healthcare sector of Sindh, Pakistan. Total 480 respondents (doctors/professors/consultant, paramedical staff, and ministerial staff) works in various hospitals of Sindh (Govt. owned). Table 1 illustrates the proportionate distribution of population frame and extracted the sample size. For constructs and scales, Table 2 shows sources for predesigned close-ended questionnaire at five-point Likert scale used to collect primary data for this study.

**Table 1:** Population & sample size.

Divisional Hospitals	Population Employed	Percentage (%)	Sample
Chandka Medical college/hospital Larkana, Sindh	200	18%	87
Ghulam Muhammad Maher Medical College Sukkur, Sindh	212	19%	91
DHQ Hospital Hyderabad, Sindh	183	16%	77
DHQ Hospital Karachi, Sindh	211	19%	91
DHQ Hospital Mirpurkhas, Sindh	162	14%	67
DHQ Hospital Nawabshah, Sindh	157	14%	67
Total	1125	100%	480

**Table 2:** Research instruments and sources

Construct	Nature of Construct	Items	Citation
Leadership Styles (LS)	IV	24	Hersey & Blanchard (1982)
Conflict Management (CM)	MV	25	Thomas & Kilmann (1974, 2007)
Organizational Dissent	DV	20	Kassing (2000)

**Table 3:** Demographic Profile (N = 480).

Demographic Variables		Frequency	Percent
Organization	Teaching Hospital	109	22.7
	Hospital	308	64.2
	Medical College	63	13.1
Gender	Male	336	70.0
	Female	144	30.0
Age	20-30 Years	116	24.2
	31 to 40 Years	189	39.4
	41-50 Years	80	16.7
	Above 40 Years	95	19.8
Qualification	Health Tech/Nursing	192	40.0
	BSc/MBBS/FCPS	144	30.0
	MSC/MBA (Health Management)	48	10.0
	M.Phil/MS	48	10.0
Experience	PhD	48	10.0
	Below 10 Years	240	50.0
	10 - 20 Years	144	30.0
	Above 20 Years	96	20.0

## 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 RELIABILITY SCORE

Table 4 shows the reliability statistics of variables of interest that the Cronbach's Alpha reliability more than 0.7 confirms reliability of all variables.

**Table 4:** Alpha Scores for All Study Variables

Main Construct	Dimensions	Items	Cronbach's Score
Leadership Styles	Facilitating Leadership Style (FLS)	6	.80
	Coaching Leadership Style (CLS)	6	.71
	Delegating Leadership Style (DLS)	6	.73
	Directing Leadership Style (DrLS)	6	.76
Conflict Management (CM)		25	.71
Organizational Dissent (OD)		20	.82

Table 5, all mean score reveal that respondents' fall under the response of agree. Moreover, SD shows the suitable deviation among the mean scores.

**Table 5:** Surveyed mean & SD result based on five-point Likert scale.

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
FLS	4	5	4.34	.475
CLS	4	5	4.43	.496
DLS	4	5	4.46	.499
DrLS	4	5	4.34	.475
CM	4	5	4.45	.498
OD	4	5	4.42	.495

### 4.2 CFA ANALYSIS

Table 6 shows the outcomes of CFA. The validities like Composite Reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) are also given. All item loads were seen as fully significant ( $p < .001$  or \*\*\*). Hence, validities for all leadership styles (CR  $> .70$  and AVE  $> .50$ ) were established. The validities for organizational dissent and conflict management were also established. The goodness of fit (GOF) of the model is observed through fit indices. The fit indices shows Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI), indicating suitable goodness of fit of the model. However, to achieve the better GOF several items have been removed from leadership styles, organizational dissent and conflict management, only those items were removed whose loading were below .50. Hence, the measurement model has achieved suitable GOF and it would be carried in the further (structural) analysis for hypotheses assessment.

**Table 6:** Validities & Fit Indices

Variable	Validity	Fit Indices
FLS	CR=.857, AVE=.494	GFI=.896
CLS	CR=0.869, AVE=0.522	AGFI=.864
DrLS	CR=0.841, AVE=0.510	TLI=.960
DLS	CR=0.875, AVE=0.540	CFI=.967
OD	AVE=.907, CR=.967	NFI=.968
CM	AVE=.741, CR=.934	RMSEA=.0.07

### 4.3 OUTCOMES OF STRUCTURAL MODEL

Figure 2 revealed the outcomes of SEM (2<sup>nd</sup> order) statistical analysis for Path-C. The structural part of the model revealed that the path effect Leadership Styles → Organizational Dissent, was ( $b = -.44, p = 0.000$  or \*\*\*) and confirming the  $H_1$  regarding negative significant effect of Leadership Styles on Organizational Dissent. All construct have loading among acceptable ranges and fit indices. Hence,  $H_1$  has been retained.

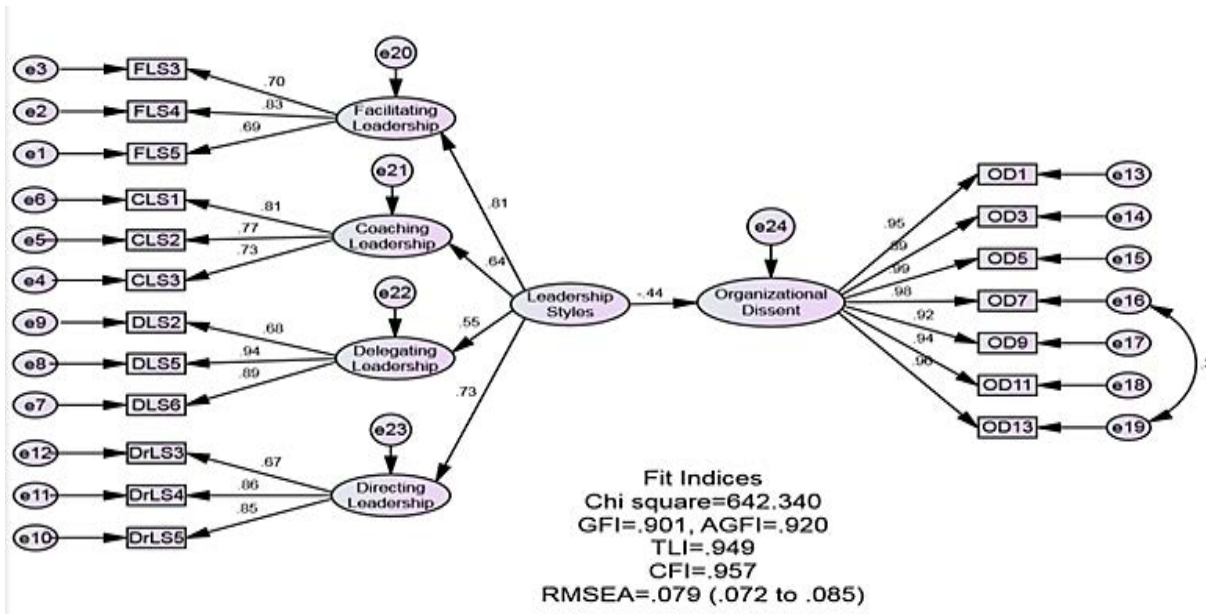


Figure 2: Assessing Leadership styles → Organizational Dissent (2<sup>nd</sup> Order).

Figure 3 shows the outcomes for Path-A. The results revealed that the path effect from Leadership Styles → Conflict management, ( $b = 0.20, p = 0.002 < 0.05$ ) was confirming the  $H_2$  regarding positive & significant effect of Leadership Styles on Conflict Management. Hence,  $H_2$  has been retained.

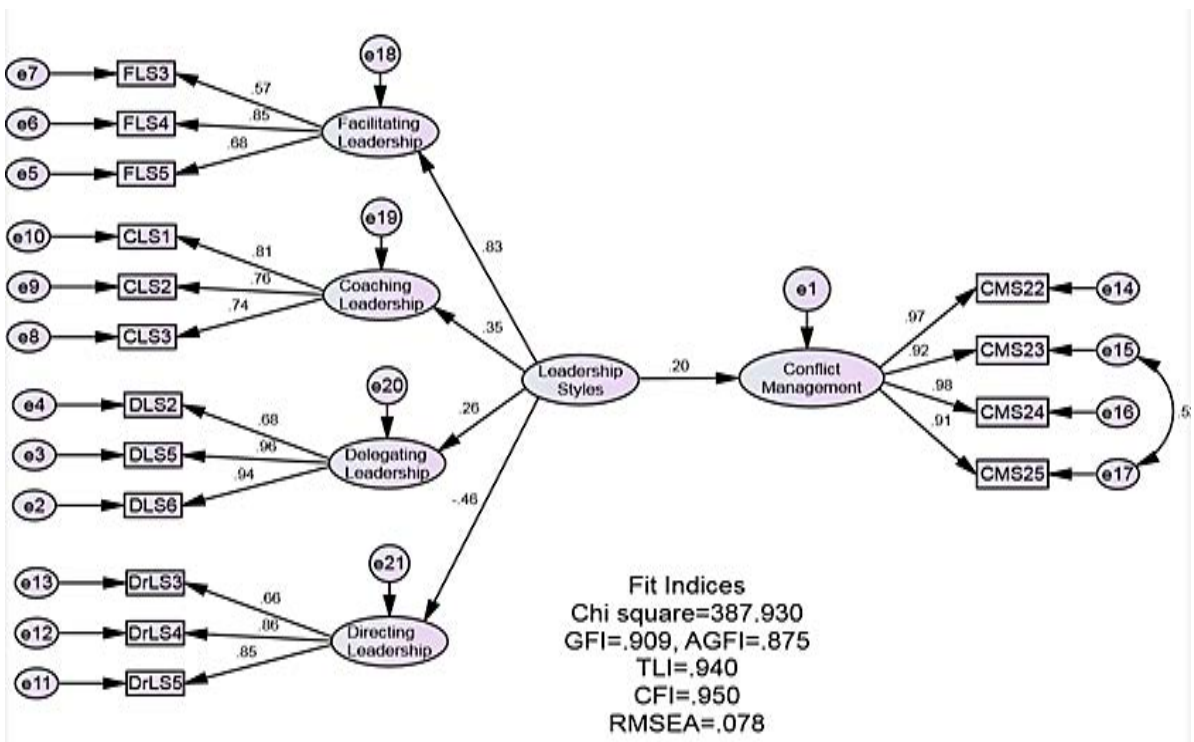
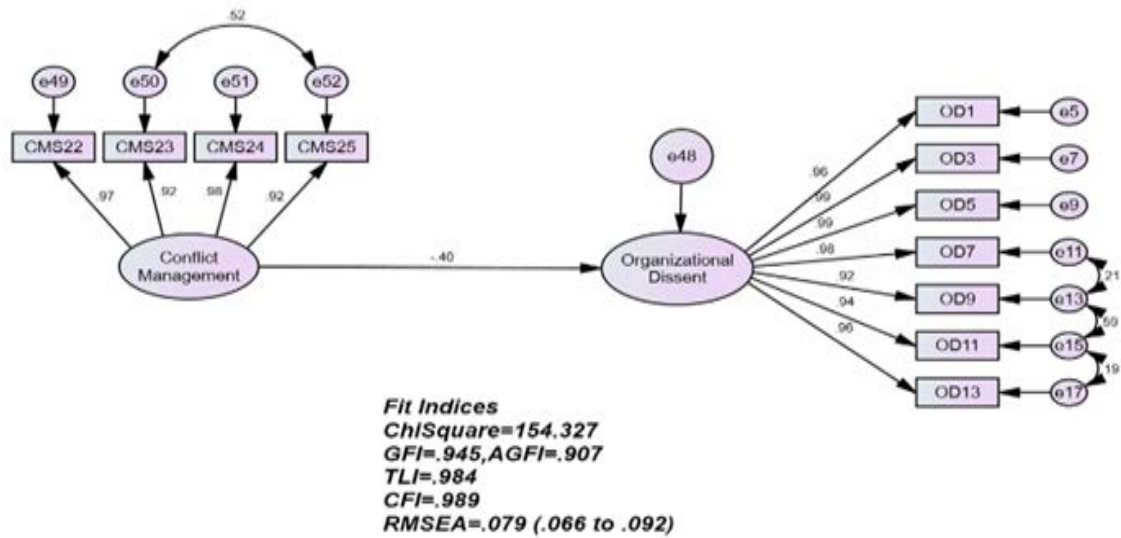


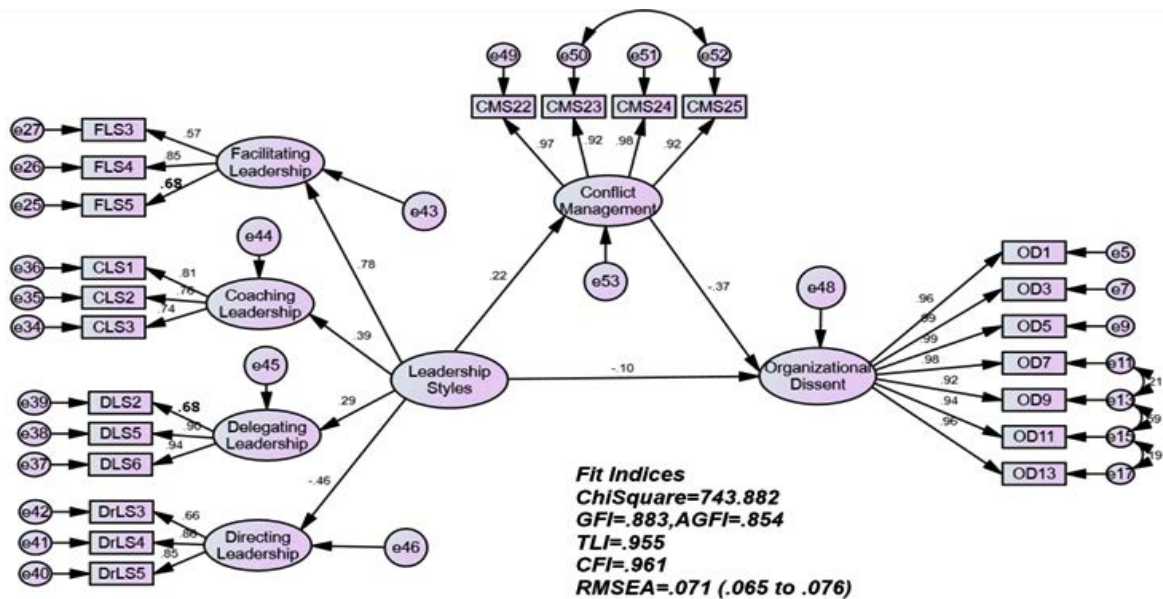
Figure 3: Assessing Leadership Styles → Conflict Management (2<sup>nd</sup> Order)





**Figure 4:** Assessing Conflict Management → Organizational Dissent

Figure 4 shows the outcomes for Path-B. Both constructs have suitable factor loading. The results revealed that the path effect from Conflict Management → Organizational Dissent, was (b= -0.40, p-value = 0.001 < 0.05) confirming the  $H_3$  regarding negative and significant effect of conflict management on Organizational Dissent. The fit indices were also established.



**Figure 5:** Assessing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) 2<sup>nd</sup> order

**Table 7:** Hypotheses assessment summary.

Hypotheses	Coefficients	p-value	Remarks
H1	-0.44	***	Accepted
H2	0.20	***	Accepted
H3	-0.40	***	Accepted
H4	-0.10	0.071	Accepted
	-0.14	0.037	

Figure 5 shows the outcomes of final model. Leadership styles have been abstracted in 2<sup>nd</sup> order and taken as independent variable, organizational dissent considered as outcome variable, and

conflict management were taken as mediating variable. The results shows the path Leadership Styles → Conflict Management → Organizational Dissent (b = -0.10, p-value = .071) is accepted at 0.1 level, whereas the direct effect results through Leadership Styles → Organizational Dissent (b= -0.14, p=0.037) confirm  $H_4$  regarding fully mediating the relationship between leadership styles and organizational dissent. Table 7 gives the hypotheses summary.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study was intended to examine leadership styles (facilitating leadership, coaching leadership, delegating leadership, directing leadership) in health care sector of Sindh. These dimensions were initially introduced by Hersey & Blanchard (1996). The leadership styles and its dimensions were treated in causal relationship with organizational dissent. This study considered organizational dissent as an outcome variable. Conflict management strategies were included to explain the relationship between leadership style and organizational dissent. The study was explanatory in design and quantitative in nature. All the hypotheses were accepted. The Data was analyzed through CB-SEM. It is concluded that leadership styles have significant and negative effect on organizational dissent (Path-C), leadership styles have significant and positive effect on conflict management (Path-A), conflict management has significant and negative effect on organizational dissent (Path-B), and conflict management mediates the relationship between leadership styles and organizational dissent.

## 6. DATA AND MATERIAL AVAILABILITY

Information regarding this study is available by contacting the corresponding author.

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