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GROUP COHESION: A THERAPY AGAINST ABUSIVE SUPERVISION

Iftikhar Hussain^{1*}, Qazi Mohammed Ahmed², Amir Gulzar¹,
Usama Usman¹, Sajjad Hussain¹

¹ Department of Business Administration, Foundation University Islamabad, PAKISTAN.

² Department of Business Studies, Bahria University Islamabad, PAKISTAN.

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge sharing can help organizations grow and progress, but abusive leaders can push employees to avoid sharing their knowledge, and Conservation of Resource theory explains how a decrease in psychological capital decreases knowledge sharing in organizations. This study examines if abusive supervision and knowledge sharing have a connection while if psychological capital mediates this connection and group cohesion moderates. From the Pakistani services sector, more than 239 participants from 40 different organizations of Rawalpindi and Islamabad participated in the study. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to prove the hypothesized negative relation of abusive supervision and knowledge sharing strong bonding (cohesion) of employees helped reduce the negative effect by improving psychological capital. The results from this study help managers to know how their abusive behavior can affect their subordinates. Also, organizations are supported by helping them know that good and strong relations in groups can boost their psychological capital to counter the abusive behavior of supervisors.

Disciplinary: Psychology, Management Sciences (HRM, Leadership, Organization Management).

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1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of learning organizations has achieved great attention in recent research. Fast-growing organizations are facing the challenges of knowledge management and sharing of knowledge (Smith, 2001; Yang et al., 2004). Yang et al., (2004) discussed the dimensions of learning organizations at people and structural levels and its positive impact on outcomes. Knowledge creation, sharing, and dissemination lead to improve organizational performance (Li et al., 2009; Nonaka et al., 1994; Tsai, 2001; Zack et al., 2009).

Researchers have identified different predecessors of knowledge sharing (Evans, 2012) like HR practices, rewards schemes, and culture of the organizations can improve the knowledge distribution. There are individual factors like personality traits and individual believes habits, psychosomatic indenture, organizational obligations, and trust can affect knowledge sharing. All positive factors help enhance knowledge sharing while negative factors can reduce or restrict sharing of knowledge such as abusive behavior of managers, non-supporting culture including other factors. Conservation of Resource theory for the first time was presented by Hobfoll (1989) and still is being explored for the new theoretical developments. The theory explains how socially linked people or employees in organizations affect each other positively or negatively and how they become a source of motivation when support each other. Constructive leadership enhances the sharing of knowledge in employees while abusive supervision reduces psychological capital and hence possibly effects knowledge sharing in a negative way (Wu & Lee, 2016).

Knowledge sharing in organizations is one of the key factors of success and progress in organizations through innovations and improvement in productivity of employees and leadership is a driver of such events to happen in organizations. This article empirically tests and examines the consequence of abusive leadership as in case of sharing of knowledge and more especially how this relationship can be countered or weakened through positive factors?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

With two-dimension two dimensions, knowledge collecting and knowledge donating knowledge sharing has become an important issue in an organization's success and survival. Sharing of knowledge is usually unnatural factors as people think if their knowledge is valuable why they should share it then (Evans, 2012). Two basic types of knowledge are explicit and tacit knowledge (Evans, 2012). Tacit knowledge is not in written form hence is hard and difficult to be transmitted and shared with others (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Major five components of knowledge, explained by Tsoukas (2005), Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995), Choo & Bontis (2002), and Wang & Noe (2010), are: knowledge is created, collected, rearranged, distributed and exhibited in actions. In the context of this study, knowledge sharing comprises of two activities, knowledge collecting and knowledge donating. Researchers mentioned some of the major challenges in knowledge sharing (Yaacob et al., 2011) out of which one major is abusive or negative behavior of supervisors towards their subordinates.

Abusive supervision is measured through non-bodily perform such as: by calling disparaging names of employees, threats, terrorizations of job thrashing, angry outbursts, hoarding knowledge that must be among employees, owning credit of other's works and humiliating subordinates in presence of others (Tepper, 2007; Zellars et al., 2002). Because of this, employees may experience frustration and irritation from the work, often he/she may feel helpless and undermined which creates a state of depression and pressure on employees due to a reduction in psychological capital. According to (Demerouti et al, 2011) psychological capital spotlights the strengths of individuals and the ways and powers they should have to grow in the workplace and (Luthans et al., 2007) defined psychological capital as 'people's affirmative mental and psychological condition of improvement and development' described by, self-efficacy of individuals, optimism in them, hope and resilience in them. These factors are personal sources within an individual who is open to development which opens a range of prospects to employees such as improved performance, increased productivity and fast learning, etc. (Avey et al., 2009).

2.1 KNOWLEDGE SHARING WHILE ABUSIVE LEADERSHIP

Srivastava et al. (2006) mentioned that constructive and positive leadership affects knowledge sharing positively and encourages employees and they start sharing knowledge. However abusive behavior of managers and its effects on knowledge sharing was hardly tested or studied by any researcher but by (Lee et al., 2018). Koohang et al., (2017) explained that positive leadership has an encouraging force on knowledge sharing and the unhelpful role of weak or negative leadership on learning organizations. Bavik et al., (2018) studied a supporting role of ethical leadership in the sharing of knowledge in employees. (Lee et al., 2018) studied the upshots of abusive supervision on of knowledge in employees for und negative relation. Priesemuth et al., (2014) empirically proved a negative relation in abusive supervision and performance of employees in groups, OCB, and group cooperation. Aryee et al., (2008) said that whenever employees have to cope with the abusive supervision they will reduce (intentionally) their relative performance like interpersonal assistance and job contributions.

H1: Abusive supervision has a negative effect on knowledge sharing in employees.

2.2 ABUSIVE SUPERVISION MAY REDUCE PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL

AS can reduce PC in employees when treated negatively, impolitely, harsh, and ignored for a long time. (Zellars et al., 2002) found that abusive supervision and self-efficacy in employees are negatively related and Tepper (2000) mentioned that it may lead to depression in employees and also can lead to anxiety and disturbance. Aryee et al. (2008) explained how abusive supervision emotionally exhausts employees. Britt et al., (2016) proved that abusive supervision can stigmatize a lack of resilience in employees.

H2: Abusive supervision has a negative effect on psychological capital.

2.3 MODERATING ROLE OF GROUP COHESIVENESS

In strong cohesion, employees may seek help from the colleagues and they may see the back of each other and cover the deficit of internal resources (psychological capital) from the surplus available positive resources (group cohesion). Strong group cohesion lowers turnover and absenteeism and enhances job satisfaction (Wech et al., 1998) and boost the performance of employees (Mullen & Copper, 1994). Karau & Hart (1998) found that strong cohesion in groups helps members avoid social hangouts and loaves. (Oh et al., 2004) prove the effectiveness of the group if high cohesion which means high performance. Cohesive groups are better at achieving goals than barely cohesive (Wang & Noe, 2010).

H3: Group cohesion moderates the relationship between Abusive Supervision and Psychological Capital.

2.4 PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AS MEDIATOR

COR suggests that loss of internal resources can start a sequence of loss and creates stress and leads to save and conserve the other resources hence employees with reduced psychological capital will reduce in sharing their knowledge. Wu and Liao (2007) and Halbesleben & Wheeler (2015) found that individuals invest their resources in expectations of having some other resources in the future. But if their psychological capital is low they will stop investing in the future as a result will stop sharing their skills and knowledge (Luthans et al., 2007). Due to AS employees are under pressure and hence the process of knowledge acquiring slows down or stops (2007). Decreased psychological capital may lead to depression and difficulties in recovery abilities (Luthans et al.,

2007). So, say that employees with reduced psychological capital may feel reduced confidence, anxious, unenthusiastic, lacking efficacy, and revival skills and aggravated that ultimately will cause lower knowledge sharing behavior of employees.

H4: Psychological Capital mediates between Abusive Supervision and Knowledge Sharing.

Hence, relationships developed among the variables can be shown with the help of Figure 1.

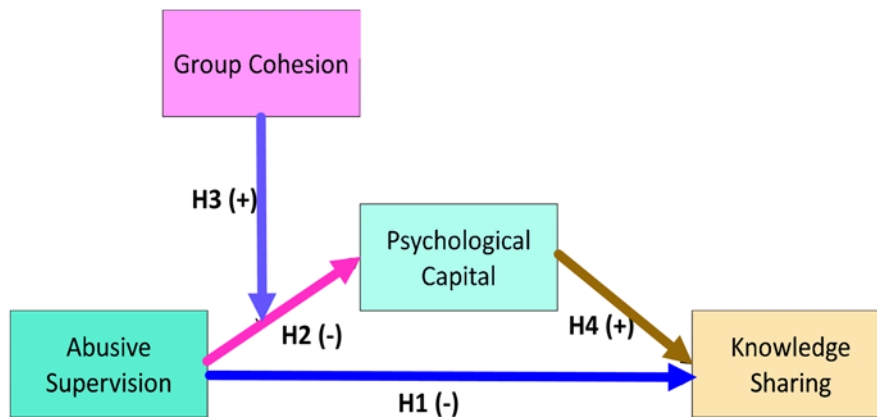


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. METHODOLOGY

Employees working in teams or groups for some shared task or duty were targeted using purposive sampling to collecting data from the services sector of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. We targeted the service sector because of intense competition in the service sector and more pressure on employees due to lower employment rates. Employees were from different departments working as a team. HR departments were contacted first to seek permission and the questionnaire of 57 items was floated then. 280 responses were received with 25 inappropriate and 16 were incomplete while 239 responses were used for the other statistical analysis.

Data against variables were collected using a seven-point Likert scale with items choices from “completely disagree” to (1) to “completely agree” (7). For Abusive supervision scale of Tepper (2000) was used having 15 items with chi-square values significant at $p < .001$ Cronbach’s α was 0.95. Knowledge sharing was measured using a scale of Den Hooff & De Ridder (2004) who had a coefficient of alpha (α) 0.94 while scale mainly focused on knowledge collecting and knowledge donating. For psychological capital, an original version scale of Luthans et al. (2007) was used with the coefficient of $\alpha = 0.93$ and there were 24 items of this scale. An eight-item scale of Chang & Bordia (2001) with $\alpha 0.75$ was used to measure group cohesion.

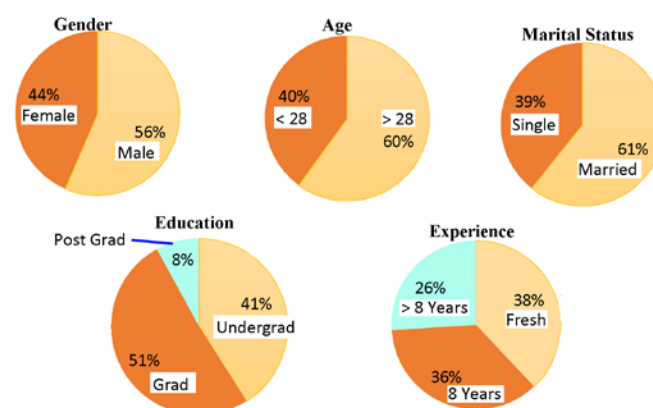


Figure 2: Demographics of respondents.

Out of total respondents, 135 (56.5%) were male and 104 (43.5%) were female. 39.7% of respondents were below 28 years of age while 145 (60.7%) respondents were married. Regarding experience at the same job, 91 (38.1%) respondents were new to the jobs while 61(25.5%) respondents were having more than eight years of experience. Most of the respondents (51.5%) were MS, M.Phil. in qualification, 41.4% were undergrad while rest were with postgraduate qualifications. Figure 2 depicts the results of descriptive analysis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was run first to see the blueprints of variables and to scrutinize the valid items used and then Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to check for the relationship of variables.

Table 1: AVE, CR and α Values

Construct	Indicator	Standard Loadings	Standard Error	A	AVE	CR
Abusive Supervision	AS2	0.842	0.119	0.910	0.591	0.717
	AS4	0.579	0.166			
	AS5	0.694	0.148			
	AS6	0.548	0.191			
	AS7	0.786	0.147			
	AS8	0.66	0.128			
	AS9	0.737	0.116			
	AS10	0.608	0.161			
	AS11	0.788	0.095			
	AS12	0.824	0.091			
	AS13	0.686	0.114			
	AS14	0.785	0.117			
	AS15	0.665	0.159			
	Knowledge Sharing	KS1	0.632			
KS2		0.791	0.105			
KS3		0.667	0.153			
KS4		0.713	0.104			
KS5		0.673	0.185			
KS6		0.811	0.151			
KS8		0.638	0.148			
KS9		0.723	0.115			
KS10		0.747	0.112			
Group Cohesion		GC1	0.551	0.178	0.745	0.588953
	GC2	0.707	0.116			
	GC3	0.77	0.099			
	GC4	0.724	0.126			
	GC7	0.780	0.187			
	GC8	0.713	0.200			
	Psychological Capital	PC1	0.664	0.128		
PC2		0.746	0.189			
PC3		0.787	0.158			
PC4		0.666	0.182			
PC5		0.731	0.097			
PC6		0.782	0.109			
PC7		0.687	0.122			
PC8		0.577	0.078			
PC9		0.513	0.157			
PC10		0.636	0.165			
PC11		0.749	0.130			
PC13		0.802	0.155			
PC14		0.612	0.070			
PC16		0.891	0.116			
PC18		0.668	0.162			
PC19		0.799	0.161			
PC20		0.527	3.934			
PC21		0.862	0.110			
PC22	0.734	0.138				
PC23	0.553	0.221				
PC24	0.799	0.121				

SEM is a method that assesses the latent constructs through a broader means of information. Factor 0.49 or above factor loading values represented the significance of items and for better and high convergent validity. Items from the scale are removed which are having low factor loadings but not more than 20% of items should be removed from a single variable scale otherwise scale itself deems to be weak. Removal of items is decided through an index of decisions including Chi-Square χ^2 , Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA), goodness of fit index (GFI), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), and Chisq/Df which is equal to CIMIN/Df. Thus, AS1 and AS3 were removed from the scale of Abusive Supervision (AS), one item KS7 was removed from the variable Knowledge Sharing (KS), two items GC5, GC6 were removed from the scale of Group Cohesion (GC) while PC12, PC15, PC17 were removed from the variable of Psychological Capital (PC). The remaining items were re-assessed checking items to the total correlation that was within the defined range of 0.35-0.70. Table 1 shows the results and findings of CFA.

Every construct in the scale is having above 0.50 average variance extracted (AVE) and it was found to be between 0.58 and 0.61. Composite reliability (CR) of the scale was found to be 0.71, 0.71, 0.70, and 0.73 while the suggested value of CR is 0.70. The values of Cronbach's alpha (α) were found to be above 0.7 suggested thresholds by researchers. All of the values of AVE, CR, and α are provided in Table 1.

Model fit indices for and threshold (level of acceptance) for CFA of each variable is represented in Table 2. All the constructs were unidimensional and the abusive supervision's construct was having all the indices within their defined limits. Also, the CFA of group cohesion showed that the collected data had the fit indices within the proposed limits. Twelve items construct of knowledge sharing was with indices in the limited criteria. Mediator of the study was psychological capital with CFA and goodness of fit indices of ($\chi^2 = 386.683$, $df = 157$, $p = 0.040$, $\chi^2/df = 2.463$, $RMSEA = 0.078$, $NFI = 0.857$, $RFI = 0.789$, $IFI = 0.91$, $TLI = 0.863$, $CFI 0.907$).

Table 2: Goodness of Fit Analysis.

Construct	χ^2	Df	P	Chisq/df = CMIN/Df	RMSEA	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
Acceptable limits	-	-	≤ 0.05	≤ 5	< 0.08	> 0.9	> 0.9	> 0.9	> 0.9	> 0.9
Abusive Supervision (AS)	108.29	45	0.010	2.354	0.075	0.944	0.910	0.967	0.943	0.966
Group Cohesion (GC)	11.700	5	0.020	2.334	0.075	0.980	0.930	0.986	0.958	0.986
Psychological Capital (OC)	386.68	157	0.040	2.463	0.078	0.860	0.790	0.910	0.863	0.907
Knowledge Sharing (KS)	35.240	15	< 0.001	2.349	0.075	0.960	0.90	0.976	0.940	0.975
Proposed Model fit Indices	1.944	13	< 0.001	4.350	0.025	0.830	0.999	0.949	0.906	0.892

All variables are found to have a significant correlation of 0.3-0.6. All results were found to be significant except the correlation between group cohesion and abusive supervision that is found to be insignificant. The average response of the supervisor's negative behavior remained in the middle almost, but psychological capital, knowledge sharing, and group cohesion were with high averages above 5.0 of all. The highest deviation in responses was found in abusive supervision 1.130 while other variables with lower deviations of 0.9, 0.8, and 0.93 around the mean value.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

	Mean	SD	Abusive Supervision	Knowledge Sharing	Psychological Capital	Group Cohesion
Abusive Supervision	3.055	1.130	1	-	-	-
Knowledge Sharing	5.072	0.912	-.267**	1	-	-
Psychological Capital	5.265	0.881	-.346**	.515**	1	-
Group Cohesion	5.273	0.937	-.051	.475**	.535**	1

*P<.05, **P<.01, ***P<.001

SEM was used to test the proposed model with one mediator and one moderator and indices were found to be $\chi^2 = 56.667$, $df = 13$, $p = 0.000$, $\chi^2/df = 4.35$, $RMSEA = 0.0245$, $NFI = 0.839$, $RFI = 0.899$, $IFI = 0.749$, $TLI = 0.906$, $CFI = 0.892$. Abusive supervision affects knowledge sharing direct and indirectly. Direct standardized effect of abusive supervision on KS is $-.096^{**}$ while abusive supervision having an effect on psychological capital with $\beta = -.384^{**}$ and $t = 4.78$. Effect transferred to knowledge sharing through mediator was $\beta = 0.287^{**}$, $t = 10.11$. Hence, it is a case of partial mediation (see Figures 3, 4).

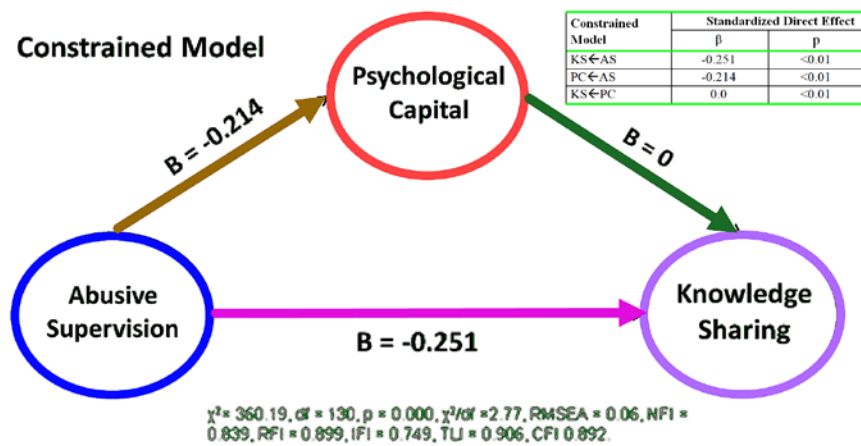


Figure 3: Constrained Model.

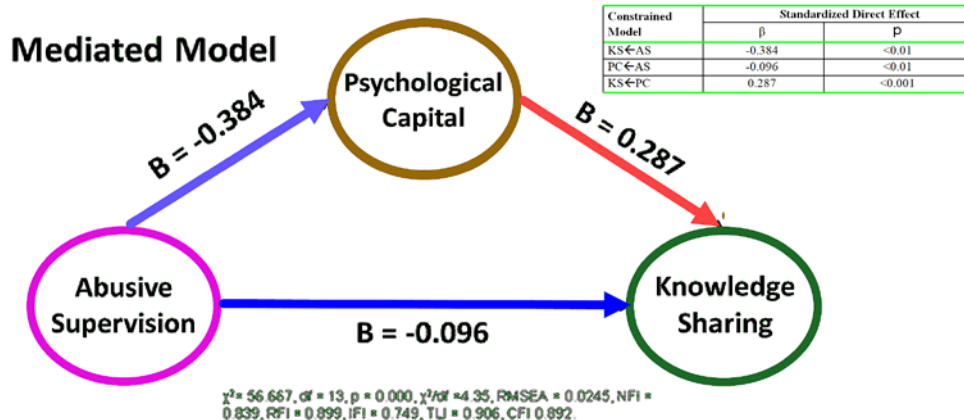


Figure 4: Mediated Model

Mediation was tested following the approach of Baron & Kenny (1986). Four steps process was used. After testing and finding significant relation of IV to DV and IV to MV and MV to DV, mediation was further tested. While adding PC in the model we see that the relation of AS and KS was having a lower beta of $\beta = -.096$ than in the constrained model where $\beta = -.251$ (see Figures 3,

4). Hence it confirms that PC mediates between the relationship of AS and KS. Reduction in beta by 0.155 points that the relationship between AS and KS is significant and proves that mediation exists partially. Hence our first, second, and fourth hypotheses are supported by results to be true.

Table 4: Estimates of Moderation

Model	Standardized Direct Effect	Unstandardized Direct Effect	SE	p-value
	B	B		
PC ← AS	-0.384**	-0.258**	0.033	< .01
KS ← GC	0.538**	0.489**	0.044	< .01
PC ← GC	0.538**	0.489**	0.044	< .01
PC ← AS*GC	0.238	0.217**	0.048	< .01

*P<.05, **P<.01, ***P<.001

In Table 4 we can see that both AS and GC are significantly related to psychological capital. AS is negatively impacting PC ($\beta=-.384$, $p<.01$), and while GC is impacting positively ($\beta=.538$, $p<.01$) on PC. The interaction term of both GC and AS is having positive significant beta means moderation exist but the direction of the moderation effect can be decided while using ($\beta=.217$, $p<.01$). Figure 5 graphing GC as moderator we can see that presence of group cohesion affects the relationship of AS on PC, at low group cohesion increased abusive behavior of supervisor reduces psychological capital in employees as is represented by the solid line in the graph but in presence of high group cohesion even if abusive supervision is high but psychological capital of employees does not decrease else it remains same or improves very little. Hence GC is moderating in the relationship of AS and PC. So, our hypothesis H3 is supported by the yielded results. Relationship of AS and PC is stronger in the presence of weak GC while in the presence of strong GC it weaker and PC of employees stays improved or stable. The hypotheses results are given in Table 5.

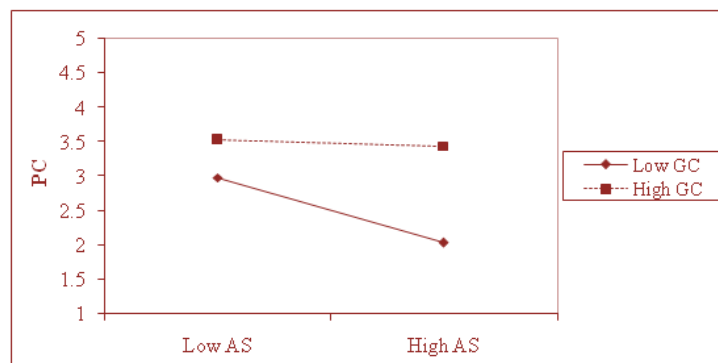


Figure 5: GC as Moderator in AS and PC

Table 5: Conclusion of hypotheses testing

Hypothesis	Accepted / Rejected
H1	Accepted
H2	Accepted
H3	Accepted
H4	Accepted

5. CONCLUSION

This study proves that the abusive behavior of a supervisor affects employee's psychological capital and hence ultimately they stop or reduce knowledge sharing with their colleagues. The study also proves that strong cohesion in the group moderates the relation of abusive supervision and

knowledge sharing with the mediating role of psychological capital. The analysis confirmed that employees try to conserve their resources (knowledge and skills) when they are suppressed or depressed due to the abusive behavior of their leader. This study strengthens the COR showing that loss of psychological resources stressed the individuals and to preventing further loss or conserve their resources they stopped sharing their knowledge while group cohesion can work as an energizer or treatment of the stress. However, in-depth further literature about how and why this happens is further being explored by other researchers in the world.

6. AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIAL

Information can be made available by contacting the corresponding author.

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Iftikhar Hussain is a Senior Lecturer of Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Foundation University Islamabad. He is a Ph.D scholar. He works on leadership and human psychology.



Qazi Mohammed Ahmed is a Senior Lecturer of Department of Business Studies of Behria University Islamabad Campus. He is a PhD scholar.



Dr. Amir Gulzar is an Associate Professor of Department of Business Administration in Faculty of Management Sciences at Foundation University Islamabad. He got a PhD in Management and M.Phil in Entrepreneurship (Gold Medal) from Foundation University Islamabad. He is also a Deputy Registrar at Foundation University.



Usama Usman is a Lecturer of Department Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Foundation University Islamabad. He is a PhD scholar at Xian University of China.



Dr. Sajjad Hussain is an Assistant Professor of Management Sciences at Foundation University, Rawalpindi. He had a PhD in HRM.
