

# Relationship between Paternalistic Leadership & Job Satisfaction: A Mixed Method Study

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*This study examines the relationship between Paternalistic Leadership and Job Satisfaction, and the mediating roles of Psychological Empowerment and Fairness in India. In the West, it is widely believed that Paternalistic Leadership does not support empowerment and is therefore not perceived as fair by employees. The study employs a sequential mixed-method approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative studies. The first study was quantitative and used a process macro that showed that Psychological Empowerment and Fairness sequentially mediated the relationship between Paternalistic Leadership and Job Satisfaction. The second study, based on thematic analysis, explored employees' experiences, revealing that Indian employees perceive it as authoritative (not authoritarian) and nurturing. This fosters psychological empowerment and fairness at work.*

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## Introduction

Leadership refers to a process in which a group of people (i.e., team, unit, and organization) is influenced and motivated to spend their efforts and resources synergistically to accomplish some common objectives and make a real and believed vision (Yukl, 1989; Xiao & Vasudevan, 2023; Hoxha, 2019;). To date, of the several studies that were conducted on leadership in India, most appealed to specific, usually Western cultures, such as North America and Europe (Ly, 2020; McClellan, 2022; Northhouse, 2004; Blunt, 1991; Yukl, 2002). Since Western scholars primarily developed leadership theories for a long time, people believed that what was favorable and/or unfavorable about leadership in Western societies should also be applied to other societies. Research has shown that, despite some similarities, certain differences exist between cultures regarding acceptable and unacceptable leadership styles (Aycan,

2008; Chen et al., 2024; Bassett, 2020; Howard & Irving, 2021; Den Hartog et al., 1999; Dorfman et al., 2012; Kabasakal et al., 2012). There are likely universal (etic) and culturally specific (emic) aspects of leadership that must be considered when considering the effectiveness of various leadership styles (Hamlin & Patel, 2020). In cultures that endorse a strong and stable social hierarchy, seemingly universal facilitators of leadership effectiveness, such as being visionary, inspirational, participative, and communicative, may not be as effective as in a cultural context that values equal power distributions (Farh & Cheng, 2000; Fox & Bourgeois, 2022; Hwang et al. 2015; Park et al. 2019). Asian conceptualizations of leadership provide additional contributions to the leadership literature by considering how various it may differ within non-Western and more Asian cultural contexts (Farh & Cheng, 2000; Vu & Gill, 2019).

We focus on paternalistic leadership (Farh & Cheng, 2000). Controversies surrounding paternalistic leadership result primarily because they have been observed differently through various cultural perspectives. Paternalistic leadership is endorsed when observed through the lenses of power distance and collectivism, but criticized through the lenses of low power distance and individualism (Gelfand et al., 2007).

Indian culture is high in power distance, masculinity, and intermediate in individualism (Hofstede, 2011). Therefore, Western models of leadership that apply to cultures practicing equality may

not be the most appropriate solution. Given the emergence of India as an economic powerhouse in South Asia or the Indian Subcontinent (INDIA, Economic Survey, 2023-2024) it is natural to focus research on leadership most suitable for Indian organizations.

Employees must be empowered for any organization to grow and develop leaders. Empowerment is an individual's perception or attitude towards work and is composed of finding work meaningfulness, perception of competence to do the work, self-determination, and impactful outcomes in an organization (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Zimmerman, 2000; Menon, 2001; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995). The Western world perceives that paternalistic leadership encourages more conformity of process and performance (Bryman et al, 2011) and therefore, is not perceived as supportive of empowerment. However, Spreitzer (2007) stated that a supportive, trusting relationship with one's leader is an important contextual antecedent of psychological empowerment. The dimensions of benevolence and morality in paternalistic leadership focus on building trust and encouraging role modeling.

**A supportive, trusting relationship with one's leader is an important contextual antecedent of psychological empowerment.**

Authors of the Western world feel that the paternalistic leader may also not be fair or impartial in the dispersion of authority or benevolence to subordinates

(Erden & Otken, 2019) and may prioritize familial ties. Therefore, we propose the following two research objectives. First, it investigates the effectiveness of paternalistic leadership by studying its effects on job satisfaction, psychological empowerment, and fairness at work. Second, it explores subordinates' experiences regarding psychological empowerment and fairness at work under a paternalistic leader.

Our study used a sequential mixed-method approach in which the first objective was studied using a quantitative study, while the second objective was studied using a qualitative semi-structured survey technique. In study 1, we hypothesized that psychological empowerment and fairness would sequentially mediate the relationship between paternalistic leadership and job satisfaction. In study 2, we used thematic analysis to understand subordinates' experiences of psychological empowerment and fairness. The results were triangulated (Cresswell, 2009) for an in-depth analysis. The results (of Study 1) showed that paternalistic leadership improved job satisfaction through the serial mediation of psychological empowerment and perceived fairness. The second study found that subordinates welcomed paternalistic leaders. The authoritarian dimension was seen as *authoritative* (not authoritarian) and, hence, supported the growth of subordinates. The leader was considered empowering and fair at work. This study supports a leadership style that is culturally relevant and weaves in the concepts of psychological empowerment and fairness for improved effectiveness.

This study is significant because it examines leadership using a non-Western lens.

## Review of Literature for Study 1

***Paternalism and Paternalistic Leadership:*** Paternalism in the context of leadership is termed *paternalistic leadership* and defined as a hierarchical superior-subordinate relationship, where the role of the superior is to create a family environment and provide care, protection, and guidance to subordinates in both work and non-work domains. Subordinates are expected to be loyal and deferent to superiors (Aycan, 2006). Paternalistic leadership is viewed as an unacceptable type in nations described as 'Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic' — the acronym 'WEIRD' (Hiller, Sin, Ponnappalli, & Ozgen, 2019). The proponents of paternalistic leadership characterize it as the 'role-transcending concern of an employer' (Padavic & Earnest, 1994), leading to empowerment, protection, grooming, and development of employees (Singh & Bhandarker, 1990). Research from Turkey, India, and Pakistan indicates that Paternalism does not imply "authoritarianism"; instead, this form of leadership demonstrates care and protection (Aycan et al., 2000; Chen et al., 2024). In Western literature, paternalism is viewed differently because its benevolent aspect is underappreciated (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). Therefore, drawing on the implicit leadership theory framework (Lord & Maher, 1993), it is argued that cultural context influences not only implicit leadership theories as cognitive

structures or prototypes characterizing ideal leaders (Kenney et al., 1996) but also the *relationships* among leadership prototypes.

Paternalistic leadership is an indigenous Chinese leadership theory that combines strong discipline and authority with fatherly benevolence and moral integrity (Farh & Cheng, 2000; Bedi, 2020; Farh et al, 2006). It has three dimensions: authoritarian leadership, benevolent leadership, and moral leadership. Authoritarian leadership imposes strong discipline and authority on subordinates, commands employees to strictly follow the organizational course of action, and demands stern compliance to organizational rules from employees. The benevolent leadership dimension refers to superiors' concerns for their subordinates' personal lives and family welfare (Cheng et al., 2004; Farh et al, 2006). Benevolence manifests in work and nonwork situations (Farh & Cheng, 2000). The leader cares about the professional development of subordinates and constantly reviews subordinates' performance to provide support when they perform poorly (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008, Pellegrini et al, 2010). The leader also sees subordinates as family members and provides them with the care and support needed (Cheng et al., 2000). The subordinates also tend to reciprocate by expressing gratitude and being trustworthy to the leader (Chan et al., 2013; Rawat, & Lyndon, 2016). The moral leadership dimension refers to leaders demonstrating superior personal virtues, self-discipline, and unselfishness in the workplace (Cheng et al., 2004). Moral leaders will exalt collective and public

interests over self and private interests, and they are respected, admired, and considered ideal leaders. Moral leaders are role models for their employees to exhibit traits, such as self-discipline, selflessness, integrity, fairness, trustworthiness, kindness, and respect (Farh & Cheng, 2000). Paternalistic leadership is compared with nurturant task leadership (Sinha, 1995), authoritarian leadership, transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1995) and leader-member exchange (Dansereau et al., 1975) for similarities and differences.

**In contrast to U.S. business leaders, Indian CEOs tend to be more preoccupied with internal management, long-term strategic vision, and organizational culture.**

*Paternalistic Leadership and Job Satisfaction:* Job satisfaction is a pleasurable emotional state that results from achieving job values (Cronley & Kim, 2017; Ting, 1996). Job satisfaction can be viewed as how employees feel about the job and the extent to which the job's value is consistent with their needs (Yvonne et al., 2014). Capelli et al. (2010) found that, in contrast to U.S. business leaders, Indian CEOs tend to be more preoccupied with internal management, long-term strategic vision, and organizational culture. Financial matters are not at the top of this agenda. Indian leaders seem to care more about motivating employees and setting an example than currying favor with shareholders or markets. This concern for subordinates supports job satisfaction. Pellegrini and

Scandura (2008) found that paternalism was firmly and positively related to employees' job satisfaction in the Turkish business context.

The theoretical approaches explaining job satisfaction are *Task characteristics approach* (Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Walsh, Taber, & Beehr, 1980; Hogan & Martell, 1987; Bhuian, Al-Shammari, & Jefri, 1996; Lu, 1999; Bhuian & Mengue, 2015), and *dispositional approach* (Staw & Ross, 1985; Davis-Blake & Pfeffer, 1989). Studies supporting dispositions and their impact on job satisfaction have focused on intrinsic motivation (Savery, 1996; Lu et al., 1999; Schonfeld, 2000), positive/negative affectivity (Connolly & Viswesvaran, 2000; Simmons et al., 2001), self-esteem (McCrae, & Costa, 1994), and the need for achievement (Mannheim et al., 1997). Using the dispositional approach (Staw & Ross, 1985; Davis-Blake & Pfeffer, 1989) and social exchange theory, paternalistic support from the leader in the form of direction setting (authoritarian), role model (moral), and mentoring (benevolent), the follower leads to job satisfaction. Therefore, we hypothesize as follows:

H1: Paternalistic leadership will lead to job satisfaction.

### **Mediation of Psychological Empowerment**

*Paternalistic Leadership and Psychological Empowerment:* Psychological empowerment combines four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Kanter, 1979;

Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995). Meaning is the value of work goals assessed by individual ideals or standards, job roles, beliefs, and behavior. Competence is an individual's trust in and mastery of their ability to carry out activities with their skills or business performance expectations. Self-determination refers to feelings about choices in initiating, organizing, and making decisions regarding work methods, steps, and efforts (Kanter, 1979). Impact, namely the extent to which individuals can influence strategic administrative results in the workplace (Colquitt et al., 2007), and the degree to which a person can influence strategic, management, and desired results at work (Kanter, 1979).

According to Handayani and Hartijasti (2021), the benevolent dimension of paternalistic leadership strengthens Psychological Empowerment among employees by making their work more meaningful (meaning dimension), making them competent (competence dimension), giving them the ability to approach work effectively (self-determination dimension), and obtaining the correct result (impact dimension). The moral dimension of leadership provides an example to employees about integrity and responsibility to fulfil an individual's obligations, not taking advantage of others, and an exemplary attitude (Zimmerman, 1990). These moral leaders exert their strength as role models for their employees, building a more personal emotional bond (trust) between leaders and followers, and thus strengthening. Au-

thoritarian leadership asserts authority and control over subordinates, and demands obedience from subordinates (Loi et al., 2009). When viewed independently, the authoritarian leadership dimension may appear to be the inverse of empowerment; however, in conjunction with benevolent and moral dimensions, it enables psychological empowerment (Dedahanov et al., 2019). Blau's (1964) social exchange theory was used to study the relationship between paternalistic leadership and employee work-related outcomes. When employees are cared for like family members, they take the initiative to prove their competence, show self-determination, find work meaningful, and impact their actions. Therefore, paternalistic leadership supports employees' psychological empowerment.

*Psychological empowerment and Job satisfaction:* Psychological empowerment influences employee motivation, job satisfaction, and job performance (Kimolo, 2013; Thomas & Tymon, 1993; Spreitzer, 2007). Psychological empowerment also impacts employees' tenure by improving their satisfaction levels and creating better work environments (Carless, 2004; Fuller et al., 1999; ABD Patah et al., 2009). Varma and Malhotra (2022) found that meaning, self-determination, and impact significantly affect job satisfaction.

*H2: Psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between Paternalistic leadership and job satisfaction.*

## Mediation of Fairness

*Paternalistic Leadership and Fairness:* Justice refers to whether one adheres to specific rules or standards, while 'Fairness' refers to how one responds to perceptions of these rules (and rule compliance). In other words, 'justice' denotes morally required conduct, whereas 'Fairness' denotes an evaluative judgment of whether this conduct is morally praiseworthy. Wanting to be treated fairly is considered a fundamental human desire. Universality theories suggest that being treated fairly fulfils several basic needs, including the need for human influence and voice (Adams, 1963; van den Bos & Lind, 2002), a sense of self-worth and self-esteem (Lind, 2001), and universal norms of ethics and morality (Folger, 1998; De Cremer, & Van Knippenberg, 2003; Van den., & Lind, 2002). Based on the dimensions of justice, the dimensions of fairness are as follows:

Distributive Fairness (accuracy of ratings and concern over ratings), interactional fairness (respectfulness and sensitivity of supervision), and procedural fairness (setting performance expectations, raters' confidence, and seeking appeal).

The social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) suggests that people develop relationships (good or bad) based on their experiences with those with whom they interact. This theory proposes that employees in a high social exchange with their leader or supervisor tend to behave correspondingly by invoking the norm of reciprocity (Emerson, 1976; Gouldner,

1960) to show their gratitude. Therefore, using the social exchange theory, employees who feel genuinely cared for and supported by paternalistic management experience fairness.

*Relationship between Fairness and Job Satisfaction:* Studies have shown that perceptions of Fairness are strongly related to job satisfaction (Al-Zu'bi, 2010; Ambrose et al., 2007; Mayer et al., 2008; Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Jones & Martens, 2007). Applying the equity theory (Adams, 1963) treatment with fairness leads to job satisfaction. Based on the above positive connection between fairness and paternalistic leadership and job satisfaction, we hypothesize that

*H3: Perception of Fairness mediates the relationship between Paternalistic leadership and Job satisfaction*

### Serial Mediation

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964 & Homans, 1961) states that when employees experience psychological empowerment, they perceive their work as meaningful and feel valued, which enhances their perceptions of procedural and distributive fairness. (Kakar, 1971; Kakar et al, 2002) compared a sample of Indian leaders with those of Ameri-

**When employees experience psychological empowerment, they perceive their work as meaningful and feel valued.**

can managers and found that the dimensions of challenging, inspiring, enabling, and modeling the differences were higher among the Indian group than those of the American group.

*H4: Psychological empowerment and Fairness serially mediate the relationship between Paternalistic leadership and Job satisfaction*

### Research Design

The research design adopted was a sequential mixed method study (Creswell, 2003; 2009) whereby study 1 was quantitative and study 2 was qualitative in design. The data was collected in both the studies using the snowball technique.

**The study used mixed method research.**

The study used mixed method research. The purpose of mixed-methods research is to investigate a problem thoroughly by drawing on quantitative measures to determine the relationship between variables and qualitative tools to provide insight into the meaning and understanding of the relationship. The study used a fixed mixed-method design (Morse, 2009; Morse & Niehaus, 2009). This design is used when quantitative and qualitative methods are predetermined and planned at the start of the research process, and mixed-method procedures are implemented as planned (Morse & Niehaus, 2009). The results of both the studies were triangulated. Triangulation facilitates convergence, corroboration,

and correspondence of results from different methods (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989).

**Study 1**

Study 1 involved a survey-based research. An online questionnaire was mailed to employees of public and private sector organizations in India. After cleaning the data, 292 responses were obtained. The responses were mainly from IT and ITES organizations. The study included 169 male and 123 female participants.

**Scales Used**

Paternalistic leadership was measured using the 6-item scale of Cheng, et al. 's (2002) six-item scale. The reliability of the scale is 0.82. Psychological empowerment was measured using the 12-item scale developed by Spreitzer (1995), with a reliability of the empowerment scale being 0.80. Fairness was measured using a 15-item scale by Bacha

and Walker (2013), and the reliability of the fairness scale was 0.79. Job satisfaction was measured using a 10-item scale developed by Macdonald and MacIntyre (1997). The reliability of the job satisfaction scale was 0.77.

**Study 1: Result & Analysis**

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed using SPSS (version 2024). From the scales of fairness (Bacha & Walker, 2013), one item (item 3) was deleted, thus making it a 14-item scale. The deleted item was, 'I have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process'. CFA and measurement models were derived using AMOS (version 2024).

Table 1 presents the mean, standard deviation, correlation, and Cronbach's alpha for all four variables. All variables showed a significant positive correlation, and Cronbach's alpha values were above 0.7, which is acceptable (Cortina, 1993).

**Table I Mean, SD, Correlations & Cronbach Alpha**

	Mean	SD	PL	PE	Fair	JS
PL	3.85	0.71	0.795			
PE	3.85	0.72	.750**	0.915		
Fair	3.66	0.65	.744**	.674**	0.881	
JS	3.78	0.75	.699**	.808**	.640**	0.889

N=292

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

Paternalistic leadership (PL); Psychological Empowerment (PE), Fairness perception (Fair)

Diagonal Values are Cronbach Alpha values

For the indices of the proposed measurement model (Table 2), CFA were (Chisq/df = 3.254, GFI = 0.710, TLI =

0.755, CFI = 0.780, RMSEA = 0.088). Table 3 shows composite reliability and convergent and divergent validity.

**Table 2 Measurement Model**

	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF	GFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
All 4 variables	2518.889	774	0	3.254	0.71	0.755	0.78	0.088

**Table 3 Composite Reliability, Convergent & Discriminant Validity**

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	JS	PL	PE	Fair
JS	0.890	0.450	0.897	0.900	0.671			
PL	0.890	0.730	0.856	0.896	0.824	0.854		
PE	0.901	0.698	0.897	0.924	0.947	0.903	0.835	
Fair	0.875	0.703	0.856	0.958	0.717	0.925	0.792	0.838

Paternalistic leadership (PL); Psychological Empowerment (PE), Fairness Perception (Fair)

Since these measures were self-reported, we ran the Harman Tingle-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The test states that if the total variance extracted by one factor exceeds 50%, common method bias is present. Analysis showed that a single factor explained 38.59% of the variance. Therefore, our study was statistically free of common method bias.

Process Macro was used to test the regression paths and mediation relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Table 4 shows the regression paths, and Table 5 shows the indirect paths for the two-stage serial mediation analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). In our analytical model, we tested for a three-path-mediated effect (Hayes et al., 2010;).

We used the analytical approach outlined by Preacher and Hayes (2004) and Shrout and Bolger (2002) to test our mediation hypotheses. Table 5 provides estimates of the indirect effects, along with the symmetric and 95% bias-cor-

rected bootstrapped confidence intervals for our path estimates. The analysis shows that all hypotheses are supported. Paternalistic leadership leads to job satisfaction (Hypothesis 1, supported; Table 4). Psychological empowerment and fairness mediated the relationship between paternalistic leadership and job satisfaction (Hypotheses 2 and 3 are supported; Table 4). The serial mediation of psychological empowerment and fairness was also found to be significant (Hypothesis 4 was supported; Table 5 & Fig. 1).

## Study 2

Study 2 was a survey-based one, in which a semi-structured questionnaire was developed with required detailed qualitative responses. The semi-structured questionnaire aimed to determine whether subordinates experienced a paternalistic leadership style. Additionally, it aimed to understand subordinates' experiences of empowerment and fair treatment at work.

**Table 4 Path Coefficients of the Structural Model**

Path	Analysis of effects	beta	standard error	t- value	P		
C	Total effect (PL-JS)	0.74	0.04	16.66	***	c-	Direct Effects (PL-JS)
0.17	0.06	2.74	**	H1			
a1	PL-PE	0.75	0.04	19.3	***		
b1	PL-Fairness	0.5	0.05	9.5	***		
a2	PE-JS	0.65	0.06	11.76	***		
b2	Fair- JS	0.12	0.06	1.96	*		
a3	PE-Fair	0.25	0.05	4.79	***		

Beta = regression weight, SE = standard error, t values are computed through bootstrapping procedure with 292 cases and 10000 samples, \*\*\* p<0.000, \*\*p < .001, \* p < .05

**Table 5 Serial Mediation Analysis**

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y	Bootstrapping for mediation				Remarks
	Effect	SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	
PL -> PE -> JS	0.46	0.05	0.37	0.55	H2 supported
PL -> Fair ->JS	0.06	0.05	0	0.12	H3 Supported
PL ->PE ->Fair -> JS	0.02	0.03	0	0.06	H4 Supported

Paternalistic leadership (PL); Psychological Empowerment (PE), Fairness Perception (Fair)

The survey questionnaire protocol consisted of the following questions: leader’s behavior regarding command and control; instances describing the leader’s command and control behavior; leader’s adherence to discipline and compliance with organizational rules; concern for the professional development of subordinates; disciplined behavior and compliance with organizational rules; concern for the professional development of subordinates; perception of the organization as a family and seeing subordinates as family members; perception as an ideal leader and instances describing him as fair; contribution to day-to-day performance and overall productivity; employee’s perception of empowerment under the leader; experience of being

treated fairly at work by the leader; and role modeling the leader. Each sub-dimension of leadership was studied by first asking whether the respondents experienced the sub-dimension using a 3-point Likert scale (low, high, cannot say) and then sharing their experiences descriptively. Descriptive questions were added to understand employees’ experiences of psychological empowerment and fairness at work.

The snowballing technique was used to collect responses. In total, 174 responses were obtained. Of these, 83 were males, and 91 were females; nine were educated up to class 12th, 80 were graduates, and 85 were post-graduates. 54 respondents had up to 5 years of work

Fig. 1 illustrates the research model with the outcome values.

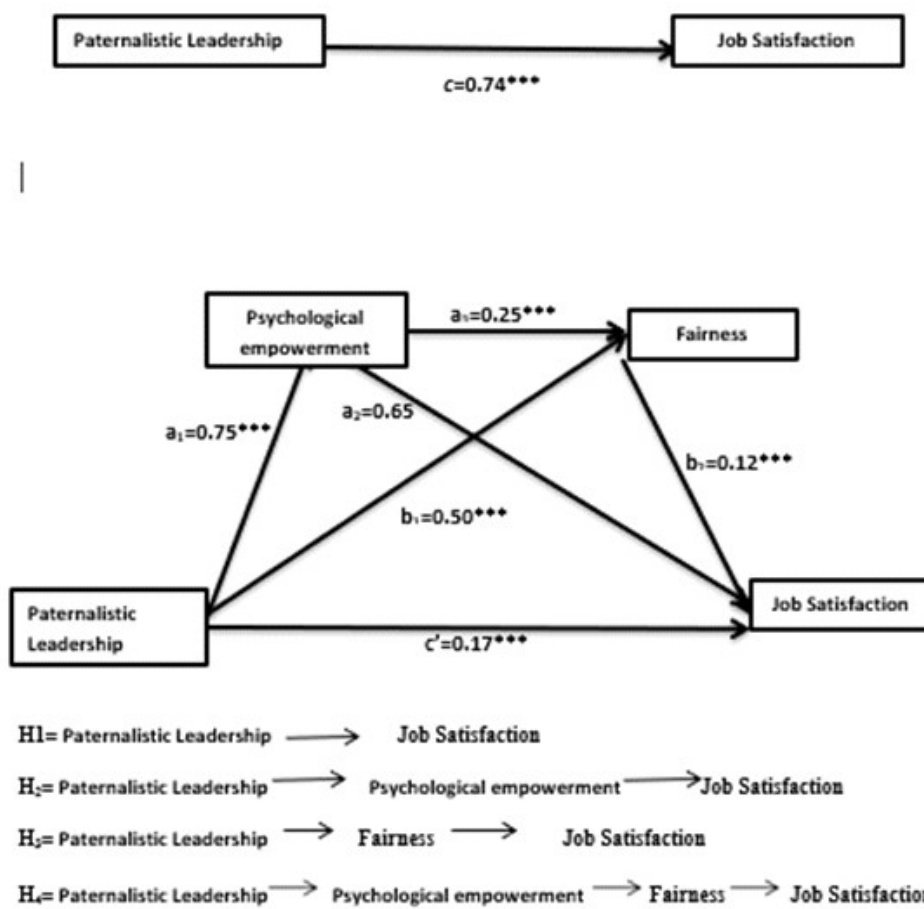


Figure Adapted from: Hayes, Preacher and Myers, (2010)  
 N = 292. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

experience, 63 had 6–10 years of experience, 35 had 11-15 years of experience, and 22 had more than 15 years of experience. The diverse sectors include education, banking, retail, IT, and ITES.

### Study 2 Result & Analysis

Table 6 presents the frequency and percentage of responses for the three di-

mensions of paternalistic leadership. The analysis shows the high level of experience of all three dimensions of paternalistic leadership. Table 7 shows a sample of respondents' experiences towards high and low paternalistic leadership responses.

Table 8 captures the respondents' experience of empowerment. The per-

**Table 6 Response Distribution**

Dimensions	Sub-dimension questions	Frequency			Percentage			
		Low	High	can't say	Total resp	Low	High	can't say
Authoritarian	1. command and control	39	108	27	174	22.41	62.07	15.52
	2. discipline and compliance	20	133	21	174	11.49	76.44	12.07
Benevolent	concern for the professional development	27	130	17	174	15.52	74.71	9.77
	perception of the organisation as a family	40	109	25	174	22.99	62.64	14.37
Moral	leader perceived as an ideal leader	33	116	25	174	18.97	66.67	14.37
	aspiration to be like your leader	31	120	23	174	17.82	68.97	13.22
		190	716	138	1044	18.20	68.58	13.22

**Table 7 Descriptive Responses For The Three Dimensions of Paternalistic Leadership**

	Comments
Authoritarian	High on command and control If the volume is high he commands to finish the pending work .....have to extend our shifts to complete those tasks. High compliance and discipline He is punctual and makes sure everyone is doing their work prior to the deadline.. High professional development Sets up a mentorship program, pairing less experienced employees with senior professionals High on perceiving organization as a family He always make us feel as a family
Benevolent	leader perceived as ideal leader An ideal leader due her qualities such as perseverance, diligence, energetic and always to look forward. role modeling leader
Role Model	low compliance and discipline Our leader often lets project deadlines slide without good reason. Low professional development Professional development very low Low on perceiving organization as a family Boss keeps work and personal life separate. .... they don't see the company as a family-like setting. leader not perceived as ideal leader I don't believe he is ideal leader. No role modeling of leader

<p>Leader is Empowering</p>	<p>I would like to emulate my leader. I respect and try to imitate.                      empowering leadership they create an environment of trust, open communication, and support. .... gives their team the freedom to explore different approaches and solutions. never micromanaged                      treated fairly at work                      consistent and transparent way they handle workload distribution. .... my leader took the time to assess each team members current responsibilities and skill sets before assigning additional tasks. They ensured that the workload was distributed evenly.                      Feeling of commitment at work                      leader herself keeps her word and commitment at work</p>	<p>He don't satisfy the majority .....not ideal leader.                      Low empowering leadership                      I don't feel empowered                      Not treated fairly at work                      Priority given to favourite employees</p>
<p>Leader is fair</p>	<p>Feeling of commitment at work                      leader herself keeps her word and commitment at work</p>	<p>No Feeling of commitment                      I am dedicated to my job, but it's because of my immediate team, not so much the boss.</p>
<p>Follower's commitment to the leader</p>	<p>Feeling of commitment at work                      leader herself keeps her word and commitment at work</p>	<p>No Feeling of commitment                      I am dedicated to my job, but it's because of my immediate team, not so much the boss.</p>

centage of respondents who experienced empowerment was higher than that of those who experienced low empowerment. Table 9 shows a sample of responses from respondents who experienced high and low empowerment. Table 10 shows experience of psychological empowerment by respondents.

### Discussion

Our study used a sequential mixed method approach to examine: (1) the relationship between paternalistic leadership and job satisfaction, psychological empowerment, and fairness at work, and (2) the experiences of subordinates around psychological empowerment and fairness at work under a paternalistic leader. With regard to the first objective, both the studies (quantitative and qualitative) showed that paternalistic leadership is largely accepted in Indian organizations. The quantitative study showed paternalistic leadership led to job satisfaction (hypothesis 1 supported). The qualitative study showed that all three dimensions of paternalistic leaders were accepted, appreciated, and practiced in Indian organizations. The analysis of the qualitative results showed high acceptance of paternalistic leadership in India. The number of respondents who appreciated high paternalistic leadership was significantly higher than those with low paternalism. Positive language and tone of comments and appreciation were

**The analysis of the qualitative results showed high acceptance of paternalistic leadership in India.**

**Table 8 Total Responses for Experience of Empowerment**

feeling empowered	Yes	No	can't say
Total responses	146	19	10
Percentage	83.91	10.92	5.75

**Table 9 Experience of Empowerment**

Leader is Empowering	High	Low
	I once worked on a critical project with a tight deadline. The leader set clear expectations but trusted me to manage my time and resources. Because of this empowerment, I was able to deliver the project on time, and we even exceeded the expected outcomes. The leader's trust and support were key to my success and growth in that role.	I feel directionless

**Table 10 Experience of Psychological Empowerment**

SN	Component	key comments
1	Meaningfulness	"During our group chats, my boss asks everyone to chip in their ideas, which makes me feel like what I say matters to our overall success."
2	Competence	"Being given new responsibilities makes me feel more confident in my abilities."
3	Self-Determination	"The leader trusts me to make decisions and take initiative without micromanaging."
4	Impact	"My contributions directly improved efficiency and team performance."

**Table 11 Fair Treatment by the Leader**

Treated fairly at work	Yes	No	Can't say
Total	144	22	8
Percentage of responses	82.76	12.64	4.60

**Table 12 Fairness at Work**

Leader is fair	treated fairly at work	Not treated fairly at work
	Fairness is demonstrated is through the consistent and transparent way they handle workload distribution. ....made me feel that my contributions were valued and that my well-being was considered, which is a clear indication of Fairness.	Priority given to favourite employees

**Table 13 Fair Treatment & Types**

SN	Component	key comments
1	Distributive Fairness	“She (the leader) ensures everyone has equal access to resources and opportunities.”
2	Procedural Fairness	“Performance reviews are based on clear criteria with the intent to support growth.”
3	Interactional Fairness	“Open forums for opinions foster respect and inclusion.”

higher for high paternalistic leaders than for low paternalistic leaders.

The dimensions of the leader’s benevolence (professional development of the subordinates and organization seen as a family) and the moral aspect (ideal leader and role model) of paternalistic leadership were well appreciated.

**Employees in India perceived the leader as *authoritative* and not authoritarian.**

While the Western world looks at an authoritarian leader in a negative light, our qualitative study showed that employees in India perceived the leader as *authoritative* and not authoritarian and appreciated authoritativeness as a necessary requirement for effective administration.

Though the terms ‘authoritative’ and ‘authoritarian’ leadership sound similar—and are often used interchangeably—they are very different. Authoritative leaders guide their team by example and inspire progression toward a common goal, whereas authoritarian leaders rely on command-and-demand compliance without questioning. Our study demonstrates that Indian leaders are clearly authoritative.

The authoritative leadership style was first defined by Goleman (2002) and compared with other leadership styles such as coaching, affiliative, democratic, coercive, and pacesetter. Authoritative leaders inspire motivation. They offer direction, guidance, and feedback to maintain enthusiasm and sense of accomplishment throughout a project or endeavor.

A strong preference for an authoritative (not authoritarian) leader who is strict and demanding, as well as caring and nurturing, is very much like *karta*, the paternalistic head of the joint family in India. Sinha (1979) has called this type of leader the ‘nurturant-task’ (NT) leader, who is strict in getting the task accomplished and tries to dominate the activities of the subordinates. Sinha (1979) refers to it as a nurturant in the sense of functioning as a benevolent guide to subordinates and taking personal interest in their wellbeing and growth.

The authoritative leader’s effect on subordinates leads to idealizing the leader and looking at him/her as a repository of all virtues, deserving faith and respect. Thus, the leader is a role model with many facets: high integrity, system builder, and humane figure (Virmani & Gupta, 1981). The modeling function of

leadership is highly salient in Indian organizations. There is a high preference for a personalized mode of relating across functions and tasks, and thus informal networks have a greater influence on organizational decision-making (Dayal, 1988; Garg & Parikh, 1995). study 2 corroborated these findings.

Our study is also in alignment with research from Turkey, and Pakistan which indicates that paternalism does not imply 'authoritarianism' but rather, this form of leadership demonstrates care and protection (Ayca et al., 2000). Therefore, we refer to the authoritarian dimension as authoritative.

The results of Study 1 showed that psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between paternalistic leadership and job satisfaction (Hypothesis 2). The qualitative study showed that respondents found leaders' behavior empowered. Empowerment came through various forms of support provided by leaders. For example, Study 2 showed that subordinates experienced psychological empowerment when the leader provided general support (not micromanagement) and extended opportunities for growth, collaboration, and delegation.

The results showed that the mediation of fairness in the relationship between paternalistic leadership and job satisfaction was significant (Hypothesis 3 supported). In the qualitative study, respondents found the leader to be fair. The leader was perceived as giving fair treatment and equal opportunities; being trans-

parent and impartial, supportive, and empowering; and enabling work-life balance and inclusion.

All the above behaviors show a nurturing behavior of the leader towards subordinates, which is a mix of authoritative (not authoritarianism), benevolence, and moral behavior that is appreciated and accepted. The followers were open about the role of modeling their leaders. The leader was not perceived as a stifler or despot. Rather, the leader was seen as encouraging, mentoring, and showing a path. The axial coding of the leader's role in empowering subordinates showed that the followers found the leader empowered them. Their experience of empowerment also made them feel treated fairly at work. This explains the serial mediation of psychological empowerment and fairness in the relationship between paternalistic leadership and job satisfaction (Hypothesis 4 is supported). Western literature is critical of authoritarian behavior and is skeptical because of the belief that such behavior will stifle empowerment and fairness. The results in the Indian setting proved contrary.

### **Theoretical Contribution**

This study extends the theory of paternalistic leadership by showing that there can be cultural differences in the perception of authoritarian dimensions ranging from command and control (authoritarianism) to authoritative and nurturing behavior. The authoritative, benevolent, and moral dimensions contribute to employee empowerment and

fairness. As found in our study, the distinction between authoritative and authoritarian also extends the body of knowledge. Western frameworks of leadership generally adopt the etic approach (outsider approach) when they apply frameworks developed in the West to other cultures. Our study uses the emic (insider) approach to explain the granularities of leadership effectiveness in India.

Our study showed that paternalistic leaders can also be psychologically empowering and fair towards subordinates. This further extends theories explaining empowerment and fairness in the context of leadership in general, and paternalistic leadership and influence in particular.

#### **Managerial Contribution:**

Our study shows that paternalistic leadership is embedded in the Indian ethos of beliefs in family values, and so is not seen or experienced as negative or detrimental to subordinate development. The study also shows to the researchers of the Western world that leadership emanating from the culture of a region is acceptable among subordinates and can also be empowering and fair. The paternalistic leadership model can be used for the coaching and mentoring of subordinates. The close family like connection emphasized by the paternalistic framework can provide guidance and empowerment. This relationship will add to the perception of leader-member relationships as empowering and fair.

The merit of our approach is the mixed-method used to study the research questions. This adds more richness to the results and interpretations. The use of the mixed method helped overcome the limitation of the cross-sectional dataset of study1.

#### **Limitations & Future Studies**

The sample consisted of educated urban white-collar respondents. Rural respondents and those working in the unorganized sector and as blue-collar employees were not part of the study.

The sample was limited to Indian organizations. Future studies can compare the leadership styles of Indian organizations that are subsidiaries of multinational corporations with those that are purely Indian. Future research can also adopt a longitudinal study method to explore the role of family values in shaping paternalistic leadership and the expression of psychological empowerment and fairness. This will further help in understanding the cultural embeddedness of leadership styles in general, and paternalistic leadership in particular.

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