

# Despotic Leadership in Healthcare: A Pathway to Psychological Distress and Reduced Performance

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper builds on the equity theory and conservation of resources theory to propose a model that explores how despotic leadership affects psychological distress and feelings of unfair treatment among healthcare employees. The authors hypothesized that interactional injustice plays a mediating role and examined whether the relationship between despotic leadership and interactional injustice is moderated by victim sensitivity. This research study is a quantitative cross-sectional study conducted among healthcare pharmacists, with a sample size of 310, based on purposive sampling with a deductive approach. Structural equation modeling was deployed to test the hypotheses. This research indicates that despotic leadership significantly impacts psychological distress and victim sensitivity also significantly moderates the despotic leadership and interactional injustice. This study suggests that organizations should focus on preventing employee exploitation, promoting fair treatment, and supporting those who are more sensitive to being treated unfairly. It also suggests that organizations should address abusive leadership by implementing behavioral training. Because it is the first of its kind to examine the effect of despotic leadership on pharmacist employees and the intervening role of interactional injustice, this study is exceptional. The application of equity theory and COR theory to the pharmaceutical sector has not been widely explored.*

## Keywords:

Despotic leadership, psychological distress, interactional injustice, victim sensitivity, conservation of resources theory, equity theory.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been growing academic and professional interest in exploring the darker sides of leadership, particularly in contexts where leaders engage in narcissistic, authoritarian or abusive behaviors (Khizar et al., 2023; Mincu & Granata, 2024; Hessari et al., 2024). Among these emerging constructs, despotic leadership characterized by self-serving behavior, excessive control and a disregard for employee well-being which has drawn increasing scholarly attention (Aumentado et al., 2024; Entwistle & Doering, 2024). Researchers have linked this leadership style to several negative organizational outcomes, leading to a decline in job satisfaction and an increased likelihood of employees wanting to leave the organization (Lee-Kugler et al., 2024; Pircher Verdorfer et al., 2024).

Although recent studies have recognized the adverse consequences of despotic leadership, deeper theoretical understanding remains limited. For instance, while the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory suggests that individuals experience stress when vital psychological or social resources are threatened or depleted (Hobfoll, 1989), few studies have explicitly applied this lens to examine the emotional and psychological outcomes of despotic leadership. The present study utilizes COR theory to explain how employees under despotic leaders may perceive a significant loss of resources, ultimately resulting in psychological distress (Guo et al., 2024; Li et al., 2024; Son & Pak, 2024).

Furthermore, existing literature has not adequately addressed the mechanisms that mediate this relationship. While some evidence suggests that despotic leadership is linked to psychological strain, the role of interactional injustice the perceived lack of fairness and respect in interpersonal interactions has not been thoroughly investigated as a mediating pathway (Colquitt et al., 2015). Drawing upon Equity Theory (Adams, 1963), which emphasizes the importance of fairness in social exchanges, this research proposes that employees who perceive inequity in how they are treated may experience intensified psychological consequences in response to despotic behaviors.

Equally important is the role of individual differences in moderating these effects. Not all employees react uniformly to negative leadership; some may be more psychologically vulnerable. This study introduces victim sensitivity as a potential moderator—a personality trait characterized by a heightened concern for being treated unfairly (Schmitt et al., 2010). Individuals high in victim sensitivity may be more likely to interpret despotic behavior as

unjust, exacerbating their emotional distress (Azeem et al., 2024; Cai et al., 2024; Li et al., 2024).

By integrating COR theory and Equity theory, this research offers a novel theoretical framework to explore how despotic leadership fosters psychological distress, mediated by interactional injustice and moderated by victim sensitivity. In line with recent industry insights such as the McKinsey Report (Rahilly et al., 2024), which highlights the harmful impact of emotionally unintelligent and narcissistic leaders, this study underscores the importance of addressing toxic leadership patterns to safeguard employee well-being. The findings contribute to leadership literature by clarifying both the process and boundary conditions through which despotic leadership influences employee outcomes.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

This study draws upon Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and Equity Theory (Adams, 1963) to explore how despotic leadership leads to psychological distress among employees. According to COR theory, individuals are motivated to obtain, protect and conserve valuable resources such as emotional stability, self-esteem, energy and social support. Stress emerges when there is a threat of resource loss (conflict, job insecurity), actual resource loss (loss of job) or a failure to gain adequate returns (no career growth) after investing resources (Hobfoll, 1989). In workplace contexts, despotic leadership functions as a stressor that threatens or depletes these resources.

Despotic leaders often exhibit authoritarian control a lack of concern for others and self serving behavior (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). These traits create a hostile and fear-driven environment in which employees must expend psychological and emotional resources to cope. Unlike abusive supervision which involves episodic mistreatment (Cole et al., 2016), despotic leadership is persistent and ideologically motivated. It centers on leaders placing personal goals above collective or ethical considerations (Grojean et al., 2004). This distinction is crucial because persistent exposure to despotic leadership can lead to sustained emotional exhaustion and diminished well-being.

Equity Theory (Adams, 1963) complements this framework by focusing on perceptions of fairness in interpersonal relationships. Employees expect fairness and respectful treatment. When these expectations are violated especially through poor interpersonal communication or

disrespectful behavior it results in interactional injustice (Dar & Rahman, 2022). This sense of injustice can lead to emotional strain, dissatisfaction, and ultimately psychological distress.

This study also introduces victim sensitivity as a moderator. Victim sensitivity is a stable personality trait characterized by heightened concern about being exploited or treated unfairly (Gollwitzer & Rothmund, 2011). Individuals high in victim sensitivity are more likely to perceive injustice in ambiguous situations and are more affected by perceived mistreatment. Under despotic leadership, they may react more strongly to subtle or overt injustices, intensifying the psychological impact. The proposed relationships among the constructs are illustrated in Figure 1, integrating both COR and equity theoretical perspectives.

## **2.2 Hypotheses Development**

### **2.2.1 Despotic Leadership and Psychological Distress**

Despotic leadership involves behaviors in which leaders exhibit dominance, suppress dissent, and prioritize self-interest at the expense of their subordinates and the organization (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Taous et al., 2023). Such behavior diminishes employees' autonomy and psychological safety, leading to emotional strain and mental health issues. According to COR theory, employees under despotic leadership expend significant emotional and psychological energy to maintain functioning, often resulting in resource depletion and burnout (Guo et al., 2024).

Psychological distress is characterized by symptoms of anxiety, depression, and general emotional instability (Arena et al., 2024). Empirical studies suggest that toxic leadership styles are associated with increased psychological distress due to prolonged stress exposure and lack of social support (Hayat & Yaqub, 2023). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H1: Despotic leadership is positively associated with psychological distress among employees.*

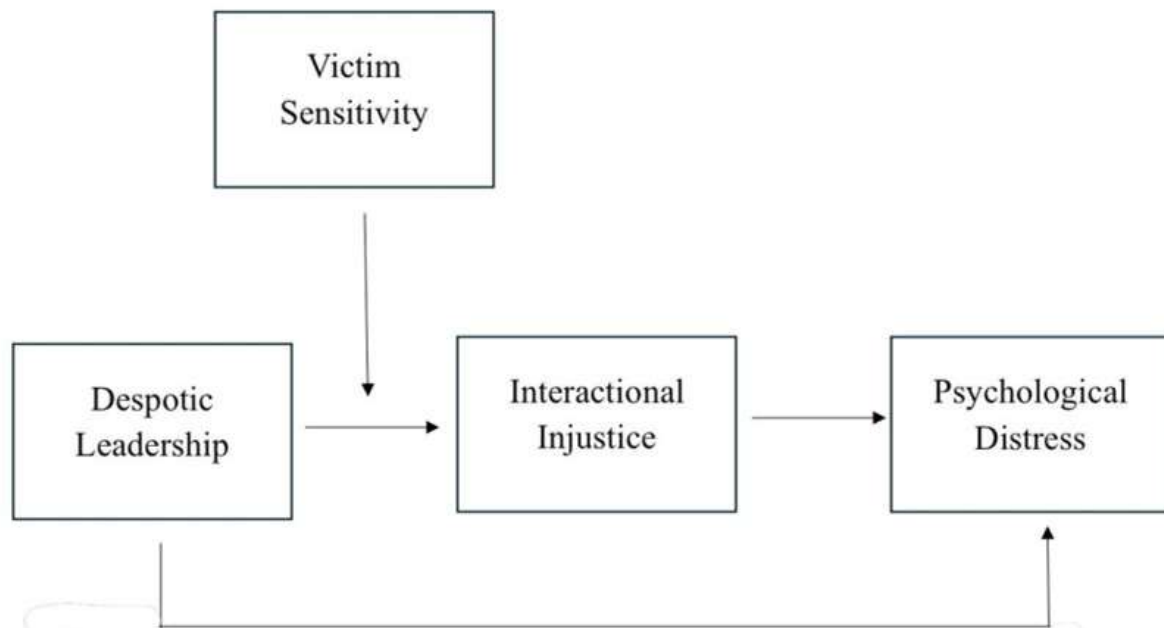


Figure 1: Theoretical framework

### 2.2.2 Mediating Role of Interactional Injustice

Interactional injustice refers to the perceived lack of respect, dignity, and fairness in interpersonal treatment from authority figures (Dar & Rahman, 2022). Despotic leaders, who often behave in dismissive or demeaning ways, can significantly influence employees' perceptions of injustice (Macias et al., 2024). When employees are consistently treated with disrespect, it creates a sense of interpersonal unfairness that may lead to frustration and emotional fatigue.

From the perspective of equity theory, such interpersonal mistreatment violates the expectations of balanced and fair social exchanges. Employees who perceive interactional injustice are more likely to experience emotional turmoil, dissatisfaction, and psychological distress (Khattak & Abukhait, 2024b; Koksai & Mert, 2024). Thus, interactional injustice may mediate the relationship between despotic leadership and employee mental health outcomes.

*H2:* Interactional injustice mediates the relationship between despotic leadership and psychological distress.

### 2.2.3 Moderating Role of Victim Sensitivity

Victim sensitivity is defined as an individual's disposition to be hyper-alert to cues of injustice, particularly those suggesting that they are being treated unfairly (Baumert et al., 2022). Employees with high victim sensitivity tend to anticipate mistreatment and interpret

ambiguous situations negatively. In environments dominated by despotic leaders, this trait may intensify employees' perceptions of being wronged.

Under COR theory, such individuals are more prone to rapid resource depletion, as they experience greater emotional reactivity and vigilance. When exposed to despotic leadership, employees high in victim sensitivity are more likely to perceive interactional injustice and, subsequently, experience stronger psychological consequences.

*H3: Victim sensitivity moderates the relationship between despotic leadership and interactional injustice, such that the relationship is stronger among individuals with high victim sensitivity.*

Building upon the earlier ideas, the research suggests that people who are more sensitive to being wronged may experience stronger effects of despotic leadership, as it leads them to feel unfairly treated, which in turn adds to their psychological distress. This moderated mediation is rooted in both COR theory and Equity Theory, suggesting that highly victim-sensitive individuals are more vulnerable to signs of mistreatment and thus experience greater distress when encountering despotic leadership through perceived unfair treatment (Gollwitzer & Rothmund, 2011; Altenmüller et al., 2023).

Recent studies support this argument, showing that victim sensitivity plays a significant moderating role in the relationship between toxic leadership and injustice perceptions (Baumert et al., 2022; Gao et al., 2024). Specifically, employees who tend to be highly sensitive to perceived mistreatment are more likely to likely to perceive interactional injustice when exposed to despotic behavior, which in turn amplifies their psychological distress (Son & Pak, 2024; Hayat & Yaqub, 2023).

*H4: Victim sensitivity moderates the indirect effect of despotic leadership on psychological distress through interactional injustice, such that the indirect effect is stronger for employees with high victim sensitivity.*

### **3. METHODS**

#### **3.1 Sample and Procedure**

The study evaluated the sample of healthcare employees in Pakistan. The target population are full-time employees aged 18 and older, with at least 1 year of work experience. To evaluate the manager's leadership character, employees must have enough interaction with their current supervisor, leader or manager for a minimum of 1 year. The sampling technique used was non-probability purposive sampling due to its relevance in selecting participants who could best reflect the study's focus on workplace leadership and employee outcomes and data

was collected through online surveys via Google Forms. By employing web-based questionnaire, 310 questionnaires were disseminated among employees of private and government firms located in Karachi who work in various pharmaceutical firms such as hospitals, industries and laboratories. After ruling out outliers and missing values, which weren't found in the sample size of 310 was used (Hair et al., 2012).

### 3.2 Measures

**Despotic Leadership** is an independent variable, and it has six items developed by (Hanges & Dickson, 2004). Sample items include "*Is harsh in their treatment, has no pity or compassion*" and "*Is vengeful: seeks revenge when wronged*" and uses a five-point Likert scale for responses, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

**Interactional Injustice** is a mediator variable, it has nine items of (four items of interpersonal injustice and five items of informational injustice) developed by (Colquitt et al., 2015), and use a five-point Likert scale for responses, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. This study concentrates on interactional injustice in which the interactional justice scores were recorded as injustice scores once the data for interactional justice were collected. Items included "*Does he/she treat you in a rude manner?*" and "*Are his/her communication generic or canned?*"

**Victim Sensitivity** is a moderator variable, it has ten items developed by (Schmitt et al., 2010), and uses a five-point Likert scale for responses, from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly, including "*It bothers me when others receive something that ought to be mine*" and "*It makes me angry when I am treated worse than others*".

Table 1

*Descriptive analysis of respondent profile*

		Frequency	Percentage
Age	18 - 30 years	199	64.2%
	31 - 40 years	83	26.8%
	41 - 50 years	28	9%
	50 years above	0	0%
	Total	310	100%

<b>Gender</b>	Female	125	40.3%
	Male	185	59.7%
	Total	310	100%
<b>Educational</b>	Undergraduate	18	5.8%
	Graduate	129	41.6%
	Postgraduate	144	46.5%
	PhD	19	6.1%
	Total	310	100%
<b>Experience</b>	1 – 3 years	167	53.9%
	4 – 6 years	59	19.0%
	6 – 9 years	51	16.5%
	9 + years	33	10.6%
	Total	310	100%
<b>Organizational Tenure</b>	6 - 18 months	114	36.8%
	18 months - 3 years	98	31.6%
	3 - 5 years	49	15.8%
	5 + years	49	15.8%
	Total	310	100%
<b>Tenure with the Leader</b>	6 - 18 months	135	43.5%
	18 months - 3 years	80	25.8%
	3 - 5 years	72	23.2%
	5 + years	23	7.4%
	Total	310	100%

**Source:** Authors' own creation

*Psychological Distress* is a dependent variable, it has six items developed by (Kessler et al., 2002). Items include "*During the past month, about how often did you feel nervous?*"



and "During the past month, about how often did you feel worthless?" and use a five-point Likert scale for responses, ranging from (1) none of the time to (5) all the time.

**Control Variables** included from (Alajhar et al., 2024) i.e. gender, age, education, experience, organizational tenure, and tenure with the leader.

### 3.3 Analytical Strategy

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS for descriptive statistics and Smart PLS 4 for structural equation modeling (SEM) via the partial least squares (PLS) approach. SPSS was used to examine respondent demographics, while Smart PLS was chosen for its effectiveness in handling smaller sample sizes and complex models involving latent variables. This software enabled the assessment of both measurement and structural models, making it suitable for testing direct, mediating, and moderating effects. As noted by Alfaiza et al. (2023) and Sarstedt et al. (2023), Smart PLS 4's updated algorithms and interface provide advanced analytical capabilities that enhance the reliability and depth of quantitative research.

## 4. RESULT

### 4.4 Measurement Model

#### 4.4.1 Reliability

Table 2 demonstrates that the assessment model fulfills necessary parameters. Factor loadings indicate how well an item matches its group. Hair et al. (2012) factor loading  $>0.5$  often indicates to assess the reliability of variables ranging from 0.609 to 0.914. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  and composite reliability results analyzed to assess the consistency of the variables. Previous studies (Hair et al., 2021; Li et al., 2020) claims the criteria for composite reliability and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  should be  $> 0.80$ . As a result, all values met the criteria for reliability analysis (Nunnally, 1975). Additionally, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) test is used to assess potential multicollinearity issues. O'brien (2007) suggested that the VIF value should remain below 10. VIF results in Table 2 show that all values were within the acceptable range, confirming the absence of multicollinearity in the data.

Table 2

*Assessment Model*

Constructs	Items	Loadings	$\alpha$	Rho_a	CR	AVE	VIF
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<b>Despotic Leadership</b>	<b>DL1</b>	0.754					2.498
	<b>DL2</b>	0.848					4.288
	<b>DL3</b>	0.914	0.929	0.952	0.943	0.736	5.983
	<b>DL4</b>	0.888					3.891
	<b>DL5</b>	0.865					2.970
	<b>DL6</b>	0.871					2.690
<b>Interactional Injustice</b>	<b>II1</b>	0.843					3.724
	<b>II2</b>	0.873					4.349
	<b>II3</b>	0.798					2.916
	<b>II4</b>	0.776					2.458
	<b>II5</b>	0.781	0.924	0.926	0.937	0.623	2.718
	<b>II6</b>	0.795					2.587
	<b>II7</b>	0.749					1.963
	<b>II8</b>	0.716					1.908
	<b>II9</b>	0.762					2.356
<b>Psychological Distress</b>	<b>PD1</b>	0.609					1.286
	<b>PD2</b>	0.749					1.759
	<b>PD3</b>	0.797					2.103
	<b>PD4</b>	0.788	0.849	0.849	0.889	0.574	2.189
	<b>PD5</b>	0.785					2.051
	<b>PD6</b>	0.798					2.166
<b>Victim Sensitivity</b>	<b>VS1</b>	0.631					1.626
	<b>VS2</b>	0.666					2.082
	<b>VS3</b>	0.677					2.428
	<b>VS4</b>	0.749					1.960
	<b>VS5</b>	0.622					2.566
	<b>VS6</b>	0.790	0.894	0.900	0.912	0.512	2.877
	<b>VS7</b>	0.790					3.163
	<b>VS8</b>	0.797					2.122
	<b>VS9</b>	0.695					3.418
	<b>VS10</b>	0.710					3.085

Source: Authors' own creation

#### 4.4.2 Validity

The convergent validity of the measuring constructs was investigated using the average variance extracted (AVE). Values for AVE should be greater than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2012), it signifies that the research model's constructions are all dependable. Discriminant validity is important prior to testing the inner measurement model (Qasim *et al.*, 2024) and each construct's AVE square root must be higher than the inter-construct correlation. The values in table 3 represent square roots and must be greater than any other values in the construct. A value below 0.10, or 0.08 in a more conservative approach (Hu & Bentler, 1999) is regarded as a suitable match. Meanwhile, the details related to discriminant validity can be found in Table 3 the HTMT is used; all values were  $< 0.8$  (Henseler et al., 2015; Sarstedt et al., 2022). Thus, they fulfilled the standards of discriminant validity.

Table 3

*Discriminant Validity by Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)*

	DL	II	PD	VS
DL				
II	0.107			
PD	0.163	0.323		
VS	0.433	0.280	0.196	

**Source:** Authors' own creation

#### 4.4.3 Hypotheses Testing

Figure 2 and Table 4 summaries all hypotheses findings which illustrates that despotic leadership impact on psychological distress (H1:  $\beta = 0.161$ ,  $T = 2.548$  and  $p\text{-value} < 0.011$ ) and leading to the acceptance of H1. H2 was hypothesized in this study, Interactional injustice acts as a intervening variable linking despotic leadership and psychological distress and findings illustrates (H2:  $\beta = 0.046$ ,  $T = 1.357$  and  $p\text{-value} > 0.175$ ) which concluded that interactional injustice fails to act as a mediator between despotic leadership and psychological distress thus H2 is rejected. Regarding H3 where victim sensitivity influences the nexus between despotic leadership and interactional injustice (H3:  $\beta = 0.232$ ,  $T = 2.848$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.004$ ), consequently, H3 was supported. As per H4, the victim sensitivity moderates the relationship between despotic leadership and psychological distress through interactional injustice ( $\beta = 0.070$ ,  $T = 2.322$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.020$ ) shows there's high victim sensitivity due to the influences of despotic leadership on psychological distress through interactional injustice; H4 accepted.

Table 4

*Hypothesis Testing*

Hypotheses	Estimates	SD	T-Values	p-Values	Decision
DL -> PD	0.161	0.063	2.548	0.011	Accepted
DL -> II -> PD	0.046	0.034	1.357	0.175	Not Supported
VS x DL -> II	0.232	0.081	2.848	0.004	Supported
VS x DL -> II -> PD	0.070	0.030	2.322	0.020	Supported

**Source:** Authors' own creation

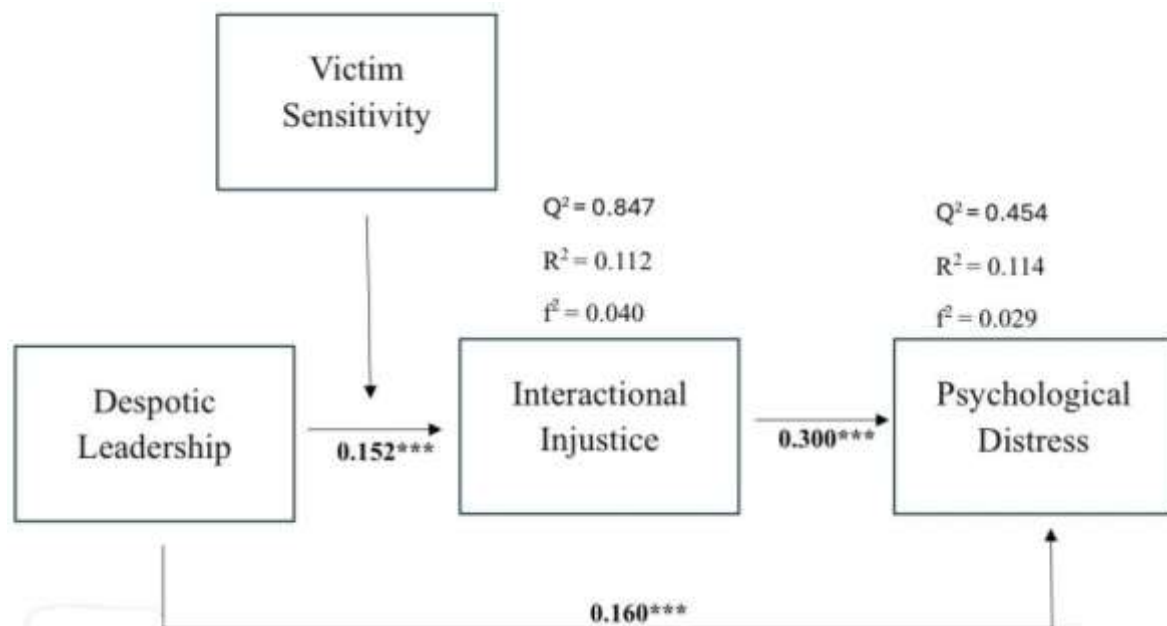


Figure 2: Structural model results

#### 4.4.4 Structural Model

PLS bootstrapping 5000 sub-sampling method was done for the structural model analysis.  $R^2$  indicate a model fitness meeting Chin (2010) threshold and  $Q^2$  serves as a criterion for predictive relevance as values above 0 indicate sufficient predictive power.

Additionally, the effect size ( $f^2$ ) provides evidence reflecting the degree of influence of an independent variable on a dependent variable.

Table 5

*R-square*

	<b>R-square</b>	<b>R-square adjusted</b>	<b>Predictive Accuracy</b>
<b>Interactional Injustice</b>	0.111	0.103	Mild
<b>Psychological Distress</b>	0.112	0.106	Mild

**Source:** Authors' own creation

Table 6

*f-square effect size*

	<b>DL</b>	<b>II</b>	<b>PD</b>	<b>VS</b>	<b>VS x DL</b>
<b>DL</b>			0.029		
<b>II</b>			0.102		
<b>PD</b>					
<b>VS</b>		0.072			
<b>VS x DL</b>		0.040			

**Source:** Authors' own creation

$f^2$  displayed the effect sizes ( $f^2$ ). Applying (Cohen, 1988) threshold values,  $> 0.02$  is small,  $> 0.15$  is medium and  $> 0.35$  is large and this study interpreted effect size. As shown in Table 6, DL on PD has a small effect because it is 0.029, II on PD has a medium effect because it is 0.102, VS on II has a medium effect because it is 0.072 and VS x DL on II has a small effect because it is 0.040 value. Table 7 shows the results of structural model.

Table 7

*Structural model results*

Variable	Interactional Injustice		Psychological Distress
	$Q^2 = 0.847$		$Q^2 = 0.454$
	$R^2 = 0.112$		$R^2 = 0.114$
	$f^2 = 0.040$		$f^2 = 0.029$
Specific Indirect Effect			
Variable	Path coefficient	STDEV	T-Stats
DL -> II -> PD	0.175	0.034	1.357
VS -> DL -> II	0.004	0.081	2.848
VS X DL -> II -> PD	0.020	0.030	2.322

$R^2$  Determination coefficients,  $Q^2$  Predictive relevance of endogenous, *PD* Psychological Distress, *DL* Despotism Leadership, *II* Interactional Injustice, *VS* Victim Sensitivity

**Source:** Authors' own creation

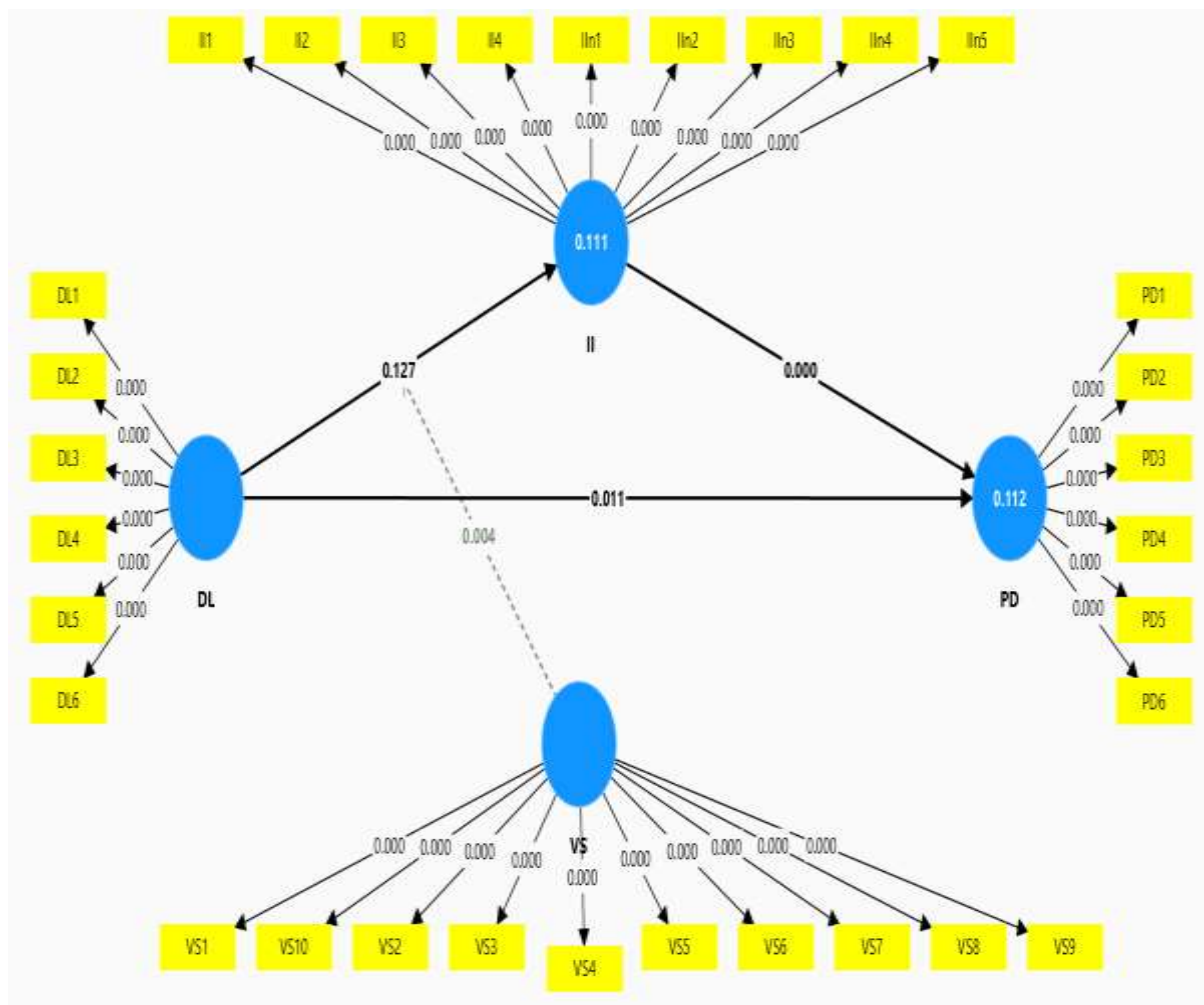


Figure 3: Structural Model

## 5. DISCUSSION

The study applies COR and equity theory to fill the research gap on the contribution of despotic leadership on psychological distress (Albashiti et al., 2021). The findings align with prior research, revealing that despotic leaders may exacerbate psychological distress among their subordinates in the workplace. By highlighting the negative impact of this new form of abusive leadership, where leaders' self-serving behaviors harm the psychological well-being of their followers (Almeida et al., 2022), the results contribute to the existing literature on abusive leadership. The results suggest that interactional injustice not significantly mediates the relationship between despotic leadership and psychological distress, highlighting that unfair treatment from leaders can amplify stress among employees. The study also highlights the ethics of good leadership in promoting balance and fairness. It also aligns with SDG Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being) aims to ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for everyone by strengthening healthcare systems to improve public health. Findings provides insights into

reducing the negative effects of despotic leadership, encouraging a healthier, more supportive work environment, and improving employee well-being and organizational success by integrating the theories of COR and equity (Xu et al., 2024).

### **5.1 Theoretical Implications**

The results of the research support the hypothesis and propose additional theoretical outcome for the negative aspects of leadership. This study contribute to our understanding of despotic leadership, victim sensitivity, and psychological distress. Firstly, this research adds to the insufficient research of the subject by investigating how despotic leadership affects the employees mental wellbeing. The present study contributes to the body of research on psychological distress by exploring a distinct type of abusive leadership which is despotic leadership and adds to the evolving body of work on psychological distress. Findings indicate the self-interested actions by despotic leaders tend to increase stress among workers without considering their wellbeing (Raza et al., 2024; Labelle-Deraspe & Mathieu, 2024). Wang et al. (2024) explains that victim sensitivity worsens depletion of resources resulting from the fear of being exploited. The research integrates COR and equity theory, explaining how despotic leadership depletes employees' mental resources and fosters a sense of injustice leading to heightened victim sensitivity (Hobfoll, 1989; Adams, 1963).

### **5.2 Practical Implications**

This paper gives insight into practical implications for organizations. First, in order to prevent exploiting followers, the organization needs to mitigate the abuse of employees and its detrimental effects. When recruiting and promoting managers, they prioritize leadership aspirants with emotional intelligence and empathy. Second, The organization needs to hold workshops/trainings programs for developing leaders that prioritize creating a detailed understanding of one's interconnectedness and supervisors need to prioritize the psychological wellbeing of their workers by providing a friendly workplace atmosphere to cope with work stress. Lastly the employees prone to perceived victimization need to assist them to overcome challenges and focuses on sharpening their skills by overlooking the intimidating workplace.

### **5.3 Limitations and Future Directions**

Data was collected through cross-sectional surveys, future research use longitudinal surveys. The findings of this research (i.e., psychological distress) recognized to be a psychological condition but later research examine other variables. Additionally, other moderators, such as



dark triad, narcissistic leaders, and malevolent leaders can be explored. Lastly, the data for this study collected in Pakistan, which possibly affecting its broader contexts. Future researchers should explore to validate this model across diverse cultural background.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

This paper demonstrates detrimental effects of despotic leadership upon employees psychological distress, applying theories of COR and equity which emphasize this leadership style intensifies the perceiving of unfairness, specifically in individuals exhibiting heightened sensitivity to victimization. The study's results offer crucial insights for firms to mitigate these problems. This study emphasizes how crucial it is to deal with abusive leadership to safeguard workers' mental health and improve organizational effectiveness. They also pave the way for future researchers into the detrimental effects of despotic leaders behavior on employees.

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**Data Availability:** Upon reasonable request.

#### DECLARATIONS

**Conflict of Interest:** None

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