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# **The Mediating Role of leader Member Exchange in the Relationship Between Paternalistic Leadership and Followers Work Engagement: An Empirical Study**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research investigates the direct impact of paternalistic Leadership (PL) and Leader Member Exchange (LMX) on followers work engagement (WE) and examines the mediating role of LMX in the relationship between PL and followers work engagement . A field study was then conducted using a sample of employees of nursing staff at Tanta University Hospitals and 262 questionnaires were completed with response rate of 88.8% , Results revealed that all dimensions of the PL have a statistically significant direct impact on followers work engagement .Moreover, results revealed that PL has statistically significant direct impact on LMX and PL and LMX have significant direct impact on Followers work engagement. Finally, findings showed that LMX plays a mediating role in the relationship between PL and nursing staff WE at Tanta University Hospitals

**Keywords:** Paternalistic Leadership; Leader Member Exchange; Work Engagement; Tanta University Hospitals.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Scientists and practitioners have asserted that some leadership theories failed to explain all aspects of leadership . Leadership is the ability to influence the actions of followers. (PL) is a systematic approach wherein a leader prioritizes the personal interests of followers and anticipates loyalty in exchange. Paternalistic leadership is a style in which leaders act as a parent in their organizations . They play a supporting and preventative role towards their employees, considering them as family members.

This leadership style is characterized by a combination of authoritative and supporting characteristics. Paternalistic leaders prioritize the well-being of their followers by providing mentorship and assistance. PL behaviors cultivate sentiments of respect, scare, and obedience among employees which leads to favorable organizational effects.

Researchers in organizational behavior and management have investigated the effects of PL on individual, group, and organizational outcomes, while WE has recently become a prominent term in business. Schaufeli *et al.* (2002) define WE as a positive, satisfactory, work-related emotional state. The extent to which an individual internalizes their role, demonstrates their level of their work commitment, the work quality and the relationship with their supervisor are crucial factors in job satisfaction. Leaders directly engaged in subordinates' work life play a pivotal role in assessing the extent of their followers' job engagement (Bamford *et al.*, 2013). Paternalistic leaders enhance employees' trust, encourage employees for more contributions to work.

Recent empirical studies indicate that PL enhances the exchange relationship between paternal leaders and their employees (Aycan *et al.*, 2000; Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008). However, the power of this relationship may depend on particular paternalistic leadership styles. Moreover, a significant outcome of high-quality LMX is WE (Kapil & Rastogi, 2019).

There has been little empirical research on the relationship between PL style and work engagement, especially in the service industry. Furthermore, no research has examined the mediating effect of LMX in this association...We conducted this research to fill the gap in the literature and service sector. This research aims to clarify the impact of PL and LMX on followers' job engagement to fulfill the organization's desire to retain competent and committed professionals in the healthcare sector.

This research initially presented the definitions of the concepts based on the pertinent literature. Then a related literature helps in formulation of our hypotheses, which illustrate impacts among the study variables. We gathered data from a random sample of nursing specialists employed at Tanta University Hospitals to evaluate the formulated hypotheses. Ultimately, the results were analyzed, and the consequences of the research were articulated.

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

This section provides a theoretical review of the study's three main concepts which are: paternalistic Leadership, Leader Member Exchange and Work Engagement

### **2.1 Paternalistic Leadership ( PL)**

#### **Definition of paternalistic leadership**

Paternalistic leadership is a family-based leadership style wherein a leader participates in the work and personal lives of their people (Schroeder, 2011). The paternalistic leader treats subordinates like a "father" and supports them (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). Farh and Cheng (2000) defined (PL) as a style that integrates robust authority with paternal benevolence and moral integrity. Paternalism entails a hierarchical leader-subordinate dynamic, wherein the leader's role is to create a familial atmosphere and provide guidance to employees in both professional and personal life, in exchange for the employees' loyalty to the leader (Aycan, 2006).

According to Farh, *et al.*, (2008) paternalism is not merely a style of leadership, more like it is considered a cultural trait,. paternalism is an attribute of a culture that magnify collectivism. Erben and Güneşer (2008) declared that paternalism means acting in the best stakes of others, as parents do for their children. Thus, they manifest "benevolent" and "fatherly" attitudes toward their employees.

### **Dimensions of PL**

PL style contains 3 notable dimensions, namely authoritarian ,benevolence and, morality, (Chen *et al.*, 2014; Cheng and Farh, 2006). Authoritarian represents firm control, and needs the extreme compliance from employees.. Here, both sides know and accept that leaders have the right to give instructions to their followers and they have onus to follow. authoritarian leadership means that a leader shows their utter authority and that they use intense control over employees

Benevolence refers to importance of employees' well-being in both work and non work issues, admitting grace and protection to followers,. Benevolent leadership signals a leader who manifests personal, and long-term attention for subordinates wellbeing, the dimension of morality depicts a strong moral trait, showing altruistic behavior towards their subordinates wellbeing . Moral leadership centers on leaders and their moral repute as persons. It comprises how kind the leader is to subordinates, how much the leader reveres them and how the leaders not abusing their power and raising those below . moral leader is described by a higher degree of integrity, . and should manifest behavior that matches social norms to give an example to others,

These three dimensions offer a scheme or a plan for PL (Zhang *et al.*, 2015). .Authoritarianism negatively impacts employees, in contrast, morality and benevolence boost positive employee behaviors (Chen *et al.*, 2014).

### **2.2 Leader Member Exchange**

LMX refers to a dyadic relationship between leaders and employees that illustrates their interactions during work (Bhatti *et al.*, 2013). LMX is characterized by the varying level of relationships that leaders establish with their followers, ranging from lower to higher quality exchanges (Kang *et al.*, 2011).

This relationship improves and evolves over time as leaders and subordinates gain deeper insights into one another and acquire new and varied experiences; leaders promote reciprocal salutary exchange relationships with their employees through various sorts of interactions(Zhang *et al.*, 2015). In high-quality LMX interactions leaders assist their subordinates , as a reaction, subordinates exert additional effort to do their tasks efficiently, and also they foster mutual trust, and loyalty (Liden&Maslyn, 1998).

A good-quality LMX relationship also encourages positive attitudes among employees . In low LMX relationships, subordinates are only perform the formal demands of their tasks, and more benefits are not provided by the leader., in some cases, subordinates in low LMX relationships may

even show behaviors that are not consistent with the leader desired behaviors. the upright link between a leader and an employee differs within a work unit and is predicated on social exchanges impacted by leader behaviors and subordinate outcomes (Chou *et al.*, 2011)

### **2.3 Work Engagement (WE)**

WE is characterized as the willingness of individuals to undertake job-related responsibilities and actively pursue work objectives (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2001). WE pertains to the enthusiasm for one's job. This indicates that when an individual does work, he will be both physically and emotionally engaged in it.

WE is a motivational construct that exemplifies the effective investment of human effort in work tasks (Rich *et al.*, 2010). Kahn's (1990) definition of WE is characterized by two qualities. Firstly, we should prioritize employees' experiences in executing work tasks over their opinions regarding work conditions. Secondly, we encompass the investment of personnel resources in work.

Schaufeli *et al.*, (2002) define WE as a notion that encompasses both employees' experiences and their personal resources. They defined WE as a favorable, work-related psychological condition identified by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor signifies elevated energy levels and the willingness to persevere, even when confronted with challenges. Dedication signifies a profound devotion in work and encompasses notions of significance, motivation, and rivalry. Absorption denotes complete concentration on the task and an enthusiastic engagement in work (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002). WE is the antithesis of burnout, which is regarded as the diminishment of WE and WE is characterized as the positive Contrary of burnout (Schaufeli, 2012).

## **3. Previous studies in the relationship between study variables**

This study is dealing with three recent interesting topics in today's world, These topics are Paternalistic Leadership (PL), Leader Member Exchange (LMX) and Work Engagement,(WE), Some of the previous studies that dealt with these topics were presented in this section.

### **3.1 Studies show relationship between PL and Work engagement:**

Oge *et al.*, (2018) contend that paternalistic leaders use their benevolent and ethical behaviors to enhance positive responses, such as workplace engagement. The benevolence aspect of leadership favorably and significantly influences WE, assistance from colleagues and supervisors boosts workplace engagement. employees in collectivist cultures perform more effectively due to benevolent and moral leaders who promote workplace values (Tuan, 2018).

Korkmaz *et al.*, (2018) study indicated no significant effect between authoritarian leadership and job engagement, but it discovered a positive effect between benevolent and moral leadership and WE.

In contrast to transformational, charismatic, servant, and other leadership styles Lin et al. (2019) asserted that PL exerts a more profound influence on the behaviors of Chinese employees. This is due to individuals from collectivist, high power distance nations exhibiting more reliance on leaders; thus, PL is more likely to affect expats' WE.

The aim of Nal&Sevin (2020) study was to identify effect of paternalistic leadership behavior on health workers WE in Turkey. This study involved 410 volunteer health workers. The study found that PL had a positive and moderate influence on WE. This study showed that PL influenced the three dimensions of work engagement.

Leadership, as a provider of job resources, is a basic factor influencing employees' WE, according to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework. Benevolent and moral leadership serves as job resources that promote employee WE and are inversely related to work-family conflict (WFC), whereas authoritarian leadership constitutes a detrimental job demand that increased WFC (Go *et al.*, 2022).

Aybar *et al.*, (2023) in a study including a sample of 223 gray-collar employees in Turkey's creative service sector, demonstrating that PL significantly influences WE. The results indicated that the relational psychological contract fully mediates the link between PL and WE.

In line with the studies that are mentioned previously, the first main hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

\* H<sub>1</sub>: PL dimensions (authoritarian, benevolent and moral) have a statistically significant direct impact on WE.

### ***3.2 Studies show relationship between PL and LMX***

Since 3 dimensions of PL have distinct traits, many studies assert that these dimensions, authoritarian benevolent and moral affect LMX in many ways (Carnevale *et al.*, 2017; Gu *et al.*, 2018). Authoritarian leadership depends on the tight oversight on subordinates (Cheng *et al.*, 2004). The authoritarian managers exert more control on their followers (Tsui *et al.*, 2004). Authoritarianism also adversely affects LMX by diminishing its quality, as leaders resort to coercive and punitive actions to suppress employee dissent (Aryee *et al.*, 2007).

The propensity of authoritarian leaders to exert more control amplifies psychological distance between themselves and their followers, hence diminishing the readiness to engage in a dyadic connection (Chen *et al.*, 2014). The authoritarian leadership negatively affects employees' perceptions, undermining the quality of productive relationships (Gu *et al.*, 2018).

In contrast, benevolent and morality-based leadership enhance the quality of LMX. Benevolent leaders assist their followers in both professional and personal contexts, permit them to rectify errors, and provide guidance and counsel for their career development, particularly during challenging periods (Farh *et al.*, 2008) this care demonstrates that benevolent leaders are inclined to keep enduring social exchange ties with their employees (Wu *et al.*, 2012).

Moral leaders maintain elevated ethical values and treat followers with respect and compassion (Wu *et al.*, 2012). They adopt good ethical standards by not accepting any advantages at the expense of their subordinates (Chen and Farh, 2012). Thus subordinates maintain good quality LMX and this behavior from subordinates is compatible with social exchange theory which presume that people like to give more if others back them.

Tang & Naumann (2015) indicated that followers who see their leader shows moral and benevolent leadership should manifest positive LMX and followers who view their leader as authoritarian are likely to hold unfavorable impressions of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX).

Abd-Rabo (2024) examined the impact of PL on LMX at National Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development in Cairo, by conducting an applied study including 160 employees in the Institute. The research findings indicated a significant positive impact of PL dimensions on LMX.

From the studies that are mentioned previously, the second main hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

H<sub>2</sub> : PL dimensions have a statistically significant direct impact on LMX

### ***3.3 Studies show the relationship between LMX and Work engagement.***

LMX improves employee WE through the attributes of vigor, dedication, and absorption (Sharoni *et al.*, 2015; Rabenu *et al.*, 2019). Employee engagement levels rise as individuals communicate with their supportive leader. A high-quality LMX makes the leader to anticipate further contacts with employees, engage emotionally with them, and offer psychological empowerment, which resulting in elevated WE (Tabak & Hendy, 2016).

Past research results have revealed positive relationship between LMX and WE (Burch and Guarana, 2014; Garg and Dhar, 2017). A study conducted among Dutch police officers investigated the processes underlying this relationship and demonstrated that high-quality LMX is associated with elevated levels of WE through increased leader support. (Breevaart *et al.*, 2015)

The quality of LMX determines the degree of work engagement, which in turn influences WE. The superior quality of LMX allows employees to have substantial support from their leaders, hence enhancing employee WE, Prilestari and Purba (2019) assert that a high LMX enhanced employee WE.

A strong LMX relationship enhances employee involvement in their tasks (Kim & Koo, 2017). Leaders who established high-quality relationships with employees possess the capacity to improve employee work engagement (Radstaak & Hennes, 2017). Permatasari and Suhariadi (2019) illustrate that good LMX significantly enhances work engagement.

Pradnyaswari & Ayu Sriath (2021) examined the impact of LMX on work engagement among employees of The Task Force for National Road Implementation Region III (Bali) in Indonesia. The findings demonstrated that LMX exerts a considerable favorable influence on WE.

Book & Wagner (2022) study investigated the creation of a healthy environment by investigating the relationship between high-quality LMX and social workers' WE, study data were obtained by administering an online survey to social workers in prominent social organizations in Germany. The study results affirm the role of high-quality LMX interactions in boosting a productive work environment. This, consequently, substantially enhances the degree of WE.

In line with what has been mentioned before, The third main hypothesis is formulated as follows:

\* H<sub>3</sub> : LMX has positive direct impact on followers work engagement.

Although several research studies investigate the direct correlation between paternalistic leadership, leader-member exchange (LMX), and work engagement, none of them examined the mediating impact of the LMX in the relationship between PL and WE, particularly in service sectors in Egyptian context. This research was conducted to contribute to filling this gap in the field. So the study H4 will be as follows :-

\* **H4:** Paternalistic leadership dimensions have a significant indirect impact on employees work engagement through the mediating role of LMX.

#### 4. RESEARCH PROBLEM

According to a pilot study conducted by interviewing sample of 40 nursing specialist at Tanta University Hospitals, the study revealed the following results: -

- A – Employees confirmed the importance of applying dimensions of PL at workplace which can in turn enhance employee WE, In other words, they asserted that PL three dimensions affect the level of WE.
- B – Employees views indicated that high quality LMX relationship was ranked high in its importance among the factors that can be shaped by PL dimensions and this relationship can in turn strength the effect of PL dimensions on nursing specialists WE at Tanta University Hospitals..
- C – The employees responses demonstrated that the level of practicing the 3 dimensions of PL, LMX and WE are at above average.

Depending on what previously mentioned in a pilot study and in the light of the research gap that was uncovered and undiscussed in the previous studies, research problem can be formulated in the following questions:



- What is the impact of PL dimensions on nursing specialists WE at Tanta University Hospitals ?
- Does LMX plays a mediating role in the relationship between PL dimensions and nursing specialists WE ?

## **5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

### **This research aimed at**

- a. Investigating the impact of PL dimensions on employees WE and determining the most important one affecting nursing specialists WE.
- b. Examining the impact of PL dimensions on LMX and determining the most important one affects the LMX.
- c. Investigating the impact of LMX on nursing specialists WE at Tanta University Hospitals.
- d. Clarifying whether the LMX plays a mediating role in the relationship between PL and nursing specialists WE at Tanta University Hospitals.
- e. Come up with results and recommendations to convince officials of Tanta University Hospitals about the influence of practicing PL dimensions in improving employees WE which positively enables the nursing specialists to achieve overall objectives effectively.

## **6. RESEARCH IMPORTANCE**

This research is significant due to its anticipated contributions to both scientific and practical domains.

- a. This research helps to fill the gap in previous studies by examining the indirect impact of PL on nursing specialists WE through LMX as a mediating variable .
- b. This research addresses three contemporary topics in today's business which are PL, LMX, and WE. This study will enrich the literature on these topics.
- c. This research contributes to the development of academic research through its measurements and variables that can be used to study the relationship between PL dimensions and followers WE.
- d. The researcher is seeking to identify the most important dimensions of PL that may affect WE through LMX
- e. Studying the direct and indirect impact of PL on WE will help to improve work efficiency of nursing specialists by thinking about the different ways of improving LMX and subordinates WE.

- f. Direct the research to nursing staff at Tanta University Hospitals is very important due to their cardinal effect on hospitals success and efficiency.

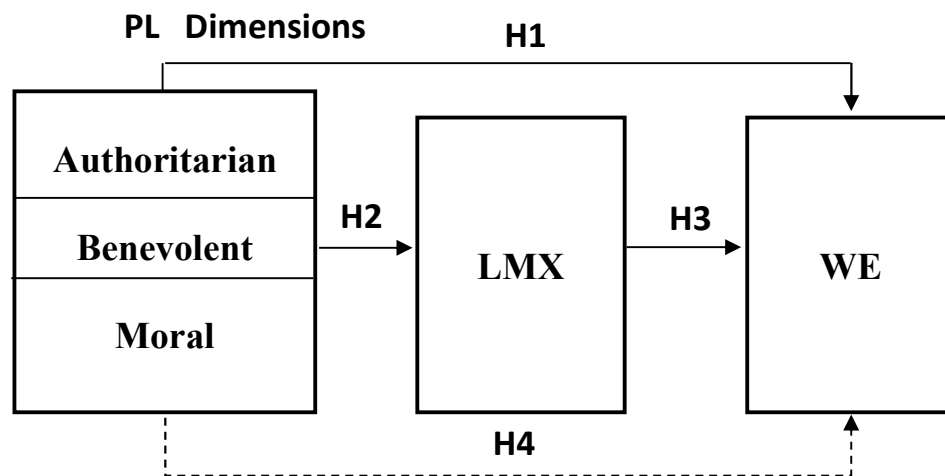
## 7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 7.1 RESEARCH VARIABLES AND MEASURES

**Table.1:** Research variables and Measures

Independent Variable	
PL	Items related to: PL dimensions used by (Cheng et al., 2004) were adopted
Mediating Variable	
LMX	Items adopted from (Liden & Maslyn ,1998 )
Dependent variable	
WE	Items related to WE adopted from Utercht Work Engagement Scale (UWES.9 )

- *Research variables and proposed relationships*



**Figure .1 .** Research variables and proposed relationships

### 7.2. QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

The researcher used 47 items to measure the study variables. Twenty-six items were utilized to measure PL dimensions: nine items were used to measure authoritarian leadership, eleven items for benevolent leadership, and six items for moral leadership. In relation to LMX, 12 items were utilized for measurement, while 9 items were employed to measure WE. A five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 5, was employed to measure the respondents' perspectives, where (1) means "strongly disagree," and (5) means "strongly agree."

### 7.3. RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLE SELECTION

This research focused on Nursing Specialists who are working at different hospitals in Tanta university , the total population size of the present research is 1261 employee . The following table shows the total number of employees who are working as nursing specialists in different hospitals.

**Table.2:**Numerical Statistics for the total number of nursingspecialists at Tanta University Hospitals

The Hospital	Total number of Nursing Specialists
Teaching hospital	451
Main hospital	201
Eye hospital	65
Students hospital	50
Emergency hospital	123
Comprehensive hospital	23
Chest hospital	20
Psychiatric hospital	108
Oncology hospital	79
New Surgery hospital	141
Total	1261

Calculate sample size had been used to determine the sample size of nursing specialists who are working at different hospitals of Tanta University. In the light of total size of research population, the researcher reached that the total size of sample ( $n^*$ ) is 295, So. 295 questionnaire have been distributed to collect the required data. in addition to the sample was distributed by using class random sample method proportionately at all hospitals.

The following table shows the research sample size of nursing specialists at Tanta University Hospitals .

**Table.3:**Numerical Statistics for the total number of nursingspecialists sample at Tanta University Hospitals

The Hospital	Number of Nursing Specialists
Teaching hospital	105
Main hospital	47
Eye hospital	15
Students hospital	12
Emergency hospital	28
Comprehensive hospital	6
Chest hospital	5
Psychiatric hospital	25
Oncology hospital	19
New Surgery hospital	33
Total	295

The number of completed questionnaires that have been statistically analyzed was 262 questionnaire by the percentage of 88.8% .

#### 7.4. CODING OF RESEARCH VARIABLES

**Table 4:** Coding of research variables

Research Variables	codes	Questionnaire Questions' Nos.
Independent variable		
Paternalistic Leadership (PL)	X	1 → 26
Authoritarian leadership	X <sub>1</sub>	1 → 9
Benevolent leadership	X <sub>2</sub>	10 → 20
Moral leadership	X <sub>3</sub>	21 → 26
Mediating variable		
Leader Member Exchange (LMX)	M	27 → 38
Independent variable		
Work Engagement (WE)	Y	39 → 47

## 8. DATA ANALYSIS

### 8.1. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY TEST FOR THE SCALES OF THE RESERCH

The validity of the measures of research (PL , LMX , WE) was confirmed by using the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using (AmosV.21). According to this, the quality of conformity ( model fit) is evaluated by set of indicators for model fit through which the model is accepted or rejected. The following table 5 shows the indicators of the model fit as follows:

**Table 5:**Indicators of CFA Test

Indicators of model fit	Obtained	Suggested
CMIN /DF	3.078	CMIN/DF ≤ 5
NFI ( Normed of Fit Index)	0.902	NFI ≥ 0.9
IFI ( Incremental Fit Index)	0.931	FI ≥ 0.9
TLI (Tucker- Lewis Index)	0.914	TLI ≥ 0.9
CFI (Compare Fit Index)	0.937	CFI ≥ 0.9
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error Approximation)	0.074	0.8 ≥ RMSEA ≥ 0.05

Based on the previous table , the previous indices confirmed that the overall fit of the model to the data was good. but which related to Convergent Validity, which means that the items of the scale that measure one concept have a strong positive correlation, where (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988) indicated that it is possible to verify this through four criteria, the first of which is the Factor Loading FL (the value of coefficient Weighted standard regression) for each of the variables measured  $\geq 0.7$  at a significance level  $\leq 0.5$ , the second is that the average variance extracted AVE for each of the variables  $\geq 0.5$ , the third is Construct Reliability  $\geq 0.5$  and finally FL (weighted standard regression coefficient for each of the measurement elements)

should be more than twice the standard error (S.E) corresponding to this element, Table (6) shows the results that were used to evaluate those standards.

**Table 6:** The results of Convergent Validity

Variables	FL	S.E	C.R	Error	Value of Estimated error
X <sub>1</sub> → Authoritarian leadership	0.976	----	-----	e 1	0.133
X <sub>2</sub> → Benevolent leadership	0.894	0.088	10.159	e 2	0.248
X <sub>3</sub> → Moral leadership	0.882	0.093	9.484	e 3	0.314
M <sub>1</sub> → Affect	0.943	----	-----	e 4	0.223
M <sub>2</sub> → Contribution	0.910	0.089	10.223	e 5	0.415
M <sub>3</sub> → Loyalty	0.907	0.096	9.448	e 6	0.335
M <sub>4</sub> → Professional Respect	0.896	0.091	9.846	e 7	0.304
Y <sub>1</sub> → Vigor	0,964	----	-----	e 8	0.215
Y <sub>2</sub> → Dedication	0.915	0.073	12.534	e 9	0.410
Y <sub>3</sub> → Absorption	0.979	0.081	12.086	e 10	0.374

Using the data mentioned in the previous table, the AVE value was calculated as well as the C.R value for each variable according to their calculation equations. Table (7) shows these values:

**Table .7:**Calculation of AVE and C.R.

Research variables	AVE	C.R
PL (X)	0.843	0.916
LMX (M)	0.836	0.913
WE (Y)	0.908	0.891

Table No. (6) showed that the FL (weighted standard regression coefficient) for all variables is greater than 0.70 and at a level of significance less than 0.05, and the values of the loading coefficient FL for each of the measurement elements is greater than twice S.E, in Table No. (7), the results indicated the AVE (Average Variance Extracted) and C.R (Construct Reliability ) values for all variables are greater than 0.50, which means that the four criteria are identical with the values previously clarified, which reflects the convergent validity of the research variables.

But which related to the Discriminant Validity that indicates that the scale items that measure a particular theoretical concept differ from the scale items that measure another theoretical concept, (Croweley & Fan, 1997) showed that this can be verified through two criteria, the first of which is that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each variable should be higher than the coefficients of the correlation of this variable compared with other variables, and the second is the squared root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for the variable is also greater than the coefficients of the correlation of this variable with other variables, and the following table No. (8) showed the results used to evaluate these criteria:

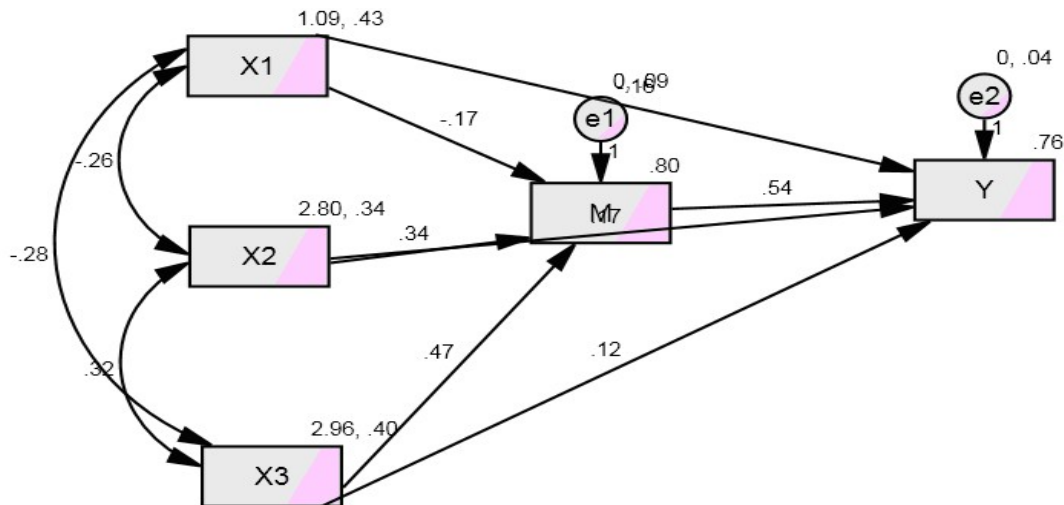
**Table 8:** Results of Discriminant Validity

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	PL	LMX	WE
PL (X)	0.863	0.918	1		
LMX (M)	0.882	0.914	0.657	1	
WE (Y)	0.930	0.953	0.638	0.925	1

It is noted from the previous table that Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each variable as well as the AVE values for each variable are higher than the correlation coefficients of each variable with the other variables, which reflects the discriminatory validity of the variables measures. As a recap, according to the aforementioned tests, the scales used to measure the research variables are characterized by content validity (model fit), Convergent Validity, and Discriminant Validity.

## 8.2. RESULTS OF STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING (SEM)

SEM analysis aims to answer the research questions which investigate the impact of PL on nursing specialists WE at Tanta University Hospitals and whether LMX plays a mediating role in this relationship. The collected data was analyzed using Amos v20 and Amos Graphic was used to draw a path diagram specifying four main relationships and sub-relationships between research variables as illustrated in figure ( 2 ). SEM results were used to test research hypotheses



The proposed research model includes four main hypotheses that illustrate the relationships among the research variables. The following methodology was used to test these hypotheses:-

### \* PL and WE

The first main hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) investigated the direct impact of PL dimensions on nursing specialists WE at Tanta University Hospitals; it has been formulated as follows:

**H<sub>1</sub> :PL dimensions have a statistically significant direct impact on WE.**

**Table .9:** SEM Results Related to the impact of PL dimensions on WE.

Independent variable	SRW	T-value (CR)	P Value	Estimate	S.E
Authoritarian leadership (X <sub>1</sub> )	-0,168	-6,030	0.000	-0,157	.0260
Benevolent leadership (X <sub>2</sub> )	0.164	3,941	0.000	.1720	,044
Moral leadership (X <sub>3</sub> )	0.128	2,895	0.004	,124 0	.0430

Analysis results shown in table (9) revealed that :

Authoritarian leadership (X<sub>1</sub>) has a statistically significant negative direct impact on nursing specialists WE at Tanta University Hospitals (T-value = - 6,030,  $\beta = ^- .168$  with  $p < 0.001$ ). With respect to benevolent(X<sub>2</sub>) and moral leadership (X<sub>3</sub>) they have a statistically significant positive direct impact on nursing specialists WE at Tanta University Hospitals (T-value = 3,941, 2.895,  $\beta = ^+ 0.164$ ,  $^+ 0.128$  with  $p < 0.001$ ).

Results also revealed that benevolent leadership comes in the first place in terms of its positive effect on nursing specialists WE ( $\beta = ^+ 0.164$ ) , comparing with moral leadership which comes second ( $\beta = ^+ 0.128$ ), So Previous results showed that the dimensions of PL (Authoritarian , Benevolent and Moral leadership ) have a statistically significant direct impact on WE of nursing specialists WE at Tanta university Hospitals. Therefore, the first main hypothesis H<sub>1</sub> is supported.

The second main hypothesis (H<sub>2</sub>) investigated the direct impact of PL dimensions of nursing specialists LMX at Tanta University Hospitals ; it has been formulated as follows:-

**H<sub>2</sub> : PL dimensions have a statistically significant direct impact on LMX .**

**Table.10:** SEM Results Related to the impact of PL dimensions on LMX.

Independent variable	SRW	T-value (CR)	P Value	Estimate	S.E
Authoritarian leadership (X <sub>1</sub> )	-0.176	-4.351	0.000	-0.170	0.039
Benevolent leadership (X <sub>2</sub> )	0.310	4.221	0.000	0.337	0.064
Moral leadership (X <sub>3</sub> )	0.463	7.721	0.000	0.467	0.060

Analysis of results as shown in table (10) revealed that :

Authoritarian leadership has a negative significant direct impact on nursing specialists LMX at Tanta University Hospitals (T-value = -4.351) , ( $\beta = -0.176$ ) with  $p < 0.001$ ).

Regarding Benevolent leadership and its impact on LMX ,results revealed that it has a statistically significant positive direct impact on nursing specialists LMX at Tanta University Hospitals (T-value = 4.221),(  $\beta = ^+ 0.310$ ) with  $p < 0.001$ ).

With respect to Moral leadership results showed that asserted its statistically significant positive direct impact on LMX of nursing specialists (T-value = 7.721) (  $\beta = +0.463$ , with  $p < 0.001$ ),

Results also revealed that moral leadership comes in the first place in terms of its positive effect on nursing specialists LMX ( $\beta = +0.463$ ), and benevolent was ranked second ( $\beta = +0.310$ ), the previous results showed that the dimensions of PL (authoritarian, benevolent, moral) have a statistically significant direct impact on nursing specialists LMX at Tanta University Hospitals, therefore, the second main hypothesis H<sub>2</sub> is supported.

#### \* LMX and WE

The third main hypothesis (H<sub>3</sub>) investigated the direct impact of LMX on nursing specialists WE at Tanta University hospitals; it has been formulated as follows:

**H<sub>3</sub> : LMX has a statistically significant direct impact on WE.**

**Table.11:**SEM Results Related to the impact of LMX on WE

Independent variable	SRW	T-value (CR)	Sig.	Estimate	S.E	Dependent variable
LMX	0.564	13.928	0.000	.544	.039	WE

Analysis results shown in table (11) revealed that:

LMX has a statistically significant direct impact on nursing specialists WE at Tanta University Hospitals, where (T-value = 13.928,  $\beta = +0.564$  with  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, the third main hypothesis H<sub>3</sub> is highly strongly supported.

#### \*PL , LMX and WE

The last main hypothesis (H<sub>4</sub>) examined the mediating role that LMX plays in the relationship between PL dimensions and nursing specialists WE at Tanta University Hospitals; it has been formulated as follows: -

**H<sub>4</sub> : PL dimensions have a statistically significant indirect impact on WE through LMX .**

**Table.12:**SEM Results Related to the indirect impact of dimensions of PL on WE through LMX

Independent variable	St.Beta	Sig.	Mediating Variable	Dependent variable
Authoritarian leadership (X <sub>1</sub> )	0.099-	0.000	LMX	WE
Benevolent leadership (X <sub>2</sub> )	0.175	0.000		
Moral leadership (X <sub>3</sub> )	0.261	0.000		



From the statistical results shown in the previous table(12), it can be noted that :

Authoritarian leadership has a statistically significant negative indirect impact on WE through nursing specialists LMX ( $\beta = -0.099$  with  $p < 0.001$ ).

Results also revealed that LMX plays a mediating role in the relationship between Benevolent leadership, Moral leadership and nursing specialists WE at Tanta university hospitals ( $\beta = +0.175$  ,  $\beta = +0.261$  with  $p < 0.001$ ).

Therefore, based on the above results, the fourth main hypothesis (H<sub>4</sub>) is supported which assumed PL dimensions has a significant indirect impact on nursing specialists WE at Tanta university hospitals through LMX.

Considering the findings, it can be said that the effects of the three dimensions of PL on nursing specialists WE are enhanced and improved by a mediating role played by LMX in this relationship.

Table (13) shows the direct, indirect and total effects among research variables.

**Table.13:** Direct, Indirect and Total Effects Among Research Variables

Effect			St.Beta	Significance Level
<u>Direct Effects</u>				
- X <sub>1</sub>	Y		-0.168	0.000
- X <sub>2</sub>	Y		0.164	0.000
-X <sub>3</sub>	Y		0.128	0.004
-M	Y		0.564	0.000
<u>Indirect Effects</u>				
X <sub>1</sub>	M	Y	-0.099	***
X <sub>2</sub>	M	Y	0.175	***
X <sub>3</sub>	M	Y	0.261	***
<u>Total Effects ( Direct + Indirect)</u>				
X <sub>1</sub>	Y		-0.267	***
X <sub>2</sub>	Y		0.339	***
X <sub>3</sub>	Y		0.389	***

\*\*\*  $P \leq 0.001$

Statistical results, in table (13) indicated the indirect impact of LMX as a mediating variable between Authoritarian leadership and nursing specialists WE, this indirect effect increases the standardized negative effect of Authoritarian leadership on nursing specialists WE from  $-0.168$  to  $-0.267$ .

Additionally, Benevolent and moral leadership have a significant positive indirect effect on nursing specialists WE through LMX . According to the statistical results, these indirect effects increase the standardized effect of Benevolent and moral leadership on nursing specialists WE respectively from  $0.164$  to  $0.339$  and from  $0.128$  to  $0.389$ .

## 9 . Discussion of Research Results

Work engagement is essential for organizational performance and can be fostered through proactive leadership (Wang *et al.*, 2017; Gu *et al.*, 2018). This study examined research gap on the impact of paternalistic leadership on work engagement, in accordance with social exchange theory (SET). This study specifically investigated the influence of 3 dimensions of PL on WE via a serial mediation mechanism of LMX.

SET elucidates the mechanisms of social interactions between leaders and their subordinates. The study results demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the influence of three characteristics of PL on leader-member exchange and work engagement, hence supporting social exchange theory.

First, This study demonstrated that (2) elements of PL (benevolence and morality) are positively correlated with nursing specialists' LMX, whereas authoritarian leadership is adversely associated with LMX. This finding matches with the SET, indicating that an authoritarian leadership adversely affects the relationship between leaders and employees by negatively influencing employees' perceptions of Leader-Member Exchange (Gu *et al.*, 2018; Abdrabo, 2023). The beneficial impact of benevolent and moral leadership on employees' perceptions of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) identified in this study aligns with the perspective that the leader-employee relationship develops through the exchange of these two dimensions of PL, which encompass respect, honesty (Chen and Farh, 2012), and empathy (Wu *et al.*, 2012; Tang & Naumann, 2015).

Second, This study also showed a positive and significant relationship between LMX and employee Work Engagement (WE). This outcome is consistent with SE theory. which posits that followers may regard a positive relationship with their leaders as a reciprocal obligation, thereby enhancing their work engagement . Additionally, the results of this study corroborate previous researches indicating that LMX influences followers' WE.(Grag & Dhar, 2017; Kim & Koo, 2017; ; Pradnyaswaril & Ayusriath, 2021; Book & Wanger, 2022)

The mediation study results indicated that LMX adversely mediates the association between authoritarian leadership and followers work engagement, while it enhances the favorable relationship between benevolent and moral leadership with followers work engagement. The results align with social exchange theory, suggesting that when nursing specialists see their leader as authoritarian, they respond adversely by decreasing LMX and demonstrating diminished work engagement.

Supporting SET perspective, these results indicate that the indirect influence of PL on employee WE through leader-member exchange is more obvious and positive in the context of being benevolent and moral leadership styles compared to authoritarian leadership.

Furthermore, authoritarian leadership adversely impacts workplace engagement. Conversely, employees exhibit greater WE in response to benevolent and moral styles of PL. Our findings align with prior research (Kormaz *et al.*, 2018; Lin *et al.*, 2019; Nail & Sevin, 2020; Aybar *et al.*,

2023), reinforcing the idea that moral and benevolent leaders can enhance employees' LMX, leading to subordinates who exhibit elevated levels of WE.

## **10 . Theoretical and practical implications**

This study offers essential insights into significant theoretical and practical implications. First Research on PL has demonstrated that PL styles affect employees' WE through LMX relationships .

Secondly, the present research offers implications for future studies into followers' WE behavior, indicating that followers are more likely to be engaged when a robust LMX relationship exists. Consequently, this study fills the existing gaps and enriches the literature on WE by demonstrating the role of LMX as a mediator in this particular context.

Thirdly, concerning LMX as a determinant of interpersonal relationships, prior literature indicates that high-quality LMX relationships substantially enhance employees' comprehension of SET and utilize LMX as a mediator in the association between PL and followers behavior (Chen *et al.*, 2014; Pellegrini *et al.*, 2010).

Previous researches on LMX indicate that leaders significantly influence employee WE behavior. Organizations should endeavor to establish training programs that help leaders in enhancing productivity and fostering personal relationships with their staff.

Moreover, the present study contributes to the literature by suggesting that organizations with employees exhibiting elevated levels of WE are more susceptible to the effect of paternalistic leaders. Thus, our findings assert that organizations should modify its policies and leader's response to encourage the employees for more work engagement..

### **Practical implications**

This study offers substantial practical implications for leaders. The results indicate that authoritarian leadership hinders WE through the intermediary impact of low LMX. Therefore, hospital leaders should avoid using authoritarian leadership styles if they aim to develop nursing specialists LMX and WE. Authoritarian leadership can be avoided by refraining from autocratic decision-making; rather, decisions ought to be made by considering the perspectives and suggestions of the followers.

Furthermore, hospitals executives must recognize the necessity of boosting social exchange ties to foster WE among nursing specialists. The findings indicate that moral leadership positively affects LMX, that potentially enhancing employees' WE. Consequently, leaders must exhibit trustworthiness and honesty, treat their employees equitably, and utilize their position for the benefit of their followers.

Hospital leaders can demonstrate ethical behavior by offering constructive feedback when receiving valuable information. This study additionally implies that leaders should engage in leadership training programs. Furthermore, such human resource strategies, executed by effective

leaders, will be more appropriate in the health sector to promote LMX quality and thus improve WE among nursing specialists.

- **Limitations and future research**

While the current research has many strengths, it also presents some drawbacks. **First**, The study exclusively gathered data from nursing specialists at Tanta University Hospitals, excluding nursing technicians which may restrict the generalizability of our findings regarding nursing personnel. We can reproduce this study by conducting comparative research and collecting data from employees in various jobs and different types of organizations (public and private).

Second, This study investigated the mediating impact of LMX between Perceived Leadership and WE . Furthermore, the researcher focused on impact of PL style in the current study; Future research may investigate the impact of alternative leadership styles (attuned, abusive, narcissistic, ethical, authentic, and spiritual) on employee WE.

Third, this study employed a time-lag research design for data gathering. However, a longitudinal research design could be used in future research overcome the study limitations.

Fourth, The researcher conceptualized and employed LMX and WE as un-dimensional constructs. Future studies may further investigate the potential mechanisms underlying the 4 dimensions of LMX. (affect, contribution, loyalty, professional respect) and the 3 dimensions of WE (vigor, dedication ,absorption).

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**المستخلص:**

يهدف هذا البحث إلى اختبار الأثر المباشر لأبعاد القيادة الأبوية، والعلاقات التبادلية علي ارتباط التابعين بالعمل بالتطبيق علي العاملين بطاقم التمريض في مستشفيات جامعة طنطا، كما تسعى الدراسة إلى الكشف عما إذا كانت العلاقات التبادلية بين القادة والتابعين تلعب دوراً وسيطاً في العلاقة بين القيادة الأبوية والارتباط بالعمل، وقد تم إجراء دراسة ميدانية علي عينة من العاملين بالتمريض في مستشفيات جامعة طنطا وبلغ عدد الإستمارات المستوفاة 262 إستمارة بنسبة 88,8

وقد أوضحت النتائج أن أبعاد القيادة الأبوية والعلاقات التبادلية لهما تأثير معنوي مباشر على ارتباط التابعين بالعمل. كما كشفت النتائج أن العلاقات التبادلية بين القادة والتابعين تؤثر تأثيراً معنوياً مباشراً على الارتباط بالعمل. وأخيراً اتضح أن هذه العلاقات التبادلية تلعب دوراً وسيطاً في العلاقة بين القيادة الأبوية وارتباط التابعين بالعمل.

**الكلمات الإفتتاحية :** القيادة الأبوية ؛ العلاقات التبادلية ؛ الارتباط بالعمل؛ مستشفيات جامعة طنطا.