

Exploitative leadership effect on employee well-being in the Egyptian dairy industry

Christine Karmy GadElKarim Srour
Laila Sameh Rabie Mohammed Ahmed
Nada Magdy Elsaied Mohammed
Nour Ashraf Abdelkhalek Barakat
Sandra Saeed Abdelfattah Mahmoud Farrag
Future University in Egypt, Egypt

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to shed light on how exploitative leadership impacts employee well-being. Studying the effect of exploitative leadership on employee well-being helps researchers and organizations understand the harmful consequences of poor leadership practices on staff members' mental and physical health.

The research focuses on the Egyptian dairy industry, which is a substantial contributor to the country's economy. A sample of 353 employees are randomly chosen in Dina Farms and Juhayna owing to their dominance in Egypt's dairy business. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is used to investigate the impact of variables on each other.

Based on the statistical analysis, exploitative leadership, and employee well-being have a negative significant relationship. Therefore, it is recommended that managers should follow a few approaches to eliminate this type of behavior such as developing clear policies and procedures, encouraging better communications with continuous feedback, and creating a supportive work environment that values the well-being of its employees.

Introduction

Employees' health and happiness are important for the organization to stay intact together and increase commitment to the organization. Well-being can simply become the driver of employees' success both inside and outside of the workplace. Further, employee well-being at work can broadly be described as the strain experienced affecting the overall quality of an employee's functioning. Strain is defined as psychological, physical, or behavioral responses to stressors (Le Fevre et al., 2003). Stress is one of the most influential factors affecting employees' well-being (Xiong Chen and Aryee, 2007). Every organization needs to ensure that its employees enjoy a high level of well-being, as it leads to a positive return on the organization's branding and performance (Combs et al., 2006).

Although there are likely many factors that impact employee well-being, one that may be of particular importance is the nature of the interaction between leaders and employees (West, 2022). Leadership plays a major role in the workplace and has a dynamic impact on employees; as leaders provide guidance, assign responsibilities, manage disputes, and support the team to achieve the organizational goals. Leadership is considered one of the major factors behind every organization's success (Yukl, 2012). Within today's environment, organizations are highly concerned about seeking ways to mitigate the influence of behavioral stressors and their negative effects at work due to the negative side of leaders (Hoobler & Hu, 2013).

In the workplace, negative leader behaviors have been associated with subordinates having experiences that resemble outcomes of concern in graduate students like burnout, physical health issues, etc. (West, 2022). This type of leader is usually characterized by egoistic behavior, undermining others' development, and taking credit for other people's work (Schmid et al., 2019).

Exploitative leadership is very common in organizations because it is easy for a person with power to exploit their colleagues without any consequences. There are many ways in which leaders can be exploitative and undermine the development of their employees. One way is by giving them a high number of tasks to do without providing enough support or resources (Guo, Ken & Luo, 2021). Moreover, exploitative leadership characterizes behaviors with the primary intention to further the leader's self-interest like obtaining credit for employees' work and using employees for personal gain (Schmid et al., 2019). Such leaders treat their employees unfairly, and abuse and exploit them in order to achieve their personal goals, having less consideration for their actions on both the employees and the organization (Van Dijke, De Cremer, & Mayer, 2010).

The issue with exploitative leadership is that it will probably lead to a high amount of stress and unhappiness for employees. Such leaders are often seen as being manipulative and not caring about their employees' well-being. Consequently, employees' productivity would decrease, harming not only themselves but also the whole organization. Thus, it's important to discuss and explore the exploitative leadership consequences concerning employee well-being.

Literature Review

Exploitative leadership is one of the destructive patterns of leadership. It refers to leadership with the elementary intention of promoting the leader's self-interest through the exploitation of others (Schmid, 2018). Exploitative leadership is a behavior that is abusive, destructive, and psychologically disturbing and perhaps legalistically corrupt and poisonous. In agreement, Schmid (2018) described leaders as narcissistic, self-promoters who engage in an unpredictable pattern of abusive and authoritarian supervision". Exploitative leaders intend to further their self-interest and "exploit others by acting egoistically, exerting pressure and manipulating followers, overburdening followers, or, on the other hand, consistently under-challenging followers, allowing no development" (Schmid et al., 2019). To reach their personal goals, exploitative leaders tend to put exceeding amounts of pressure on their followers or even engage in manipulative tactics to influence the followers to accomplish his/her self-interested aspirations.

Schmid et al. (2019) pointed out that exploitative leadership incorporates five dimensions, namely genuine egoistic behaviors, taking credit, exerting pressure, undermining development, and manipulating. The first dimension is genuine egoistic behaviors, which refers to the use of power for the sole purpose of achieving personal gains. An egoistic leader behaves in a self-interested manner and exploits others significantly. The second dimension, taking credit, applies to leaders who are being appreciated for the achievement of their subordinates, unjustified for their subordinates' hard work, and use it to benefit themselves. The third dimension is Exerting pressure, which Involves leaders putting unwarranted and excessive pressure on employees to get tasks done. Exploitative leaders usually use unjustified and extraordinary job pressures through complex tasks and intolerable schedules and deadlines (Burns, 2017; Tepper et al., 2007). The fourth dimension of exploitative leadership is undermining development. The undermining of development and job growth refers to the act of consistently assigning boring and useless routine tasks that leaders do not wish to undertake and hindering the career progression of their subordinates. Finally, manipulating describes that leaders play others off against each other to benefit themselves. The manipulative behavior of exploitative leaders affects the dynamics of meaningful relations between subordinates such as trust, collaboration, and cooperation, which form the basis for managing the flow and sharing of knowledge and adjusting to the surrounding environment (Hou, 2017).

Exploitative leaders engage in manipulative and seditious acts to ensure their own interests are met; thus, employees would feel undermined (Lin et al., 2017). Scholars expressed that undermining is an obstruction to law and various rules in societies. Moreover, undermining in organizations negatively affects employee's health, giving those negative vibes, increasing unexcused absences, the high failure rate in work/assignments completion, and disrespectful or abusive behavior, which in turn affect performance in organizations (Carter, Onyeador, & Lewis Jr, 2020). Employees' health and happiness is the foundation of their wellbeing (Lawson, Noblet, Rodwell, 2009).

Employee well-being has emerged as one of the greatest challenges faced by managers (Boddy, 2014) and they are inquiring into strategies aimed at improving the same. Experience of more positive emotions

at work has significant influences on both individual outcomes and organizational performance and productivity (Illies *et al.*, 2015).

According to Pradhan & Hati (2022), employees' well-being consists of three main dimensions. First is subjective well-being at work, which refers to the term subjective well-being that describes a person's overall experience in life and reflects a person's self-described happiness. Subjective well-being includes positive attitudinal judgments as well as the experience of positive and negative effects, defined as typical or transient moods or emotions experienced while working. According to Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory, positive emotions function in the short term to broaden one's thought-action repertoire and thereby build in the long term one's subjective, social, psychological, and resources (Fredrickson, 2001). The second dimension of well-being is psychological well-being. It refers to individuals' valued experience (Bandura, 1986) in which they become more effective in their work and other activities (Huang *et al.*, 2016). According to Diener (2009), well-being is a subjective term, which describes people's happiness, the fulfillment of wishes, satisfaction, abilities, and task accomplishments. The third and final dimension is social well-being, it entails feeling a part of meaningful communities, having satisfying short-term interactions, and maintaining satisfying long-term relationships with other people. Spreitzer *et al.* (2005) explain that satisfaction with peers and exchange relationships with leaders are both components of social well-being.

Prior research has demonstrated many negative effects that exploitative leadership has on employees including decreased job satisfaction and affective commitment, increased turnover intention, burnout, workplace deviance, and perceived imbalance in social exchange (Schmid *et al.*, 2018, 2019). The fact that exploitative leaders tend to require employees to work based on their self-interest and punish rebellious subordinates (Schmid *et al.*, 2014), may increase injustice and distrust leading to a significant decrease in employees' well-being (Lawson, Noblet, Rodwell, 2009). Since exploitative leaders often give boring tasks to employees, exert an exceeding amount of work pressure, and place inappropriately high job demands on employees, scholars proposed that the resultant psychological distress may lead to perceptions of resource loss, decreased job control, and personal autonomy (Schmid *et al.*, 2018).

Based on previous research results presented above the researchers hypothesized the following:

H1: There is a negative effect of exploitative leadership on employee well-being.

H1a: there is a negative effect of exploitative leadership on employees' subjective well-being.

H1b: there is a negative effect of exploitative leadership on employees' psychological well-being.

H1c: there is a negative effect of Exploitative leadership on employees' social well-being.

Research Methodology

This research used a simple random sampling technique, to determine the sample size. A survey was distributed electronically to (353) employees in Dina Farms and Juhayna, two market-respected leader brands in the Egyptian dairy products sector known for producing quality products. The survey is comprised of two sections measuring both exploitative leaderships representing the independent variable and employee wellbeing as the dependent variable. The exploitative leadership scale is adopted from Schmid *et al.* (2019) who presented 13 items measuring the dimensions of exploitative leadership. Moreover, the research adopted Hati's (2022) 28-item scale to measure employee wellbeing dimensions.

Findings

The research uses several statistical techniques to test the research hypotheses. First, the descriptive statistics are conducted to determine the main characteristics of the data collected from the dairy sector employees. Second, Confirmatory Factor Analysis is also conducted to examine whether questionnaires used to measure exploitative leadership and well-being are consistent with our understanding of the nature of these constructs. Third, the Spearman Correlation coefficient is used to measure the strength and the direction of the relationship between exploitative leadership and employee wellbeing. Finally, the Structural equation modeling is used to investigate the effect of exploitative leadership and employee well-being on each other, providing a better understanding of the phenomenon. In conclusion, the research starts by specifying the theoretical model that represents the correlation between exploitative leadership and employee wellbeing dimensions. Then, SEM is used to understand the magnitude and significance of these correlations.

Descriptive Statistics

The arithmetic mean is an indication of central tendency to offer understanding into the average value of the data collected from the dairy employees. Table (1) shows the mean for each survey item and the standard error of the mean that offers insight into the degree accuracy that the sample mean represents the whole population mean.

	Mean	Std. Error
My views are well accepted by my teammates.	3.79	.895
People in my team don't help each other in difficult times.	2.79	1.138
I take active part in important decision-making activities of my team.	3.73	.918
I can freely share my problems with my colleagues.	3.42	1.051
My day-to-day activities contribute towards the benefits of my team.	3.62	.894
My life is mostly sorrowful.	3.45	1.014
I feel that I am a sensible person.	3.96	.902
I am a confident person.	3.89	.965
I believe that I have a purpose and direction in life.	4.01	.868
I think life is a continuous process of learning.	4.36	.938
I care for things that are important to me, not what is important to others.	3.70	.891
I understand what is expected from me.	2.66	1.144
I am not flexible.	3.54	.977
I easily adapt to day-to-day changes of my life and manage my responsibilities well.	3.30	1.201
I feel I am capable of decision-making.	3.78	.940
I feel depressed from the stress and demands of day-to-day life.	3.50	1.144
I am quite satisfied with my job. Exploitative	3.51	1.006
I feel good about myself.	3.64	.945
I attach lots of value to my work.	3.81	.878
I enjoy meaningful work.	4.10	.840
Mostly I feel happy	3.44	.933
My job provides scope for career growth.	3.52	1.042
I am an optimistic person.	3.72	.952
I feel good about my work.	3.93	.918
My manager values the achievement of his or her own goals over the needs of the employees.	3.22	1.175

	Mean	Std. Error
My manager Puts me under pressure to reach his or her goals.	3.15	1.185
My manager Does not give me opportunities to further develop myself professionally because his or her own goals have priority.	2.95	1.169
My manager Gives me boring routine tasks when he or she can benefit from it.	3.09	1.132
My manager Increases my workload without considering my needs in order to reach his or her goals	3.10	1.183
My manager Does not consider my workload when new tasks need to be assigned.	3.16	1.081
My manager Gives me tedious tasks if he or she can benefit from it.	3.23	1.126
My manager sees employees as a means to reach his or her personal goals.	3.14	1.195
My manager Uses my work to get himself or herself noticed.	3.01	1.143
My manager Passes the team's work off as his or her own.	2.87	1.171
My manager Uses my work for his or her personal gain.	2.92	1.221
My manager Manipulates others to reach his or her goals.	2.92	1.280
My manager often puts my colleagues and me against each other to reach his or her goals.	2.91	1.261
People are trustworthy in my team.	3.68	.969
I am an important part of my team and organization.	3.91	.882
I am close to my teammates in my organization.	3.66	.940
My team is a great source of social support.	3.64	.968
I love to spend time with my teammates.	3.62	.993

Table (1): Descriptive measures of statements Source: Based on calculation of the surveyed sample

In Table (1) it is clear that value of standard error of the mean is small indicating a more precise estimation of the mean for the research population.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The research investigates the reliability and validity of the survey used to measure exploitative leadership and employee wellbeing. For this purpose, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) determine whether the survey is actually measuring these variables, with the reliability measured by Cronbach alpha.

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Exploitative leadership	0.701	0.816	0.527
Psychological well-being	0.754	0.835	0.504
Social well-being	0.795	0.859	0.524
Subjective well-being	0.754	0.835	0.504

Table (2) Reliability and Validity analysis for the phenomenon Source: developed by the researchers

Table (2) shows that all the variables had a Cronbach alpha higher than 0.7. Therefore, all the statements are reliable to represent the factors in the study. To approach the validity of the statements in expressing the factors, both the composite reliability and the average variance extracted were computed. The AVE of each factor was above 0.5 and the CR was above 0.7. This shows how the statements were valid to be used for the factors.

The Spearman correlation coefficient

The Spearman correlation coefficient is applied in this study to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between exploitative leadership and employee wellbeing. The Spearman correlation coefficient takes values from -1 to +1. Values that are close to -1 signal a strong negative correlation, while those closer to +1 represent a strong positive correlation. As for values close to 0 means there is no correlation between the variables.

		Exploitative Leadership	Subj.	Psyc.	Social	
Spearman's rho	Exploitative Leadership	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.476**	.337**	.451**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	398	398	398	398
	Subjective	Correlation Coefficient	.476**	1.000	.382**	.291**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	398	398	398	398
	Psychological	Correlation Coefficient	.337**	.382**	1.000	.706**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	398	398	398	398
	Social	Correlation Coefficient	.451**	.291**	.706**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	398	398	398	398

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

Table (3): Spearman Correlation coefficients of the phenomenon

Correlations

Table (3) indicates that there is a significant relationship between Exploitative Leadership and Subjective well-being at a 95% confidence level. Also, there is a significant weak negative relationship between Exploitative Leadership and Psychological well-being value at 95%. In addition to that, there is a significant moderate negative relationship between Exploitative Leadership and social well-being at a 95% confidence level. So, exploitative leadership has a negative significant impact on subjective, psychological, and social well-being.

Structural Equation Modelling

SEM is used in this research used to model relationships between exploitative leadership and employee well-being and to test the research hypotheses assessing theoretical causal structure among the two variables.

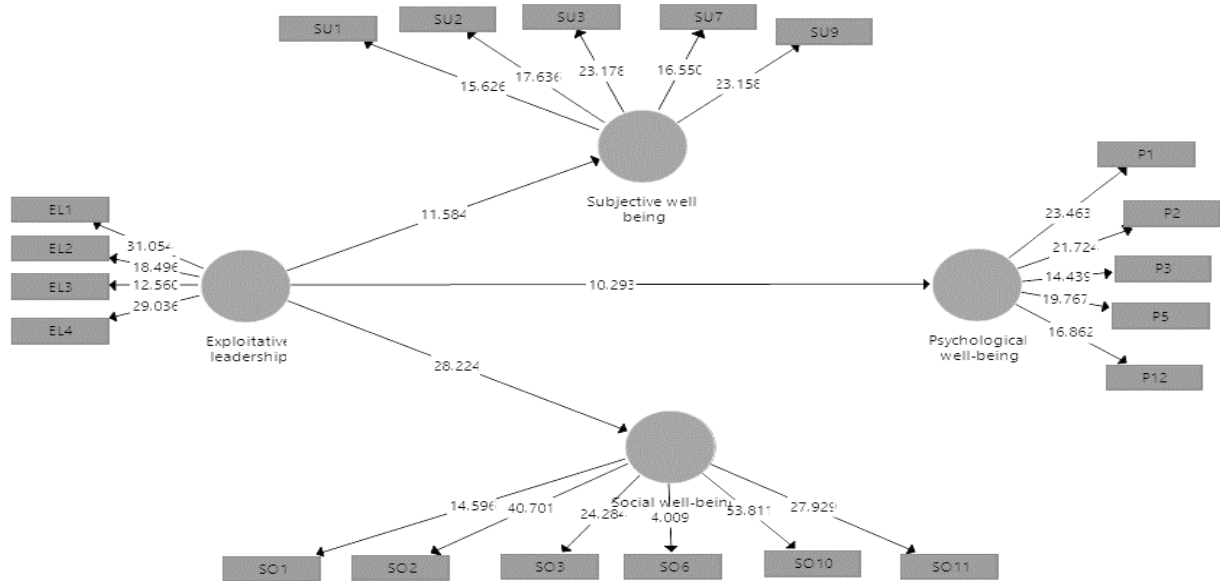


Figure (1): Structural equation model of the 4 factors provided by using SmartPLS.

Figure (1) shows how the relationships are built in the structural equation model. All the loadings are above 0.7 which gives an indication that no statements shall be removed from the study.

**p-value<0.01, * p-value<0.05, "" p-value>0.05 Source: Based on calculations using Smart PLS Table (4) Estimates of structural equation model of the phenomenon

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)
Exploitative leadership -> Psychological well-being	0.485***	0.047
Exploitative leadership -> Social well-being	0.749***	0.027
Exploitative leadership -> Subjective well-being	0.494***	0.043

After applying SEM, the phenomenon is better understood. From the table above the results of the study indicate that exploitative leadership has a significant impact on Psychological, Social, and Subjective well-being. Thus, exploitative leadership has a negative significant impact on Psychological, social, and subjective well-being.

Discussion and conclusion

The main objective of this research is to examine the exploitative leadership effect on the employee’s well-being. Based on the statistical analysis results obtained from applying SEM, it can be concluded that Exploitative leadership has a negative effect on employee well-being. Even though many factors may impact employee well-being, the relationship between a leader and followers is central to well-being (West, 2022). This is concurrent with organizational behavior literature indicating that negative leadership behaviors have been linked to workplace outcomes of concern in subordinates, such as burnout, physical health problems, etc. (West, 2022).

Specifically, exploitative leadership has a negative impact on social well-being at work. As exploitative behaviors increase, a climate of fear and mistrust is fostered, causing strained relationships between leaders and their subordinates as well as among coworkers. This finding agrees with Sirgy (2012) research indicating that negative leadership has an impact on relationships outside the organization encouraging employees to engage in unhealthy coping mechanisms like aggression and substance abuse, frequently leading to very high levels of stress, anxiety, and even depression. This also agrees with the research result indicating exploitative leadership negative effect on employees' psychological wellbeing.

Exploitative leadership also has an impact on employees' subjective well-being, which results in a sense of alienation and loneliness among workers. This result is in line with previous research showing that exploitative leadership has a variety of detrimental effects on workers, including decreased job satisfaction and affective commitment, increased intention to leave the company, burnout, workplace deviance, and a sense of social exchange that is unbalanced (Schmid et al., 2019).

Based on this study's results and evidence, several implications need attention to enhance well-being and consequently performance. The HR department should put forth effort in educating leaders and employees about exploitative leadership, so as a first step spreading awareness among managers is crucial. In other words, training professionals should inform managers and staff on what constitutes exploitative leadership, how it impacts people and the organization, and how to prevent or stop it, training and seminars can be organized. Further, supervisors must be educated on detecting exploitative leadership behavior patterns through employees' feedback and offer potential remedies. Attention must also be paid by all organizational levels, to providing employees assistance and resources to help them deal with the negative impacts of exploitative leadership. This may entail having access to tools for resolving conflicts, receiving conflict resolution instruction, and having anonymous reporting options. Additionally, establishing a procedure for reporting and appropriately handling complaints will show that the problem is being handled seriously.

Promoting a positive organizational culture is critical when dealing with exploitative leadership and weak well-being. Empathy, respect, and honesty towards employees should be leaders' top priorities. Additionally, cultivating cooperation, communication, and work-life balance as well as developing a sense of community inside the workplace can aid in developing a more pleasant work environment that deters exploitative leadership. Finally, management should consider holding leadership accountable for their actions. People in power who act exploitatively need to face consequences. This can entail taking official disciplinary action, like being fired from your job, or putting in place a performance improvement plan. Steps must be taken to guarantee that the bad leadership's behavior is altered and does not reoccur in the future.

Finally, the leader sets the tone for the organization and has a direct impact on the employees, thus it is clear that leadership is crucial when it comes to the welfare of employees at any organization. Therefore, this study is done to demonstrate how an exploitative leader can negatively impact an organization's employee well-being and why employee well-being is crucial for an organization.

In conclusion, employee well-being is crucial for organizational success, and leadership plays a significant part in that matter. Exploitative leadership behaviors, which focus on the leader's self-interest, can lead to employee stress, burnout, reduced productivity, and high turnover rates, particularly in industries such as the dairy industry in Egypt. However, despite its negative effects on employee well-being, there is a lack of research examining the relationship between exploitative leadership and employee well-being, especially in Egypt. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating by testing the research hypotheses through statistical analysis including Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). From the statistical test results, it can be concluded that Exploitative leadership has a negative effect on employee well-being. Thus H1, H1a, H1b and H1c are accepted. This conclusion is supported by previous research showing a significant positive impact of ethical leadership on psychological, social, and subjective well-being. Overall, the findings suggest that Exploitative leadership has detrimental effects on multiple aspects of employee well-being, including happiness, health, and relationships. These results highlight the importance of fostering positive and supportive leadership practices to promote employee well-being in the workplace.

The study informs HR practitioners, managers, and stakeholders on how to mitigate the negative effects of exploitative leadership and improve employee well-being in the workplace. Organizations should

strive to create an environment that encourages fair treatment, respectful communication, and supportive leadership styles to enhance employee well-being and ultimately improve overall organizational performance.

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Research limitations and direction for further research

The findings of this study must be seen in the light of some limitations. For instance, time constraints have restricted the ability of the researchers to spend researching a topic and tracking change over time. Therefore, a longitudinal study would be beneficial to track the long-term effect of exploitative leadership on employee wellbeing.

This study may not offer a complete picture of the effect of the exploitative leadership style on employees' well-being. Thus, this study's findings should be further explored, particularly with other variables that could interfere with the strength or the direction of the relationship. For example, personal resilience, personality, job stressors, and social support could be considered in future research to offer a more comprehensive construct. Finally, to safely generalize the results of this study without the errors of self-reporting bias, future research must use different measurement tools to measure exploitive leadership.

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