

**RESEARCH PAPER****Leadership Styles, Interactional Justice and Employee Well-being: A Study in Export Processing Zones of Pakistan****<sup>1</sup> Amina Tariq\*, <sup>2</sup> Shahzad Khurram and <sup>3</sup> Nyela Ashraf**

1. PhD Scholar, Air University School of Management (AUSOM), Air University, Islamabad, Pakistan
2. Dean, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Wah, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Lecturer, Department of Business Administration, University of Poonch, Rawalakot, AJK, Pakistan

**\*Corresponding Author:** [amina\\_tariq21@yahoo.com](mailto:amina_tariq21@yahoo.com)**ABSTRACT**

Leadership styles are considered as one the most significant component of overall organization configuration. While employee wellbeing and its connection with the overall organization's configuration is necessary to examine, it is equally important to include leadership styles in the research perspective. For this purpose, we conducted a study in which we include main types of religious leadership's styles and regressed them against employees' wellbeing. For this quantitative study, data was gathered through questionnaires given to total 511 employees who are working in various export processing zones of Pakistan. In this study, we also examined the mediating effects of interactional justice on religious leadership styles to well-being relationships. We found that religious leadership styles have strong and positive impact on employee well-being and the mediation effect also exists in these relationships.

**Keywords:** Authentic Leadership, Employee Well-being, Ethical Leadership, Interactional Justice**Introduction**

Today importantly, human well-being in organizational context has remained understudied. One key reason that makes us focus on welfare is that all organizational are dependent on work of human beings. Essentially important human factor is non-replaceable in its entirety even when organizational work is done through high tech sophisticated machines. This holds more because organization can only prosper when all staff members perform for the benefit of the organization (Gibson et al., 2006). Any organization that does not ensure the well-being of its people dies (Mondy, Gordon, Sharplin, & Premeaux, 1990). Success of firms in achieving human well-being not only depends on physical and material factors such as money, technology, equipment, buildings or other assets, but also on the management/ leadership styles within an organization.

Many previous researches in leadership and management have established that senior managers of organizations must be responsible for an effective managerial configuration that is helpful to encourage the employees working in the organization, empower their employees to achieve vision, mission and goals (Key, 2000), and fully pay attention to the achieve the objectives of their organization (Yukl, 2002; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). Within an organization, individual leaders have a significant influence to the success of any organization (Bass, 1990). Leaders must be capable of implementing a management style that inspires and supports work to have positive attitudes towards leaders and their jobs, and ultimately supports the employees to improve the performance of organization, to make an organization successful within a competitive environment.

In extant literature, leadership is a widely discussed phenomenon. Term leadership is known as an approach that is used by a person to lead the people by going in advance (Al-Malki & Juan, 2018). Employees play an important role to ensure the service quality. When the staff is clear about their requirements and expectations, most probably their performance will be increased (Keskes, 2014). In fact leaders are liable for the suitable allocation of job and resources, several approaches to allocate and perform task have been used by different types of leaders. Past studies examined that leaders positively increase organizational effectiveness by influencing the employees. Mostly, leaders extensively influence its supporters in the organization. Hence, it is essential to understand the nature of religious leadership styles like authentic leadership and ethical leadership to examine their effect on solving different organizational issues and enhancing employee well-being.

In the previous literature we found that very limited work is done that explore the effect of the positive sides of leadership styles on various component of employees' well-being (welfare) (Angermeier, Dunford, Boss, Smith, & Boss, 2009), especially with regards to export processing zones. Moreover, existing literature of management has presented an absence of predictable results (Yukl, 2002) that are not fully integrated with organizational configuration and leadership theories (Vilkinas & West, 2011). Therefore to fill this gap, hence, it was the objective of the current research to study the effects of the religious leadership styles on employee wellbeing focusing on employees working in organization at export processing zones. It is important to note that this study is very limited to the organizational context of export processing zones in Pakistan. We selected this context because there is currently no study to be appears focusing on positive styles of leaderships in Export processing zones in Pakistan. Our research contributes to extant literature by filling this gap and adds another novel perspective to the organizational configuration and leadership literatures.

## **Literature Review**

### **Social Learning Theory**

Authentic and ethical leaders are advocates of qualities, for example, social justice, collaboration, consideration and inclusion (Ehrich et al., 2015), and the procedures or mechanisms through which the correct qualities and behaviors are advocated among supporters are described by the social learning theory (Mayer et al., 2012). As indicated by this theory, supporters will in general focus and imitate the dispositions, qualities, and behaviors of their ethical and authentic leaders, on the grounds that their appeal and believability as good examples and source of direction that helps to develop their molded behavior (Brown & Trevino, 2006). The job of leaders in making a reasonable working condition and a decent quality of work life for employees would help to enhance satisfaction of the employees with their jobs and also helps to easily understand the dimensions of employee wellbeing (Javeed et al., 2013). In such manner, leadership style is considered as a significant tool, whenever utilized correctly, would expand positive and constructive relationships between employees and leaders, increase employee performance and better organizational climate (Kuoppala et al., 2008). The increasing importance of these leadership styles amongst organizations is considered as an outcome of previous study's results on positive findings of authentic leadership, ethical leadership and spiritual leadership. These styles of leadership involve "development of standards with moral and ethical values that helps to deal with the behaviors of the employees and use of these standards efficiently and successfully with their behaviors" (Yilmaz, 2010).

### **Ethical Leadership and Employee Well-being**

In the organizational literature, ethical and moral values inside leadership have been examined. According to Brown et al. (2005), the term ethical leadership is defined as a different leadership style that is based on a theory of social learning. Brown and Treviño (2006, p. 595) describe ethical leadership as 'the exhibit of normatively suitable direct

through close to interpersonal relationships and intrapersonal actions, and to promote such actions and behaviors to the supporters through reinforcement, participate in making decisions and two-way communication between leader and followers. An ethical leader is the one who has: (1) an ethical and moral individual – a person seen to be trustworthy, fair, reasonable, legitimate, principled decision-maker and dependable (Brown et al., 2005); (2) the person who is role model for their followers – one who also follow what he speaks to his or her followers, and perceived to be a role model and good example for his/her followers (Mayer et al., 2009); and (3) an ethical manager – the person who creates moral values an unequivocal piece of their leadership plan and give rewards and compensation to consider supporters responsible for ethical behavior and conduct. This value-based methodology in overseeing ethical conduct and behavior is contended to separate it from other leadership styles (Brown & Treviño, 2006).

Previous studies research has found out different factors which affect employee wellbeing with the basic goal and objective of good practices to increase workplace outcomes for both employers and the employees. In the past years, the construct of ethical leaders has been established and got importance in the field of research due to two aspects. The first one is that the significance of ethical leadership has been increased due to several empirical studies described that style of leadership is positively related to the employee outcomes like increase in performance, satisfaction, job dedication, organizational citizenship behavior and commitment of the employee with their organization (Brown et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2011). The second aspect is that corporate leaders have been exposed to numerous high-profile organizational (Toor & Ofori, 2009, p. 533). These scandals have directed that in the organizations both practitioners and academics have to pay more attention to ethical and moral culture and environment and to find out what are the outcomes and predictors of ethical leadership style (Brown & Trevino, 2006; Mayer et al., 2009).

Existing literature examined that ethical leadership can have positive outcomes for employees, including upgraded employee well-being (Liu et al., 2010), expanded job satisfaction (Den Hartog & De Hoogh, 2009), improved employee performance (Mayer et al., 2012), and expanded job devotion (Mayer et al., 2009). Ethical leadership has likewise been identified with an increase in work engagement (Chughtai et al., 2015) and employee wellbeing (Kalshoven & Boon, 2012). So, the following hypotheses were developed:

**Hypothesis 1:** Ethical leadership will positively affect employee well-being.

### **Authentic Leadership and Employee Well-being**

Authentic leadership is a positive leadership style that underscores behavioral integrity, mindfulness, consistency, trustworthiness, honesty and self-awareness (Avolio et al., 2004). Authentic leadership is placed to impact performance by underlining individuals' qualities instead of shortcomings (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Wong & Cummings, 2009). This type of leadership is "an example of straightforward and ethical leader behavior that encourages transparency in sharing data expected to settle on choices while tolerating contribution from the individuals who pursue" (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; p. 424). Authentic leaders construct confiding in workplaces that draw in supporters through four sorts of behaviors: self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing and relational transparency (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Leaders have to play a significantly important role in creating such workplaces that increase employee wellbeing and eventually their performance (Kuoppala et al., 2008). Leaders shape the nature of the prompt workplace which importantly affects the ability of employees with their work and ensuring job and health-related outcomes (Wong et al., 2010). At the point when leaders neglect to guarantee that working conditions support employees' capacity to achieve their work in significant manners, employees battle to accomplish work goals and may get depleted, ruining performance, and at last decreasing their health and well-being (Stouten et al.,

2010). Research has indicated that socially engaged leadership styles are relatively more useful than autocratic styles (Kuoppala et al., 2008).

Researches show rising interest in authentic leadership style as leadership in the field of organizational psychology that has indicated promising outcomes in making positive workplaces that cultivate employee wellbeing and health (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Past research has connected positive leadership practices as a rule (Hauge et al., 2011; Laschinger & Fida, 2014) and authentic leadership specifically, to positive work outcomes (Walumbwa et al., 2008; Wong et al., 2010, Giallonardo et al., 2010; Laschinger & Fida, 2014), recommending that leadership is an important part of organizational strategy for advancing enlistment and maintenance of new attendants (Jensen & Luthans, 2006). So, we hypothesized the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 2:** Authentic leadership will positively affect employee well-being.

### **Interactional Justice Mediates between Ethical leadership and Employee Wellbeing**

At long last, we suggest that ethical leadership will positively influence employee well-being and such a relationship is interceded by interactional justice. Profoundly established in the Confucian belief system, ethical leaders who ought never to exploit subordinates (Cheng et al., 2004) should regard adherents as closures instead of imply. Since respectability and unselfishness are key attributes of ethical leaders, such behavior is bound to increment honesty-based as well as generosity-based reliability (Mayer et al., 1995). In the Asian setting, ethical leadership behavior is considerably progressively significant for employees because of a long history of autocratic and feudalism standards instead of law and too generous power asymmetry among directors and subordinates (Chen & Farh, 2010). In circumstances where subordinates are profoundly helpless against managers' activities, bosses' uprightness and unselfishness fill in as an assurance that employees won't be excessively misused and exploited (Wu et al., 2012). Consequently, leaders' ethical behaviors are primary determinants of leaders' reliability and, in this way, subordinates' trust in leaders with the goal that their well-being expanded.

Additionally, we argue that interactional justice may intervene in the relationship between ethical leadership and psychological well-being. Bies and Moag (1986) proposed this organization justice measurement and is regularly known as interactional justice. They characterized this sort of justice as the decency of the relational treatment of the employees by the power figure (Zainalipour et al., 2010). Interactional justice is priceless in the workplace inferable from the effects of reasonable or uncalled for treatment (Frey & Stutzer, 2002). It can likewise be characterized as the technique wherein the organization treats its employees with justice and identifies with the human component of the organizational practices (Cathleen et al., 2010). A leader who holds high ethical standards and exhibits unrivaled individual temperance and self-control will in general, treat subordinates reasonably and graciously with genuineness and affectability and lead them by model. These behaviors are probably going to cause employees to see a significant level of relational regard and thought, prompting the view of higher interactional justice. Seen interactional justice thus positively influences trust in administrators based on dependability assessments.

Nonetheless, we contend that the impression of interactional justice intervene the ethical leadership-trust relationship because there could be different instruments through which ethical leadership upgrades trust. For instance, ethical leadership could expand confidence through an identification procedure. As proposed in earlier research (Farh & Chen, 2000) and supported by some exact investigations (Chen et al., 2004), as profound quality is an exceptionally esteemed leadership behavior in various nations, for example, China, subordinates may create solid identification with an ethical leader, which thusly initiates trust-in-boss. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3:** Interactional justice will partially mediate the positive relationship between ethical leadership and employee well-being.

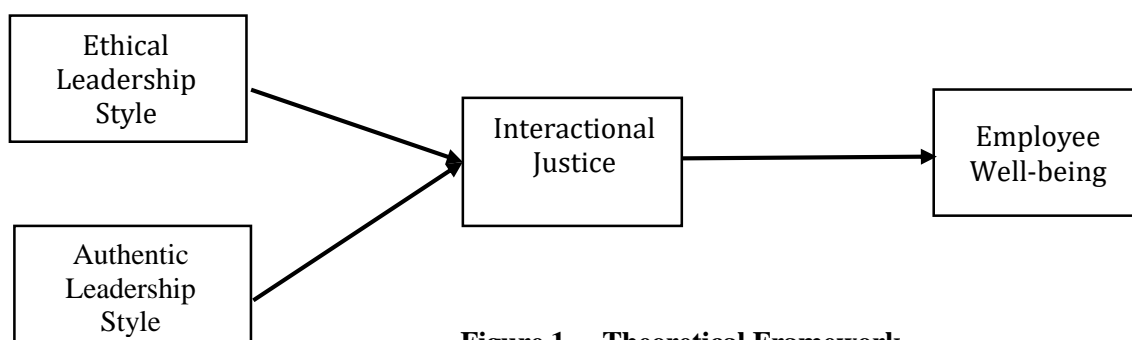
### **Interactional Justice mediates between authentic leadership and employee wellbeing**

Authentic leadership behaviors, by definition, incorporate huge numbers of these different reasonableness criteria. In particular, authentic leaders are open, straightforward, and predictable in basic leadership (Avolio et al., 2009; Walumbwa et al., 2008; Walumbwa et al., 2010), and in this manner ought to be seen as procedurally reasonable by subordinates. Extra contentions for authentic leadership meeting reasonableness criteria are with respect to instructive and relational justice. Authentic leaders show elevated levels of mindfulness, social straightforwardness, and disguised good point of view (three of the elements of authentic leadership), which drives them to maintain a solid degree of respectability and trust with and among devotees, encourage transparent sharing of data, and display certifiable regard of adherents.

We hypothesize that authentic leadership behavior encourages trust and loving in leader-subordinate connections. On an elementary level, self-disclosure is a gauge of closeness. Since it very well may be hazardous, individuals will, in general, reveal themselves to hint companions, guardians, and accomplices as opposed to outsiders. What's more, the accomplice's reliability is a vital state of self-revelation (Jones & Archer, 1976). In addition, people are increasingly disposed to uncover themselves to people they like (Collins & Miller, 1994). So, subordinates will, in general view leaders' self-revealed authenticity as demonstrating that leaders need to have close, trusting, and affectionate associations with subordinates (Liu & Perrewe, 2006).

As per social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973), self-divulgence will probably be responded to in relational correspondence, and self-revelation demonstrates preferring and trust (Wortman et al., 1976). Essentially, the literature on trust proposes that subordinates will respond to leader-started trust over the long haul (Whitener et al., 1998). Thus, leaders and subordinates can grow close relational connections parallel to progressive work connections. The nearby leader-the subordinate relationship can occur after some time as common self-divulgence and sharing create. When shaped, the two gatherings impart all the more lavishly, trusting in one another and giving common passionate support (Boyd & Taylor, 1998). So we hypothesized:

**Hypothesis 4:** Interactional justice will mediate the positive relationship between authentic leadership and employee well-being.



**Figure 1 Theoretical Framework**

## **Material and Methods**

### **Participants and Data Collection**

For the present study, a survey strategy is used as it is preferred for data collection from a large audience. The survey is linked to the deductive approach (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). The surveys mainly involve questionnaires as it assists in collecting

consistent data from a large population in a reasonable manner. Cross-sectional research is conducted in our research work to collect data just once. Data is collected from the employees currently serving in the different firms of export processing zones in Pakistan. The required respondents were conveniently selected from export processing zones. The objective of the study was achieved by the willingness of employees to use convenient sampling through the questionnaire. For data collection, we distributed 685 questionnaires and 531 questionnaires were received back with a response rate of 74%. After the data cleaning process, the outliers, unengaged responses and missing data were identified and corrected. After the data cleaning process, 511 questionnaires were usable.

### Measures

We used four demographic variables, including information related to Age, Gender, Qualification and Tenure of the respondents in the questionnaire. Other than demographics, the questionnaire has consisted of variables under consideration. These variables comprised of the questions related to different leadership styles, employee workplace well-being and interpersonal justice. All of the items of the variables consisted of 7 points Likert scale. A 10-item scale of Brown, Treviño, & Harrison (2005) was used in this study to measure ethical leadership. Walumbwa et al. (2008) 8-item scale was used to measure authentic leadership. Interactional justice scale was developed by Elma (2013) as a sub-dimension of organizational justice scale with 7-items was used. Employees' well-being was measured by 8 items scale consisting of two factors: interpersonal and intrapersonal factors, by Bartels, Peterson & Reina, (2019).

### Sample Characteristics

In this part, we describe the characteristics of the sample. These characteristics consists of gender, age, qualification and experience of the individuals of understudied sample. Section ahead explains the percentage and frequency of the demographic variables.

**Table 1**  
**Sample Characteristics**

| <b>Gender</b>        | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Male                 | 400              | 78.2              |
| Female               | 111              | 21.8              |
| <b>Age</b>           |                  |                   |
| 18-25                | 34               | 7.1               |
| 26-33                | 254              | 48.8              |
| 34-41                | 172              | 33.5              |
| 42-49                | 51               | 10.6              |
| <b>Qualification</b> |                  |                   |
| Bachelors            | 57               | 11.1              |
| Masters              | 297              | 58.1              |
| Mphill               | 152              | 29.7              |
| PhD                  | 05               | 0.01              |
| <b>Experience</b>    |                  |                   |
| 1-5                  | 196              | 38.2              |
| 6-10                 | 135              | 26.5              |
| 11-15                | 120              | 23.5              |
| 16-20                | 51               | 10.0              |
| 21-25                | 9                | 1.8               |

### Results and Discussion

#### Descriptive Statistics, Reliability and Correlation Analysis

Means, standard deviation, reliability and correlation of the all the variables are represented in **Table 2**. Employees' well-being shows maximum mean score of 5.75 and SD of 0.69, predicting a higher level of wellbeing of employees in the organizations of Pakistani export processing zones. Cronbach alpha provides estimation of reliability by using correlation between variables with assumption that equal reliability persist in all variables. Final values of Cronbach alpha ranged between 0.70-0.87. This displayed that high reliability exists as values are above recommended threshold by Fornell & Larcker (1981) i.e. > 0.70.

After reliability analysis, correlation analysis was conducted to examine the associations between all the understudied factors. The primary objective for correlation analysis was to find the immediate correlation between different leadership styles and three dimensions of well-being. Variables are said to be connected on the possibility that they tend to differ in the same or a contrary ways. Table 7 shows that all variables are significantly correlated. Ethical leadership and employees well-being are significantly correlated ( $\alpha = 0.212$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Results also indicates that authentic leadership is positively and significantly related to employees' workplace wellbeing ( $\alpha = 0.332$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The values in the correlation table give us a go ahead to conduct further statistical analyses because the values are aligned with the hypothesized relationships.

**Table 2**  
**Correlations Analysis**

|                              | Mean | SD   | EL      | AL      | IJ      | EWB    |
|------------------------------|------|------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| <b>Ethical Leadership</b>    | 5.31 | 0.53 | (0.75)  |         |         |        |
| <b>Authentic Leadership</b>  | 5.18 | 0.49 | 0.436** | (0.79)  |         |        |
| <b>Interactional Justice</b> | 5.51 | 0.62 | 0.348** | 0.543** | (0.81)  |        |
| <b>Employee Well-being</b>   | 5.75 | 0.69 | 0.212** | 0.332** | 0.391** | (0.86) |

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

### Regression Analysis

**Table 3**  
**Regression Analyses Mediation Analyses**

|                 | Coefficient | T      | P-value | Hypotheses Accepted/Rejected |
|-----------------|-------------|--------|---------|------------------------------|
| <b>EL → EWB</b> | 0.621       | 10.137 | 0.000   | <b>Accepted</b>              |
| <b>AL → EWB</b> | 0.267       | 16.541 | 0.000   | <b>Accepted</b>              |

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .; EL= Ethical Leadership, AL= Authentic Leadership, EWB= Employee Well-being

Results of the current research work represents that ethical leadership positively and significantly effects employees' well-being ( $\beta = .6210$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). Furthermore, the results in the Table 3 depicts that authentic leadership is positively and significantly linked with employees' well-being ( $\beta = 0.267$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ).

Based on the results regression analysis, we tested for the mediation effect between different leadership styles and employees' well-being. **Table 4** presents the results of the *mediation analysis*. In the present study, the 95% confidence interval of the indirect effects was obtained with 5000 bootstrap resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

**Table 4**  
**Mediation Analysis (Total Effect, Direct Effect and Indirect Effect)**

|                  | Total Effect | Direct Effect | Indirect Effect | Result           |
|------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------|
| <b>EL-IJ-EWB</b> | 0.621***     | 0.329***      | 0.291***        | <b>Supported</b> |

|                  |                 |                 |                 |                  |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| <b>AL-IJ-EWB</b> | <b>0.267***</b> | <b>0.154***</b> | <b>0.113***</b> | <b>Supported</b> |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|

EL= Ethical Leadership, AL= Authentic Leadership, IJ= Interactional Justice, EWB= Employee Well-being

Furthermore, the analyses examined the mediating effect of ethical and authentic leadership styles on employees' wellbeing via interactional justice. The analysis of the current research work represents that the effect of ethical leadership on employees' wellbeing was mediated by interactional justice with indirect effect ( $\beta = 0.291$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ), supporting Hypothesis 3. Additionally, the results represented in **Table 4** indicates that interactional justice significantly and positively mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and employees' well-being with indirect effect ( $\beta = 0.117$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ). Hence, hypothesis 4 was supported by the results. The finding of this study also indicates that interactional justice mediated the relationships between ethical leadership, authentic leadership and employees' wellbeing.

## Discussion

This research aims to understand the relationship between variety of types of management / leadership styles and types of employees' wellbeing. We have specifically focused on religious types leadership styles as they combine together to constitute a managerial configuration (a mix of leadership traits that are unique to an organization) that nurtures joint responsibility, positive attitudes and good behavior in the employees.

In the previous literature we found that very limited work is done that explore the effect of the positive sides of managerial configuration on various component of employees' well-being (Angermeier et al., 2009). We noted no such study conducted in empirical setting of export processing zones (Yukl, 2002). Therefore to fill this gap, current research examines the effects of the religious leadership styles (as a component of organizational configuration) on employee wellbeing in Pakistani export processing zones. We selected the Pakistani context because there is currently no study that focuses on religious styles of leaderships in Pakistani export processing zones. Therefore, in this research we study the relationship between Independent variables (spiritual leadership, authentic leadership and ethical leadership) and dependent variables such as workplace well-being, psychological well-being and subjective well-being that are various types of well beings of employees. Moreover, this research also analyzes the mediating role of interactional justice religious leadership and wellbeing types—i.e., workplace well-being, psychological well-being and subjective well-being.

Our results indicated that religious leadership styles at export processing zones firms (ethical, authentic and spiritual leadership styles) positively affect psychological, subjective and workplace well-being. Export processing zones firms should train their managers to adopt these leadership styles and evaluate managerial performance through performance management systems that include assessment based on these leadership styles. We also found that organizational environment filled with interactional justice shall lead to better effect of ethical, authentic and spiritual leadership styles on employees' wellbeing.

## Conclusion

This study indicated that ethical and authentic leadership styles at export processing zones firms employees' well-being. Export processing zones firms should train their managers to adopt positive leadership styles and evaluate managerial performance through performance management systems that include assessment based on these leadership styles. We also found organizational environment filled with interactional justice shall lead to better effect of ethical and authentic leadership styles on employees' wellbeing. The findings of the current research work contributes to the relevant literature.



**Recommendations**

Several interesting avenues for future research await scholarly contributions. Firstly, the data and the proposed model are meant for export processing zones firms. Non-export processing zones firms are not included in the sample. Future studies may also include non-export processing zones firms and conduct a comparative analysis to see how nature of relationships differs in two groups. Inclusive sample like this will boost the generalizability of the study. Secondly, in future endeavors, export processing zones firms need to be classified based on the size, ownership and control to examine the validity of positive leadership to wellbeing connections. Thirdly, as wellbeing and managerial configuration are embedded in context and it is really difficult to separate them from the contextual setting in which they exist, therefore, in depth multiple case study design powered by qualitative data will complement our work. Fourthly, we highly recommend longitudinal analyses to study the effects of managerial configuration on wellbeing of employees through a dynamic approach. Previous studies view leadership as antecedents to wellbeing. In line with previous research, our work shows that religious leadership styles contained in it determine wellbeing.

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