

# INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP STYLE ON EMPLOYEE WELLBEING THROUGH THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE EMPATHY: INSIGHT FROM HOTEL INDUSTRY

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## Abstract

This study investigate the impact of transformational and transactional leadership on employee well-being within Pakistan hotel industry focusing on employee empathy as a mediator and trust in leadership as moderator. Using a quantitative approach data were collected from hotel employee and analysed through hypothesis testing. Result reveal that transactional leadership significantly enhance employee empathy, which in turn positively influences well-being. Conversely transformational leadership shows no significant effect on empathy or well-being. Trust in leadership moderate the relationship between transactional and empathy but has no significant moderating effect in the transformational leadership context. The study highlight the importance of transactional leadership and trust in promoting employee empathy and well-being.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the tourism industry has witnessed significant growth, establishing itself as a vital driver of global economic development. In 2019, the travel and tourism sector alone contributed over \$8.9 trillion to the global GDP and supported approximately 330 million jobs, representing one in every ten jobs worldwide (ABDELADHIM, 2025). At the core of this expansive sector lies the hotel industry, which plays a central role in shaping tourist experiences and sustaining the broader tourism ecosystem (Yessimova et al., 2023). Given its service-oriented nature, the effectiveness of hotel operations

is heavily influenced by internal organizational dynamics, particularly leadership practices. (Yessimova et al., 2023). Leadership within hotels not only impacts operational efficiency but also profoundly shapes employee experiences and performance outcomes (Bakkeli and Breit, 2022). In this regard, leadership style has emerged as a critical factor influencing employee well-being, with effective leaders fostering supportive environments that enhance motivation, job satisfaction, and service quality (Bakkeli and Breit, 2022).

Leadership styles have a significant impact on employee well-being and have gotten notice in the current consumer market of hospitality industry (Magdy and Salem, 2024). Organization structure and functionalities depend on the qualities and style of leadership which lead the organization performance (Magdy and Salem, 2024). It seems distinct that appropriate leadership is essential for any organization (Tigre et al., 2025). Nevertheless, leadership style has been changing from years (Kjellstrom et al., 2020). Organizations are modifying their environment and structure to meet the customer needs by adopting updated leadership styles (Mogaji and Dimingu, 2024). Studies highlighted the issues of changing leadership styles and its impact on employee empathy which leads to employee well-being in the hospitality industry (Bhutto et al., 2021).

Empathy is acknowledged as central for employee happiness and altruistic behavior toward their working environment which deals with employee well-being (Raina, 2022). Employee well-being is exact from leadership styles and has tendencies with employee empathy which are directed by leadership styles (Azeemi et al., 2024). These tendencies among the leadership styles, employee empathy and well-being affixed with organization (Arghode et al., 2022). Organizational leadership focuses on maintaining the balance between the individual for a viable development (i.e., social, economic, environmental) which are interconnected (Miao and Nduneseokwu, 2025). Although, these developments raise work engagement and loyalty among employees that showcase the employee's empathy and well-being with their organization through employee trust on leadership, financial stability and work-life balance (Magdy and Salem, 2024).

Balanced work-life is a psychological tendency where an individual feels comfortable and builds their trust in their organization (Pensar and Rousi, 2023). Das and Pattanayak (2023) argued that leader trust pertains to employee belief in their leader competence, reliability and integrity which is a fundamental part of an effective leadership. The effective leadership positively induces the employee emotions, empathy and well-being to understand internal credence of the employee (Kim et al., 2022). Employee empathy and well-being come up with effective teamwork advantages for organizations

in many ways: enhancing the team performance, reducing turnover and encouraging customer satisfaction (Kim et al., 2022).

Beyond this vibe, there are different leadership styles examined with firm performance, job satisfaction, employee commitment and work engagement (Al Khajeh, 2018; Abasilim et al., 2019; Elkhwesky et al., 2022; Rabiul et al., 2022). Transformational and transactional leadership styles widely used to enhance the customer satisfaction which relate to behavioural outcomes (Abbas and Ali, 2023). These studies raise concern about the leadership styles and employee empathy which direct the employee well-being in the hospitality industry. To the best of our review, a few attempts exist with leadership styles and employee empathy which induce employee well-being in the hospitality industry. To identify this research gap, the present study aims to investigate the impact of transformational and transactional leadership styles on employee empathy which enhance the employee well-being under the shed of leader trust. The study contributes to literature by providing the empirical evidence on the proposed research problems and introduces practical implications for employing effective leadership styles where firms can catch higher outcomes.

This study aims to examine the influence of leadership styles on employee well-being within the hotel industry. It further seeks to explore the mediating role of employee empathy in the relationship between leadership styles and employee well-being. Additionally, the research assesses the moderating effect of trust in a leader on this relationship. Based on the findings, the study intends to provide practical recommendations for the hospitality industry to enhance employee well-being.

The social exchange theory studies interdependent workplace behavior (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005; Blau, 1964). Socializing benefits hospitality workers (Meira and Hancer, 2021). Employees react properly (Hamza et al., 2024). Dedication, trust, and loyalty always improve these partnerships (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Management makes hotel personnel dedicated. Staff boost hotel businesses (Kurtessis et al., 2017).

People build social exchange theory partnerships by weighing cost and rewards. Hotel staff and the hospitality business are causally linked by social and

psychological factors (George, 1958) (Kim and Qu, 2020). According to social exchange theory, hotel staff respond to their leader with extra-role behavior (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). For growth, hotel personnel need social and economic resources (Hsu et al., 2019). According to Chang and Busser (2020), hospitality researchers promote employee empathy, well-being, and turnover intention. In this current study Social exchange theory is used to create a hotel industry conceptual model based on employee-leadership relations. Leader support empowers hotel employees psychologically by providing social support, autonomy, and decision-making freedom (Deng, 2024). and service-oriented hotel sector citizenship behavior (Abdulrab et al., 2018). Leader trust moderates hotel leader styles and hotel worker empathy in this study.

### Hypothesis development

Extensive research across sectors such as tourism, marketing, and services has utilized Social Exchange Theory (SET) to examine the influence of leadership styles on employees' cognitive and emotional responses (Fan et al., 2021). SET posits that social interactions are shaped by individuals' evaluations of the perceived balance between benefits and costs, motivating them to maximize rewards and minimize losses. This framework is essential for understanding how leadership shapes employee attitudes and emotions (Fan et al., 2021).

Transformational leadership marked by an inspiring vision, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and role modeling has been shown to foster trust, loyalty, and supportive work environments in the tourism industry (Aftab et al., 2023). Such leadership improves employee satisfaction, commitment, and productivity by enhancing their sense of value (Aftab et al., 2023). Similarly, in marketing and service sectors, transformational leaders positively affect employee emotional engagement and cognitive responses, thereby improving customer service (Osborne and Hammoud, 2017).

This study extends existing research by applying SET to explore the effects of transformational leadership on employee empathy and well-being ((Chakkaravarthy and Bhaumik, 2025). In emotionally demanding fields like hospitality, this leadership style

enhances empathy and job satisfaction through strengthened peer support and understanding. Reciprocal appreciation boosts morale and organizational performance (Chakkaravarthy and Bhaumik, 2025).

**H1.** Transformational leadership significantly positive influences employee empathy.

Transactional leadership emphasizes structured roles, clearly defined objectives, and performance-based feedback to manage and motivate employees (Agrawal and Dhamija, 2024). This leadership approach relies heavily on contingent rewards and corrective actions to ensure goal attainment (Agrawal and Dhamija, 2024). (Favour, 2024). Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides a useful framework for understanding the effects of this style, suggesting that employee behavior is shaped by the perceived balance of costs and rewards within workplace relationships (Favour, 2024).

Transactional leaders focus primarily on achieving specific performance outcomes and reward employees based on measurable achievements (ONYANGO , 2024). In service-oriented industries, where interpersonal interaction is critical, this reward-based approach may influence how employees express empathy (Mian and Riaz, 2024). Research suggests that employees may display empathetic behavior not out of genuine concern but as a strategic means to receive incentives (Mian and Riaz, 2024). This may complicate emotional engagement and diminish the authenticity of workplace relationships (Jiang and Shen, 2023).

This study applies SET to examine how transactional leadership impacts employee empathy and well-being in the hotel industry (Baquero, 2023). While this leadership style may foster outward empathetic behaviors, such expressions may lack sincerity, potentially undermining team cohesion, morale, and overall employee well-being (Baquero, 2023).

**H2.** Transactional leadership significantly and positively influence on employee empathy

A growing body of scholarly research has examined the relationship between employee empathy and well-being across various sectors, including tourism, marketing, and services, often employing Social Exchange Theory (SET) as a theoretical framework

(Meira and Hancer, 2021). SET, introduced by Blau (1964), posits that individuals engage in social relationships by weighing potential rewards against costs. Within organizational contexts, employees invest time and effort with the expectation of receiving support, recognition, and reciprocal benefits (Meira and Hancer, 2021). This theoretical lens provides insight into how empathic behaviors foster a supportive and rewarding work environment (Arghode et al., 2022).

Empathy plays a significant role in enhancing employee well-being, particularly in people-centered industries such as tourism and hospitality. Tucker and Hoying (2023) emphasize that genuine understanding of coworkers' emotions improves workplace interactions. Empathic actions, including active listening and emotional support, contribute to cohesion and a sense of belonging (Keyser et al., 2022). Reducing feelings of isolation and promoting psychological well-being (Keyser et al., 2022). Marketing studies further link workplace empathy with reduced stress and anxiety (Martin et al., 2023). SET underscores the importance of empathetic environments in achieving positive outcomes, such as job satisfaction and emotional health (Martin et al., 2023). This study extends prior research by empirically investigating empathetic interactions and their impact on employee well-being in the hotel industry (Hwang et al., 2021).

**H3.** Employee empathy significantly and positively influence well-being.

Empathy serves as a vital indicator of the trust and confidence employees place in their organization and its leadership (Arghode et al., 2022). A strong perception of organizational support has been shown to yield numerous positive outcomes for employees (Arghode et al., 2022). including increased job satisfaction, reduced stress, and enhanced overall well-being (Arghode et al., 2022). Organizational support encompasses various practices through which companies express appreciation for employees such as recognition of effort, provision of incentives, and opportunities for career advancement (Manjenje and Muhanga, 2021). Such support fosters intrinsic fulfillment and encourages greater employee commitment (Manjenje and Muhanga, 2021).

Social Exchange Theory (SET) offers a valuable framework for understanding this dynamic (Ahmad et al., 2023). According to SET, employee-organization relationships are built on reciprocal exchanges of value (Kumi et al., 2025). Organizations that invest in employee development and acknowledgment are more likely to see increased employee dedication and productivity (Kumi et al., 2025). This reciprocity promotes a mutually beneficial relationship that enhances job satisfaction and overall well-being (Kumi et al., 2025).

**H4a:** Employee empathy mediates the relationship between transformational leadership style and employee well-being.

**H4b:** Employee empathy mediates the relationship between transactional leadership style and employee well-being.

Trust is a critical determinant of organizational effectiveness, particularly in service-driven sectors such as tourism, marketing, hospitality, and related industries (Sumaira and Ali, 2025). Empirical evidence demonstrates that trust significantly influences employee motivation, performance, and job satisfaction (Sumaira and Ali, 2025). In sectors like hospitality and tourism, employees who trust senior management exhibit stronger organizational commitment and a deeper sense of affiliation (Nguyen et al., 2025). Trust fosters improved service delivery and establishes a reciprocal relationship that benefits both employees and customers (Nguyen et al., 2025).

Trust also moderates how employees perceive and respond to various leadership styles (Rai and Koodamara, 2025). Transformational leadership, which emphasizes inspiration and motivation, is most effective when employees have confidence in their leaders (Rai and Koodamara, 2025). This trust strengthens employee-organization bonds, promoting a collaborative and supportive work environment (Rai and Koodamara, 2025). In marketing, trusted transformational leaders stimulate innovation and cohesion, thereby enhancing performance and satisfaction (Saefullah et al., 2025). In contrast, low levels of trust can diminish the effectiveness of transactional leadership, which relies

on reward based mechanisms (Yang et al., 2025). Employees may view transactional strategies as manipulative, leading to reduced motivation and empathy (Yang et al., 2025). Social Exchange Theory (SET) explains these dynamics by asserting that trust shapes perceptions of leadership and influences employee empathy (Kumi et al., 2025). Leaders must therefore build trust to foster positive organizational outcomes (Rai and Koodamara, 2025).

Empathy plays a central role in facilitating these exchanges (Raina, 2022). Compassionate and

supportive interactions between employees and management contribute to strong, trusting relationships, leading to improved well-being and

organizational outcomes (Pansini et al., 2024).

Furthermore, empathy influences the effectiveness of various leadership styles (Pansini et al., 2024).

Empathetic leaders foster positive employee experiences, enhancing satisfaction, loyalty, and performance (Raina, 2022).

**H5a:** The trust in leader moderates the relationships between transformational leadership and employee empathy.

**H5b:** The trust in leader moderates the relationships between transactional leadership, and employee empathy.

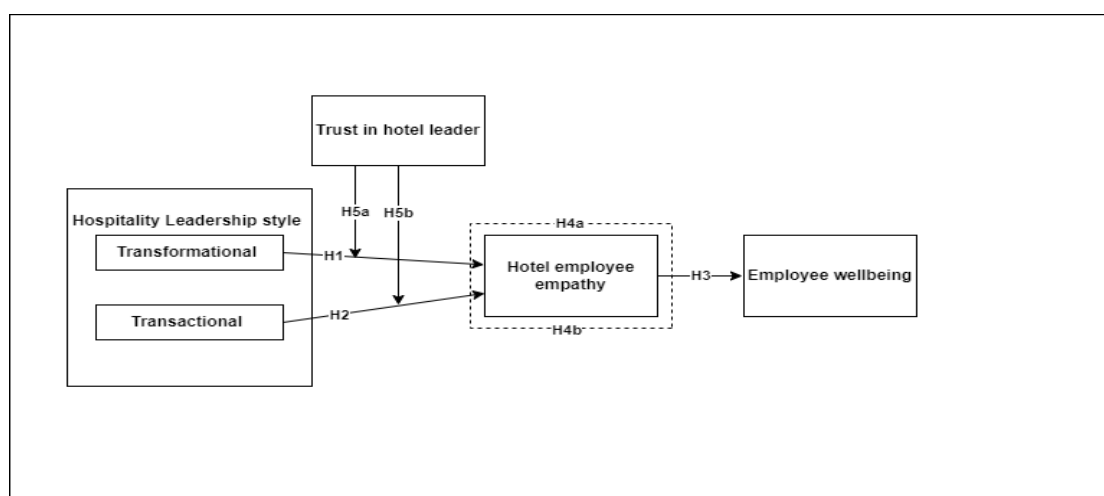


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

## Research methodology

### Sample and procedure

In this study, the target population is specifically chosen from the hotel industry in Pakistan. The population comprises hotels varying star ratings, including 3-star, 4-star, and 5-star establishments, which cater to tourists from both Pakistan and other nations. The data were gathered using a survey questionnaire adapted from prior research experiments. Personnel and management in these hotels in Pakistan disseminated surveys via physical copies (where the accessibility was distorted). Approximately 1-2 months were required to complete the data collecting process, as it involved contacting the human resource department of the

hotels industry and the leaders of various departments of the selected hotels. After the permission of HR department of hotel distribute questionnaire to the hotel employee. The participants received a comprehensive explanation of the questionnaire and the clear objective of the study, which is only focused on academic research. Participants were instructed to thoroughly read each question and answer according to their comprehension, since there was no fixed notion of correct or incorrect answers. Their personal information and data were guaranteed to be subject to strict confidentiality. There is no offer any incentive to hotel employee to collect that information and data, total 356 sample collect from hotel employee.



### Measures

This measuring items scale was derived from prior literature and modified to suit the service environment. Every construct included in the model was measured using multi-item scales designed to assess all relevant aspects of the construct.

Transformational leadership this construct capture from (Kara et al., 2013). Transactional leadership this construct capture from (Kara et al., 2013). Trust in leader this construct adopt from (Yuan et al., 2022; Leung et al. 2001). Employee empathy this construct capture from (Markovic et al. 2015). Employee well-being this construct adopt from (Sharma and Kumra, 2022). A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (indicating "strongly disagree") to 5 (indicating "strongly agree") was employed for all items.

### Analytical procedures

The present work used PLS-SEM route modeling to evaluate the motivational model suggested in this paper. The current body of literature explicitly outlines the reasons that influenced our selection of the PLS-SEM as the analytical method for this study. Since its inception, the PLS-SEM path modeling has been widely employed in the fields of management and social sciences (Russo and Stol, 2021). Furthermore, applying the suggestion of reference this method is highly relevant to the aim of our study as we planned to evaluate the outcome variable (Guenther et al., 2023). Ultimately, prior studies have recognized that this method is the most sophisticated and widely used variance-based

structural equation modeling (SEM) strategy for examining path modeling linkages (Guenther et al., 2023). Taking these factors into account, we employed Smart PLS 4 to evaluate the suggested correlations of our study (Guenther et al., 2023). Prior to examining the consistency, rationality, path topologies, and associated assumptions of normalcy and multicollinearity, we assessed the common method bias by according to the guidelines provided in references (Skawinski et al., 2024).

### Demographics

A total of 356 responses were collected from the hotel industry. Table 1 presents a succinct summary of the demographic attributes of the participants. The respondents were categorized by gender, with 59.3% identified as male and 40.7% identified as female. 48.8% of the participants were aged between 25 and 34 years. According to the respondents' educational background, 50.6% had successfully obtained a bachelor's degree. A majority of the participants has job experience spanning from 3 to 6 years, although a notable proportion (25%) have accumulated over 9 years of experience. Furthermore, a majority of 50.3% of the participants are now in employment. The operating department accounts for 40.7% of the responses. According to the poll, 93.3% of the individuals were working full-time and 89.6% had permanent positions.

Table 1: Demographic Result

Table 2: Demographic Result

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage %
<b>Gender:</b>		
Male	211	59.3
Female	145	40.7
<b>Age (years)</b>		
18 to 24	54	15.2
25 to 34	174	48.8
35 to 44	100	28.1
45 Above	28	7.9
<b>Education:</b>		
High School	16	4.5
Intermediate	133	37.4
Undergraduate	180	50.6

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage %
Graduate	27	7.5
<b>Experience:</b>		
Less than 3 Years	59	14
3 – 6 Years	89	25
6 – 9 Years	128	36
9 – above	89	25
<b>Organizational level:</b>		
Managerial role	62	17.4
Supervisor role	72	20.2
Employee role	179	50.3
Other	43	12.1
<b>Department:</b>		
Production	83	23.3
Marketing	76	21.4
Operation	145	40.7
Other	52	14.6
<b>Employment status:</b>		
Full – time	332	93.3
Part – time	24	6.7
<b>Employment:</b>		
Permanent	319	89.6
Contractual	37	10.4



### Measurement model

#### Internal consistency

The evaluation of internal consistency was performed using three metrics: Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and rho A. (Ahli et al., 2024). The results suggest that the reliability values for internal consistency ranged from 0.60 to 0.80. All the values obtained in this inquiry had a magnitude

greater than 0.60, thereby confirming the model's internal consistency. The study utilized convergent validity to evaluate the accuracy of the measurements. According to (Ahli et al., 2024). the minimum value for AVE exhibited a statistically significant outcome of 0.50 or above, suggesting effective management (see Table 2).

**Table 3: Reliabilities and Convergent Validity**

Constructed	Alpha	rho_A	rho_C	AVE
EE	0.619	0.614	0.787	0.553
EWB	0.638	0.685	0.798	0.572
LT	0.681	0.703	0.805	0.510
TL	0.726	0.910	0.818	0.606
TR	0.609	0.502	0.749	0.517

**Source:** The data utilized in this investigation was acquired using the SMART PLS-SEM 4 Software.

**Construct validity**

The HTMT scores in the table demonstrate satisfactory discriminant validity among the constructs. Constructs with lower HTMT scores exhibit evident distinction from others, indicating robust discriminant validity (Ahli et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the presence of greater HTMT values

across specific constructions indicates the possibility of overlap, which necessitates more investigation to guarantee that the constructs are adequately separate (Lim, 2024). The results conform to the recommended thresholds for HTMT, which indicate that values should generally be less than 0.85 or 0.90 to establish sufficient discriminant (Lim, 2024).

**Table 4: Discriminant Validity**

Constructs	EE	EWB	LT	TL	TR	LT x TL	LT x TR
<b>Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) – Matrix</b>							
EE							
EWB	0.559						
LT	0.486	0.299					
TL	0.171	0.142	0.259				
TR	0.544	0.374	0.610	0.206			
LT x TL	0.183	0.334	0.217	0.264	0.173		
LT x TR	0.271	0.185	0.140	0.180	0.199	0.353	

**Source:** The data utilized in this investigation was acquired using the SMART PLS-SEM 4 Software

**5.2.3 Multicollinearity & Common Method Bias**

The study may be affected by common method bias (CMB) when the predictor variables are measured using the same response method, as indicated by Jordan and Troth (2020). Numerous measures pertaining to the acquisition of computer-mediated communication (CMC) data. These measures involve protecting the confidentiality of participants, ensuring clear and specific research questions, and providing detailed survey instructions to minimise any biases and mistakes. The results suggest that the Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB) did not show any notable problems when evaluating the structural model. Furthermore, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) results showed values that were lower than the threshold of 5. Thus, the Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB) did not provide a challenge.

**Structure Model****Model fit**

Smart PLS\$ is software program that offers essential indicator for evaluating the adequacy of the statistical model. According to the result shown table 4 statderndised root mean square residual (SRMR) had a value 0.083 while the normed fit index (NFI) had a value 0.466 (Cheah et al., 2024). The data collected

from all value indicate that suggested model is appropriate for research purposes. The researcher also evaluated the goodness of fit (GOF) value of the proposed framework to verify its overall quality (Purwanto and Sudargini, 2021). The calculated goodness-of-fit (GOF) value of 0.493 surpassed the minimum threshold of 0.36 according to the study conducted by Maziriri et al., 2024).

**5.3.2 Coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) and effect size ( $f^2$ )**

The study model's explanatory power was assessed using evaluative metrics such as impact size ( $f^2$ ) and coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ). The effect size was determined by evaluating the magnitude of the route coefficients, which were assigned values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 in  $f^2$ . The values were classified as small, medium, and large based on Cohen's (2013) proposed categorization. The study conducted Cohen's (2013) by utilizes the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) to evaluate the level of variability displayed by each endogenous variable. According to Cohen's (2013)  $R^2$  values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are commonly regarded as indicating strong, moderate, and weak levels of variance, respectively. However, all the values in this investigation met the stated threshold requirements.



Table 5: Model Fit and R<sup>2</sup> effect F<sup>2</sup>

Constructs	EE	EWB
R <sup>2</sup>	0.170	0.140
F <sup>2</sup>		
EE	EE	EWB
EWB		0.162
LT	0.052	
TL	0.003	
TR	0.036	
LT x TL	0.000	
LT x TR	0.023	
Model Fit	Saturated	Estimated model
SRMR	0.083	0.084
NFI	0.466	0.469

**Source:** The data utilized in this investigation was acquired using the SMART PLS-SEM 4 Software.

#### 5.4 Path Coefficients

The structural model incorporated an examination of the statistical significance and pertinence of the path coefficient values (Ahli et al., 2024). The findings from Table 5 suggest that there is no significant correlation between TL and EE. These results do not support the hypothesis that  $\beta = 0.051$ , with a p-value of 0.389. The countries TR and EE exhibit a strong and positive correlation, which supports the hypothesis that  $\beta = 0.187$ , with a p-value of 0.000. The study found that there is a substantial and positive relationship between EE and EWB. This supports the hypothesis with a beta coefficient of 0.374 and a p-value of 0.000. The results indicate that LT does not have a significant moderating effect on the link

between transformational leadership and employee empathy. Furthermore, the hypothesis  $\beta = -0.007$ , t-value = 0.137, p-value = 0.891 is not supported. However, the results indicate that LT has a strong moderating effect on the link between transactional leadership and employee empathy. This supports the hypothesis  $\beta = -0.121$ , with a p-value of 0.016. The results indicate that mediation does not play a major role in the link between TL and EWB, which does not support the hypothesis ( $\beta = 0.019$ , p-values = 0.399). However, the results show that EE plays a substantial role in mediating the association between TR and EWB. This provides support for the hypothesis with a beta coefficient of 0.070 and a p-value of 0.002.

Table 6: Hypotheses testing

Direct effect	$\beta$	t-values	p-values	Decision
Transformational leadership → Employee empathy	0.051	0.862	0.389	Insignificant
Transactional leadership → Employee empathy	0.187	3.629	0.000	Significant
Employee empathy → Employee well-being	0.374	6.369	0.000	Significant
Moderating effects				
Trust in leader x Transformational leadership → Employee empathy	-0.007	0.137	0.891	Insignificant

Direct effect	$\beta$	t-values	p-values	Decision
Mediation effects				
Transformational leadership → Employee empathy → Employee well-being	0.019	0.844	0.399	Insignificant
Transactional leadership → Employee empathy → Employee well-being	0.070	3.050	0.002	Significant

**Source:** The data utilized in this investigation was acquired using the SMART PLS-SEM 4 Software.

## Discussion

The results of this study indicate that transactional leadership has a large and beneficial impact on employee empathy. Transformational leadership does not have a similar effect on employee empathy. This result indicates that transactional leadership, which focusses on rewards and performance measurements, promotes a type of pragmatic, task-oriented empathy among employees.

Employees under transactional leadership often associate their performance with tangible rewards, fostering a form of empathy aligned with pragmatic, goal-oriented interactions. This outcome-driven empathy is reinforced by recognition and incentives, enhancing employees' understanding of, and responsiveness to, the expectations set by their supervisors (Cerasoli, 2025; Nuraini, 2023).

However, the study found that transformational leadership characterized by vision, inspiration, and individualized consideration did not significantly influence employee empathy. This may reflect the specific context of the Pakistani hotel industry, where transformational leaders may not consistently demonstrate supportive or empathetic behaviors in daily interactions, limiting emotional engagement and connection.

Nevertheless, when employees do not perceive strong support and personalized attention from their leaders, the effectiveness of transformational leadership in fostering empathy diminishes. Leaders may struggle to translate visionary and inspirational qualities into meaningful, compassionate interactions, thereby limiting the development of empathetic responses among employees in such contexts.

The hotel industry is a worldwide phenomenon, and cultural variations have a substantial influence on the perception and appreciation of leadership styles.

Transformational leadership may be perceived as less effective or less applicable in certain cultures due to varying expectations on leadership conduct. In cultures that prioritize hierarchical structures, transformational leadership may not be compatible with traditional leadership approaches, which could reduce its influence on employee empathy (Poturak et al., 2020; Bayram and Dinç, 2015; Mujkić et al., 2014).

The strong correlation between employee empathy and well-being highlights the crucial importance of emotional bonds in the workplace. Empathy fosters a conducive atmosphere, augmenting job contentment and diminishing stress levels. Enhanced employee comprehension and connection result in improved overall well-being, which in turn leads to greater organizational outcomes (Bayighomog and Arasli, 2022).

This discovery highlights the imperative for hotel administration to deliberately foster empathy among their staff. Workplace culture can be enhanced by training programs that specifically target the development of interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence. This improvement can result in reduced turnover rates and enhanced job performance (Bharwani and Talib, 2017).

The study found that employee empathy mediates the relationship between transactional leadership and employee well-being, but not in the context of transformational leadership. Under transactional leadership, the clear linkage between performance and rewards fosters a pragmatic form of empathy. This performance driven empathy enhances well-being by aligning employee efforts with tangible outcomes and recognition, contributing to a more satisfying work experience (Arghode et al., 2022).

In contrast, employee empathy does not significantly mediate the relationship between transformational

leadership and employee well-being, indicating that other variables may exert a stronger influence. Although transformational leaders are expected to inspire through vision and individualized consideration, inconsistent demonstration of these qualities or a lack of emotional resonance with employees may limit their impact on both empathy and overall well-being.

Moreover, the specific context of Pakistan's hospitality sector may significantly influence outcomes. The potential positive effects of transformational leadership on employee empathy and well-being could be diminished by factors such as the effectiveness of visionary leadership implementation or prevailing industry norms, suggesting unmeasured contextual and leadership quality variables may moderate its impact.

Transformational leadership may exert a direct influence on employee well-being, potentially through enhanced job satisfaction or engagement, thereby reducing the necessity for mediators. This direct effect may surpass the significance of indirect, mediated pathways (Judge and Piccolo, 2004).

The hotel management frequently emphasizes operational efficiency and visitor pleasure, perhaps restricting the ability of transformational leaders to prioritize staff well-being as an indirect result. Leaders may place greater importance on short term operational issues at the expense of long-term well-being strategies, so diminishing the impact of transformational leadership on employee well-being (Tracey and Hinkin, 2008).

The study highlights that trust in leadership significantly moderates the relationship between transactional leadership and employee empathy. Consistent with Social Exchange Theory (SET), trust strengthens the positive effects of transactional leadership by enhancing the perceived fairness and clarity of performance reward linkages (Cropanzano et al., 2017). When employees trust their leaders, they are more receptive to transactional practices, fostering greater empathy and contributing to improved overall well-being (Guinaliú and Jordán, 2016).

In contrast, trust did not significantly moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and employee empathy. This indicates that, regardless of trust levels, transformational leadership did not have a statistically meaningful impact on empathy in this

context (Kement et al, 2025). Unlike transactional leadership where trust enhances the reward-based exchange transformational leadership's influence on empathy appears less dependent on trust. This finding highlights the complexity of leadership dynamics and underscores the need for further research into contextual factors shaping these relationships.

The quantification and interpretation of trust may fail to accurately reflect its actual influence or may display inconsistencies. If employees lack complete trust in their leaders or if their trust is influenced by factors such as organizational culture, leadership consistency, or personal experiences, it may not have a substantial impact on the relationship between transformational leadership and empathy context (Kement et al, 2025). The findings highlight the crucial importance of transactional leadership for hotel managers in Pakistan, as it fosters staff empathy, leading to enhanced overall well-being. By incorporating components of transactional leadership, such as well-defined performance incentives and effective feedback systems, the level of empathy among employees can be greatly improved.

### Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the literature on leadership by illustrating the complex interactions between leadership styles, employee empathy, and well-being. It highlights the necessity of considering cultural contexts especially within a collectivist society like Pakistan when applying theories of leadership and employee engagement.

The findings encourage a re-evaluation of social exchange theory in this context, suggesting that perceptions of leadership effectiveness can vary significantly based on structural and relational dynamics within specific cultural settings.

The results prompt a reassessment of social exchange theory in this particular situation, indicating that views on the efficiency of leadership can differ greatly depending on the structural and relational factors within unique cultural environments.

### Implications for Practice

This strategy ensures that employees' objectives are in line with the expectations of the organization, creating a nurturing atmosphere that promotes empathy. Moreover, it is crucial to bolster trust in leadership.

Without a solid basis of trust, the potential advantages of transactional leadership may not be fully actualized. To optimize the good effects of transactional leadership on empathy and well-being, managers should priorities the establishment of transparent and dependable connections with their staff.

On the other hand, the absence of notable results regarding transformational leadership suggests that its benefits may not be completely realized without corresponding enhancements in other leadership domains or organizational support systems. To ensure the effectiveness of transformational leadership, it is crucial to overcome these gaps by enhancing leadership practices and establishing a conducive organizational climate. Through this approach, managers may effectively utilize the power of transformational leadership to stimulate creativity, motivation, and employee engagement, while also benefiting from the empathy established through transactional leadership tactics.

### Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the significant role of transactional leadership in promoting positive employee outcomes within the hotel industry. Transactional leadership was found to directly enhance employee empathy, which in turn positively influences employee well-being. Moreover, trust in leadership significantly moderated this relationship, emphasizing the value of transparent, reliable, and cooperative leadership in cultivating an empathetic and supportive work environment. Managers are advised to implement clear performance-based incentives and structured feedback systems to maximize these benefits.

In contrast, transformational leadership did not demonstrate a significant direct effect on employee empathy or well-being. This suggests that its influence may operate through alternative or more complex pathways not captured in the present study. Furthermore, while empathy mediated the relationship between transactional leadership and well-being, it did not serve this role in the transformational leadership context. These findings highlight the need for a differentiated leadership approach, with transactional leadership offering more

direct pathways to improving employee empathy and well-being.

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## Appendix

Variables and sources	Modified items
<b>Transformational leadership</b> (Kara et al., 2013).	<p>Transformational leadership style encourage my motivations.</p> <p>Transformational leadership encourages me to think more creatively.</p> <p>Transformational leadership sets challenges standards.</p>
<b>Transactional leadership</b> (Kara et al., 2013).	<p>Transactional leadership takes action before problems are chronic.</p> <p>Transactional leadership points out the standard to carry out work.</p> <p>Transactional leadership monitors my performance and keeps track of mistake.</p> <p>If I shared my problems with my leader, I knows he would respond constructively and caringly</p>

<p><b>Trust in Leader</b> (Yuan et al., 2022; Leung et al. 2001)</p> <p><b>Employee Empathy</b> (Markovic et al. 2015).</p> <p><b>Employee Well-being</b> (Sharma and Kumra, 2022).</p>	<p>Given my leader's track record, I see no reason to doubt his/her competence and preparation for the job</p> <p>Most people, even those who aren't close friends of my leader, trust and respect him/her as a coworker</p> <p>Other work associates of mine who must interact with my leader consider him/her to be trustworthy</p> <p>Employees deal with customer in caring way in hotel sector</p> <p>Employees have the customer best interest in hotel sector</p> <p>Employees understood the needs of their clients in hotel sector</p> <p>You are satisfied with the quality of life in your organization</p> <p>You are satisfied from yourself to work with your organization</p> <p>You are satisfied with the capacity of work in your organization</p>
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