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# Health-oriented Leadership and Employees' Well-being: An Explanatory Mechanism of Person-job Fit and Psychological Empowerment

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### ABSTRACT

Employees' health is important for an organization as it influences the work and organizational outcomes. Therefore, researchers have greatly emphasized identifying its determinants, especially workplace factors. Building on these lines, this study proposes and tests a Health-Oriented Leadership (HOL) model and its influence on Well-Being (WB) through the mediation of person-job fit and moderation of psychological empowerment. Considering the study requirements, the data is collected from IT and health professionals. In total, 314 useful responses are used for analysis. The data is evaluated in two steps (i.e. preliminary analysis and hypotheses testing). The findings of the study reveal that HOL and WB are positively related. Person-job fit partially mediates this relationship, while psychological empowerment strengthens the relationship. The results highlight that HOL, being an employee-centric leadership approach, brings positive outcomes in the form of person-job fit and employees' well-being. Personal psychological factors, like psychological empowerment, moderate the relationship and have synergistic effects with HOL. This study adds value to the literature by proposing the mechanism through which HOL can influence employees' WB. Past studies have largely ignored person-job fit and psychological empowerment as the mechanism between HOL and WB.

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Out of numerous determinants of employees' outcomes, their health is one of the most important determinants (Weziak-Bialowolska et al., 2023). World Economic Forum report has highlighted that globally, employees' health has suffered a loss of \$530 billion annually. In 2018 only, health issues cost a loss of 141 million days (WEF, 2023). Consequently,

organizations introduce numerous interventions to improve the health of their employees (Nielsen et al., 2023), but even huge investments by the organizations are not getting the desired results. Therefore, researchers have also shifted their focus to finding ways to improve employees' workplace health (Linnan et al., 2019). A recent survey by Statistica has revealed that only one-fourth of the employees feel well-being at work (Statistica, 2023); therefore, the workplace determinants of health should be studied (e.g., Karpagavalli & Suganthi, 2024; Nath et al., 2024; O'Connor et al., 2024; Sonnentag et al., 2023).

Employees' health is often denoted by their well-being, and it covers psychological, work and life domains (Jaškevičiūtė et al., 2024). Psychological and life domains cover the holistic approach to life, while work focuses on the work-life (Liao, 2021). Work well-being covers facets like work attitudes and behaviors (Abdalla et al., 2018; Jin et al., 2018; Kaluza & Junker, 2022). Recently, Kaluza and Junker (2022) highlighted that work well-being is closely associated with life well-being; therefore, researchers should study work well-being. Constructing on these lines, this study considers work engagement and emotional exhaustion as the proxy of well-being at work.

While looking at the factors that can influence employees' work well-being, the role of leadership is the most instrumental (Harms et al., 2017; Vincent-Höper & Stein, 2019). A leader can improve employees' well-being through personal influence, inspiration, and working conditions (Montano et al., 2017; Wegge et al., 2014). Previously conventional leadership styles and approaches have been investigated for their influence on employees' well-being (e.g., Burger et al., 2024; Inceoglu et al., 2018; Pfeffer et al., 2020; Umrani et al., 2024), but some researchers have challenged these approaches for being organizational focused instead of being employee-centric (Marinova et al., 2015; Wiroko & Murty, 2024). For instance, Arnold and Rigotti (2021) commented that conventional leadership approaches are "not tailored to the question of how leaders influence health and well-being" (p. 713-714). Therefore, there has been a shift to more employee-centric leadership. One such leadership approach is Health Oriented Leadership (afterwards, HOL), i.e., a leadership style where the leader makes workplace interventions to improve employees' health (Franke et al., 2014). Recent studies have observed that HOL improves employees' well-being by eliminating workplace conflicts, reducing job insecurity, and improving working conditions (e.g., Erschens et al., 2024; Kaluza & Junker, 2022).

Though HOL and employees' well-being relationship has been valued in literature, how this relationship exists is a question that needs further investigation (Jaškevičiūtė et al., 2024; Kaluza & Junker, 2022). Past studies have identified numerous explanatory variables, e.g., workplace climate, LMX, and self-care (Chen & Wu, 2023; Kaluza & Junker, 2022). According to Erschens et al. (2024), these studies ignored perceptions about jobs and organizations. Therefore, the current study aims to study person-job fit (henceforth, PJ fit), i.e., perception of fit with the job (Choi et al., 2017), as an explanatory mechanism. This study proposes that due to HOL, employees have a higher level of well-being because they assume that their job is a good fit for them. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this mechanism has been largely ignored and has not gained due attention.

This study also proposes the conditional role of psychological empowerment. The need for such a role is proposed by Kaluza et al. (2021) in the following words: "The conditions under which such a leader (i.e., HOL) behavior is most effective are largely unknown" (p. 405). This

claim seems logical from various upfronts. For example, HOL intervenes and removes numerous barriers that may hamper health at the workplace; employees may consider this role as an intervention in their personal matters (Oyserman et al., 2014). Similarly, due to changes in workplace climate, employees may tend to consider the role of HOL as a challenging leader because such leaders may look for continuous changes. Based on these lines, this study proposes that when employees feel psychologically empowered, they may consider the role of HOL positive. Psychological empowerment is a psychological state where one feels that the workplace empowers individuals in making job-related choices (Ahmed et al., 2024). It is also pertinent to mention that the same has not gained due attention from researchers, and psychological empowerment as a moderator between HOL and outcomes has been largely ignored.

This study makes some valuable contributions to HOL and well-being literature. First, this study covers the role of employee-centric leadership style (HOL) as a predictor of employees' well-being. Second, this study proposes and empirically tests the mediating role of PJ fit and thus answers the call of Erschens et al. (2024), who proposed studying job and organizational level variables. Third, this study values the findings of Kaluza et al. (2021), who observed that HOL does not work in isolation and may also influence negatively; therefore, the boundary conditions should be studied. In response, this study proposes the moderating role of psychological empowerment. Lastly, this study uses the lens of Social Cognitive Learning Theory (SCLT) (Bandura, 1977) to explain the proposed relationships.

## Hypotheses Development

Leaders can influence the jobs, context, and environment, and all these work facets are important determinants of employees' well-being. For instance, in their editorial, Burger et al. (2024) found that positive leadership improves well-being of the employees. Their study, being an editorial, lacked empirical support. However, some other studies support this. For example, Montano et al. (2017) published a meta-analysis and meta-analytically reviewed 144 studies to find the role of leadership in improving well-being, and observed that positive leadership (e.g., transformational, relationship-oriented, and leadership with a high level of exchange with followers) influences employees' health and performance. Another meta-analysis study, 72 articles by Inceoglu et al. (2018), observed that leadership can influence employees' well-being through numerous paths/mediators. Both Montano et al. (2017) and Inceoglu et al. (2018) studies covered a review of already published studies, so they provided a summary of the existing literature using sophisticated meta-analytical techniques. Pfeffer et al. (2020) qualitative study based on 21 interviews of executives highlighted that companies can foster employees' health and well-being through their environment, but most often, the employees' health is only used as a secondary objective as it ensures better organizational outcomes. Therefore, this study highlighted an important aspect of employees' health at work by highlighting the organizational-focused interventions instead of employee-centric approaches.

The current study proposes that specific and employee-centric leadership approaches better predict well-being. The conventional leadership approaches focus on organizational gains while ignoring employee needs (Pfeffer et al., 2020). On the other hand, employee-centric leaders positively influence the employees' well-being. For instance, Arnold and Rigotti (2021) longitudinal study on 776 novice teachers found that HOL (being employee-centric) helps

reduce stress, overcome the challenges of being new incumbents, and help in adjusting to the environment, thus improving health and well-being. This longitudinal study helped find the causality better predicted by the time series and longitudinal studies (Ahmed & Islam, 2023). Franke et al. (2014), with the seminal study on HOL, covered two major phases: (1) developing and validating the construct of HOL and (2) testing the impact of HOL on employees' health. The sample of 353 employees in the second phase of the study supported the researchers' assertions that HOL positively influences the health of the employees. They also observed that the follower's self-care mediated the relationship between HOL and employees' health. This study, thus, led to the formation of a new leadership approach that is more employee-centric in nature. Recently, a systematic literature review of six studies carried out by Erschens et al. (2024) also observed that individualized and employee-centric practices improve the employees' health. Their study focused on leader's needs and health improvement and found that when management tailors the employee-centered plans, the leaders' (employee) health improves. The study reviewed existing literature, but there were very few selected articles. Yao et al. (2021) qualitative synthesis of 50 published articles created a detailed review of health-promoting leadership. They proposed a research framework with protentional research outcomes (for individuals: positive attitudes, well-being, and health) and for organizations (culture and practices). They used resource perspectives (conservation of resources and job demands-resources), learning (social learning theory), and exchange perspectives (social exchange theory) to explain the mechanism. Their study proposes that employee health and well-being improve when a leader promotes health at work, which influences the organizational culture where health and well-being are valued and nurtured.

A recent review article by Upadhyay (2024) highlights the value of leadership in the UAE and how it influences well-being. The study found that leadership aligned with the culture can positively influence the outcomes in the form of well-being. Dietz et al. (2020), in their study, proposed leaders as role models and tested the hypotheses on longitudinal and dyadic data of 72 leaders and 412 team members. They found that the employees learn from their leaders and try to imitate their acts. Lin and Liao (2020) study on leaders' temporal focus and resilience observed that followers learn from their leaders and offer similar outcomes. They carried out this research on two samples of 222 supervisor-subordinate dyads. Ahmed and Faheem's (2021) experimental research observed that leaders/supervisors influence followers by providing them with incentive that modifies their behavior. Ogunfowora's (2014) study on 297 employees of 58 work units identified that leaders are more effective when considered as role models. Their study focused on ethical leadership while considering the role modeling of a leader as a moderator. Teetzen et al. (2023) further investigated the factors that helped the HOL influence employees' attitudes and observed that the health-oriented culture fosters HOL, which in turn influences employees' attitudes and well-being. Their study covered an investigation of 74 teams and 423 employees, thus observing team-level findings.

The aforementioned literature covers some interesting highlighting including the study design strengths: team-based (Teetzen et al., 2023), dyadic (Dietz et al., 2020; Lin & Liao, 2020), longitudinal (Arnold & Rigotti, 2021), experimental studies (Ahmed & Faheem, 2021) and qualitative studies (Pfeffer et al., 2020). The mentioned literature covers review articles (UPadhyay, 2024), editorial (Burger et al., 2024), meta-analytical investigations (Inceoglu et al., 2018; Montano et al., 2017), qualitative synthesis (Yao et al., 2021), systematic literature

review (Erschens et al., 2024) and empirical studies (Ahmed & Faheem, 2021; Dietz et al., 2020; Franke et al., 2014; Lin & Liao, 2020; Ogunfowora, 2014; Teetzen et al., 2023). The given literature, thus, covers major research types, approaches, and designs that can be carried out to find the variables of interest and possible associations (Ahmed & Islam, 2023). Interestingly, all these studies conclusively highlight the role of leaders in nurturing employee health and well-being. The researcher found that despite a rich literature on the leadership and employees' well-being, there is a lack of literature on HOL and well-being relationships (except Arnold & Rigotti, 2021; Franke et al., 2014). The current study fills this gap by offering empirical evidence of the same.

Moreover, the previous studies have focused on resources and exchange perspectives (e.g., Yao et al., 2021), largely ignoring the learning perspective, which is the underlying premise of the current study. Therefore, the current study uses Social Cognitive Learning Theory (SCLT) (Bandura, 1977), which posits that SCLT posits that humans learn from their environment and imitate the happenings around them. When HOL is present at work, a health-focused climate comes into existence, and employees learn from this environment and focus on their well-being. Past studies have also highlighted that HOL is positively related to physical and mental health at the workplace and is, therefore, associated with well-being (Klug et al., 2019; Santa Maria et al., 2019). The same is hypothesized below:

**H1:** There is a positive relationship between health-oriented leadership and employees' well-being.

### **Mediating Role of Person-job Fit**

Some recent studies have highlighted the value and need of investigating the mechanism through which HOL and well-being can be associated. For instance, Liu et al. (2021) investigated the impact of health-promoting leadership on employee engagement through mediation of employee health. The findings support the hypothesized relationship. This study covered only employee engagement, leaving other dimensions of well-being (e.g., emotional exhaustion), while the current study fills this gap. They also proposed that the mechanism should be investigated through other mediators and moderators. There is a dearth of literature that has linked HOL with well-being. Kaluza and Junker (2022) study proposed and investigated the mediating role of health climate and self-care between HOL and employees' exhaustion (a dimension of well-being). They carried out a three-lag investigation using the conservation of resources perspective to explain this relationship. Santa Maria et al. (2019) researched German police officers using a sample of 811 respondents. They observed that HOL positively influences employee health and well-being. They also tested the mediating role of leader's own health and found that the partial mediation was supported. Franke et al.'s (2014) study conducted on a sample of 353 employees also supported the idea that HOL positively influences employees' health. They also observed that the follower's self-care mediated the relationship between HOL and employees' health.

The given studies focused on outcomes of health-focused leadership and considered only one dimension of well-being. The current study considers both engagement and emotional exhaustion to measure well-being, thus contributing to the current literature. Moreover, the mentioned studies considered either employee-related mediators, e.g., employee health (Liu et

al., 2021), employee self-care (Franke et al., 2014; Kaluza & Junker, 2022), health climate (Kaluza & Junker, 2022) and leader's health (Santa Maria et al., 2019). None of these or other studies have considered employees' perceptions of fit with the job (a person-job congruence factor). Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by focusing on the same and proposing the mediating role of person-job fit (henceforth, PJ fit) using the related literature.

One of the supporting Longitudinal Internet Study of Social Sciences (LISS) was conducted by van Woerkom et al. (2024), who found that a strengths-based leader can improve employee PJ fit. This happens because such a leader focuses on maximizing organizational efficiency, performance, and outcomes by continuously developing resources. Though this study does not consider the HOL as a predictive leadership, the explanation provided for strengths-based leadership is also expected to positively influence PJ fit. This is because HOL also tries to improve health performance, efficiency, and quality by improving the working environment, culture, and values (the organizational resources). Therefore, it is expected that HOL will first foster PJ's fit perceptions of employees. Kock et al.'s (2018) study also proposed and tested the model of empathetic leadership and observed that when a leader is empathetic toward their followers, they build a positive relationship with the organization. Using this premise, this study proposes that HOL takes care of the health of employees (empathetic approach) and employees feel a positive relationship (high PJ fit). The given studies have considered fit perceptions as mediators but did not use the predictive role of HOL, which is the value addition done by the current study.

The previous paragraph highlights how HOL can improve PJ fit perceptions, but the PJ fit outcomes in the form of well-being are not discussed so far. This study uses the study of Jaškevičiūtė et al. (2024) to explain this relationship, which proposes and tests the relationship between person-organization fit and employees' well-being. The extensive study was carried out in three European countries with a large sample of 1140 respondents. They observed that fit perceptions positively predict employee well-being. This study covered PO fit as the predicting variable, while the perceptions of the job were ignored. Koburtay and Alzoubi (2021) and Liao (2021) also investigated the association between PO fit and environment fit roles in predicting employees' psychological well-being. These studies covered fit perceptions but ignored fit perceptions regarding the job. Both job and organization fit perceptions are different, and often, the workplace is better predicted through jobs, which is an important contribution of the current study.

Using the explanation provided in the previous two paragraphs, it is proposed that HOL fosters feelings of fit with the job (PJ fit), which in turn influences well-being; therefore, a mediation mechanism is hypothesized. The said relationship can also be proposed using SCLT (Bandura, 1977). This theory proposes that people learn from their environment and try to imitate the same. The environment may include the climate and the leadership. Through their inspiration, the HOL can work as role models (vicarious model). Such leaders may motivate employees to work safely, care for their health, and reward them for their acts (verbal persuasion and feedback). The consistent efforts and continuous focus of HOL reaffirms that health is an important concern at the workplace (experience). All these workplace endeavors influence the employees' perceptions of fit with the organization because they feel that the workplace and job environment is congruent to their job requirements, and they feel a situation of well-being. Therefore, the following mediation hypothesis is proposed:

**H2:** Person-job fit mediates the positive relationship of health-oriented leadership and employees' well-being.

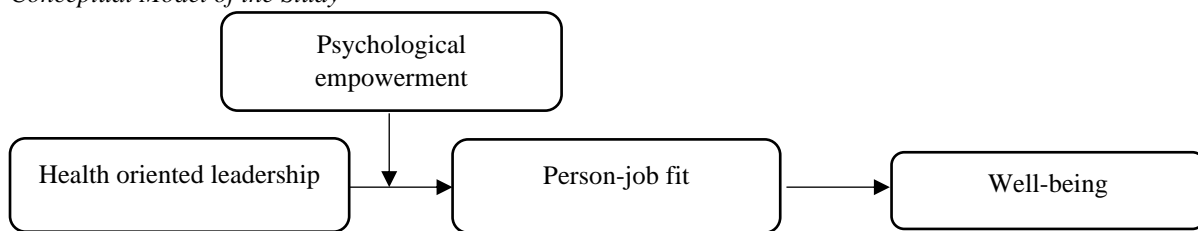
### **Moderating Role of Psychological Empowerment**

The current study also proposes the moderating role of psychological empowerment on the relationship between HOL and PJ fit. This relationship has been largely unattended in the past literature, but the same can be predicted using the existing literature and underpinning theory. Out of a few related studies, Kohút et al. (2022) identified that well-being is influenced by a number of factors, including social, cognitive, and personality factors. They also observed that psychological factors are important predictors of one's well-being. Their study did not consider personality as a moderator but a predictor of well-being and positive feelings about work. The current study considered psychological empowerment as a moderator between HOL and PJ fit, which is an under-investigated area of research. Spreitzer's (1995) seminal work on psychological empowerment defines it as a state of intrinsic motivation with one's orientation to competence, impact, meanings, and self-determination as the dimensions of psychological empowerment. Competence is one's belief in the ability to perform the tasks, impact means that one can influence the work, meanings cover the value or worth one feels for/in the job, and self-determination focuses on the feelings of control over the job. Some recent studies have considered psychological empowerment as an explanatory mechanism between positive workplace factors and outcomes. For instance, Ahmed et al. (2024) studied psychological empowerment as a mediator between fun at work and employees' knowledge-sharing behavior. They used the theoretical premise of Emancipatory values and organizational support to predict the relationship between a sample of IT professionals and the working environment and fit perceptions positively influence the work outcomes. Islam et al. (2024) also considered the mediating role of psychological empowerment between fun and knowledge sharing, but they found that the leadership role is also instrumental as such leaders nourish and provide a culture of inclusion, which influences the psychological empowerment of the employees. They used the theoretical premise of self-determination and conservation of resources theory.

The current study considers HOL as a parallel factor to fun as both aim to create a positive working environment. However, the aforementioned studies did not consider psychological empowerment as a moderator (the gap the current study intends to fill). Therefore, it is hypothesized that HOL and perceptions of psychological empowerment can work together to offer synergetic results. The same can be proposed using the SCLT perspective, as the HOL leaders are considered role models through care for self and employees' health. Their work on promoting health ensures an environment where employees experience health orientation. Such leaders also encourage and motivate employees to work to promote their health. Therefore, the following hypothesized relationship is conjectured:

**H3:** The positive relationship between health-oriented leadership and person-job fit is stronger when employees feel a higher level of psychological empowerment and vice versa.

Figure 1 presents the study model.

**Figure 1***Conceptual Model of the Study*

## Method

According to Ahmed and Islam (2023), research methodology covers data collection, analysis, and interpretation. In this study, the data is collected from IT and health professionals because these organizations require soft skills in job performance (Mardis et al., 2018) with high mental and physical health. Mechanical Turk (MT) software was used to collect data to reach the respondents. Because the population of the study was unknown, the sample size was determined using the sample-to-items ratio (i.e., 20:1; Costello & Osborne, 2009). Seven hundred professionals were approached using the mentioned tool, but even after sending the four reminders, only 348 respondents completed the survey. After evaluation of the responses for quality and completeness, it was observed that 34 responses were carelessly filled and removed for analysis purposes.

Table 1 contains the demographical information of respondents. The table shows that the majority of the respondents were male (57.64%), between 21-30 years of age (60.82%), from the IT sector (55.74%) and holding university degree (70.38%), and with experience of up to three years (48.09%).

**Table 1***Demographical Profile*

|               |                   | Demographics | N   | %     |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------|-----|-------|
| Gender        | Male              |              | 181 | 57.64 |
|               | Female            |              | 133 | 42.36 |
| Age           | 21-30             |              | 191 | 60.82 |
|               | 31-40             |              | 59  | 18.90 |
|               | 41-50             |              | 41  | 13.06 |
|               | 51-60             |              | 23  | 7.32  |
| Sector        | IT                |              | 175 | 55.74 |
|               | Health            |              | 139 | 44.26 |
| Qualification | University degree |              | 221 | 70.38 |
|               | college or below  |              | 93  | 29.62 |
| Experience    | 1-3 years         |              | 151 | 48.09 |
|               | 4-8 years         |              | 93  | 29.62 |
|               | 9-12 years        |              | 44  | 14.01 |
|               | >12 years         |              | 26  | 8.28  |

All the measures were adopted from the existing literature. For instance, HOL was assessed using the Franke et al. (2014) scale covering example items like ““My supervisor tries to reduce my demands by optimizing my work-life balance””. Well-being was measured using the two dimensions: emotional exhaustion and engagement. Emotional Exhaustion was operationalized using the Maslach Burnout Inventory, which contains five items: “I feel burnout from work.” Utrecht scale covering items like, “At work, I feel bursting with energy,” was used to measure



work engagement. Spreitzer's (1995) shorter version of four four-item scale was used to operationalize psychological empowerment. The scale has been validated by Islam et al., (2024). It covered items like "The work I do is meaningful to me". Person job fit was measured using Saks and Ashforth's (2002) four-item scale, covering items like "To what extent the job is a good match for you?".

## Findings

A preliminary data analysis was carried out to move to the hypotheses testing. The data was evaluated for missing values, normality, and outliers. There were no missing values in the data set, and the data also met the normality test requirements (i.e., skewness +1 and kurtosis +3). Mahalanobis D score was used to test the outliers, and no outliers were reported. Common method bias was also tested using Harman's single factor test, which showed a variance of 33.46% (<50%), thus showing that the variance was not severe (Podsakoff et al., 2023).

After preliminary analysis, the data was evaluated using the two-step Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique. At first, the measurement model was assessed for confirmatory factor analysis, reliability, and validity (Hair et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2009). The results of the measurement model are shown in Table 2. All the items showed acceptable factor loadings for each item (i.e., > .50). The reliability of the measure is displayed using the composite reliability values, where the higher values (> .70) highlight that the measures are reliable. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is also acceptable, as the tabulated values are above the threshold of .50 (Hair et al., 2014). This study used the guidelines of Fornell and Larcker (1981) to assess the discriminant validity, while the tabulated diagonal values are more than the values given in the same column; therefore, the requirements of discriminant validity are met.

**Table 2**

*Results of Factor Analysis*

|        | Factor analysis |     |     |     | Discriminant validity |     |     |
|--------|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----------------------|-----|-----|
|        | Loading         | AVE | CR  | FW  | PEF                   | PE  | KS  |
| HOL    | .59-.73         | .60 | .93 | .79 |                       |     |     |
| PJ fit | .58-.83         | .59 | .90 | .69 | .80                   |     |     |
| WB     | .60-.80         | .54 | .88 | .65 | .53                   | .71 |     |
| WE     | .55-.79         | .58 | .87 | .61 | .60                   | .64 | .80 |

Model Fitness Indices:  $\chi^2/df=2.01$ ; CFI=0.95; SRMR=0.05; RMSEA=0.45;

HOL=health-oriented leadership, PJ fit=person-job fit, WB=well-being, PE=psychological empowerment

Descriptive statistics and correlation results are reported in Table 3, where it is evident that all the variables of interest are correlated with each other. For instance, it is evident that HOL is positively related to PJ fit, WB, and PE ( $r = .41^{**}$ ,  $r = .43^{**}$ , and  $r = .10^*$ , respectively). Similarly, PJ fit is also positively related to the WB and PE ( $r = .39^*$  and  $r = .12^{**}$ , respectively). The given findings helped us move a step further with hypothesis testing.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlation*

| Variables | Descriptive | Correlation |            |            |            |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
|           | Mean (SD)   | HOL         | PJ fit     | WB         | PE         |
| HOL       | 3.98 (.51)  | <b>.79</b>  |            |            |            |
| PJ fit    | 3.74 (.52)  | .41*        | <b>.80</b> |            |            |
| WB        | 3.68 (.50)  | .43**       | .39*       | <b>.81</b> |            |
| PE        | 3.59 (.82)  | .10*        | .22**      | .12**      | <b>.83</b> |

\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , Reliability values given in diagonal line

HOL=health-oriented leadership, PJ fit=person-job fit, WB=well-being, PE=psychological empowerment

Table 4 contains the results of the hypotheses testing. The table reveals that HOL positively influences WB ( $\beta = .32, p = .000$ ); therefore, H1 is supported. The test of mediation highlights that the indirect effect of HOL and WB through PJ fit is also significant ( $\beta = .20, p = .02$ ), which supports H2. As both direct and indirect relations are significant, it is concluded that partial mediation is supported (Ahmed & Islam, 2023). Finally, moderation results are also shown in the table, highlighting that the relationship remains positive after the inclusion of PE as moderator. The moderation results are further elaborated in Figure 2, which contains the interaction plot. It is evident from the figure that when both HOL and PE are high, the collective effect on PJ fit is also more/high and vice versa.

**Table 4**

*Hypotheses Testing*

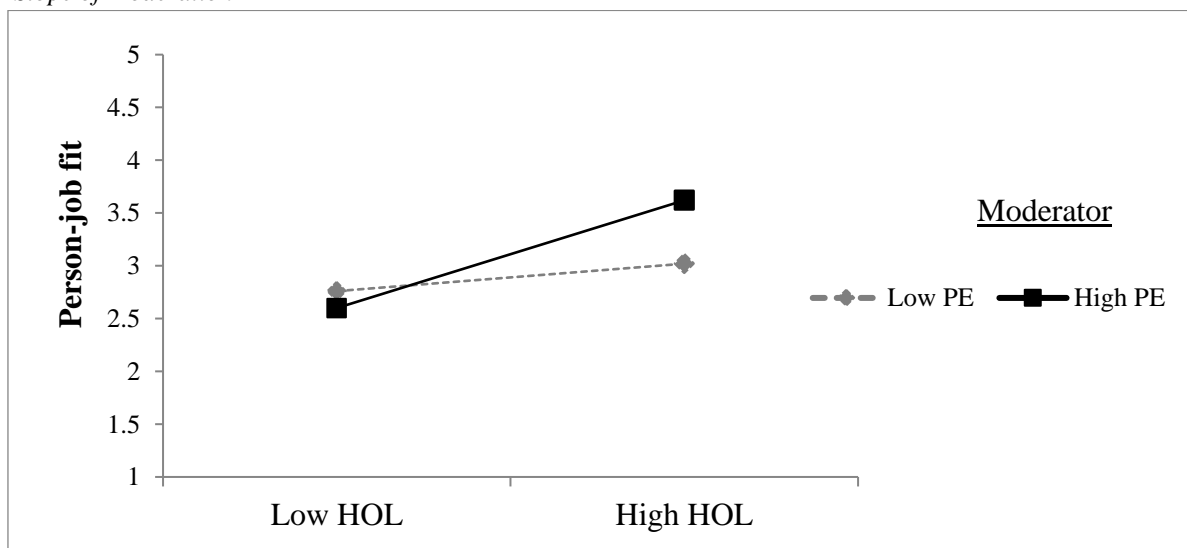
| Relationships         | B   | SE  | Bootstraps @ 95% |      | p    |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|------------------|------|------|
|                       |     |     | LLCI             | ULCI |      |
| HOL → WB              | .32 | .07 | .03              | .11  | .000 |
| Indirect effects      |     |     |                  |      |      |
| HOL → PJ fit → WB     | .20 | .06 | .19              | .32  | .02  |
| Interactional effects |     |     |                  |      |      |
| HOL × PE              | .19 | .02 | .03              | .22  | .017 |

U=upper limit, L=lower limit, CI=confidence interval, Bootstrap sample size 5,000

HOL=health-oriented leadership, PJ fit=person-job fit, WB=well-being, PE=psychological empowerment

**Figure 2**

*Slope of Moderation*



## Discussion

This study aims to find how HOL influences WB using the lens of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). This study also assumes and tests the mediating role of PJ fit and moderation of PE. Three hypotheses are proposed and put to the test to better understand the relationships. The statistical results reveal that HOL and WB are positively related; thus, the findings support the existing literature, which proposes that employee-centric leaders play a significant role in employees' WB (e.g., Kaluza et al., 2021; Kaluza & Junker, 2022). The findings also support the underpinning explanations of SCLT (Bandura, 1977), as the health-focused behavior of leaders becomes a source of learning for the followers, and they also imitate the behavior; thus, their WB increases. The findings also support the proposition that the HOL and WB relation is

mediated by the PJ fit. Here again, the results are supportive and consistent with the theoretical lens. The study also investigates the moderating role of PE, which is also supported. Therefore, the study answers the calls made by some recent studies.

### **Theoretical Implications**

This research endeavor offers some valuable contributions. The foremost is focusing on the HOL, an employee-centric leadership, instead of conventional leadership approaches focusing on organizational gains (e.g., Arnold & Rigotti, 2021; Inceoglu et al., 2018; Pfeffer et al., 2020). This study also considers employees' WB as an outcome of HOL, which has recently gained researchers' attention (e.g., Kaluza & Junker, 2022; Kaluza et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2021). This study also focuses on work well-being. The WB is divided into life, work, and psychological well-being, while previous studies have focused on either of the three aspects. However, this study covers the psychological factors of work, i.e., work engagement and emotional exhaustion; therefore, both variables can be considered psychological aspects of work (Kaluza & Junker, 2022). There is a dearth of literature that covers both psychological and work well-being simultaneously. Therefore, both work and psychological well-being aspects are investigated in tandem by taking these job aspects.

This study also explains how HOL influences WB, i.e., through the mechanism of a mediator and a moderator. Past literature has studied LMX, self-care, and health climate as the mediators (e.g., Kaluza & Junker, 2022; Kaluza et al., 2021), but the role of one's fit with the job is an ignored area of investigation. Therefore, this study proposes and empirically tests the mediating role of PJ fit. The boundary condition of PE has also not gained the attention of researchers in the past. Few past studies have called for investigating the factors that may influence the outcomes of employee-centric leaders (Ahmed et al., 2024; Kaluza et al., 2021). This study, therefore, proposed and investigated the role of PE as a moderator, while the same has been proved statistically.

The use of a social learning perspective (i.e., SCLT, Bandura, 1977) is another important contribution of the current study. SCLT uses the learning perspective to explain how humans learn and change their behaviors. Using this premise, this study assumed and found statistical support for employees learning positive behaviors from their leader (HOL), which improves their well-being (increases engagement and decreases emotional exhaustion). Through health awareness, feedback, persuasion, and the creation of a health-oriented environment, HOL creates a situation of fit for employees, which fosters their well-being. In addition, employees with higher psychological empowerment feel synergistic effects of HOL as they have psychological freedom added with support from the leader and, therefore, feel more fit.

### **Practical Implications**

This study also offers some meaningful managerial lessons, where the foremost is the role of leadership in improving employees' well-being. It is evident that when a leader is more employee-centric and values their health over everything else, the employees tend to feel well-being at work. Therefore, the management should introduce health-focused programs, train the managers for HOL, and motivate and reward them to adopt such approaches. This study also uses work engagement and emotional exhaustion (two psychological and emotional states) as

the proxy of work well-being. Both these facets are important considerations for management; therefore, the study provides a model to improve these states.

The study also highlights that HOL overweighs the conventional leadership approaches because it is more employee-centric, where their health is prioritized by the organization and its agents (HOL) (e.g., Arnold & Rigotti, 2021; Inceoglu et al., 2018; Pfeffer et al., 2020). Employees learn from this working aspect and translate it positively, increasing their fit (person-job fit) perceptions of the job. Therefore, the study highlights a way through which an organization can foster the fit perceptions of their employees. Fit perceptions (job fit, organization fit, and environment fit) are considered important psychological states influencing numerous workplace outcomes (Ahmed et al., 2024). The study also highlights that psychological empowerment is an important determinant of fit perceptions, and the outcome is higher when it is blended with the HOL.

Based on these lines, this study proposes that management should hire more managers (or train existing managers) with a higher health focus. HOL, being an employee-centric leadership, influences overall organizational outcomes because the employees display positive psychological and behavioral states. The management may transform the job descriptions (JDs) of their managers and employees and add health-related elements, which will prove to be a health-centric act that brings more positive outcomes. The performance appraisal system may also include such job parameters where the employees are rewarded for healthy acts. This will also bring positive changes to the workplace, influencing overall organizational outcomes.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Although this study is based on a rigorous methodology and in-depth analytical process, it may have some limitations associated with that. The foremost is the use of a cross-sectional approach, which may undermine the causality testing. Future researchers may use longitudinal or time series data to test causality and judge the long-term effects of HOL. The current study has focused on one aspect of well-being (i.e., work well-being), ignoring psychological and life well-being. Though work well-being influences the other aspects of well-being (Jaškevičiūtė et al., 2024), it may also happen other-way around (i.e., life well-being affecting work well-being); therefore, future researchers should focus on this perspective. Future researchers should also focus on all aspects of well-being to look at the outcomes better. This study considers person-job fit as the mediator, ignoring other fit perceptions (i.e., person-organization fit and person-environment fit). Ahmed et al. (2024) highlighted that all these fit aspects are important determinants of employee behaviors; therefore, in the future, these aspects can be focused as mechanisms between HOL and outcomes. This study covers psychological empowerment as the boundary condition or moderator, which is one's psychological state. Other personal level variables, e.g., personality, state of mental health, and family conditions, may also be considered moderators. External factors like peer support, level of exchange relation with the leader, and justice at the workplace could also be considered as boundary conditions. This study uses the learning perspective (Social cognitive learning theory, Bandura, 1977) to explain the mechanism of the study, while the same relationship can be explained using the exchange perspective (Social Exchange and Organizational Support Theories), resources perspective (Job-Demand Resources, Conservation of Resources), and emancipation perspective (Emancipatory theory) to explain the relationships.

## Conclusion

By using the underpinning explanations of SCLT (Bandura, 1977), this study proposes and investigates the mechanism of improving employees' work well-being. The study highlights that health-oriented leadership effectively improves employees' well-being as it fosters the fit perceptions with the job. Thus, the study explains the ways through which a health-oriented leader influences the employees' outcomes. The study also proves that personal psychological factors (here, psychological empowerment) have a great bearing on the outcomes, and these factors, working synergistically with the HOL, influence employees' fit perceptions.

## Declarations

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### Ethics Approval

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