Leader-Expressed Humility as a Moderator: Narcissistic and Paternalistic Leadership in Employee Retention

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Abstract: *This study examines the impact of narcissistic and paternalistic leadership styles on employee job embeddedness, as well as the moderating effect of leader-expressed humility on the relationship between job embeddedness and employee retention. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (SET), Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, and Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, the research offers a multi-theoretical perspective on how leadership behaviors influence employee attachment and retention in organizations. Data were collected from 382 employees in the cutlery manufacturing sector of Gujranwala, Pakistan—a region known for high labor turnover and limited organizational stability. Using structural equation modeling, we find that narcissistic leadership negatively impacts job embeddedness, while the moral and benevolent dimensions of paternalistic leadership positively influence it. The authoritarian component of paternalism shows a weak but positive association. Although leader-expressed humility correlates positively with employee retention, it does not significantly moderate the relationship between job embeddedness and retention. The findings provide theoretical insights into the understudied interaction between leadership styles and embeddedness in emerging economies and offer practical guidance for human resource professionals and organizational leaders seeking to foster long-term employee commitment. Additionally, it contributes to the existing leadership literature by linking contrasting leadership styles in a high-power distance and non-Western context. The study recommends prioritizing relational leadership traits and reevaluating humility-based strategies in hierarchical cultural settings.*

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1. Introduction

Job embeddedness has emerged as a powerful way to explain why people stay with their current employer instead of accepting other offers. This concept encompasses the ties, both within the workplace and in the wider community, that anchor a worker to their job (Robinson et al., 2014). Because these connections can be shaped by interactions among colleagues and outside obligations, job embeddedness offers a broader perspective than older models that rely on simple measures like commitment or satisfaction. When workers consider the friendships, routines, and sacrifices leaving would entail, stronger embeddedness typically correlates with higher retention rates (Yu et al., 2020). By emphasizing leader-expressed humility, this study adds a fresh dimension to the leadership-job embeddedness debate that has often been overlooked.

Retaining talented staff has become a top priority for companies worldwide, as stability fuels productivity, boosts morale, and preserves valuable knowledge (Hancock et al., 2013). In contrast, frequent turnover increases hiring costs, disrupts team cohesion, and risks losing key skills, all of which can undermine a firm's long-term health (Hom et al., 2017). Understanding what keeps employees engaged has evolved from being merely a human resources concern to a cornerstone of any serious business strategy. As new management models proliferate across industries, knowing which style retains workers has become crucial. This project focuses on two contrasting approaches—paternalistic and narcissistic leadership—and examines how each either fosters employee attachment or drives them away. Narcissistic leaders prioritize their own gain and may create a toxic workplace, while paternalistic leaders (moral or benevolent) emphasize care, loyalty, and mutual benefit. By comparing the two, we can clearly see how each style influences employee retention and stability.

In Pakistan and other emerging economies, retaining workers is notoriously challenging, making the issue even more pressing in these contexts. Gujranwala's cutlery industry, which relies on extensive hands-on labor, experiences relentless turnover, making stable staffing essential for daily operations. The city's unique blend of cultural norms and economic pressures provides an ideal setting for studying how different leadership styles relate to workers' sense of job embeddedness and their decision to

stay. Due to frequent market fluctuations, rapid rule changes, and often unreliable security, both employers and employees face unique challenges that shape retention in specific ways (Aman-Ullah et al., 2020). These factors complicate workforce stability, making employee retention a particularly complex issue (Chen et al., 2023). Management styles that promote job embeddedness—defined by an employee's connection to and fit within their organization—have been shown to stabilize workforces in turbulent environments. However, management approaches can vary widely, with some, like paternalistic management, emphasizing care and loyalty, while others, such as narcissistic management, often adopt a self-centered approach that undermines job embeddedness (Yao & Hao, 2023).

Despite the growing literature on leadership and job embeddedness, research rarely examines how contrasting leadership styles—specifically, narcissistic and paternalistic leadership—simultaneously affect job embeddedness and retention within a single integrated model. While constructs like job satisfaction and organizational commitment are frequently explored, job embeddedness as a mediating mechanism remains underutilized in emerging economy contexts, such as Pakistan. Notably, the moderating role of leader-expressed humility is severely understudied, especially in Pakistan's hierarchical cultural context shaped by a rigid authoritarian structure, high power distance, and a preference for directive leadership (Noor & Asim, 2024).

Leader-expressed humility refers to a leader's ability to show modesty, admit mistakes, and acknowledge their followers' strengths (Owens et al., 2013). This concept is significant as it counters hierarchical or ego-centric leadership, potentially strengthening the relational bonds that promote embeddedness. Hostile or demeaning leader behaviors (i.e., humiliation) can undermine employee morale, weaken job embeddedness, and ultimately lead to higher turnover rates (Tanuwijaya & Jakaria, 2022). Most existing studies focus on leader-expressed humility as a direct predictor of outcomes (e.g., creativity, performance) rather than as a buffering mechanism in toxic or complex leadership contexts (Asianab, 2023). Additionally, little empirical work has tested these relationships in high-power-distance, culturally hierarchical environments, such as the manufacturing sector in Gujranwala. This creates a clear gap in our understanding of how leadership dynamics operate in collectivist and resource-constrained settings.

This study is timely and significant for multiple reasons. First, employee retention has become increasingly difficult in emerging

economies, where economic fluctuations and labor mobility often undermine organizational stability. Second, identifying leadership traits that foster embeddedness is crucial for maintaining workforce continuity and enhancing organizational performance. By contrasting narcissistic and paternalistic leadership styles and introducing leader-expressed humility as a moderator, this research provides a novel and integrative approach to explaining employee retention. Moreover, testing these dynamics in Pakistan's cutlery industry offers context-specific insights relevant to labor-intensive manufacturing sectors in developing nations. The findings aim to inform both leadership development practices and human resource retention strategies in volatile economic environments.

This study investigates the influence of paternalistic and narcissistic managerial styles on job embeddedness and assesses the impact of job embeddedness on employee retention. We also examine whether the relationship between job embeddedness and employee retention is moderated by leader-expressed humility. The theoretical contribution of this study lies in expanding knowledge on job embeddedness and leadership theories in emerging economies, as well as providing a nuanced understanding of how management styles, embeddedness, and leader behaviors intersect. Our research offers managers clear recommendations on whether to adopt or adjust narcissistic and paternalistic leadership styles during challenging circumstances, highlighting both the benefits and unintended consequences of each approach.

Additionally, this study contributes to a growing body of work demonstrating that humble leaders can improve employee outcomes—a critical idea in volatile markets where power shifts rapidly (Ali et al., 2022). Another key contribution lies in integrating leadership style, job embeddedness, and leader-expressed humility into a single framework, allowing readers to see how these elements interact and influence retention decisions in fast-growing environments. By comparing narcissistic and paternalistic leaders, the study reveals for the first time how employees feel more or less secure in their positions when pay and markets become unpredictable.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews past findings and formulates the hypotheses. Section 3 explains how the data were collected and analyzed. Section 4 presents the main results, while Section 5 explores their implications, identifies limitations, and suggests directions for future work.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

This study is grounded in three interrelated theories: Social Exchange Theory (SET), Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model. SET posits that trust and mutual give-and-take between leaders and staff foster bonds that keep workers committed to their roles and the organization (Brown et al., 2005; Wang et al., 2022). According to COR theory, individuals strive to gain and protect valuable psychological and social assets—such as support, respect, or stability—and withdraw whenever those assets feel threatened (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Norouzinik et al., 2022). JD-R theory offers a framework for understanding how job demands (e.g., toxic or authoritarian leadership) and job resources (e.g., moral support, leader-expressed humility) influence employee outcomes, such as embeddedness and retention (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Islam et al., 2022; Owens et al., 2019). By integrating these theories, this study aims to explain how different leadership styles serve as either resources or stressors, and how leader-expressed humility might buffer or amplify these effects.

2.1. Narcissistic Leadership and Job Embeddedness

Rosenthal and Pittinsky (2006) stated that leaders who act in self-serving ways, driven by selfish personal needs unrelated to the organization's interests, are narcissistic leaders. Ouimet (2010) describes narcissistic leaders as arrogant, impatient, unpredictable, and uncompromising, significantly influencing their staff's attitudes and behaviors. Amankwaa et al. (2022) link subordinates' job embeddedness to leaders' characteristics and styles. However, Norouzinik et al. (2022) find that narcissistic leadership correlates with lower job embeddedness and engagement. Thus, this study hypothesizes that narcissistic leadership negatively impacts employees' job embeddedness, based on resource conservation and social exchange theories. SET suggests that employees will reciprocate to leaders and the organization by performing work or engaging in favorable activities, helping the organization repay leaders for their moral encouragement and material support (Wang et al., 2022).

The three main components of job embeddedness—connection, matching, and sacrifice—motivate people to stay with the company. According to Lee et al. (2014), sacrifice refers to the costs employees incur when leaving an organization, including the loss of material or spiritual benefits. Matching assesses how well employees adapt to their work environment, while connection describes their relationships with leaders or

coworkers. Narcissistic leaders can erode employees' trust, leading to decreased job embeddedness and increased psychological stress (Brown et al., 2005).

Literature indicates that negative leadership traits, defined in the dark triad (Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism), adversely affect job embeddedness (Yamin, 2022). Norouzinik et al. (2022) examined the link between narcissistic leadership and job embeddedness. To foster corporate innovation and engagement, researchers emphasize collaborative and participatory leadership approaches. The relationship between job embeddedness and various leadership styles has been studied through SET (Huning et al., 2020). While existing literature connects narcissistic leadership to job stress, its direct impact on embeddedness in emerging economies remains underexplored. Narcissistic leadership can be understood through COR theory and SET. COR suggests that narcissistic leaders deplete employees' emotional and psychological resources, reducing their motivation to stay connected to the organization. SET posits that when leaders prioritize self-interest and fail to reciprocate support, employees withdraw commitment, ultimately lowering job embeddedness (Ouimet, 2010; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Therefore, we propose:

Hypothesis 1: Narcissistic leadership negatively influences job embeddedness.

2.2. Paternalistic Leadership and Job Embeddedness

Paternalistic leaders have power over their staff, allowing them to share ideas, participate in decision-making, maintain control, and support their creativity (Farh & Cheng, 2000). Little research has been conducted on how leadership influences job embeddedness from various perspectives (Norouzinik et al., 2022).

Yamin (2022) noted that both workplace embeddedness and paternalistic leadership enhance worker productivity and creativity. According to Faraz et al. (2023), the positive effects of leadership on nurses' job embeddedness are mediated by psychological contract fulfillment and ownership. Health care authorities should prioritize servant leadership to retain qualified nurses. The researchers found a strong positive correlation between paternalistic leadership and work embeddedness (Khalid et al., 2021). They also emphasized the importance of job qualities and a supportive work environment in fostering employee engagement and retention through job embeddedness. Cho et al. (2019) examined how

resilience and authentic leadership affect nurses' job embeddedness. They found that interventions aimed at enhancing leadership resilience and authenticity can significantly increase nurses' job embeddedness.

The aforementioned studies suggest that research on the impact of authoritarian leadership in the workplace is limited. However, most experts agree that an authoritarian leadership style negatively affects workers' performance, motivation, innovation, and job satisfaction (Gu et al., 2018). Authoritarian leaders are criticized for viewing the organizational hierarchy as a strict control mechanism and making autocratic decisions that harm the work environment, leading to stress and demotivation.

2.2.1.   *Authoritarian Leadership and Job Embeddedness*

Authoritarian leadership is often seen as a job demand that creates strain, potentially decreasing embeddedness unless countered by cultural expectations of obedience. According to Siddique and Siddique (2020), authoritarian leaders frequently establish rigid hierarchical structures and centralized decision-making and rarely solicit feedback from subordinates. Decisions impacting subordinates without consultation often undermine their commitment and sense of self, leading to poor performance and job dissatisfaction. Authoritarian leaders typically avoid forming close relationships with subordinates, seeking complete obedience and compliance (Chan et al., 2013).

Because authoritarian leaders are generally perceived as emotionally detached and aloof, they are unlikely to support staff in expanding their professional networks. Their insistence on total obedience can discourage employees from developing succession plans or pursuing career paths aligned with their interests (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2017). JD-R theory identifies authoritarian leadership as a job demand that increases employee strain and reduces well-being. However, in cultures with high power distance, authoritarianism may be tolerated or viewed as necessary. While authoritarian control can hinder open communication and autonomy, it may also create a perceived sense of order, influencing embeddedness in complex ways. Therefore, a contextualized understanding is necessary (Gu et al., 2018; Siddique & Siddique, 2020). Thus, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2: Authoritarian leadership negatively affects job embeddedness.

2.2.2. Moral Leadership and Job Embeddedness

Moral leadership acts as a resource (JD-R) and reinforces reciprocity norms (SET), fostering deeper employee attachment. The second key element of paternalistic leadership is the moral leadership style. This type of leader prioritizes high spiritual values, demonstrates selfless and disciplined behavior towards staff, abides by the law, and never abuses authority.

According to Islam et al. (2022), moral leaders can influence employee behavior, encouraging followers to emulate their actions. Previous research has clearly shown that moral leadership significantly predicts creative work behavior among employees (Kuenzi et al., 2021). JD-R theory categorizes moral leadership as a job resource that promotes an ethical climate and enhances employee well-being. SET indicates that fair, principled leaders build trust and mutual respect, prompting employees to reciprocate with stronger organizational ties. Employees are more likely to stay in environments where leadership aligns with their personal values (Islam et al., 2022). Thus, we propose that:

Hypothesis 3: Moral leadership positively affects job embeddedness.

2.2.3. Benevolent Leadership and Job Embeddedness

Benevolent behavior reflects resource investment in followers, enhancing psychological safety and belonging, consistent with COR and JD-R. A benevolent leader allows staff to make mistakes, provides growth opportunities, and helps correct errors (Huang, 2022). Kind leaders treat employees like family and encourage them to face life's challenges outside of work (Yamin & Mahasneh, 2018). Other research indicates that paternalistic leadership negatively impacts organizational commitment, staff innovation, and performance (Dedahanov et al., 2016). According to Lee et al. (2014), leadership styles significantly influence employee work embeddedness. Siddique and Siddique (2020) note that most followers view their authoritarian bosses as rigid and uninterested in new ideas or work-related discussions.

Benevolent leadership is characterized by leaders who show concern, encouragement, and care for their followers' progress and well-being. Moving beyond conventional leadership strategies focused on task accomplishment, these leaders prioritize developing positive relationships and fostering a supportive work environment (Ansari & Siddiqui, 2020). Benevolent leaders provide guidance, mentorship, resources, and support to

help employees solve problems and achieve their goals, with a primary focus on personal and career development. This leadership style, categorized as relationship-oriented or people-oriented, emphasizes fostering positive connections, collaboration, trust, and a supportive work environment (Khairy et al., 2023). Benevolent leadership aligns with COR and JD-R theories, offering emotional and social resources that reduce stress and increase satisfaction. Employees under benevolent leaders feel supported both personally and professionally, strengthening their attachment to the workplace. This support system reinforces embeddedness by fostering strong relational and value-based connections (Khairy et al., 2023; Yamin & Mahasneh, 2018). Hence, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 4: Benevolent leadership positively affects job embeddedness.

The three characteristics of paternalistic leadership—moral, benevolent, and authoritarian—can be either advantageous or disadvantageous. According to Chan et al. (2013), paternalistic leadership is a heterogeneous construct that shares traits with authoritarianism and its ethical opposite. Earlier studies suggest that paternalistic leadership encompasses conflicting roles, exhibiting both pull (moral and benevolent) and push (authoritarian) components (Cheng et al., 2002). Therefore, examining these paternalistic leadership subcomponents in light of JD-R theory is essential. The motivating pathway in the JD-R framework (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) is linked to moral and benevolent leadership, while the health erosion pathway relates to authoritarian leadership. However, the contrasting roles of paternalistic leadership may have mixed effects, leading to varying ways that each leadership component provides resources and meets the demands of employees' jobs.

2.3. Job embeddedness, leader-expressed humility, and employee retention

According to Nzewi and Audu (2023), employee retention is the desire of employees to consistently remain in the workplace. It is distilled into employee self-efficacy, workplace flexibility, and job satisfaction. Uchenna and Audu (2022) revealed that job fit encompasses personal values, career path, job knowledge, and ability, as well as the degree to which an employee aligns with their immediate and external working environment. Moustafa et al. (2024) noted that fit refers to an individual's compatibility with their work and environment, driven by personal desires, preferences, values, needs, and goals. Therefore, Koo et al. (2020) argue that fit plays a crucial role in employee retention. When employees feel a good fit within the organization, they are more likely to stay, leading to improved retention.

For instance, Ma et al. (2018) found that work embeddedness enhances employee retention. They also discovered that increased job embeddedness effectively reduces turnover. Dechawatanapaisal (2018) asserts that employees who feel more connected to the company are less likely to leave. Moreover, Coetzer et al. (2017) noted that job embeddedness includes various traits that motivate employees to stay. There is a strong correlation between job embeddedness and workforce turnover intentions (Shah et al., 2020). Transformational leadership may be essential for staff retention (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Job embeddedness is a recently developed concept focused on retaining employees rather than allowing regular departures. It impacts employee retention and turnover intentions (Harris, 2012). Prior studies indicate that workers highly immersed in their jobs are less likely to leave (Karatepe & Shahriari, 2014).

According to Ampofo and Karatepe (2022), job embeddedness refers to the financial, social, and psychological factors influencing an employee's likelihood of staying with a company. Ferreira et al. (2017) found that companies successfully promoting job embeddedness can decrease negative outcomes, such as turnover intentions, while fostering positive outcomes in staff retention. Robinson et al. (2014) noted that workplace embeddedness is an effective retention strategy that can influence employee attitudes and behaviors. Recent research has primarily focused on the relationship between work embeddedness and organizational retention (Bergiel et al., 2009).

Every attitude must begin with some stimulus; job embeddedness does not occur spontaneously. Employment security may precede job embeddedness (Murphy et al., 2013). Embeddedness includes factors such as fit, links, and sacrifice. Employees who are highly embedded in their jobs are less likely to leave, as doing so would result in a loss of social, emotional, or financial resources (Ferreira et al., 2017; Ma et al., 2018). COR theory posits that individuals strive to retain valuable resources. Job embeddedness, which encompasses links, fit, and sacrifice, reflects the accumulation of these resources. Employees who are deeply embedded are less likely to leave because exiting would result in personal, social, and career losses (Ferreira et al., 2017; Ma et al., 2018). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 5: Job embeddedness positively influences employee retention.

2.4. *Moderating Role of Leader-Expressed Humility*

While leader-expressed humility is linked to increased psychological safety and relational trust (Brown & Treviño, 2014), its role as a moderator in hierarchical cultures remains contentious. According to the JD-R model, leader-expressed humility may buffer against leadership-related stressors, enhancing the effect of job embeddedness on retention. However, in high power-distance settings like Pakistan, humble leaders may be viewed as weak rather than empowering.

Research shows that effective leaders in commercial organizations use humility to win over their followers, inspiring and adding value to the organization in various ways (Yam et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2020). Additionally, leaders who are straightforward, optimistic, and modest not only form stronger bonds with their followers but also serve as role models (Brown & Treviño, 2014). However, our current understanding of this connection is unclear due to previous research (Hu et al., 2018). These studies partially support the positive correlation between followers' creativity and leaders' humility. For instance, Sok et al. (2018) assert that creativity involves developing and implementing novel ideas and solutions beneficial to the business.

The paradox perspective uses humility to illustrate the relationship between employees' job embeddedness and leaders' narcissism. Moreover, employees are motivated by leaders who blend humility and narcissism (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). According to the JD-R theory, humble leadership behaviors (such as admitting mistakes and appreciating others) serve as positive job resources that reduce stress and enhance relational safety. The SET further explains that humble leaders foster reciprocal trust, which can strengthen the effect of job embeddedness on retention. Thus, leader-expressed humility may enhance the positive impact of embeddedness by reinforcing employee-leader relationships (Brown & Treviño, 2014; Owens et al., 2019).

Hypothesis 6: Leader-expressed humility moderates the relationship between job embeddedness and employee retention, such that the relationship is stronger when humility is high.

2.5. *Conceptual Framework*

Based on the reviewed literature and theoretical foundations, the new framework illustrates how narcissistic and paternalistic leadership

affects the extent to which workers feel job-embedded. Once embedded, workers are more likely to remain in their roles (Ferreira et al., 2017; Ma et al., 2018). Additionally, the framework includes leader-expressed humility as a potential moderator in the relationship between job embeddedness and employee retention (Brown & Treviño, 2014; Owens et al., 2019). This integrative model is grounded in SET (Brown et al., 2005), JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), and COR theory (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), providing a comprehensive view of leadership and retention dynamics in an emerging economy context.

Figure 1: Conceptual model
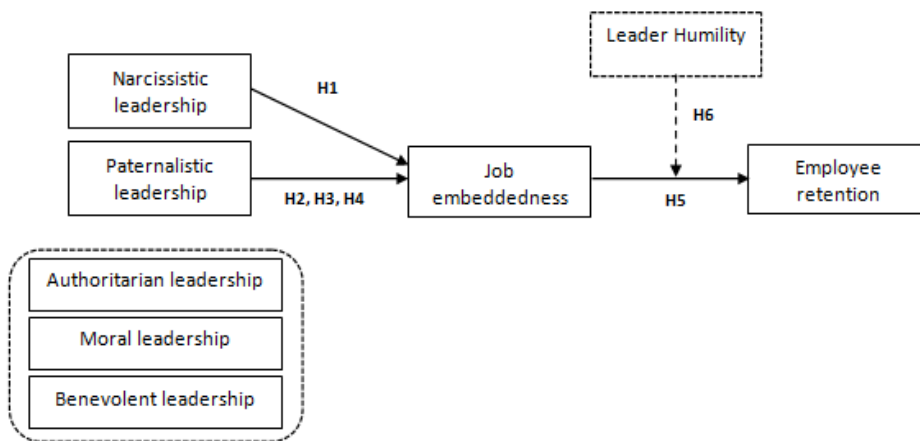
3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Participants and Procedure

This study's research design is based on the positivist paradigm, which advocates for gathering new data to study phenomena. The unit of analysis is employees from the cutlery sector in Gujranwala, Pakistan. Surveys were distributed to employees, regardless of gender, and participants could withdraw from the study at any time. A convenience sampling method was employed to distribute 415 questionnaires to employees. Golzar et al. (2022) note that convenience sampling is appropriate when a respondent list is unavailable and allows researchers to engage with actual respondents. Out of the 415 distributed questionnaires, 382 valid responses were received, resulting in a response rate of approximately 92 percent.

3.2. Variable Measurement

The literature review indicates that all variables under study have well-developed scales. To assess narcissistic leadership (NL), a six-item scale created by Hochwarter and Thompson (2012) was used. Unless otherwise specified, all responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Five items related to job embeddedness (JE) were based on the scale developed by Wang et al. (2022). The five-item humility scale created by Norouzinik et al. (2022) was used to measure humility. Chan (2024) provided the paternalistic leadership categories, including authoritarian, moral, and benevolent leadership, which were modified for the current study. Seven items were drawn from the Kyndt et al. (2009) study on employee retention.

3.3. Statistical Analysis

SPSS version 25 and AMOS version 21 were used to test the proposed model. Using IBM's AMOS 21, the authors primarily employed structural equation modeling to analyze the findings. A two-step process was utilized: first, a confirmatory factor analysis fitted the measurement model, followed by hypothesis evaluation in the structural model.

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1. Participants' Characteristics

As shown in Table 1, our sample comprised 86.6 percent males (331) and 13.4 percent females (51), indicating a male-dominated cutlery workforce in Pakistan. Participants were divided into four age groups: 44.5 percent were under 30 (n = 170), 34.3 percent were aged 31–40, 14.7 percent were aged 41–50, and 6.5 percent were 50 and above. In terms of education, 65.4 percent had completed intermediate schooling, 24.6 percent held a bachelor's degree, and 9.9 percent had a master's or PhD. Regarding job experience, 36.1 percent had less than five years, 39 percent had five to ten years, and 24.9 percent had over ten years of professional experience.

Table 1: Participants' characteristics

Characteristic	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	331	86.6
	Female	51	13.4
Age (years)	< 30	170	44.5
	31–40	131	34.3
	41–50	56	14.7
	50+	25	6.5
Education	School/Matric. /Inter.	250	65.4
	Graduation	94	24.6
	Master's/PhD	38	9.9
Experience (years)	< 5	138	36.1
	5–10	149	39.0
	> 10	95	24.9

4.2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations (SD), and correlation coefficients for the study variables. The means were 3.682 (SD = 0.8212) for leader-expressed humility, 3.667 (SD = 0.8609) for narcissistic leadership, 3.708 (SD = 0.8953) for authoritarian leadership, 3.808 (SD = 0.7357) for moral leadership, and 3.757 (SD = 0.7757) for benevolent leadership. Job embeddedness had a mean of 3.315 (SD = 1.035), while employee retention had a mean of 3.682 (SD = 0.8215). The results indicate that narcissistic leadership was significantly and negatively associated with job embeddedness ($r = -0.146$, $p < 0.10$). Additionally, authoritarian leadership showed a weak but statistically significant positive correlation with employee retention ($r = 0.226$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

	Mean	SD	LHH	NLL	PAA	PMM	PBB	ERR	JEE
LHH	3.682	0.8212	0.677						
NLL	3.667	0.8609	-0.107	0.679					
PAA	3.708	0.8953	-0.046	0.469***	0.738				
PMM	3.808	0.7357	-0.014	0.647***	0.348***	0.620			
PBB	3.757	0.7757	-0.153*	0.209**	0.021	0.123	0.567		
ERR	3.682	0.8215	0.230***	0.168*	0.226***	-0.011	0.062	0.673	
JEE	3.315	1.035	0.284***	-0.146*	0.028	0.043	0.184***	0.156**	0.820

Notes: p*<0.05; p**<0.01; p***<0.001.
Diagonal values represent the square roots of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct.
LHH = leader-expressed humility; NLL = narcissistic leadership; PAA = authoritarian leadership; PMM = moral leadership; PBB = benevolent leadership; ERR = employee retention; JEE = job embeddedness.

4.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Reliability

The construct's discriminant and convergent validity are confirmed by the measurement method (Yamin, 2019). Convergent validity is evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and factor loadings (Yamin, 2020). Both composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha should exceed 0.70 to ensure each measure is reliable. Construct reliability is further assessed using AVE, which should surpass 0.50. According to Rahi et al. (2024), a construct is considered reliable if its factor loading exceeds 0.50. The findings indicate that the reliability of the constructs is supported by all values for composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, AVE, and factor loadings. The results of the measurement model are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Measurement model

Construct scale	Factor loading	Composite reliability	AVE	Cronbach's alpha
NLL1	0.65	0.836	0.501	0.83
NLL2	0.74			
NLL3	0.69			
NLL4	0.57			
NLL5	0.62			
NLL6	0.78			
PAA1	0.81	0.826	0.531	0.82
PAA2	0.78			
PAA3	0.65			
PAA4	0.70			
PMM1	0.70	0.697	0.544	0.66
PMM2	0.77			
PMM3	0.64			
PMM4	0.21			
PBB1	0.62	0.703	0.584	0.70
PBB2	0.56			
PBB3	0.54			
PBB4	0.53			
PB5	0.58			
JEE1	0.92	0.910	0.522	0.90
JEE2	0.81			
JEE3	0.88			
JEE4	0.69			
JEE5	0.78			
LHH1	0.85	0.781	0.545	0.78
LHH2	0.90			
LHH3	0.58			
LHH4	0.61			
LHH5	0.24			
ERR1	0.75	0.805	0.672	0.80
ERR2	0.71			
ERR3	0.67			

Construct scale	Factor loading	Composite reliability	AVE	Cronbach's alpha
ERR4	0.60			
ERR5	0.62			

NLL = narcissistic leadership; PAA = authoritarian leadership; PMM = moral leadership; PBB = benevolent leadership; JEE = job embeddedness; LHH = leader-expressed humility; ERR = employee retention.

4.4. Model fit

The main components of the conceptual model—job embeddedness, moral leadership, benevolent leadership, authoritarian leadership, and narcissistic leadership—along with several alternative models, were tested to find the best model fit for the data. Following Kline's (2023) advice, we used various fit indices. The results are summarized in Table 4, comparing the values of χ^2 (0.449; df = 1), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.001), root mean square residual (RMR = 0.006), comparative fit index (CFI = 1.00), and normed fit index (NFI = 0.96). The fit indices indicate an excellent model fit (χ^2/df < 2, RMSEA < 0.05, CFI and Tucker-Lewis index [TLI] > 0.95), confirming the measurement model's appropriateness for hypothesis testing.

Table 4: Model fit

Model	χ^2	Df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	RMR	NFI	CFI	TLI
Hypothesized five-factor model NLL + PAA + PMM + PBB + JEE	0.449	1	0.44	0.001	0.006	0.96	1.00	0.98
Hypothesized three-factor model JEE + ERR + LHH	0.227	1	0.27	0.000	0.009	0.94	1.00	0.95

NLL = narcissistic leadership; PAA = authoritarian leadership; PMM = moral leadership; PBB = benevolent leadership; JEE = job embeddedness; ERR = employee retention; LHH = leader-expressed humility.

4.5. Hypothesis Testing

The structural model analysis tested the study's hypotheses, with results shown in Table 5. The path coefficients (β) and t-statistics for direct relationships indicate that job embeddedness is negatively affected by narcissistic leadership (β = −0.326, p < 0.05); thus, H1 is accepted. These findings align with Jiatong et al. (2022) and Norouzinik et al. (2022). In contrast to our earlier hypothesis, H2 results show a significant positive relationship between job embeddedness and authoritarian leadership (β = 0.130, p < 0.05). This finding diverges from existing literature and

underscores the need for a more context-sensitive leadership model, particularly in cultures like Pakistan, where hierarchical norms are ingrained. However, this result aligns with Siddique and Siddique (2019), which has a relatively low score due to the p-value nearing the margin line. It also suggests that this link may be influenced by other factors. H3 findings reveal a strong correlation between moral leadership and job embeddedness ($\beta = 0.221$, $p < 0.05$), consistent with Islam et al. (2022). H4 results also mirror those of Khairy et al. (2023), showing a strong relationship between benevolent leadership and job embeddedness ($\beta = 0.204$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 5: Regression weights (group no. 1: default model)

	Hypothesis		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Decision
JEE	<---	NLL	-0.326	0.072	-4.543	***	Accepted
JEE	<---	PAA	0.130	0.063	2.065	0.039	Rejected
JEE	<---	PMM	0.221	0.079	2.806	0.005	Accepted
JEE	<---	PBB	0.204	0.067	3.028	0.002	Accepted

JEE = job embeddedness; NLL = narcissistic leadership; PAA = authoritarian leadership; PMM = moral leadership; PBB = benevolent leadership.
S.E. = standard error; C.R. = critical ratio.

This study enhances the understanding of leader-expressed humility by examining its moderating influence on the relationship between job embeddedness and staff retention. According to Ferreira et al. (2017), job embeddedness can promote positive outcomes like staff retention while reducing negative effects such as turnover intentions. As shown in Table 6, the findings reveal a significant relationship between job embeddedness and employee retention. The result for H5 was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.120$, $p < 0.05$) and aligns with prior research by Koo et al. (2020).

Table 6: Regression weights (group no. 1: default model)

	Hypothesis		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Decision
ERR	<---	LHH	0.243	0.050	4.883	***	Accepted
ERR	<---	Interaction term	-0.052	0.050	-1.044	0.297	Rejected
ERR	<---	JEE	0.120	0.049	2.430	0.015	Accepted

ERR = employee retention; LHH = leader-expressed humility; JEE = job embeddedness.
S.E. = standard error; C.R. = critical ratio.

The moderation analysis revealed that leader-expressed humility does not significantly strengthen the relationship between job embeddedness and employee retention. One possible reason is that in high

power-distance cultures like Pakistan, humility is often seen as a weakness rather than a strength, which reduces its moderating effectiveness. In such contexts, leadership is typically associated with control, assertiveness, and authority. As a result, employees may not respond positively to humble leadership in a way that reinforces their intention to stay, even if they feel embedded in their jobs. Furthermore, in cultures that emphasize status, hierarchy, and compliance (such as Pakistan), employees may prioritize job stability and security over relational leadership traits like humility. Future research should consider contextual factors such as cultural orientation and power dynamics when assessing the role of humility in leadership.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study examines the relationships between paternalistic leadership, narcissistic leadership, and job embeddedness. The findings support existing literature, indicating that narcissistic leadership negatively influences job embeddedness, while paternalistic leadership has a positive effect. The study further investigates the relationship between job embeddedness, employee retention, and leader-expressed humility. Although initial results show positive associations among these variables, including leader-expressed humility as a moderator renders the relationship between job embeddedness and employee retention statistically insignificant, suggesting that leader-expressed humility does not have a meaningful moderating effect in this context.

The findings reinforce prior research on the detrimental impact of narcissistic leadership on job embeddedness (Norouzinik et al., 2022) and confirm the positive role of moral and benevolent leadership traits (Islam et al., 2022; Khairy et al., 2023). The insignificant moderating effect of leader-expressed humility contrasts with previous findings (Owens et al., 2019), possibly due to contextual or industry-specific dynamics. These results highlight the need for contextually adapted leadership models in retention strategies.

The study suggests that a paternalistic leadership style, as employed by managers, is the most effective approach, while a narcissistic leadership style should be discouraged to achieve effective employee retention and organizational growth. Additionally, the benevolent leadership style significantly influences job embeddedness, which in turn enhances employee job performance. Organizations should encourage and emphasize benevolent leadership, as it fosters a positive perspective on work through the lens of organizational embeddedness (Chan, 2017).

Supporting this, our results show that a leader's humility positively relates to employee retention, enhancing performance and retention by strengthening relationships between superiors and subordinates and setting an example for followers (Owens et al., 2019). To accomplish this, leaders must demonstrate modest behavior toward their subordinates and foster an atmosphere of cooperation, inclusion, and humility (Owens & Hekman, 2016). Organizations may benefit from examining the interactions between authoritarian, benevolent, and moral leadership styles and job embeddedness. The study recommends prioritizing relational leadership traits and reevaluating humility-based strategies in hierarchical cultures.

The theoretical contribution of this study extends the understanding of job embeddedness and leadership theories within non-Western contexts, offering a nuanced perspective on the interplay between leadership styles, employee embeddedness, and leader behaviors. Research on narcissistic leadership—both in conceptualization and empirical investigation—remains limited. This study not only clarifies how narcissistic leadership affects employees' job embeddedness but also strengthens the empirical foundation by highlighting its negative effects, broadening leadership research by examining how narcissistic leadership distinctly shapes employee behavior. In Pakistan and other emerging economies, prior researchers have primarily focused on positive leadership styles. Thus, this research theoretically expands leadership theory by integrating multiple styles (narcissistic and paternalistic) with a relational construct (embeddedness) in an emerging market context.

The outcomes of this study can be practically implemented by organizations to retain their strategic resources. It offers managers precise recommendations on when and how to adopt or moderate narcissistic and paternalistic leadership styles in challenging circumstances, highlighting both potential benefits and unintended consequences of each approach. Managers in manufacturing should avoid narcissistic traits that erode trust and embeddedness, while training programs should promote benevolent and moral leadership behaviors. Although humility is valued, its effects may vary across cultures, requiring leaders to tailor their styles to meet employee expectations.

Despite contributing to the growing literature on leadership, the integration of diverse leadership styles, and the influence of job embeddedness on employee retention—with leader-expressed humility as a moderator—this study has certain limitations that may inform future research. The results may not generalize to other public and financial sectors,

as the statistical populations consisted of cutlery managers and relevant individuals in the cutlery sector of Gujranwala. The study employed a convenience sampling technique, which may introduce bias and limit the generalizability of the findings. To enhance validity and representativeness in future research, stratified random sampling is recommended for a more balanced representation across key demographic groups, including organizational size, job level, gender, and age.

Another limitation is that cross-sectional research requires a statistically representative sample size, and collecting data according to the desired variables proved challenging. Future researchers are encouraged to explore these variables independently and longitudinally. Furthermore, as this study is cross-sectional, contrary relationships between variables may exist, allowing for a more comprehensive analysis. This study examined only leader-expressed humility as a moderator between job embeddedness and employee retention. Future research should explore the moderating roles of narcissistic leadership, authoritarian leadership, moral leadership, and benevolent leadership to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

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