Impact of despotic leadership and workplace incivility on innovative work behavior of employees: Application of mediation-moderation model

Shahid Mehmood [a], Riffut Jabeen [b], Muhammad Asif Khan [c,*], Mohammed Arshad Khan [d], Beata Gavurova [e], Judit Oláh [f,g]

[a] *Department of Management Sciences, Faculty of Management Sciences and IT, Mohi-Ud-Din Islamic University Nerian Sharif AJ&K Pakistan*
[b] *Department of Business Administration, Ghazi University, Dera Ghazi Khan, Pakistan*
[c] *Department of Commerce, Faculty of Managemet Sciences, University of Kotli 11100, AJK, Pakistan*
[d] *Department of Accountancy, College of Administrative and Financial Sciences, Saudi Electronic University, Riyadh 11673, Saudi Arabia*
[e] *Technical University of Kosice, Faculty of Mining, Ecology, Process Control and Geotechnologies, Letna 1/9, 042 00 Kosice, Slovakia*
[f] *John von Neumann University, Hungary, 6000 Kecskemét, Izsáki út 10, Hungary*
[g] *Department of Trade and Finance, Faculty of Economics and Management, Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Czech Republic*

A B S T R A C T

Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) of employees is one of the essential requirements for organizations to excel in competition in today's dynamic world. Nowadays, organizations can keep the current pace through competitive advantage. But to acquire competitive advantage, employees must be creative and innovative in their work-related behaviors. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Pakistan are suffering several challenges in this regard. Therefore, current study is designed to examine the role of negative events and negative leadership on the IWB of the employees with mediating role of Psychological Well-being (PsyWB). Further, the moderating role of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) has also been tested. The negative event used in current research is Workplace Incivility (WPI) and Despotic Leadership (DL) from the negative leadership styles examined. Results of the current study showed that the presence of WPI and DL in organizations damage the IWB of employees as they harm the PsyWB of employees. We find that PsyWB mediated the relationship among DL, WPI, and IWB. POS is helpful for employees to overcome the negative issues prevailing in the organizations. The SMEs need to construct policies to eradicate WPI and must discourage despotic personalities to make the environment favorable for employees to protect their IWB. There must be some events that can increase the positive PsyWB of employees to make them more creative and motivated. Likewise, POS must be at sufficient level so that employees feel safe and healthy in all respects.

1. Introduction

The Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) contributes a major part to the development of any country as a most prominent type of

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* Corresponding author. Department of Commerce, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Kotli, 11100, Kotli, AJK, Pakistan.
E-mail addresses: mshahid.mehmood@hotmail.com (S. Mehmood), rjabeen@gudgk.edu.pk (R. Jabeen), khanasif82@uokajk.edu.pk (M.A. Khan), m.akhan@seu.edu.sa (M.A. Khan), beata.gavurova@tuke.sk (B. Gavurova), olah.judit@uni-neumann.hu (J. Oláh).

businesses. For the reason, the emerging economies of the world depends on SMEs for their economic growth [1]. According to De Giorgi and Rahman [2], almost 90% businesses in developed economies are small and medium enterprises. SMEs in Pakistan are the most influential organizations that contributes great to the economic aspects of the Pakistan as well as contributing to the employment aspects of the country. There are almost 5.2 million SMEs working in Pakistan contributing almost 40% to the gross domestic product (SMEDA, 2021) [3]. But employees in SMEs sector are facing challenges regarding their performance and productivity [4–10]. Research has stated that SMEs are a major source of innovation [11]. For the reason innovative work behavior is too much demanded as a critical source of competitive advantage for SMEs. But employees in SMEs are facing issues related to innovative work behaviors [12]. Innovative Work Behavior (IWB), as a set of activities that exhibit different positive contributions to organizations is rapidly changing the competitive environment. IWB helps to build the competitive advantage for the organizations and to increase the organizational sustainability [13]. Currently, IWB is most effective factor to keep the pace of competition.

Workplaces suffer more when there is a prevalence of negative events especially when the negative events are due to the figure-heads of the organizations. Negative events are of numerous types. Bullying, ostracism, incivility, and despotic behaviors of leadership are few examples of negative events at the workplace [14–18]. According to Weiss and Cropanzano [19], when there is a prevalence of negative events at the workplace, negative emotions that may cause frustration, anxiety, depression, low productivity, high turnover intentions, low job satisfaction, and less creativity are some possible outcomes. Therefore, negative traits and events have drastic outcomes at various levels in organizations [20,21]. Although many organizations are suffering due to the prevalence of negative events, strong mental capabilities and psychological well-being may not even reduce the bad effects of such negative events and help the employees to cope with such challenges [22,23].

COR theory postulates that bodily and psychological stress reactions are based on an inborn survival response that mobilizes the person to take actions to regain the lost or reduced resources [24]. When there are negative events at the workplace, employees may be unable to build positive psychological well-being and finally suffer in terms of low creativity. Organizational support can help employees to cope with the effects of negative events. By considering the relevance of COR theory with the conceptual framework of current research, the relationships among negative events, psychological well-being, and innovative work behavior are tested to uncover the effects so that organizations can modify the strategies and make reforms in their policies accordingly [25]. It means that when there are positive or negative events at the workplace this will result in the generation of emotions that can affect the psychological or mental abilities of the workforce. Positive emotions will contribute to positive psychological well-being and mental abilities. While negative events cause damage to the psychological well-being and mental abilities of the workforce. Finally, such emotions lead towards different outcomes, positive emotions help to acquire a higher level of productivity, job satisfaction, and innovative work behavior [26]. On the other hand, the effects of negative emotions swerve and cause low productivity, a high rate of turnover intentions, low job satisfaction, and less creativity among employees [27].

Researchers [28] found that leadership is an important factor that can cause numerous outcomes among employees in organizations. Inclusive leaders are the most influential personalities to bring creativity and innovativeness among employees. According to Ref. [29], destructive leaders like toxic, abusive, and despotic leaders can increase the emotional exhaustion among employees and affect their well-being badly. Hence, the performance and job satisfaction among employees are found very low and negative. Despotic leadership also stops creativity and demotivates the employees thus resulting in less innovative work behavior [30]. Despotic leadership cause numerous problems for employees disturbs the well-being of the workforce badly and exhausts the employees' emotions [31].

May, Gilson [32], reported that in organizations managers or supervisors must establish a supportive environment for their employees so that employees can feel secure in every aspect. There must be organizational support to employees regarding events that can cause distress and anxiety among the workers [33]. Literature suggests that management must discourage despotic or self-centered leaders [34]so that the mental health of the employees remains safe and sound. Similarly, Shah, Afshan [35] found that unethical behavior, despotic traits, and stressors create anxiety among employees but in presence of perceived organizational support employees can cope with such events and behaviors.

Therefore, in current research, the focus of researchers is to investigate the impact of negative behaviors like despotic leadership (DL) and events like workplace incivility (WPI) on the innovative work behaviors (IWB) of employees working in SMEs with mediating role of psychological well-being (PsyWB). Further, the conditional effect of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) has also been tested in current research. The major dilemma for organizations in the current scenario is the IWB of the employees and the research study uncover the reasons for less creativity among the employees. To define these effects, we anchor our theoretical arguments in COR theory. Taken together, the study contributes to the extant literature of the dark side of leadership by exploring the unattended association that perceived organizational support would reduce the harmful effects of the despotic leadership and workplace incivility at the innovative work behaviors of employees. The study is conducted in developing country Pakistan, that is high in power distance and collectivism. Further the severe impacts of despotic leadership and incivility on employee's behavior are evident from literature [36–38].

Despite the strong interest of practitioners and researchers regarding the innovative work behaviors of employees, there are some gaps in current literature regarding the harmful effects of despotic leadership and incivility on the psychological wellbeing and innovative work behaviors of employees. In particular studies have not considered psychological wellbeing as an intervening variable and perceived organizational support as a moderating variable. Further studying the effects of despotic leadership and workplace incivility in SMEs has not been a major focus in Pakistan. Moreover, the study also verifies the application of COR theory. Based on COR theory in Pakistani SMEs, this research aims to develop a novel framework that investigated the harmful effects of leadership behavior and incivility at the workplace causing conservation of organizational resources. In addition, the research aims to motivate the management of SMEs from developed and developing economies to contribute to the innovative work behaviors of their employees.

Therefore, current research is novel and valuable in several aspects. Firstly, this research is new addition to existing literature. Secondly, this research is contribution in theoretical aspect because researchers have determined the mediating role of PsyWB among the particular relationships first time. Lastly, the moderating role of POS among the particular relationships is also a unique attempt by the researchers. Therefore, this study is a direction for managerial decision making in the organizations as well. This study will enable the management of organizations to consider its finding and eradicate the effects of negative events from workplaces by introducing positive leadership styles.

The paper is structured as follows: the first part introduces SMEs, the problems faced by employees due to despotic leadership and incivility, objectives of the study and theory applied. The second part presents literature about Despotic Leadership, Workplace Incivility, Psychological Wellbeing, Innovative Work Behavior, Perceived organizational Support and the hypothesis development. Third part of the study is about methodology. Fourth part presents the detail of results and fifth part presents discussion, conclusion as well as managerial and theoretical contributions of the study.

2. Literature review, proposed hypothesis and framework

This study determines to investigate and establish the association among these constructs. On the basis of previous literature cited and the gap found, the study has established a novel framework to answer questions highlighted in previous literature and to find issues faced by SMEs in Pakistan.

2.1. Despotic leadership and innovative work behavior

Leadership plays a vital role in the success of organizations on a collective basis and for employees on an individual basis. Several leadership styles are the reason for the success of organizations but some may lead towards undesirable outcomes and may result in negative consequences. The most prominent of which is the despotic leadership style [36] due to which organizations suffer from work withdrawal, lower OCB, creativity, job performance [36,39], work-family conflicts, burnout [40], and lower job performance [38]. Contrary to this many of the leadership styles have positive outcomes like servant leadership has positive outcomes for service innovative behavior of the employees in the presence of intrinsic motivation [41]. Similarly, Newman, Schwarz [42] reported that servant leadership has positive outcomes for organizational citizenship behavior of employees. Team error management climate has positive and significant role for gratitude at workplaces, in result which can help the organizations to improve the organizational citizenship behavior of the employees at their workplaces [43]. Similarly, Su, Lyu [41] reported that the style of leadership i.e. servant leadership can help the employees to increase the service oriented innovativeness in their work behaviors in the presence of intrinsic motivation. On the other side styles like despotic leadership affects employees as well as organizations badly. The presence of people with despotic attributes at the managerial level is not a good sign for organizational performance as a whole and individual performance as well. It also damages the psychological well-being and of the workforce [40]. Besides all these outcomes, psychological distress played a mediating role among despotic leadership and the above-reported outcomes [44]. It exhibits several things that can cause damage to employees' mental health and low productivity in organizations. Despotic leadership has drastic effects on job satisfaction and it increases the turnover intentions among employees as well [45,46].

Employees who are voluntarily performing activities in favor of organizational effectiveness and are coordinating and cooperating with other employees as well on a volunteer basis withdraw their efforts in the presence of a toxic environment or despotic behavior of employees [47]. Therefore, despotic leaders affect the performance and the innovative work behavior of employees. The low performance of employees is the result of the low motivational influence of despotic leaders on their employees [34]. Employees barely trust such leaders and perceive job insecurity in the presence of such leaders [48], and ultimately their job performance declines [48]. Due to the low morality standards observed in despotic leaders, employees become less focused, and less enthusiastic about their jobs and compromised on their creativity [34]. While working with such negative leaders, employees would conserve to safeguard their personal resources that are necessary for the innovative work performance in organizations [49]. In line with the empirical evidences from previous literature, the study hypothesized that.

H1. Despotic Leadership has negative effects on innovative work behavior of employees working in Pakistani SMEs.

2.2. Workplace incivility and innovative work behavior

Workplace incivility is defined as "low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target" [50]. Contrary to this Chen, Guo [43] found that team error management has positive effect for workplace gratitude and better workplace gratitude helps employees to increase level of creativity among them. Workplace Incivility is also one of the negative events that prevailed in the workplaces and badly affects organizations. Such events are against organizational norms. Vasconcelos [51] identified that workplace incivility is the practice in organizations that disregards the activities of employees and disrespects the original practices. Hence, this results in low productivity and low performance among employees. Similarly, workplace bullying also effects the job performance of employees causing mental distress and low mental and psychological well-being among employees [52].

Workplace incivility also acts as stressor and causes emotional exhaustion among employees resultantly, creativity is found below the average standards [53]. Therefore, unethical behavior at the workplace may result in low mental health and cause exhaustion among employees impacting the creativity of employees for which the process of unique idea generation stops. According to Zhan, Li [54] workplace incivility caused low perceived insider status among employees and finally employees are found exhausted, depressed,

and less innovative in their work roles. In the prevailing incivility at the workplace, employees struggle to reserve and maintain their personal resources as they feel it the loss of their valuable resources [55].

It is also an objective of the research to determine the effects of a negative event (Workplace Incivility) on the innovative work behavior of the employees working in the SMEs of Pakistan in line with COR theory. Therefore, based on the above literature below mentioned is the second hypothesis of the current research.

H2. Workplace incivility has negative effect on the innovative work behavior of employees working in Pakistani SMEs.

2.3. Despotic leadership and psychological well-being

Psychological well-being of employees contributes great to the performance of employees and has fruitful results for employees and organizations on the whole [15,29]. But dilemma in current scenario for organizations is the prevalence of negative events at the workplaces that reduce the psychological capital, emotional intelligence and psychological well-being of the employees [56,57]. As a result, negative events create alarming situations for employees and organizations alike, and they must be eliminated as soon as possible in order to reinstate the efficiency and effectiveness of the employees working in these organizations. Similarly, despotic self-centered leaders are also not suitable for contemporary organization (Naseer et al., 2016) as they destruct the positive emotions of employees and reduce the mental health, cause distress, and results is low psychological well-being of employees [29,37]. Ethical leadership enables employees to remain focused on the tasks that are included in their work roles and also motivate the employees to enhance their productivity level. Leaders with positive traits are good sign for organizational environment because such environment can boost up their morale and high level of psychological well-being [58]. In contrast, despotic leaders with negative traits and toxic behaviors create alarming situations at workplaces Iqbal, Asghar [31] and employees working with such leaders cannot focus on their roles due to distress and mental disorders. Similarly, Samad, Memon [59] revealed that despotic leadership cause swerve damages to the emotions of the employees. Employee are found with having negative emotions due to the prevalence of despotic leadership in organizations and are emotionally exhausted. Psychological well-being is found below the required level and finally such employees cannot perform well under such leadership. Following the line of inquiry, the despotic leaders lack ethical norms and values, depicts self-centered personalities, manipulating resources have weaker motivational influence on employees [36]. The self-centered and egotistic behavior of despotic leaders create stress and uncertainty in the work environment [36–38] and these prevailing conditions affect the psychological well-being of employees. This psychological distress urge employees to reserve their personal resources as they feel the investment of resources as waste of resources. Such subordinates show poor behavior, lack of interest and engagement in their jobs and as a consequence lack of innovative work behavior.

Besides the effects of negative leadership and negative events on innovative work behavior another objective of research is to analyze the effects of despotic leadership on psychological well-being of employees working in the SMEs of Pakistan. Thus, third hypothesis of current research is.

H3. There is negative and significant relationship between despotic leadership and psychological well-being of employees working in Pakistani SMEs.

2.4. Workplace incivility and psychological well-being

Workplace incivility is one of the major challenges faced by the management of every organization. Events like bullying, social exclusion, incivility, and ostracism are few examples of negative events widely studies in previous research. Such events contribute to numerous undesired outcomes in organizations. Thus, these events are challenge for the organizations and employees suffer due to such negative events and behaviors [60]. Workplace incivility is social mistreatment in organizations depicting in the uncivil behavior of supervisors with subordinates or behavior of coworkers with one another [51]. Such mistreatment has not good outcomes for employees and organizations. Incivility cause mental disorders among employees and psychological well-being of employees found decreasing in the presence of such events [61]. Workplace incivility is mental torture for employees and psychological capital cannot remain up to the mark or at satisfactory level in the presence of such events [62,63]. Thus, employees' well-being, mental health and emotions are highly dependent on the events of the workplace. Work life interaction is a significant factor that affect employee's safety, health, satisfaction and quality of life [64]. Employee's lack of satisfaction and engagement in their work become the cause of low investment of personal resources in their work. The physical health of employees may suffer from a lack of psychological well-being. In line with the fundamental tenets of COR theory, context and social environment may influence how resources are maintained and nurtured. Negative events and behaviors prevailing at the workplace from coworkers and supervisors cause stress and effect employee's psychological health. The depletion of psychological resources caused by resource losses in some people may lead to resource losses in others, which causes general misery at the workplace [65].

As aim of current research is to explore the effects of negative leadership and negative events on innovative work behavior. Another objective of the research is to analyze the effects of despotic leadership on psychological well-being of employees who are working in the SMEs of Pakistan. On the same line of inquiry, fourth hypothesis of the current research is.

H4. There is negative and significant relationship between workplace incivility and psychological well-being of employees working in Pakistani SMEs.

2.5. Psychological well-being and innovative work behavior

According to study conducted by Koroglu and Ozmen [66] it has been found that employees with positive psychological well-being are more engaged in work and their performance is much different, creative, innovative and high than that of employees with low psychological well-being. As mentioned in previous literature that employees who are highly engaged in their jobs are more creative and innovative in terms of the work behaviors. Further, Masyhuri, Pardiman [67], reported that school teachers with high level POS and psychological well-being are found highly productive. The psychological well-being as an essential part of overall social atmosphere become increasingly important part of well-designed employer value proposition in enterprises [17]. Hence, psychological well-being of employees can contribute to their high level of efficiency, effectiveness and innovative work behavior. Innovative work behavior of employees is found well at desired level when employees have good mental health and there is no any distress, thus psychological capital [68], psychological health [69] and psychological well-being is at its peak [70]. According to COR theory, people work hard to acquire, hold, nurture, and safeguard the things they deeply value; as a result, the inflow and retention of essential resources will have a significant impact on their psychological well-being. Psychological well-being is associated with performance, engagement, physical health [65,71] and productivity at workplace [72].

In current research the role of psychological well-being for innovative work behavior is to be tested. Therefore, by considering above literature fifth hypothesis in current research is.

H5.   There is positive and significant relationship between psychological well-being and innovative work behavior of employees working in Pakistani SMEs.

2.6. Mediating role of psychological well-being

Psychological capital has vital importance for the employees and their behavior and performance related outcomes in their respective organizations [73]. Psychological well-being is one of the important elements of employees' personality that enhance the productivity level of employees, reduces the turnover intention among employees and helps employees to improve the creativity, novelty, and innovative work behavior [19,28,74,75].

Leadership is also very important factor that contributes the psychological well-being of employees. As leadership attributes are of both kinds, negative leadership and positive leadership traits are found in organizations. Positive leadership traits can exert positive outcomes in shape of better well-being, good mental health and positive emotions and behaviors at work [76]. Another study by Wang, Wang [77] revealed that structural capital, cognitive capital, and relational capital has positive effect on psychological ownership and in result it can help organizations to have positive effects for knowledge sharing among consumers. Negative leadership like despotic leadership, toxic leadership and abusive supervision on the other side exhibit low psychological well-being, mental disorders, psychological distress and negative emotions and behaviors [78]. Emotions finally results in different outcomes. Such as, negative emotions results in low performance, dissatisfaction from job, high turnover intentions, less creativity and low innovative work behaviors [79]. While, positive emotions result in high job performance, job satisfaction, low turnover intentions, high creativity and innovative work behavior [80,81]. Thus, on the basis of above quoted literature using COR theory has built a strong justification for the mediating model to explore the mediating effects of psychological well-being for two other relationships. COR theoretical model is applied in this relationship to better understand the mediating effect. According to COR theory negative events and behaviors effect the personal reservoirs of resources. Where a loss or gain in the one domain effect the psychological well-being of employee's, consequently effecting their innovative work behaviors. The hypotheses for mediating role in light of above literature are given below.

H6.   Psychological well-being mediates the relationship between despotic leadership and innovative work behavior of employees working in Pakistani SMEs.

H7.   Psychological well-being mediates the relationship between workplace incivility and innovative work behavior of employees working in Pakistani SMEs.

2.7. Moderating role of POS

Contextual and personal factors both effect employee's behaviors and outcomes [82]thus to be considered in organizational behavioral studies. This study has identified one important and unique contextual factor, perceived organizational support affecting the relationship of DL and WPI with psychological well-being of employees in Pakistani culture. The study examined that perceived organizational support may decrease the negative effects of these two, negative events and negative behaviors, on employees psychological well-being. Perception of organizational support shapes individual's interpretations of the expected or unexpected behaviors among the members of the organization. Research by Yongxing, Hongfei [83], uncovered the realities and provided facts that work engagement helps employees to improve the psychological well-being of employees and perceived organizational support with its moderating role strengthened the relationship of work engagement and well-being of employees. Thus, prevalence of positive events among employees and in the environment of organization is positive sign and helps organizations to improve the employee work related outcomes [84]. POS can make such relations stronger and employees feel better in the presence of POS. On the other hand, the presence of negative events in the organizational environment results in low well-being of employees [85], low performance [86] and increased psychological distress [87]. In such conditions POS act as moderator and contribute to weak the negative relationships [88]. Thus, in the presence of despotic leaders and incivility in the organizations ultimately there will be low psychological

well-being of employees but employees perception about organizational support helps to make such relations weak, to reduce the effects of despotic leadership and incivility [89]. Hence, grounded on the above literature mentioned in COR theory, the study establishes POS as a moderator and hypothesize that.

H8. Perceived organizational support moderates the relationship between despotic leadership and psychological well-being of employees working in Pakistani SMEs such that negative effect decreases in presence of POS.

H9. Perceived organizational support moderates the relationship between workplace incivility and psychological well-being of employees working in Pakistani SMEs such that negative effect decreases in presence of POS.

2.8. Theoretical framework

Fig. 1 Is the theoretical framework for current research based on COR theory.

3. Methodology

This study investigated the impact of Despotic Leadership and Workplace Incivility on Innovative Work Behaviors of Employees through mediating role of Employee Psychological Wellbeing and moderating role of Perceived Organizational Support in Pakistan's Small and Medium Industry.

3.1. Construct measurement

In this study the researchers have employed the Likert scale for the measurement of constructs in the proposed framework. The scales ranges from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 or 7 "strongly agree". The scales are adopted and originally developed in the English language. The survey instrument was distributed among target population for data collection. Despotic leadership (DL) is measured by employing six items scale developed by Ref. [90]. Seven items scale developed by Ref. [91] is used to measure Workplace Incivility (WPI). Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) of employees is measured using seventeen items scale developed by Ref. [92]. To measure the Psychological Well-being of employees in current research, twelve items General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) scale is employed. To measure the POS in current research eight items scale developed by Eisenberger, Huntington [93] is used. The scale used in the study are attached in Appendix.

To check the validity and reliability of constructs/scale Table 2 is showing the values of Factor loading, composite reliability, discriminant validity (AVE), and cronbach's alpha value are reported and discussed under section 4.1 of the study. The values are showing that construct is quite reliable and valid to conduct the survey.

3.2. Sampling techniques and data collection

Managers and employees from small and medium enterprises of Pakistan under the definition of Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA) are the targeted populations of this study. The study used a nonprobability convenience sampling technique for data collection from SMEs located in different cities of Pakistan such as D.G. Khan, Multan, Gujranwala, Islamabad, Faisalabad, Peshawar, Sialkot, Lahore, and Karachi. Previously many researchers have used this technique for data collection as the most easy, simple, efficient and convenient way for data collection [94,95]. Moreover, convenience sampling technique also helps researchers to bring symmetry in data specifically if data is collected from different sources [96]. Researchers has collected data from two sources, managers and employees. So, it was found as a suitable technique. Furthermore, as the study is related to find the effects of the bad behavior of leaders and workplace incivility on the innovative work behaviors of employees, the authors confirmed that employees who directly report to managers and managers who directly observe and get the report from employees included as a unit of the study. To approach the targeted population, researchers get help from personal contacts and social media. The data was collected through offline and online media. However, the questionnaire link was distributed through Emails, Facebook, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn to managers, owners, and supervisors about the innovative work behaviors of the employees and to employees about the leadership behavior and incivility, psychological well-being, and perception of organizational support. Personal visits were also done to increase
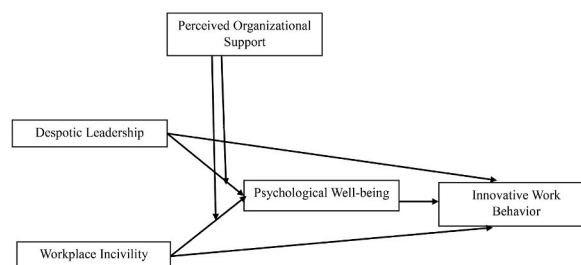

Fig. 1. Research model.

Table: 1
Demographic details.

Employee's Particulars	Description	Numbers	Percentage
Gender	Male	416	77.04
	Female	124	22.96
Total		540	100
Age	20 to 30	201	37.22
	31 to 40	86	15.93
	41 to 50	175	32.41
	51 and above	78	14.44
Total		540	100
Qualification	3-year Diploma	81	15
	Bachelors	95	17.59
	Masters	258	47.78
	Others	106	19.63
Total		540	100
Work Experience	Below 1	53	9.82
	1 to 3	80	14.81
	4 to 7	135	25
	8 and above	272	50.37
Total		540	100

the response rate. A cover letter was attached with the questionnaire explaining the reasons and nature of the study ending with the thanking remarks.

We made sure the responses were anonymous and made it clear that the information collected from them would only be utilized for educational purposes. We receive a very good response from managers and employees alike because the respondents were informed of the study's goal and the significance of their opinion. A total of 560 replies were filed; 10 of those were incompatible and were removed from the data sheet.

3.3. Respondents characteristics

The data was collected from both perspectives: management, and employees of SMEs. According to the demographic profile of the participants, mostly male participants, 77.04% have participated in the survey, and female respondents are 22.96% of the total sample. This difference may be the reason that in Pakistan the female employment rate is low as compared to male. The results exhibited that the majority of the employees are of the 20–30 years of age group. 15.93% of the respondents were between 31 and 40 years of age, and 14.44% of managers indicated their age is above 50 years. The data about the education level of respondents showed that 15% of respondents in the study are working with three years of diplomas, and the other 17.59% are working with graduate degrees. The majority of the respondents, 47.78% are master's degree holders. The majority of managers 50.38% showed 8 years and above job experience, 25% showed job experience between 4 and 7 years, 9.28% of respondents have below 1-year job experience, and 14.81% of respondents indicated that they have 1–3 years' job experience. Table 1 presents a complete detail of the demographic profile of the respondents.

3.4. Methods of data analysis

It is very critical for any study to select the suitable technique to examine the empirical data as it affects the reliability and validity of the results. Keeping in view the criticality of the analysis technique, this study has adopted SEM using AMOS 24.0. To evaluate the proposed hypotheses of this study researchers have adopted a two-step approach suggested by Ref. [97]. For these firstly missing values were eliminated and the validity and reliability of the latent and observable constructs were found with discriminant and convergent validity tests. The constructs are found unidirectional. At the next stage, the hypothetical relationship proposed in the conceptual framework was estimated considering the recommendation of [98]. With the Bootstrap test, the mediating role of employees' psychological well-being between despotic leadership and employee's innovative work behaviors and between workplace incivility and employee's innovative work behaviors was checked. Moreover, MODPROBE macro test was applied to verify the moderating relationship between perceived organizational support among despotic leadership and psychological well-being and workplace incivility and psychological well-being.

4. Data analysis and findings

After the selection of the suitable research methodology, the collected data set has been analyzed with the help of AMOS-24. Further, the results of the study are discussed and elaborated in this section.

4.1. Assessment of the measurement model

All the constructs of the study were adopted from prior literature. The data of all constructs were collected from management and

Table: 2
Constructs factor loading and reliability.

Constructs	Factor Loadings (>0.5)	C.R (>0.7)	AVE (>0.5)	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	SD
Despotic Leadership		0.83	0.67	0.91	5.43	0.82
DL1	0.982					
DL2	0.856					
DL3	0.987					
DL4	0.921					
DL5	0.865					
DL6	0.891					
Workplace Incivility		0.91	0.74	0.94	4.36	0.65
WPI1	0.765					
WPI2	0.784					
WPI3	0.987					
WPI4	0.876					
WPI5	0.891					
WPI6	0.792					
WPI7	0.943					
Psychological Well-being		0.89	0.81	0.96	4.22	0.74
PsyWB1	0.912					
PsyWB2	0.932					
PsyWB3	0.964					
PsyWB4	0.854					
PsyWB5	0.793					
PsyWB6	0.772					
PsyWB7	0.854					
PsyWB8	0.981					
PsyWB9	0.885					
PsyWB10	0.871					
PsyWB11	0.986					
PsyWB12	0.745					
Perceived Organizational Support		0.95	0.69	0.87	3.65	0.43
PS1	0.768					
PS2	0.909					
PS3	0.898					
PS4	0.745					
PS5	0.848					
PS6	0.793					
PS7	0.794					
PS8	0.891					
Innovative Work Behavior		0.91	0.85	0.86	3.81	0.59
IWB1	0.792					
IWB2	0.892					
IWB3	0.923					
IWB4	0.824					
IWB5	0.782					
IWB6	0.796					
IWB7	0.864					
IWB8	0.846					
IWB9	0.858					
IWB10	0.820					
IWB11	0.854					
IWB12	0.893					
IWB13	0.897					
IWB14	0.786					
IWB15	0.875					
IWB16	0.913					
IWB17	0.846					

employees of SMEs operating in different cities of Pakistan. Researchers have used the SEM technique to analyze the values of the external loading. To confirm the validity and reliability of the latent and observed constructs, composite reliability and average variance extracted were utilized. Initially, model fitness results such as CFI, GFI, NFI, TLI, AGFI, and RMSEA were checked for the assessment of the measurement model. The results of the model fitness CFI: 0.95, GFI: 0.93, NFI: 0.96, TLI 0.95, AGFI: 0.95 RMSEA:0.06 confirmed that the hypothetical model of this study is fitted to the observed data. The reliability was assessed and confirmed by factor loadings as suggested by Ref. [99]. All the items of the constructs of the study satisfy the factor loadings criteria as the factor loadings of each selected variable is found greater than 0.50. The results of the measurement model are presented in Table 2 and confirmed that the factor loadings of the variables are consistent with recommended criteria [99]. Furthermore, the results of the composite reliability values also ensure the internal consistency of all constructs as the values were greater than the minimum threshold level of 0.70 suggested by Ref. [98]. For convergent validity, AVE was estimated and results satisfied the acceptance criteria

>0.50 recommended by Ref. [98]. The results presented in Table 2 also confirm the suggested criteria. Moreover, the values of Cronbach's alpha ensure the reliability of the developed scale.

After confirming the validity and reliability of the developed scale, researchers have also measured the discriminant validity recommended by Refs. [100,101] presented in Table 3. The results of the study also confirmed the attained criteria of discriminant validity as the correlation of all constructs was less than the square root of AVE. In addition, researchers have checked common method bias test that is also linked with reliability and validity problems. The results also claimed the nonexistence of common method bias.

4.2. Hypothesis testing

After confirming the goodness of the proposed model, the researcher has evaluated the direct and indirect (mediation and moderation) relationships of the proposed hypotheses of the study. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed in the study as it is a widely used technique to judge the direct and indirect relationship in empirical studies [97]. For mediation analysis PROCESS macros with bootstrapped confidence were used bearing in mind the recommendations of [102]. For the moderating relationship, moderation regression analysis was done considering the references of [102]. The outcomes of the proposed direct relationships are summarized in Table 4 and Fig. 2.

For hypothesis testing β values, t values, P values, standard errors, and critical ratios were calculated. The values of Hypothesis 1 from despotic leadership to innovative work behavior are −0.345, 7.65, and 0.000 respectively. Outcomes of the tests also established the significant negative impact of DL on the IWB of employees as the P value is lower than 0.05 and the β value is negative. Therefore, H1 is accepted. For the second path, Hypothesis 2 the results of β values, t values, and P values also matched with the suggested criteria and confirm the suggested significant negative impact of WPI on IWB. Thus, results also support H2. For the proposed Hypothesis 3, β, t, and P values from DL to PsyWB, are −0.442, 11.23, and 0.002 respectively. Hence indicating the significant negative impact of DL on PsyWB of employees supporting H3. For Hypothesis 4, β, t, and P values from WPI to PsyWB are −0.532, 9.986, and 0.001 respectively, indicating the significant negative impact of WPI on PsyWB of employees and confirming the H4. The fifth hypothesis, H5 proposed the significant positive impact of PsyWB of employees on their IWB. β, t, and P values from PyWB to IWB, are 0.36, 14.54, and 0.000 respectively showing that PsyWB strengthens IWB. Thus, supporting the proposed path of H5.

The study has also hypothesized four indirect paths, H6, H7 showing the mediating relationships, and H8, H9 postulates the moderating effects. The empirical results of mediation tests and moderation effects are given in Table 5 and Fig. 2. The results of the direct paths confirmed that DL and WPI, negatively correlated with PsyWB and IWB of employees. Further, the study aims to verify the mediating role of PsyWB among DL and IWB and WPI and IWB. Thus, H6 and H7 were postulated to check this intervening role. The results of the H6 mediation results β is 0.365, the t value is 5.73, and the P value is 0.001 indicating that PsyWB partially mediates the link between DL and IWB. Therefore, hypothesis 6 is accepted. H7 was proposed as the second mediating effect of PsyWB on WPI and IWB. The β value 0.547, t value 7.23, and P value 0.000 are also to the consistent suggested criteria, supporting H7. The empirical results of the direct hypothesis indicated that WPI has a significant impact on IWB. It can be said that PsyWB partially mediates the link between WPI and IWB.

The study has also employed moderation regression to find the moderating role of POS. H8 and H9 are formulated to show the moderating effect of POS. The results of H8, regarding moderation regression analysis, show that the t value is 11.23, the value of β is 0.482, and the P value is 0.01. While the results of H9 for t value is 14.93, β value is 0.271, and the P value is 0.001 respectively. The P values of both designed hypotheses are lower than 0.05, and β values are positive. Hence, the results of moderation regression also authenticated the H8 and H9 of the study.

5. Discussions

This empirical study was designed to inspect the impact of despotic leadership and workplace incivility on the innovative work behavior of employees. We posit that psychological well-being mediates the relationships. Further, the moderating role of POS was also analyzed. The study aimed to explain the negative impact of despotic leadership and workplace incivility on the psychological well-being and innovative work behavior of employees working in SMEs in Pakistan. In this study, researchers have focused on improving the IWB among employees in Pakistani Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) by improving the work environment and psychological health of employees.

The findings of the study are in line with the previous researches. It has been empirically proven that despotic leadership has a negative impact on employee's well-being, behaviors, and performance [48]. The study also advances and supports the findings from previous researchers that despotic leadership have negative effects on employees positive outcomes [36,40,103]. The findings of the

Table: 3
Discriminant validity.

Constructs	Mean	S. D	DL	WPI	PsyWB	IWB
DL	4.75	1.43	1			
WPI	5.62	1.28	0.67	1		
PsyWB	3.89	1.63	0.84	0.66	1	
IWB	4.41	1.27	0.77	0.72	0.65	1

*P value < 0.10, **P value < 0.05, ***P value < 0.01.

Table 4

Results of the direct hypothesis of the study.

Hypothesis	Independent variable	Dependent variable	ß	t value	P value	Decision
H1	Despotic Leadership	Innovative Work Behavior	−0.345	7.765	***	Supported
H2	Workplace Incivility	Innovative Work Behavior	−0.421	9.234	***	Supported
H3	Despotic Leadership	Psychological Well-being	−0.442	11.23	***	Supported
H4	Workplace Incivility	Psychological Well-being	−0.531	9.986	***	Supported
H5	Psychological Wellbeing	Innovative Work Behavior	0.363	14.56	***	Supported

**P < 0.01, ***P < 0.001.
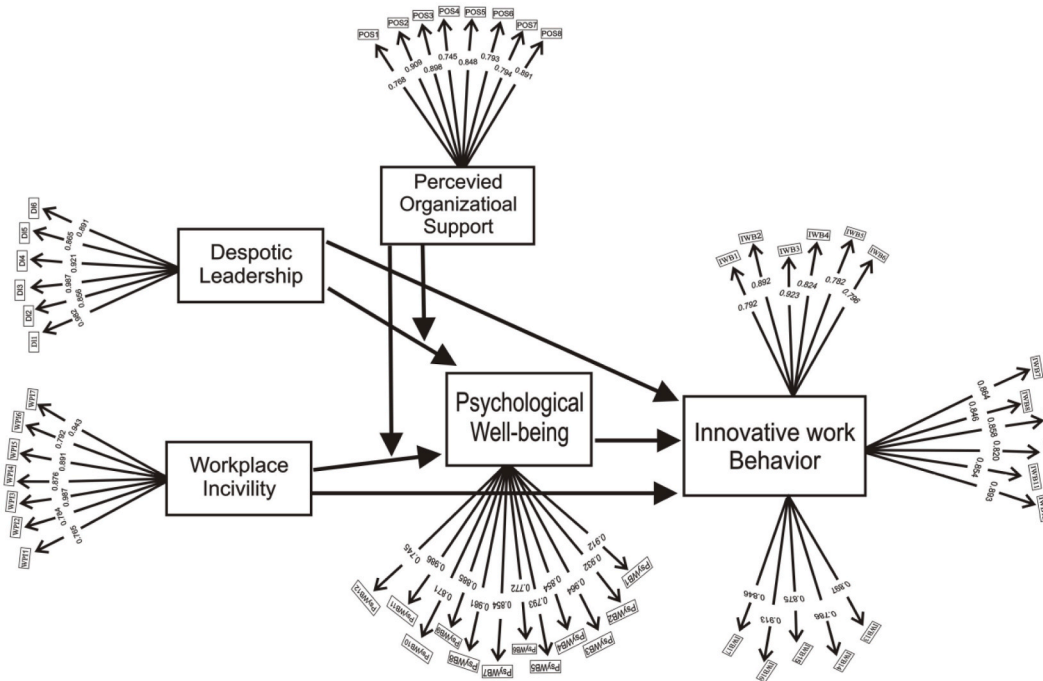
Fig. 2. Outcomes of the proposed direct relationships.

Table 5

Results of the indirect hypothesis of the study.

Hypothesis	Independent	Mediator (PsyWB) Moderator (POS)	Dependent	ß	t value	P value	Decision
H6	DL	PsyWB	IWB	0.365	5.73	***	Supported
H7	WPI	PsyWB	IWB	0.547	7.23	***	Supported
H8	DL	POS	PsyWB	0.482	11.23	***	Supported
H9	WPI	POS	PsyWB	0.271	14.93	***	Supported

**P < 0.01; ***P < 0.00.

study revealed that despotic leadership has a detrimental impact on the innovative work behavior of employees in Pakistani SMEs. Hence H1 of the current study is supported as per results attained through data analysis. Although a scant literature is available on this relationship, related or closer relationships have been evaluated in the past to examine the impact of despotic leadership on employee outcomes [44]. Similarly, Kasi, Bibi [104] found that despotic leadership has negative outcomes for employee voice, behavior and employee performance outcomes.

Impact of workplace incivility on innovative work behavior was also tested in current research and results of the analysis revealed that innovative work behavior of employees in SMEs of Pakistan, badly effected and incivility cause reduction in innovative work behaviors of employees. Therefore, H2 of study is supported and results are in line with results of [25], who found that employees who are facing or experiencing workplace incivility are less creative and innovative work behavior of employee declined resultantly. Results of both relationships (H1 and H2) have support from the views of the COR theory [24]. The phenomenon of despotic leadership and incivility, effect the positive behaviors of employees. Due to the prevailing persistence stressful conditions at the workplace, employees feel their resources are drained out. Hence, study reveals that incivility at the workplace and despotic behavior of leaders

directly diminish employees' innovative behavior by suppressing employees psychologically. Findings of current study are in line with the findings of [52,54,55,105]explaining the negative effects of workplace incivility on employees.

They effect of despotic leadership on psychological well-being were also examined and found that despotic leadership has negative effect on the psychological well-being of the employees or workforce of the SMEs in Pakistan. The empirical results of the study are in line with the findings of previous researchers [31,37,38,59] explaining the negative impacts of despotic leadership on employees emotions and psychological health due to the stress produced by the negative behaviors. Therefore, H$_3$ of study is supported. Relationship between workplace incivility and innovative work behavior of employees was also analyzed and results manifests that workplace incivility is not good for psychological well-being due to negative relationship between WPI and PsyWB. This shows that employees who are experiencing the WPI, have low psychological well-being. Therefore, H$_4$ of study is supported. Advocates of the COR theory asserts that negative events and behaviors effect employee's engagement and creativity. COR theory asserts that while in contact of stressful situation employees may behave in two different ways, either they try to gain new resources or try to restore the existing resources and withdraw their efforts and investment of resources at the workplace. As employees are not ready to invest from their resource reservoir. Innovativeness and creativity demand the investment of resources. These events create stress environment [106,107] that badly effects the innovativeness and creativity of employees.

Prior literature also confirmed that incivility at the workplace increase burnout, occupational stress and turnover intentions [108]. The results of the study revealed that both negative events and behaviors effect the psychological well-being of employees that effect the innovative behaviors of them. Psychological well-being of employees is an essential and key factor regarding employee progress and work-related behaviors. It triggers employee's innovative behaviors at job. The innovative behaviors of employees also converted into competitive advantage. Effects of psychological well-being on innovative work behaviors were also empirically tested in prior literature. Literature set that psychological well-being of employees contributes to the innovative work-related behaviors of employees. The mental health and psychological well-being put great impact on employee's creativity and stimulate the innovative work behaviors among employees. Results also support the proposed hypothesis. Therefore, H$_5$ of study is supported. COR theory also provides insight into this relationship.

Mediating role of PsyWB between DL and IWB of employees working in SMEs was also tested and found that PsyWB mediates the relationship. Results from previous studies also confirmed the results of the study [78,79] Therefore, H$_6$ of study is supported. Mediating role of PsyWB between WPI and IWB of employees working in SMEs was also tested and found that PsyWB mediates the relationship. Therefore, H$_7$ of study is supported. The mediation results show that psychological well-being of employees partially mediates the relationship among DL, WPI and IWB. However, the mediating effect of PsyWB also help the management.

Moderating role of POS between DL and PsyWB was also tested and results are showing that POS moderates the relationship. Therefore, H$_8$ of study is supported. Moderating role of POS between WPI and PsyWB was also tested and results are showing that POS moderates the relationship. Therefore, H$_9$ of study is supported. Thus, results revealed that perceived organizational support moderate the relationship of DL, WPI and PsyWB. POS acts as a moderator and contributes to weak the relationships [88] to reduce the negative effects of despotic leadership [32] and incivility on employees psychological well-being. The significant interaction of moderating results of POS depicts that the negative relationship of DL and PsyWB and WPI and PsyWB was low. Therefore, H8 and H9 are supported. Certainly, the results of the current study recommend that SMEs in Pakistan must focus on the negative workplace events and behaviors effecting the psychological health and innovative behaviors of their employees and must work for the psychological wellbeing of its employees to leverage their innovativeness and competitive.

Certainly, the current research contributes to the body of knowledge as it strengthens the context view in case of leadership behavior and workplace events such that perceived support from organization reduces the negative effects of both leadership behavior and workplace events on employees. The study also stimulates the thinking about the positive events and behaviors at the workplace to augment innovativeness among employees. Although the findings report a bleak picture of employees working with despotic leaders and incivility, also presents a silver lining. The negative effects of incivility and despotic leadership style can be attenuated in work contexts that are organizational support.

6. Conclusions

On the whole it is concluded that innovative work behavior is the essential component of employees and leads to generate competitive advantage. Negative events like workplace incivility and despotic leadership are couple of the factors that are not favorable for the IWB of employees. Further, such events are also not good for PsyWB of employees, hence IWB decreases among the employees who experience incivility or despotic behavior at the workplaces. POS can make such relationships weak due to its positive nature.

6.1. Theoretical implications

As per theoretical foundations of the study base on COR theory, despotic leaders have selfish behavior and they show no concerns for employees and just sticked to their own interests. Such behavior shows low concern to the psychological well-being of the employees and finally employees in SMEs of Pakistan are found less creative and innovative in their assigned roles. When workplaces have negative events or questionable personalities, especially at managerial level this is not favorable for goals achievement in the organizations. Despotic leadership makes employees unhappy and less motivated because despotic leaders exhibit unethical, self-centered and unfair behaviors at workplaces [90]. Therefore, such employees who are experiencing despotic behaviors from leaders and incivility in the organizations, would not have any creativity in their work roles and their innovative work behavior will decline day by

day [36,91]. Survey results concluded that if employees are psychologically strong and have high level of POS as examined through moderating role of POS among DL-PsyWB relationship and WPI-PsyWB relationship, would cope the effects of DL and WPI. On the other hand, employees who have not adequate POS and PsyWB are suffering and they are less creative and innovative in their work behaviors in their respective organizations.

6.2. Managerial implications

Innovative points of this research point to practical implications for managers and practioners. Despotic leadership and Workplace incivility are found negatively effecting the PsyWB and innovative behaviors of employees working in the SMEs of Pakistan. Therefore, in current research study, it has been proven that in Pakistani SMEs, employees who are found experiencing the incivility and despotic behavior are less creative are their innovative work behavior is not up to the mark. SMEs of Pakistan needs to establish stable and safe work environment to ensure high level of POS among employees to eradicate the negative events from organizational environment. Moreover, SMEs need to promote positive events of the workplaces to enable employees for having high level of positive PsyWB so that they can make themselves more creative and innovative. Targeted organizations, SMEs in Pakistan should introduce and promote positive leadership styles to boost up PsyWB of employees and there must be adequate training programs that can help employees in SMEs for having sufficient energy and coping abilities to deal with such events and behaviors. Organizations could introduce educational and training sessions to help employees to grow professionally and personally. All these practices can help employees to improve their IWB and this will be great initiative by mangers of SMEs to gain high rate of efficiency and effectiveness.

6.3. Limitations and recommendations

On the basis of the findings of empirical results, the study proposed the following recommendations to the decision for policy makers and the management of the SMEs of Pakistan.

There is a lack of self-assurance in results as the research has not sufficient level of methodological strength. Initially, the major focus of the research was to examine the effect of despotic leadership and workplace incivility on innovative work behavior of employees working in SMEs of Pakistan. Data was collected from the SMEs working in different cities due to several constraints. Futures researchers should collect data at different points of time to evaluate the effect of negative leadership and events on the psychological well-being and innovative behaviors of employees as data was collected from two sources: managers and employees reporting to managers. Therefore, such kind of things are contributing for reduction in potential effect of single source bias and common method. Few other limitations are also mentioned below.

Secondly, convenience sampling was used for data collection that can be a question and small sample size was used due to time constraint that can be a question for the generalizability of the results. Hence larger sample size from different industries employing probability sampling techniques is also a suggestion for future researchers to validate the findings of the study.

Thirdly, population was SMEs of Pakistan, any other sector can be chosen in future research. As there are many other organizations in Pakistan as per our believe, facing despotic behaviors of leaders and incivility. So, those sectors/organizations need to be examined.

Fourthly, despotic leadership and incivility were chosen as predictors for IWB with mediating role of PsyWB and moderating role of POS. In future research researchers can use different mediators and moderators to examine the effect. According to our opinion in the light of research by Ref. [109], future researchers can use self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation as mediating variables and other contextual factors can be added as the moderating variable. Further, the culture can also be studied.

Fifthly, other leadership styles are also opportunity for researchers to use them as predictor to examine their effect on IWB. Moreover, comparative study among different sectors of Pakistan or comparative study between developing countries organizations and organizations of developed countries can also be the point of interest. On the whole the generalizability of results can be increased by using different methodological approaches.

Availability of data

The data used in this study shall be made available on reasonable request from the corresponding author.

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Authors contribution

All the authors particular contribution to this manuscript is as under:
Shahid MEHMOOD: Data curation; Investigation; Visualization; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing.
Riffut JABEEN: Conceptualization; Methodology; Supervision; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing.
Muhammad Asif Khan: Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Supervision; Writing – original draft.
Mohammed Arshad KHAN: Conceptualization; Data curation; Software; Validation; Visualization; Writing – original draft.
Beata GAVUROVA: Funding acquisition; Investigation; Resources; Validation; Writing – review & editing.

Judit OLÁH: Funding acquisition; Investigation; Project administration; Resources; Supervision.
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Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests:

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e19673.

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