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**Examining the Relationship between Psychopathic Leadership, Work Phobic Anxiety and Employee Work Alienation: The Moderating Role of Hostile Attribution Bias**

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**Abstract:** The current study examines the direct relationship between psychopathic leadership and work alienation while incorporating the mediating role of work phobic anxiety. The study sustains that work phobic anxiety mediates the relationship between leader psychopathy and employee work alienation. In addition to this, as grounded in Affective Events Theory, the study further establishes that Hostile Attribution Bias (HAB) as employee-centric dispositional factor moderates the relationship of leader psychopathy an affect inducing event and work phobic anxiety, an employee's behavioral outcome a reaction concerning stimulus workplace. The study employs a quantitative time-lagged design with multisource data collected in three waves through the survey method. Results of the data analysis established all hypotheses of the research in the proposed directions. Confirmatory Factor Analyses were also performed to ensure, reliability and validity of the scales employed in the study; the mediation & moderation were analyzed using SPSS Process Macro, using the "Bootstrapping Method" ([Hayes, 2017](#)).

**Keywords:** *Leader Psychopathy, Hostile Attribution Bias, Work phobic Anxiety, Work Alienation*

### **Introduction**

Leadership plays an influential role in the life of organizations. Leaders are the ones who are anticipated to safeguard the interests of their fellow workers and colleagues while making critical organizational decisions ([Northouse, 2018](#)). Contrarily, some innately uncaring leaders act selfishly and otherwise to nurture solely their interests and that too at their followers' expense. This self-serving attitude of leaders not only disrupts their followers' performance, but it does leave a ruinous impact on the overall effective functioning of any organization(s) ([Williams, 2014](#)). We often come across such kind of leaders/superiors in our communal and organizational lives. These leaders can be broadly categorized as self-publicist, devious cheat, and hedonists. All such identifiers are linked with renowned *Dark Triad Personality* traits classified into three main kinds, i.e., *Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy* ([Barelds et al., 2018](#)).

For the past several years, a burgeoning trend can be observed in the *Dark Triad Personality* and *Despotic Leadership* literature. Persistent declining organizational performance and recent corporate scandals have revitalized the interest among researchers to study *Dark Triad Leadership* and the impact of their harmful policies and practices on their fellow workers and

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organizational performance at large. The dark triad group of personality traits comprises three significant traits: *Machiavellianism*, *Narcissism*, and *Psychopathy*. All three attributes are conceptually different and are closely linked with leaders who work for themselves through devious means and strategies. "Machiavellianism is associated with *deception* and *manipulation* with a core emphasis on *self-interest*. Narcissism is related to *self-pride*, *splendor*, *glory*, and *grandiosity*. Psychopathy, on the other hand, is associated with *remorselessness*, *implacability*, *relentlessness*, and *callous selfishness* (Pechorro et al., 2019). Nevertheless, all three aforementioned dark triad traits are believed to be tremendously hazardous, but *psychopathy* is considered the most *fatal* of all three attributes in nature (Barelds et al., 2018). As reported by (Barker, 2014) that "1 in 5 CEOs is a psychopath," moreover as reflected by (Pearlman, 2016) "CEO is the profession with the most psychopaths." Such findings of the recent studies make it imperative to investigate the impact of *psychopaths* and their *harmful* policies on fellow workers' lives and organizational performance at large, respectively. Psychopaths are the ones who are mostly found to be involved in immoral decision making, corporate misconducts, and delinquencies, and due to their behavioral tendency, they frequently use their positional power to help them fulfill their objectives and goals (Wu and Lebreton, 2011, Smith et al., 2013, Spain et al., 2014). Research in the past predominantly focused on the adverse impact of psychopathic leadership on employee(s) self-esteem who score low on this trait (Barelds et al., 2018). Research from the past has also revealed mediators studied amongst the relationship of psychopathic leadership and employee level outcomes, e.g., relational ego depletion, low core self-evaluation. More recently, the interactive effects of several *factors/moderators* of organizational contextual nature have been studied (Harms et al., 2018).

Accordingly, in their more recent meta-analysis (Harms et al., 2018) encouraged the researchers to examine the interactive impact of follower-centric dispositional factors, i.e., Hostile Attribution Bias (HAB) as a moderator on psychopath leaders and employee work outcomes relationship. Therefore, the current study endeavors to bridge the existing research gap by investing the interactive role of Hostile Attribution Bias as a follower-centric dispositional factor on the relationship of leader psychopathy, an affect inducing event work phobic anxiety, *an employee's behavioral outcome*. Given the suggestions and recommendations mentioned above, the current study also endeavors to *extend* the prevalent literature on psychopathic leadership by examining the direct impact of a leader's psychopathy on employee work alienation while incorporating the *mediating* role of work phobic anxiety. Furthermore, as suggested by (Barelds et al., 2018).

The current study takes its theoretical foundation from the *Affective Events Theory* (AET) as an overarching theory a model developed by organizational psychologists (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996) to explain "how emotions and moods influence job performance and job satisfaction." AET is a theory of "affect (the broader term for emotional experiences, including emotion and mood) in the workplace. In addition to focusing on affect, it encompasses cognitions, behavior, attitudes, and other crucial psychological constructs to explain job behavior and performance".

## Literature Review

### Psychopathic Leadership and Work Alienation

Psychopathy is considered "a clinical syndrome with both behavioral and personality components" (Rogstad and Rogers, 2008). (Cleckley, 1964) categorized different facets of a psychopath which enlists insincerity, lack of shame or remorse, callous/unemotional traits and incapacity for love. (Cleckley, 1964) seminal work also comprises antisocial traits such as uninviting behavior, poor judgment, failure to learn by experience and criminal behavior. The construct of psychopathy is divided into two important categories, i.e., primary and secondary psychopaths. The former type of psychopath is considered to be "emotionally

*unstable*," and the latter is perceived as *"reactive"* in nature. Individuals on the higher side of the primary trait are insensitive, egocentric, lack empathy, and are manipulative. Because the primary psychopaths capture the core of psychopaths working in the organizations ([Murphy and Vess, 2003](#)), this study will focus on the primary psychopaths as in most organizational psychology studies. Primary psychopaths are studied more often than secondary psychopaths. It "is pertinent to note that an organization's managerial culture deeply influences the performance of both the organization and its employees. Specifically, a top manager/leader's personality and traits influence an organization's managerial culture greatly; the organization's overall image, risk attitude, shareholder and customer protocols all are largely dependent on the organizational leadership ([Urban, 2008](#)). More specifically, the toxic leader will deteriorate the organization through aberrant and dysfunctional actions. The same vein as a polluted heart will contaminate the whole body through the toxic blood supply. The toxic actions of top management cause counterproductive work behaviors in the employees ([Thomas, 1991](#)) .

As suggested by ([Coyne and Ostrov, 2018](#)), employees working *along/with* psychopaths feel distressed, socially excluded and disregarded, which in turn fosters unsympathetic and meaningless leader-member relationships. The deceitful and manipulative approach of psychopathic leadership makes the organizational environment stressful, traumatic, and tumultuous. Since psychopaths operate on competing strategies rather than on collaboration, their followers often tend to face mortification ([Jonason et al., 2012](#)) that leaves them in a state of self-estrangement and meaninglessness ([Jones et al., 2017](#)). Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

***Hypothesis 1: Psychopathic Leadership is positively associated with Employee Work Alienation.***

#### **Mediating Role of Work Phobic Anxiety**

Workplace phobia has been defined as *"a classical phobic anxiety reaction concerning the stimulus workplace."* It usually occurs in a reaction similar to a panic or anxiety attack accompanied by physiological arousal when the person is either approaching or thinking about the workplace. The person suffering from such a psychological state exhibits a noticeable avoidance behavior towards his organization and the workplace. ([Haines et al., 2002](#)) in their research explained the avoidance approach, i.e., avoidance of corporate events, get-togethers where the employee feels that he can encounter other colleagues or immediate supervisor(s), even feeling annoyed and aroused when talking with others about the work ([Haines et al., 2002](#)). Such indicators impair the employee's emotional and physical well-being ([Muschalla et al., 2009](#), [Smith et al., 2013](#)). Work-anxieties may present themselves as cognitive anxiety (worrying) or physiological arousal, panic, and avoidance ([Muschalla et al., 2016](#)). In the worst case, there is an overall panic-like reaction and avoidance behavior towards the workplace. The latter is known as "workplace phobia" ([Haines et al., 2002](#); [Muschalla et al., 2009](#)).

The concept of alienation was first described by ([Hegel, 1910](#)); as the individual's disconnection from his or herself. Later this concept was extensively studied by ([Marx, 1975](#)) in terms of social and economic aspects. Marx emphasized that the individual's loss of control over his labor creates a sense of alienation ([Kohn, 1976](#), [Mottaz, 1981](#)). Due to their cynic nature and individual performance criteria, psychopathic leaders are expected to be involved in unethical and unscrupulous decision-making, leaving their coworkers with lesser control and autonomy. Besides, psychopaths are commonly engaged in deviant workplace behaviors, white-collar crimes, bullying, corporate misconducts and offensive supervision ([Boddy, 2006](#), [O'Boyle et al., 2013](#), [Stevens et al., 2012](#), [Mathieu et al., 2014](#), [Barelds et al., 2018](#)). Psychopathic leaders are insensitive, inconsiderate and self-seeking, which harms employee

commitment, satisfaction and well-being. Consequently, people working under such leaders do not feel at home, i.e., they feel "*estranged*" and uncomfortable in such working conditions. In their study on bullying in adults ([Baughman et al., 2012](#)) revealed that psychopath leaders are more involved in bullying and intimidating behavior; which in response fosters dissatisfaction, trauma, and pain among followers ([Muschalla et al., 2018](#))

In the past research, it has also been reported that while dealing with psychopaths at work, coworkers feel social insecurity, which causes trepidations towards the organization, specific tasks assigned by the psychopath leader which can induce work phobia or work anxiety ([Muschalla et al., 2016](#)). As reported earlier, psychopathy is also linked with inconsiderate, uncaring and selfish behavior ([Cohen and Strayer, 1996](#)), so there exists a strong correlation between anxiety and Psychopathy ([Ali et al., 2009](#)). As psychopaths lack empathy, which is a prime cause of antisocial behavior ([Cohen and Strayer, 1996](#)), researchers like ([Furnham et al., 2009](#)) have also reported positive correlation between psychopathy and state anxiety.

A leader's persistent callous treatment is perceived as an affective event by followers. As stated in the Affective Events Theory (AET), employees react emotionally to things that happen to them in their respective workplaces. This emotional reaction subsequently affects their job performance and satisfaction levels. Since the leaders' psychopathic behavior is considered a negative-inducing event that leads to the deadly affective outbreak of work phobic anxiety, that further manifests into lasting external behavioral reactions explicitly exhibited in work alienation. Consequently, it is hypothesized that:

***Hypothesis 2: Work phobic Anxiety mediates the relationship between Psychopathic Leadership and Employee Work Alienation***

#### **Moderating Role of Hostile Attribution Bias (HAB)**

Some people are disposed to interpret the behavior of other people in their surroundings as having hostile intent, commonly known as *Hostile Attribution Bias* (HAB), which is the "*tendency to interpret the behaviour of others, across situations, as threatening, aggressive, or both*" ([De Castro et al., 2002](#), [Dodge and psychopathology, 2006](#), [Smith et al., 2016](#)). HAB is considered a significant predictor in developing deviant workplace behaviors and aggression in employees ([Crick and Dodge, 1994](#)). More precisely, when an employee feels or interprets that the intender has a hostile intention, he feels it justified to behave and respond aggressively and becoming antagonistic as a response to the intender ([Dodge et al., 1987](#)). In the recent past, researchers like ([Dodge and psychopathology, 2006](#)), have examined that people who have aggressive nature are more likely to develop HAB, which reaffirms the idea that such people are more prone to interpret ambiguous interpersonal cues as having a hostile intent. Besides, people having dispositional hostility tend to look at events, objects and things in their surroundings negatively, which consequently yields negative responses ([Crick and Dodge, 1996](#), [Dodge et al., 2015](#)). Because of psychopaths' self-serving leadership style, it has been observed by researchers like ([Jonason et al., 2012](#)) that out of all the three dark triad personality traits, the combination of psychopaths and Machiavellians are more related with *assertiveness and manipulation*, i.e. (*hard manipulation*), while Machiavellians and Narcissists are more inclined towards reasoning and ingratiation, i.e. (*soft manipulation*). Consequently, it tends to engender and trigger feelings of anxiety and bitterness for the superiors in the followers' minds. A more recent study by ([Kong, 2018](#)) has discovered HAB's interactive role amid perceived negative workplace gossip and organizational self-esteem, the results of which illustrate that HAB acts as a negative moderator and reinforcer. Because of its nature as a negative interpretation bias, HAB acts as a catalyst in fostering spite, concern, and anger, which only develops due to the leader's psychopathic behavior. Moreover, distinctive deception and callous manipulation of psychopaths are among the main reasons their followers feel concerned. Additionally,

psychopaths are the leaders who are innately self-serving, egoistic, and insincere; hence they treat their followers like non-entities, which becomes the root cause; as to why their followers undergo nervousness. Accordingly, it creates a sense of negative upward social comparison, which resultantly causes feelings of resentment in the followers). Consistent with the *AET*, leader psychopathy is regarded as a negative affective event by the employee/coworker, leading to an affective response in the form of workplace phobic anxiety. Furthermore, hostile attribution bias is a negative dispositional factor, strengthening the underlying relationship between leader psychopathy and workplace phobic anxiety. Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed

**Hypothesis 3:** *The relationship between Psychopathic Leadership and Workplace Phobic Anxiety is moderated by Hostile Attribution Bias, such that the positive relationship will be stronger in case of higher hostile attribution bias and vice versa.*

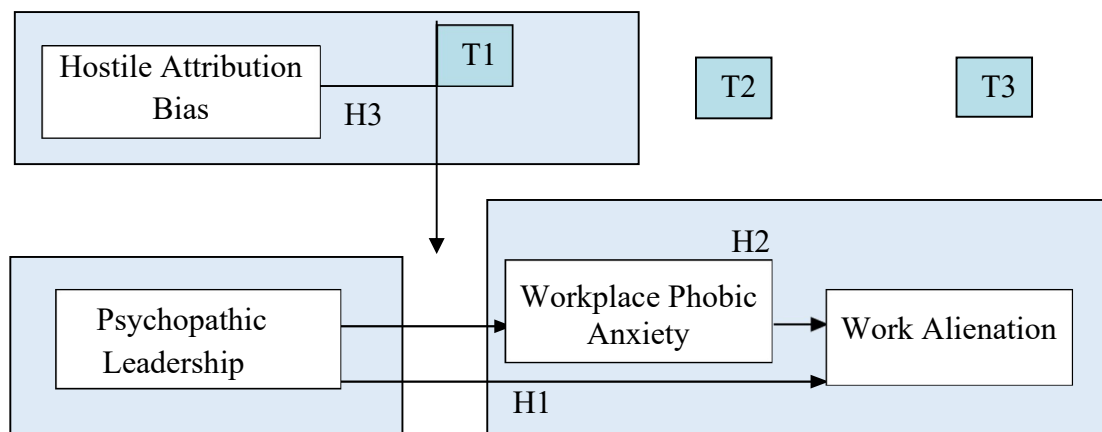


Figure 1. Graphical presentation of the studied model

## Methods

The following section comprises details regarding sample, population, data collection procedures, research design, measures employed in the survey, and further information about statistical tools used for data analysis.

### Sample and Procedure

The current study is time-lagged therefore, to address the *common method bias*, the responses were taken at three different time lags; Leader Psychopathy and Hostile Attribution Bias were measured at time one (t1), work phobic anxiety at time two (t2) & outcome variable work alienation, was measured at time three (t3) with all-time lags two to three week apart. This study's target population is employees from the services sector of major cities of Pakistan, i.e. (*Islamabad/Rawalpindi*), specifically from *private and public* organizations in the services sector (*banking, telecommunication*). The sampling strategy used to collect responses is convenience sampling. Due to the situation of several main/head offices of state and corporate services sector in twin cities, i.e. (*Islamabad/Rawalpindi*). The minimum sample size for quantitative studies varies from 50 to 400. ([Delice and Practice, 2010](#); [Burmeister and Aitken, 2012](#)).

Consequently, the extant study strived to study a sample of 417 respondents approximately. The sample was drawn, as specified, from both public and private services sector organizations. The sample consisted of *managers/executives* and officials ranging from entry to middle and top management levels, and from different organizational departments, i.e., *finance, marketing, IT, management*, etc. 53% of the total respondents were from the public sector organizations and 47% of the total respondents were from the private sector organizations.



Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Employee Gender	417	1	2	1.24	.427
Employee Age	417	26.00	59.00	39.3118	6.89751
Employee Education	417	2.00	4.00	2.1199	.34670
Name of Employee Organization	417	1	16	7.67	4.010
Public or Private sector	417	1	2	1.47	.500
Leader Psychopathy	417	1.08	7.00	5.0847	1.19648
Hostile Attribution Bias	417	1.00	7.00	4.9806	1.30754
Workplace Phobic Anxiety	417	1.00	7.00	5.0088	1.18902
Work Alienation	417	1.00	7.00	4.7595	1.09218

From the sample of 417 respondents, 76% were male and 24% were female employees. The employees' qualification level varies from bachelors to Ph.D. level; 89% of the total respondents were masters, 10% were MPhil/MS, and 1 percent were Ph.D. degree holders. The respondents' age numbers illustrate that almost 65% of the respondents belong to the age group of 25-40 years age bracket and 28% of the respondents belong to the age group of 41-50 years and 7% were from the 50-59 years age bracket. The respondents' job experience demonstrates that 52% of the total respondents have a job tenure of almost 15 years, 38% have 20 years of experience, and 10% of the entire sample respondents have more than 25 years of experience. The sample was taken from 16 diversified organizations comprising of both public and private sector organizations with a sample size of 417 literate respondents at responsible positions which consequently makes sample fairly generalizable.

### Measures

#### *Psychopathy Scale*

The 12-item (Boduszek et al., 2018) psychopathy scale was used in this study as one way to assess psychopathic attributes. This scale's reliability score is reported at ( $\alpha = 0.95$ ) using a 7-point Likert scale. The sample items from the scale are: *My boss/supervisor, "Doesn't feel concerned about what other people feel; Doesn't usually appreciate the other person's viewpoint," "Doesn't get upset seeing other people cry."* etc. The discriminant validity was ascertained through the CFA results i.e. ( $\chi^2 = 116.870$ ,  $df = 53$ ,  $CFI = 0.98$ ,  $NFI = 0.97$ ,  $GFI = 0.95$ ,  $RMR = .05$  and  $RMSEA = 0.05$ ). Convergent validity was also established since all the items loaded in a range of 0.77 to 0.84 with AVE 0.62 lesser than the composite reliability (CR), i.e., 0.95 (Hair Jr et al., 2010).

#### *Hostile Attribution Bias*

Hostile attribution bias was measured with an 8-item scale developed by (Buss and Durkee, 1957). The 8-item scale will be used to measure Hostile attribution bias on a frequency scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Example items include, *"There are a number of people who seem to dislike me very much."* & *"There are a number of people who seem to be jealous of me"*. The reliability score of this scale is reported at ( $\alpha = 0.95$ ). The CFA results ensured the discriminant validity i.e. ( $\chi^2 = 51.93$ ,  $df = 18$ ,  $CFI = 0.98$ ,  $NFI = 0.98$ ,  $GFI = 0.96$ ,  $RMR = .03$  and  $RMSEA = 0.06$ ). Convergent validity was assured as all items loading ranged from 0.83 to 0.85 with AVE 0.70 and less than the composite reliability (CR), i.e., 0.95 (Hair Jr et al., 2010).

### *Workplace Phobic Anxiety*

Workplace Phobic Anxiety level was measured using a 7-item scale, using the renowned ([Ali et al., 2009](#), [Muschalla et al., 2010](#)) instrument. This scale's reliability in the current study was found to be ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ); an example of an item from the scale is: "When thinking about my workplace, everything in my body becomes tense". "Whenever possible, I avoid approaching the site of my workplace" etc. The convergent validity was confirmed as all items loading ranged from 0.74 to 0.81 with AVE 0.59 and less than the composite reliability (CR), i.e., 0.91 ([Hair Jr et al., 2010](#)). The discriminant validity was also ascertained through the CFA results i.e. ( $\chi^2 = 21.607$ ,  $df = 13$ ,  $CFI = 0.99$ ,  $NFI = 0.98$ ,  $GFI = 0.98$ ,  $RMR = 0.03$  and  $RMSEA = 0.04$ ).

### *Work Alienation*

This measure indicates the degree to which an individual is disengaged from his work environment ([Hirschfeld et al., 2000](#)). Work Alienation was measured using a 9-items scale developed by ([Mottaz, 1981](#)). Sample items are: "I have a good deal of freedom in the performance of my daily task.". "Sometimes I am not sure I completely understand the purpose of what I'm doing." Responses were made on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. Cronbach's alpha for this measure was reported at 0.92. Convergent validity was confirmed as all items loading ranged from 0.69 to 0.82 with AVE 0.59 and less than the composite reliability (CR), i.e., 0.92 ([Hair Jr et al., 2010](#)). The discriminant validity was also ascertained through the CFA results i.e. ( $\chi^2 = 77.732$ ,  $df = 24$ ,  $CFI = 0.97$ ,  $NFI = 0.97$ ,  $GFI = 0.96$ ,  $RMR = 0.05$  and  $RMSEA = 0.07$ ).

### **Statistical Techniques and Software**

The data was analyzed with the help of inferential statistical techniques. To establish validity of measures adapted for this study, confirmatory factor analysis was performed. The Mediation & Moderation analyses were performed employing SPSS process macro, using the "bootstrapping method" ([Hayes, 2017](#)), which has a lower Type II error rate and greater statistical power as compared to the traditionally used "causal steps approach" advocated by ([Baron et al., 1986](#)). The software known as "Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)" (version 25) was used to analyze the descriptive statistics using "Process Technique" by ([Hayes, 2017](#)). Confirmatory factor analyses were carried out in AMOS.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

Following the requirements of the proposed framework, Initially, CFA was executed on the individual variables. Later, CFA was conducted on the variables which were measured at time 1,2 and 3.

#### **CFA's for Full Measurement Model**

The confirmatory factor analysis was performed using the ML (Maximum Likelihood) procedure, including independent variable, moderator variable, mediator variable, and dependent variable. In addition to ensure discriminant validity among all the variables of the study, the results of four-factor full measurement model i.e. ( $\chi^2 = 278.932$ ,  $df = 182$ ,  $CFI = .98$ ,  $NFI = .95$ ,  $GFI = .94$  and  $RMSEA = .030$ ) exhibited better model fit as compare to the results of single-factor model ( $\chi^2 = 2657.867$ ,  $df = 187$ ,  $CFI = .60$ ,  $NFI = .57$ ,  $GFI = .54$  and  $RMSEA = .165$ ).

Table 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for Full Measurement Model

	X2	Df	X2/df	CFI	NFI	GFI	RMR	RMSEA
<b>CFA's for Full Measurement Model (LP-HAB-ME-AR-WA-RA-WPA)</b>								
One Factor full measurement model (LP-HAB-WPA-WA)	2657.867	187	14.213	.60	.57	.54	.369	.165
Four factors full measurement model (LP-HAB-WPA-WA)	278.932	182	1.532	.98	.95	.94	.056	.030

Table 3: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for Individual Variables

	X2	Df	X2/df	CFI	NFI	GFI	RMR	RMSEA
<b>Leader Psychopathy</b> (One Factor Model)	116.870	53	2.20	.98	.97	.90	.09	.05
<b>Hostile Attribution Bias</b> (Single Latent Factor Model)	51.93	18	2.88	.98	.98	.96	.03	.06
<b>Work Phobic Anxiety</b> (One Factor Model)	21.607	13	1.66	.99	.98	.98	.03	.04
<b>Work Alienation</b> (One Factor Model)	77.732	24	3.23	.97	.97	.96	.05	.07

Table 4: Convergent & Discriminant Validity and Composite Reliability

	CR	AVE	MSV	WA	LP	HAB	WPA
<b>Work Alienation</b>	0.929	0.593	0.128	<b>0.770</b>			
<b>Leader Psychopathy</b>	0.953	0.628	0.187	0.247	<b>0.793</b>		
<b>Hostile Attribution Bias</b>	0.950	0.705	0.039	0.063	0.047	<b>0.840</b>	
<b>Workplace Phobic Anxiety</b>	0.912	0.596	0.159	0.298	0.282	0.171	<b>0.772</b>

Convergent validity has been confirmed because composite reliability (CR) for all the variables is greater than 0.7 (acceptable range) and CR is greater than average variance (AVE) for all the variables, and AVE is greater than 0.5 for all the variables of study (Hair Jr et al., 2010). Discriminant validity was also confirmed as maximum shared variance (MSV) is less than AVE for all variables (Hair Jr et al., 2010).



Table 5: Factor Loadings

Table 1. Factor Loadings					
Scale Items	Factor 1: LP	Factor 2: WPA	Factor 3: WA	Factor 4: HAB	Cronbach $\alpha$
Item 1	.84	.74	.74	.84	
Item 2	.77	.76	.78	.85	
Item 3	.79	.81	.83	.84	
Item 4	.73	.77	.79	.85	
Item 5	.78	.77	.82	.85	
Item 6	.80	.81	.77	.83	
Item 7	.83	.74	.74	.84	
Item 8	.84		.74	.83	
Item 9	.80		.69		
Item 10	.74				
Item 11	.80				
Item 12	.77				
LP					<b>0.95</b>
WPA					<b>0.91</b>
WA					<b>0.92</b>
HAB					<b>0.95</b>

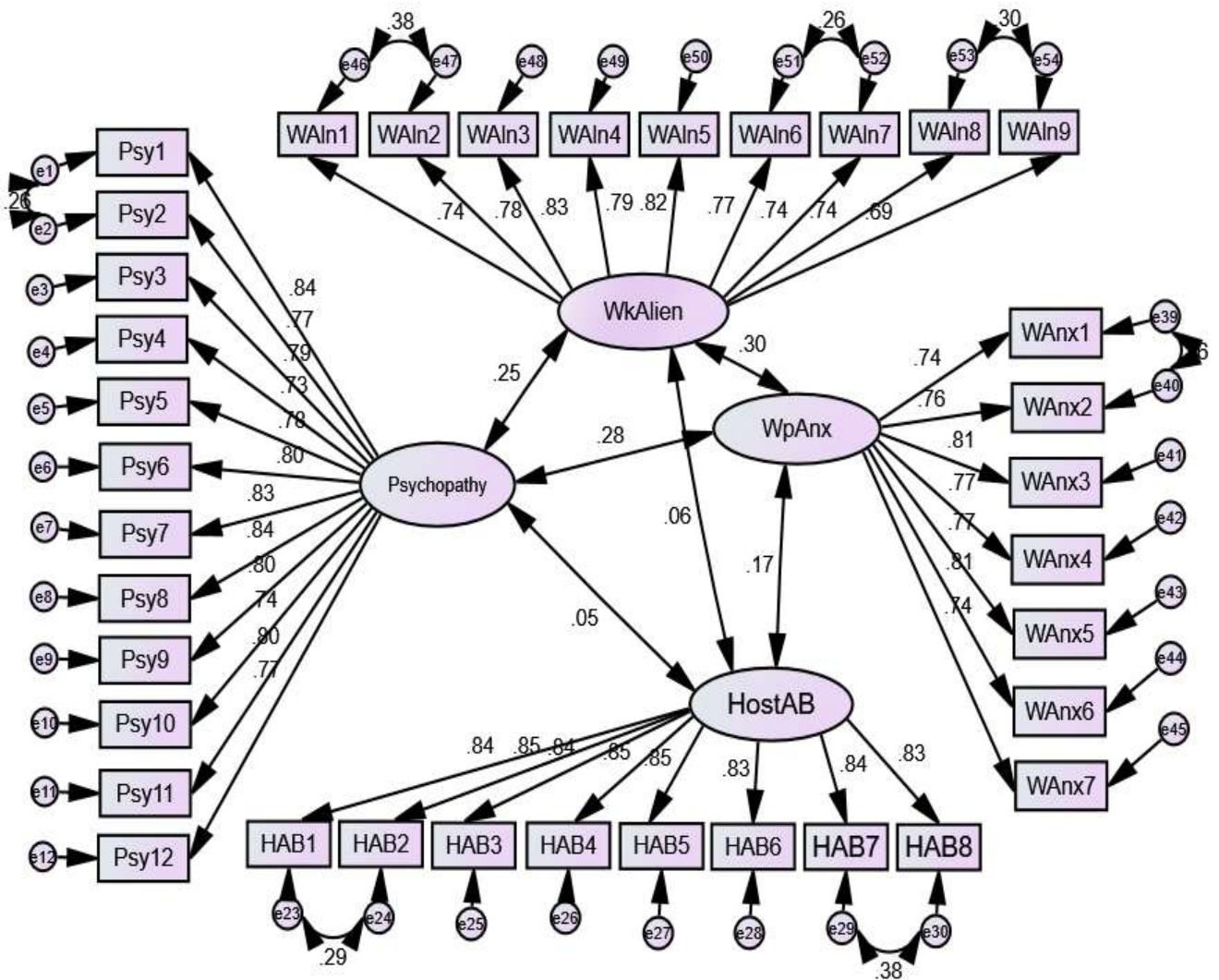


Figure 2. Graphical presentation of the Full Measurement Model

## Testing of Hypotheses

Statistical testing of the study hypotheses was carried out through a series of tests. The results of IV's direct relationship with DV revealed that the relationship between IV with DV is significant (Sig =.000). The coefficient of the relationship of Leader Psychopathy and Work

Table 6: ANOVA Table

Alienation as positive ( $\beta = .21$ ).

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	21.072	1	21.072	18.405	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	475.153	415	1.145		
Total	496.226	416			

a. Dependent Variable: Work Alienation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Leader Psychopathy

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.803	.229		16.605	.000
X_Psy	.188	.044	.206	4.290	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Work Alienation

Table 7: Coefficient table of the regression analysis

Table 8: Bootstrap results for indirect effects of Work Phobic Anxiety

Direct and Total Effects				
	$\beta$	S.E	t	P
Leader Psychopathy $\rightarrow$ Work Anxiety	.296	.0339	8.732	.000
Work Anxiety $\rightarrow$ Work Alienation	.357	.0668	5.358	.000
Leader Psychopathy $\rightarrow$ Work Alienation	.210	.0477	4.409	.000

### Bootstrap results for indirect effects

Effect	Effect	SE	LLCI 95%	ULCI95%
PL and WA	.0529	.016	.0229	.0885

Results shown in table 4, reveal that *Psychopathic Leadership* is associated positively with *Employee Work Phobic Anxiety* ( $\beta = .296$ ,  $t = 8.7320$ ,  $p < .000$ ), and *Employee Work Phobic Anxiety* is positively related with *Employee Work Alienation* ( $\beta = .357$ ,  $t = 5.3583$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Moreover, *Psychopathic Leadership* is found to have a significant indirect effect on *Employee Work Alienation* via *Employee Work Phobic Anxiety* (completely standardized indirect effect = .0529,  $SE = .0168$ ,  $LLCI = .0229$   $ULCI = .0885$ ). In contrast, the direct effect of *Psychopathic Leadership* on *Employee Work Alienation* became insignificant when the mediator is introduced in the model.

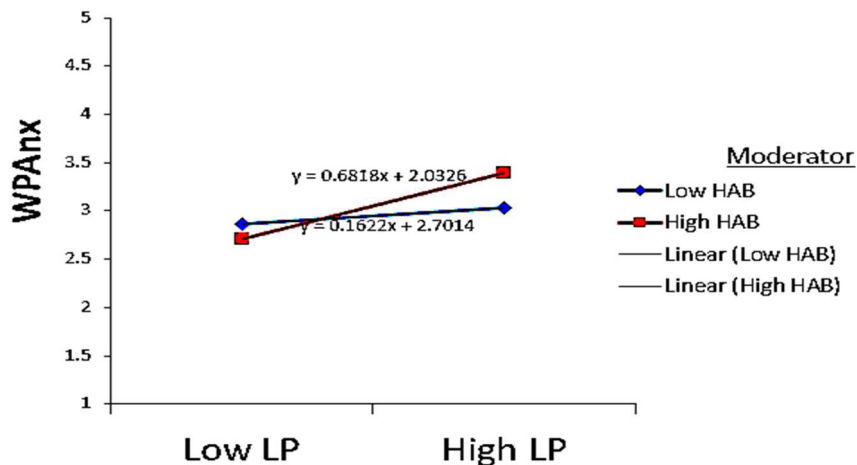
**Moderating role of Hostile Attribution Bias (HAB) between leader psychopathy and malicious envy**

Hypothesis 3 proposes that Hostile Attribution Bias (HAB) moderates the relationship between leader psychopathy and employee work phobic anxiety. i.e.  $\beta = .18$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $\Delta R^2 = .04$ ,  $p < .01$ . Simple slope test further affirmed the significance of the slope i.e. the association between leader psychopathy and employee work phobic anxiety was stronger at high levels of the moderator, i.e., HAB. Resultantly, (H3) is accepted. The aforesaid relationship's interaction plot further depicted that the relationship between leader psychopathy and employee work phobic anxiety will be stronger in higher hostile attribution bias.

TABLE 9: Moderation Analysis Results–HAB (Bootstrap 95% Confidence Interval) Employee Work Phobic Anxiety (EWA)

	$\beta$	SE	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	5.0148	.0560	.0000	4.9047	5.1249
LP	.2110	.0469	.0000	.1189	.3032
HAB	.0553	.0438	.2077	-.0308	.1414
LP x HAB	.1299	.0367	.0004	.0577	.2021
$\Delta R^2$ due to Interaction	.0278				
Slope Test					
<b>Moderator: HAB</b>					
-1.3075	.0412	.0675	.5421	-.0915	.1739
.0000	.2110	.0469	.0000	.1189	.3032
1.3075	.3809	.0667	.0000	.2498	.5120

The interaction plots shown in Figures III show that the interaction for Employee Work Phobic Anxiety is job performance is stronger when Hostile Attribution Bias is high (i.e.,  $\beta = 0.38$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) than when it is low ( $\beta = 0.04$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, moderation results are in line with our hypothesis 3 of the study



## Discussion

It has been noted that despite a recent meta-analytic review about the harmful effects of psychopathic leadership ([Landay et al., 2019](#)), its impact on several organizational characteristics and emergence of psychopathic leadership has yet to be explored by the researchers of the field. Numerous scientific studies have previously demonstrated that negative attitudes are originating from adverse working conditions ([Muschalla et al., 2018](#)).

The already tested relationship of psychopathic leadership with employee-level outcomes has been reaffirmed. The freshly established *psychopathic leadership* relationship with *employee work alienation* and then with *employee work phobic anxiety* as a mediator of this relationship has not been studied before. Findings of the study have affirmed these relationships statistically. Most importantly this study has tested a moderated mediating effect of *hostile attribution bias* on these direct and mediating relationships as suggested by ([Harms et al., 2018](#)).

Although previous studies have analyzed the antecedents and consequences of psychopathic leadership extensively in the past, nevertheless, the mechanism through which psychopathic leadership affects employee-level outcomes through the mediating mechanism of *employee work phobic anxiety* and moderated the mediating effect of *hostile attribution bias* has been unexplored through a single model, especially in Pakistani context. This is likely the first empirical study in Pakistan that tests the emergence of work alienation due to the interplay of three types of factors utilizing the *Affective Events Theory* ([Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996](#)).

In general, ample support was found for all hypotheses of the study. Results lend all hypotheses full support. Leader psychopathy was positively related to the outcome variable, i.e., Hyp:1 (*work alienation*) and (*workplace phobic anxiety*). For the said hypotheses, results from the process macro lend full support; findings from the Hayes process technique revealed that leader psychopathy has a strong impact. It is positively and significantly associated with outcome variable, i.e., Hyp:1 (*work alienation*). This elucidates that working with/along a psychopath can exacerbate the employees' work alienation levels. These results support previous studies' findings ([Thomas, 1991](#), [Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996](#), [Muschalla et al., 2016](#), [Muschalla et al., 2018](#)).

Hypothesis 2 represents the relationship between leader psychopathy and work alienation mediated by work phobic anxiety. Findings and results from Process Hayes indicated that work phobic anxiety fully mediated the relationship between leader psychopathy and work alienation relationship. Thus hypothesis 2, was fully supported.

Hypothesis 3 states that Hostile Attribution Bias moderates the relationship between Leader Psychopathy and work phobic anxiety. The interactive effect of Hostile Attribution Bias among the aforementioned relationship was examined through Hayes Process. Results from Process Macro, revealed and supported the hypothesized relationship that HAB, moderates

the relationship between leader psychopathy and work phobic anxiety as interaction term (Leader Psychopathy x Hostile Attribution Bias) was found to be significant i.e.  $\beta = .18, p < .01; \Delta R^2 = .04, p < .01$ .

The current research is instrumental from the managerial and supervisory viewpoint; it offers important insights into how toxic leadership, especially psychopathic leadership, affects the employees' emotional, attitudinal and behavioral response patterns, which adversely affects the employee work outcome(s). Since employees are considered the most essential and invaluable asset for any organization, working along psychopaths will rust the creativity, satisfaction level, and involvement of the employees rather than deter their commitment levels.

Therefore, employees must be provided with a climate inside the organization, which should be supportive, fair-minded, and balanced from the managerial viewpoint. Equitable and just treatment procedures should be followed at the workplace to evade any sense of stressful environment. Open communication should be practiced in the organizational structure to help limit the success of the psychopaths. There should be employee/supervisor training concerning psychopathic behavioral patterns. Similarly, establishing and monitoring the objective performance criteria is also indispensable.

This study gives new insights into how psychopathic leaders left deleterious effects on employees' emotional, affective and behavioral response patterns that eventually affect their work outcomes, which is a mounting attraction amongst researchers focusing on the dark side of leadership behaviors. The present study assimilates an important mediation mechanism based on previous research studies, i.e., employee work phobic anxiety, under the umbrella of *affective events theory* (AET). Studies in the past endeavored to examine dark triad leadership and its subsequent impact on employee level outcomes moderated by several organizationally relevant contextual factors ([Harms et al., 2018](#), [Henle and Gross, 2014](#), [Nandkeolyar et al., 2014](#), [Padilla et al., 2007](#), [Wang et al., 2015](#)). But lately, researchers have stressed upon investigating the followers' centric dispositional factors. Therefore, this study examines the interactive effects of follower dispositional attributes, i.e., Hostile Attribution Bias.

This study attempted to comprehend and investigate the causal mechanism regarding employee work phobic anxiety between leader psychopathy and employee work alienation through a moderated mediation model.

### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

Like other research studies, this study is also not free of limitations. First and foremost, the study's limitation is that responses were acquired from the respondents of two major cities of Pakistan only, i.e. (Islamabad/Rawalpindi); consequently, the study's findings cannot be generalized wide across the country.

Secondly, the study employs a time-lagged design where independent and moderating variables, i.e., were measured at time one (t1), mediating variable, i.e., at time two (t2) & outcome variable measured at time three (t3); these time lags cannot be considered as full-time lag design. Consequently, researchers in the future are strongly encouraged to opt for a full-time lag design where they can tap all the variables of their research models at all time lags and at different time intervals.

Thirdly, the sample was drawn from the private and public organizations in the services sector (banking, telecommunication) situated in the twin cities, i.e. (Islamabad/Rawalpindi). Therefore, the findings of this research cannot be generalized in other sectors such as manufacturing concerns. Therefore, future researchers are encouraged to replicate this research model in different industries and organizational backgrounds.

The present study focuses mainly on the toxic effects of psychopathic leadership on the behavioral, affective and attitudinal response patterns of the followers/co-workers offering essential insights for the readers; also providing future researchers significant avenues to



discover in the forthcoming times, e.g., as the extant focused mostly on the primary psychopathy. Therefore, future studies might explore the secondary psychopathy in a *dual-process model* of psychopathy and its impact on employee outcomes. Future Researchers are also encouraged to investigate employee-centric unexplored moderators at work, e.g., authoritarian subordinates. Prospective researchers are also encouraged to explore mindfulness related interventions in the hypothesized model of the present study. As mindfulness is believed to mitigate self-focused schemas, it promotes interconnectedness and promotes nonaggressive responses in the employee(s).

## **Conclusion**

There is growing evidence that can be seen in the psychopathy literature that this concept is still in its infancy and needs to be better assessed in different dynamic circumstances to get a better understanding. Researchers have suggested several avenues to explore to add to the existing body of literature. (Landay et al., 2019) in their recent meta-analysis have pointed out that first and foremost, there exists a need for better understanding & assessment of the Psychopathy construct in the organizational literature.

Therefore, the present study is a wide-ranging effort to address the most toxic and perilous dark triad trait, i.e. "Psychopathy" and its impact on employee work outcomes. Moreover, in the past several researchers have studied the interactive effects of organizationally relevant moderators on the relationship of psychopathic tendencies and work outcomes. More recently, as recommended by (Kokkinos and Voulgaridou, 2018), this study endeavoured to examine an employee-centric moderator's effects, i.e., "Hostile Attribution Bias" on the relationship between leaders psychopathy and its subsequent impact on employees' work outcomes. The study's overall results reinforced, maintained, and supported the research model by providing adequate support for all the study hypotheses. Lastly, Managerial, and theoretical contributions are also conscripted, and future recommendations are proposed correspondingly based on results.

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