

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

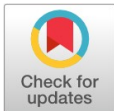
Exploitative Leadership Research: A Comprehensive Overview

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Abstract— This study aims to provide a comprehensive yet concise review of the research on exploitative leadership, structured within a chronological framework. It begins by outlining the early historical context of leadership studies, tracing the development of exploitative leadership as a distinct concept within the broader category of destructive or negative leadership. The review highlights the evolution of the term, exploring its relevance across diverse academic disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and political science, each of which contributes unique perspectives to the understanding of this phenomenon. Key queries addressed include how exploitative leadership has diverged from other destructive leadership forms, such as abusive supervision or authoritarian leadership, and what specific characteristics define exploitative leaders. The study also investigates the various outcomes associated with this leadership style, with a particular focus on how it influences behavioural and attitudinal responses in the workplace. This analysis is framed within multiple theoretical frameworks, including social exchange theory and the conservation of resources model, offering a rich, interdisciplinary approach to understanding its impact. In conclusion, the study identifies and discusses emerging trends in exploitative leadership research, suggesting future directions for empirical investigation and theoretical refinement, particularly in light of ongoing changes in organizational structures and leadership dynamics.

Index Terms— Exploitative leadership, self-interest of leadership, Egoistic behavior, Antecedents, mechanisms, Undermining

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Introduction

The realm of leadership encompasses a vast scope, characterized by intricate complexities and formidable challenges in its execution. Its interpretation undergoes shifts across different locations, eras, and cultural contexts (Stone & Patterson, 2021). Through historical and philosophical lenses, the concept of leadership remains in a constant state of progression. Currently, there exist more than 1000 definitions for leadership, spanning over many diverse leadership styles and encompassing different prominent leadership theories (Dugan, 2024; Silva, 2016). Due to its integrally social and cultural nature, defining leadership introduces intricacies and a range of perspectives, leading to challenges in its practical application. Despite the intricate and sometimes daunting aspects of leadership, its fundamental core revolves around the idea of providing service. The central concept of "service" holds a paramount position in the realm of leadership, transcending various definitions and conceptual frameworks. This is primarily because, regardless of the context, service forms the foundational backbone of leadership (Tedla et al., 2022).

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The history of leadership is as old as humankind itself, with its foundations rooted in the thoughts of Plato, Laozi, and other leading thinkers (Sułkowski, Dacko-Pikiewicz, & Szczepańska Woszczyzna, 2024). In modern management sciences, leadership studies gained significant attention in the early 20th century with contributions from figures like Frederick Taylor, who introduced scientific management, and others who developed various leadership theories, such as trait theory, contingency theory, and participative leadership (Stone & Patterson, 2021; Tedla et al., 2022). Since then, substantial efforts have been made to identify, categorize, and explain many aspects of leadership, encouraging broad corporate and social examination of varied leadership styles and behaviors (Mehraein, Visintin, & Pittino, 2023; Nawaz & Khan, 2016).

The study of leadership has evolved through several main phases, including the Great Man Theory, which posits that leaders have leadership traits when they are born, and such traits are possessed by extraordinary individuals (Peters, 2023; Samul, 2020; Spector, 2016). Trait theory expanded on this by suggesting that specific physical and personality characteristics distinguish leaders from non-leaders (Nawaz & Khan, 2016; Peters, 2023). Contingency theories introduced the idea that effective leadership depends on situational factors (Amghar, 2022; Luthans & Stewart, 1977), while style and behavior theories focused on the various methods leaders use to interact with their teams (Benmira & Agboola, 2021; Warrick, 1981). Process leadership theories emphasized the actions and behaviors leaders employ to manage and influence their organizations (Dugan, 2024; Greenleaf, 1977). Transactional leadership theory views leadership from a different perspective as a sequence of interactions between leaders and followers (Bass, 1985; Dong, 2023), while transformational leadership theory highlights the importance of inspiring and engaging followers for a higher purpose (House & Shamir, 1993; Ladkin & Patrick, 2022). Based on a leader's approach and behaviour, leadership styles and characteristics can be classified as either constructive or destructive. Constructive leader emphasizes on encouraging and mounting followers to achieve organizational goals (Arasli, Arici, & Kole, 2020), while destructive leadership is regarded as by behaviors that damage both the organization and its employees (Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad, 2007; Krasikova, Green, & LeBreton, 2013).

Exploitative leadership (EL), a form of destructive leadership, has increasingly become a focal point in leadership studies due to its detrimental impact on both subordinates and organizations. While various destructive leadership styles, such as abuse of authority (Tepper, 2000), hubris (Sadler-Smith, Akstinaite, Robinson, & Wray, 2017), and despotism (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008), have been extensively studied, EL remains relatively underexplored. Despite its less overtly aggressive nature, EL is distinct and uniquely harmful. Schmid, Pircher Verdorfer, and Peus (2019) highlighted that this leadership style involves acting egoistically, exerting undue pressure, and hindering subordinates' development, thereby contributing to a toxic work environment.

Problem statement, research question, and significance of study

Although leadership studies are becoming more popular, there is still a lack of a clear and complete overview of exploitative leadership, an important but less explored type of leadership (Syed et al., 2023). Most researchers only looked at specific parts of it, which results in a limited understanding of its key features, causes, and effects. This incomplete picture makes it difficult for researchers and professionals to fully understand how exploitative leadership affects organizations (Emmerling, Peus, & Lobbestael, 2023). A more thorough review is needed to bring together existing knowledge, which can help guide future studies on the topic (Jimbun, Mohamed, Mahomed, & Subramaniam, 2022). This study aims to investigate how exploitative leadership is linked to employees' willingness to take on tasks beyond their job responsibilities. By exploring the underlying causes, influencing factors, and conditions that may affect this relationship, the research seeks to improve our understanding of exploitative leadership and its harmful consequences. Given the significant negative consequences of EL, it is crucial to understand its impact on various employee behaviors and organizational outcomes. This study aims to explore the intricate relationship between EL, its antecedents, and the mechanisms through which EL can affect employees (mediators), moderators, and outcomes.

The current study offers a concise overview of EL as this leadership style recently has gained the clear attention of scholars due to its detrimental consequences, which are not immediately apparent and can harm organizations badly. The study is divided into five sections. The first section delineates and defines EL, tracing its historical origins by detailing the contexts and situations from which the conception of EL originates. The second section delves into the significance of EL by exploring and comparing analogous constructs. It meticulously compares and contrasts these constructs to highlight similarities that underscore universal themes while also addressing key distinctions that delineate unique aspects of EL in various contexts. The third section offers a comprehensive analysis of how EL impacts behavioral and performance outcomes through different mechanisms, encompassing both supervisor-directed outcomes and organizational-directed outcomes. The fourth section elucidates the methodology used in conducting this review research paper, detailing the approach and frameworks utilized. In the fifth section, emerging trends in EL research are highlighted, offering insights into evolving areas which need further inquiries. The concluding section provides a comprehensive discussion and synthesis of findings, culminating in a definitive conclusion.

Literature Review

Evolution of exploitative leadership: from historical origins to current constructs

The history of leadership stretches back to early times, with introductory ideas on sense-making leadership evolving from the ideas of thinkers like Plato and Laozi. The concept of leadership in modern sciences, however, has its origins in the early 20th century, notably with the advent of Frederick Winslow Taylor's Scientific Management. Significant contributions in this era were made by Stogdill, who used trait theory in the early 20th century. In 1939, Kurt Lewin introduced his own leadership style, and in 1976, Max Weber developed the idea of charismatic authority. The 1960s brought Fred Fiedler's contingency theory of leadership, followed by Rensis Likert's participative leadership theory in 1967. In the mid-1970s, the concepts of situational leadership emerged, as did the path-goal theory of leadership. In 1970, Robert Greenleaf first introduced the idea of servant leadership and further developed the concept in 1977. The 1980s through 2011 marked the era of Bernard Bass's transformational leadership. Bruce Avolio and Fred Luthans developed the theory of authentic leadership in 2008.

In modern sciences, constructive or positive leadership gained more attention from scholars than negative or destructive leadership. Destructive leadership, as described by Krasikova et al. (2013), refers to "intentional actions by a leader that can damage or aim to damage the organization and the followers. This can occur in two main ways: (a) by inspiring employees to follow goals that go in contradiction with the genuine benefits of the organization, or (b) by using a leadership approach that involves employing detrimental approaches to inspire followers, regardless of any rationalizations for such behaviour" started gaining the attention of researchers after Howell (1988) very first introduced personalized charismatic leadership as self-centred and self-interested behaviour of leadership. Afterwards researchers found different constructs and types of destructive leadership including Ashforth (1994) petty tyranny of leadership, leader bullying, leader incivility, abusive leadership, leader undermining, corrupt leadership and evil leadership, toxic leadership, leader narcissism and tyrannical leadership, leaders exclusion, Derailed Leadership, Aversive Leadership, Pseudo-Transformational Leadership, Despotic Leadership, negative leadership, and insincere leadership, Destructive Leadership, Abusive supervision is amongst the worst kind of leadership (Hussain, Ahmed, Gulzar, Usman, & Hussain, 2020) while positive and ethical leaders promote improved satisfaction and better performance (Fayyaz, Ahmad, Hussain, & Arshad, 2019). The following table from Mackey, Ellen III, McAllister, and Alexander (2021) presents various destructive leadership styles of other ELs, along with their definitions and the researchers who first provided operational definitions and developed scales to measure these variables.

Table I
Destructive variables

Construct	Definition	Reference
Destructive Leadership	Intentional actions by a leader can damage or aim to damage the organization and the followers. This can occur in two main ways: (a) by inspiring employees to follow goals that go in contradiction with the genuine benefits of the organization, or (b) by using a leadership approach that involves employing detrimental approaches to inspire followers, regardless of any rationalizations for such behaviour.	Krasikova et al. (2013)
Abusive Supervision	Subordinates' views on the degree to which supervisors consistently display aggressive oral and gestures, reactions, or actions, but excluding physical exchange.	Tepper (2000)
Aversive Leadership	Leadership behaviours that focus on employing threats, intimidation, and punishment.	Bligh, Kohles, Pearce, Justin, and Stovall (2007)
Corrupt Leadership	The leadership engages in deceitful, dishonest, or unethical behaviours to the extent that surpasses the norm, prioritizing their own self-interest over the public good.	Kellerman (2004)
Derailed Leadership	Leaders exhibit behaviors that are harmful to subordinates (e.g., bullying, humiliation) and detrimental to the organization (e.g., absenteeism, fraud) while engaging in destructive practices.	Einarsen et al. (2007)
Despotic Leadership	Leader's characterized by self-aggrandizement and exploitation, driven by individual supremacy and demanding conduct that serves the leaders own benefits.	De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008)
Evil Leadership	The leader and followers engage in extreme acts of cruelty, using pain as a tool for exerting power and inflicting substantial physical and psychological harm.	Kellerman (2004)

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Construct	Definition	Reference
Insincere Leadership	Leaders employ a range of covert and deceptive tactics to attain own objectives at the cost of others, avoiding direct conflict.	Schilling (2009)
Insular Leadership	The leader and followers neglect or overlook the health and well-being of individuals outside their immediate group or organization.	Kellerman (2004)
Leader Bullying	Persistent negative actions over an extended period make it challenging for the affected individual to respond or defend themselves.	Einarsen and Skogstad (1996)
Leader Exclusion	Leaders exclude followers from important workplace connections, activities, or events.	Scott (2007)
Leader Incivility	Subtle, low-level misconduct with unclear intentions to cause harm, marked by impoliteness and disregard.	Andersson and Pearson (1999)
Leader Narcissism	Leaders act based on their own excessive self-centred desires, prioritizing their personal needs above the needs and interests of their followers and organizations.	Rosenthal & Pittinsky (2006)
Leader Undermining	Actions aimed at obstructing the formation and maintenance of positive relationships, professional success, and a good reputation.	Duffy, Ganster, and Pagon (2002)
Negative Leadership	Negative leadership is when they are involved in usually unpopular activities, reaching from unproductive to damaging aspects.	Schilling (2009)
Personalized Charismatic Leadership	Leaders focus on their personal gain and foster unequal relationships by manipulating and undermining the authority of their followers.	Howell (1988)
Pseudo-Transformational Leadership	Leaders push their own self-serving goals by exerting dominance and control over their followers, prioritizing their own glorification over shared values or collective goals.	Barling, Christie, and Turner (2008)
Petty Tyranny	An individual who wields power in an arbitrary, harsh, and vengeful manner, exerting dominance over others.	Ashforth (1994)
Toxic Leadership	People with harmful behaviours and maladaptive traits create a long-lasting and severe negative impact on those they lead.	Lipman-Blumen (2005)
Tyrannical Leadership	Leaders who achieve outcomes by sacrificing their subordinates and aligning their actions with organizational objectives while inflicting harm on their followers.	Einarsen et al. (2007)

The concept of exploitative leadership

The notion of EL (which is a form of destructive and negative leadership) was first introduced by Schmid et al. (2019) in their research paper. Schmid, Pircher Verdorfer, and Peus (2018) defined EL as a leadership style in which leader exploits others for their self-interest. On the other side, Wright and Ferris (1997) mentioned that in the intimidating interdependence of material benefits and interests, exploitation prioritizes the self-interest or well-being of the exploiter at the cost of the exploited. Schmid et al. (2018) further expanded on this concept, linking EL to self-interested behaviours and creating a framework to measure this destructive style. Exploitative leaders, driven by personal ambition, often manipulate, coerce, and dishonestly exploit their subordinates' abilities, time, and resources, undermining not only the well-being of their followers but also the long-lasting health of the organization itself (Elsaied, 2022; Metin-Orta, 2021; Schmid et al., 2019).

Characterized by self-promotion and the pursuit of personal power, EL dismisses ethical considerations and focuses on short-term gains at the cost of sustainable organizational development (Schmid et al., 2019). This leadership style fosters a climate of mistrust and discontent through tactics such as manipulation and coercion, leading to a host of negative outcomes for subordinates (Lyu, Wu, Ye, Kwan, & Chen, 2023; Wang, Ren, Chadee, & Sun, 2021; Abdulmuhsin2021). Moreover, exploitative leaders tend to overburden followers with menial tasks, stifling their growth and development (Schmid et al., 2019). Overall, EL is considered a form of negative and damaging leadership, as it involves leaders engaging in damaging approaches to gain self-benefit from their subordinates (Fatima & Majeed, 2023; Schmid et al., 2018).

Dimensions of exploitative leadership in current construct

EL can manifest in various ways, including leaders acting selfishly, manipulating others, and pressuring or overburdening followers. The dimensions of an EL can be drawn based on an interview study by Schilling (2009) and (May, Peus, & Frey, 2010). There are four key dimensions of EL identified by Schmid et al. (2019) based on the scale developed to measure this variable. Agreeing with Schmid et al.

(2019), the first dimension of EL involves leaders acting egoistically by preferring their own objectives while giving the least priority to the needs of others and captivating acclaim for the work done by others (Stouten & Tripp, 2009; Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). The second dimension involves an exploitative leader exerting pressure and manipulating followers by using influence tactics, such as applying excessive pressure or manipulating them to achieve self-serving goals. Leaders often apply excessive pressure and harsh timelines on followers, using manipulative rather than overtly aggressive tactics to achieve goals that serve their self-interest (May et al., 2010; Schilling, 2009). The third dimension involves overburdening followers, where leaders delegate additional tasks to already overloaded followers, often in a way that seems friendly but ultimately serves the leader's self-interest. To further their own goals, the leader may adopt an overtly amicable manner; this behaviour sets it apart from other damaging leadership styles, which frequently stem from bullying. (Tepper, 2000) The fourth dimension of EL involves under-challenging followers, where leaders assign monotonous tasks or obstruct their career advancement to prevent growth and development while this approach contrasts sharply with Constructs of positive leadership, including servant leadership (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

How is an Exploitative Leader Different from an Abusive Leader, Narcissistic Leader, or Machiavellian Leader?

EL is characterized by a leader who prioritizes their own self-interest, employing various tactics to exploit their followers for personal gain. While there are other leadership styles that also involve pursuing self-interest through the manipulation of others, these approaches differ from EL in their specific characteristics and methods. Both narcissism and Machiavellianism are fundamentally driven by self-interest. Narcissists are often marked by their arrogance and manipulative behaviour toward others (Paulhus, 1998) and are known to take undue credit for others' achievements, showing greed in pursuing self-interest (Rauthmann, 2012). Such leaders' focus is on their own needs, validation, and approbation, seeking gigantic attention while showing a lack of empathy for others. In contrast, Machiavellians are distinguished by their use of deceptive interpersonal strategies and their ability to lie persuasively in the hunt for their own goals (Geis & Moon, 1981). Machiavellian achieves purposes using cunning and deceptive approaches to stay in power and take advantage of others' works or achievements, while exploitative leaders act egoistically, exert pressure, manipulate followers, overburden followers, and challenge followers and hinder them from achieving their goals Schmid et al. (2018). On the other side, an abusive supervisor uses explicit hostility and aggression, manifesting as verbal abuse and bullying, with the intent of asserting dominance and exerting control over subordinates through intimidation, while EL, through covert manipulation and deceit, exploits followers for personal gain without resorting to overt aggression (Tepper, 2000). Abusive supervision directly undermines the emotional well-being of followers through harsh treatment (Liang et al., 2022), while EL employs deceptive practices that, although less immediately apparent, similarly compromise trust and morale Schmid et al. (2019). The former is characterized by direct confrontation (Pradhan, Srivastava, & Mishra, 2020), whereas the latter relies on indirect manipulation to achieve self-serving goals (Lyu et al., 2023). Abusive supervision resembles reactive aggression, characterized by impulsive and emotional responses. In contrast, exploitative leadership aligns with proactive aggression, which is premeditated and calculated (Emmerling et al., 2023).

Past studies on exploitative leadership and its outcomes Table 2 provides an overview of research on exploitative leadership since this variable was introduced and operationalized by (Schmid et al., 2018). This variable has since prompted further investigations across various industries. However, the body of literature on EL remains relatively sparse, underscoring the need for additional research (Fatima & Majeed, 2023). The existing literature highlights the detrimental effects of EL on employee's emotions, development, performance, burnout, decreased job satisfaction, decreased well-being, decreased organizational commitment, and workplace bias (Fatima & Majeed, 2023; Wang et al., 2021; Wu, Sun, Ye, Kwan, & Yang, 2021). The first literature review on EL was published by Jimbun et al. (2022). Subsequently, further studies have been published, examining new issues stemming from EL. Table 2 includes not only the outcomes from major studies identified in (Jimbun et al., 2022) study but also those highlighted in more recent research published between 2021 and 2024.

So based on previous researches on destructive leadership in general and exploitative leadership in specific we can hypothesize that 'exploitative leadership has negative impacts on follower's behaviors.' And the next table two presents a proof mentioning the results of existing researches on EL.

Table II
Outcomes of exploitative leadership

Author	Sector and Location	Theory	Result
Alajhar, Bajaba, and Yaqub (2024)	Full-time employees, USA	Conservation of Resources Theory, Equity Theory	EL was a predictor of psychological distress with perceived distributive injustice as a mediator.
Huang, Li, and Tang (2024)	MBA students and employees in China	HRD	The developmental HR strongly improved creative ideas while EL was lower, with reciprocation obligation mediating these impacts.
S. Bajaba, Al-Judibi, Basahal, and Alsabban (2024)	Saudi Arabain Employees	SET	EL negatively affects work passion, while trust in leaders plays a mediating role.
Wang, Ren, Chadee, and Chen (2024)	Manufacturing and services industry, China	CRT	It was proved that work meaningfulness and another variable, moral potency, both mediated the relationship between EL and ethical silence.
Khalid and Aftab (2024)	Banking, Telecommunication, and higher education sector, Pakistan	(CRT)	EL was found to correlate positively with knowledge withholding through hostile attribution bias and perceived job insecurity.
Pircher Verdorfer, Belschak, and Bobbio (2024)	Various sectors, Germany	SET	EL and Abusive Supervision through perceived LMSX decreases satisfaction with leadership.
Guo, Luo, and Cheng (2024)	Industry, China	Appraisal Theory of Discrete Emotions	EL has positive relations with approach-oriented and also a positive correlation with avoidance-oriented counterproductive work behaviours (CWB), with anger serving as a mediating factor.
El-Sayed Aly, Wahba, and Abdel-Aleem (2023)	Hospitals, Egypt	SET, Moral Disinterment Theory	EL was negatively correlated with passion for work in nurses.
Ye, Chen, Wu, and Kwan (2023)	Hospitality Industry, China	Social Identity Theory	EL was positively linked to social loafing, mediated by employees' perceived insider status (PIS).
Mahmood, Zahur, and Al Hassan (2023)	Public sector organizations, Pakistan	CRT	EL reduces psychological well-being and job satisfaction by promoting dehumanization.
Khan and Tariq (2023)	Banking Sector, Pakistan	Social Cognitive Theory	EL directly affects employee expediency, and Perceived injustice mediates this relationship.
Huang, Li, and Tang (2023)	Saudi Arabia Industry	Social Cognitive Theory	EL positively impacts unethical pro-organizational behaviours (UPOB), and this relationship was fully mediated by moral disengagement.
(Lyu et al., 2023)	The manufacturing industry China	Social Cognitive Theory	EL positively affects both employees' organizational deviance and employees' interpersonal deviance indirectly by way of moral justification.
Majeed, Fatima, and Irshad (2023)	Textile sector, Pakistan		EL was found to be positively related to employee procrastination through state suspicion (SS) and supervisor-based cynicism.
Emmerling et al. (2023).	NA	NA	Mentioned passive behaviour (turnover, withdrawal) as an outcome of EL, while low arousal (shame, depression, insecurity) mediates

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Author	Sector and Location	Theory	Result
A. Bajaba, Bajaba, and Alsabban (2023)	Public and private sector Saudi Arabia	Social Identity Theory	EL negatively impacts voice behaviour through organizational identity.
Sun, Wu, and Kwan (2023)	Hotel Industry, China	SET	EL adversely affects the service quality of employees working in the hospitality industry, with LMX acting as a mediator.
(Fatima & Majeed, 2023)	Hotel Industry, Pakistan	Conservation of Resource Theory	Exploitative leaders increase psychological distress and emotional complexity among hotel employees.
Ye, Lyu, Wu, and Kwan (2022)	Private hotel industry, China	Organizational Justice Theory	EL indirectly influences employees' service sabotage by depleting their resources.
Akhtar et al. (2022)	Education Sector of Pakistan	CRT	There exists serial mediation of facades of conformity with depression between EL and absenteeism.
Zahur, Swati, and Butt (2022)	The banking sector in Pakistan	Social Exchange Theory	EL causes reduced employee creativity and decreased psychological well-being of employees by causing emotional exhaustion. However, interaction avoidance moderates this relationship.
Elsaied (2022)	Telecom Sector, Egypt	Ego depletion theory	EL influenced organizational cynicism; emotional exhaustion mediated this relationship.
Costa et al.,(2021)	Medium and large companies in Italy and Croatia	Social Cognitive Theory	EL was negatively impacting innovation implementation.
Syed et al., (2021)	Service sector, Pakistan	Cognitive Appraisal Theory	EL recuses performance and increases turnover intentions by encouraging knowledge-hiding actions or behaviour.
Wang et al. (2021)	Hospitality, China	Ego Depletion Theory	In the hospitality industry, EL reduces innovative green behaviour, with emotional exhaustion serving as a mediator.
Wan et al., (2020)	IT, manufacturing, retail, finance, education, China	Ego Depletion Theory	EL negatively impacts employee innovative behaviour.
Wu et al. (2021)	Hospitality, China	SET and LMX	EL detrimentally impacts the service performance of frontline hospitality employees.
Abdulmuhsin (2021)	Public universities, Iran	Knowledge-based View, SET, LMX	Significant negative impact of EL on knowledge management.
Guo et al. (2024)	High technology company China	CRT	EL is associated with increased knowledge hiding and greater psychological distress.
Majeed et al. (2023)	Nurses, Pakistan	CRT	Negative affectivity was found to mediate EL and psychological distress in nurses, while psychological detachment diminishes the strength of this relationship.
Schmid et al. (2019)	Various organizations Germany	N/A	EL related to turnover intention.
Schmid et al. (2018)	Information technology and communication, Germany	Cognitive-Relational Theory	EL showed a nearly significant negative impact on job satisfaction.

Methodology

A meticulous approach was taken to amass studies on exploitative leadership that were published till June 2024 in order to compile and combine pertinent data. The goal was to create an extensive analysis that may serve as a representation of the quantitative research on EL. The subsequent research methodologies were utilized:

Available content was found in journals (peer review especially), books, conference papers, PhD level dissertations, and different research reports. Most of the articles were taken from APA, Elsevier, Emerald, and Sage journals, as well as JSTORE and Science Direct. Wiley's online library was also used to access literary works. Other than the aforementioned platforms, Google, Google Scholar, and ProQuest are great sources of information on searched content or topics. For searching the related contents, topics like destructive leadership, EL, negative leadership style, toxic leaders and outcomes, counter work productive behaviours and antecedents, negative communication behaviour, personality traits and performance, employee organization relationship, negative emotions and aggressive behaviours, etc., were used.

After about 150 publications were reviewed, 100–110 pertinent ones were chosen and cited in the creation of the study. About 15 to 20 specific works—such as scholarly articles, theses, book sections, technical documents, research briefs, and conference papers—that addressed EL in professional settings were downloaded because the idea of EL is still relatively new and has not been the theme of much research.

As the present study emphasises the outcomes of EL, It emphasizes the interactive dynamic of 'a dyadic relationship' in the leadership and their cohorts or followers. Data can be collected from leaders and followers as well. It is beneficial to collect data from both for a complete understanding of dyadic leadership relationships (Gooty & Yammarino, 2011). Leaders' goals, actions, intentions, and self-perceptions of their leadership style can all be inferred from data collected from leaders. On the other hand, data collected from followers highlights how they understand and are affected by the leader's actions, providing insight into the efficacy and outcomes of the leadership approach. This dual viewpoint provides a more thorough and complex understanding of the leadership dynamic and its effects. To enhance effectiveness, a time-lagged approach can be employed for data collection, where leaders and followers provide their responses at different intervals, ranging from weeks to months. This method helps reduce or mitigate common method variance by capturing data at separate points in time, thus offering a more accurate reflection of the dynamics between leadership and followership (Podoskoff et al., 2003).

There are different scales available for different leadership styles to collect measure variables and collect data from leadership or followers. Likewise, researchers have developed different scales to measure different destructive leadership styles. For example, ccc established a scale to measure abusive supervision, which is one of the most extensively used. Although the complete 15-item form is used in many studies, a few researchers (Baumeister et al., 2001, for example) use smaller forms that have three to thirteen items. The initial scale designed, developed, and validated to measure EL was created by Schmid et al. (2018). This scale consists of 15 items specifically for assessing EL. To date, no alternative scales have been developed or tested for this construct, and none of the researchers have identified a shorter version of Schmid's scale. Scale items used in exploitative leadership are attached in the annexure.

In this scale, the first three items assess egoistic acts of leadership. Items four through six evaluate whether leadership exerts pressure for personal gain. Items seven to nine are designed to measure whether leadership assigns tedious tasks while undermining followers. Items ten to twelve are utilized to assess whether leaders take credit for others' work. Finally, items thirteen to fifteen measure whether leaders manipulate subordinates to further their own interests.

Limitations and Future Directions

Given are a few limitations which must be addressed in future studies:

A key limitation is that our focus was on management sciences journals only. All the articles accessed and reviewed were from the management sciences domain, which predominantly covers topics mostly relevant to management sciences only, while leadership is one of the most studied topics in management sciences. We didn't include insights from fields like political science, sociology, education, and the public sector. A more comprehensive understanding could be gained by integrating findings from these varied disciplines.

Another limitation is that, despite our efforts to target a comprehensive range of research studies on exploitative leadership, some relevant studies may have been inadvertently excluded due to constraints in accessing all research journals and the potential for human error.

This study primarily addresses the concept of EL and its consequences without delving into the examination of potential antecedents. In the future, studies should be carried out to fill this gap by investigating the antecedents of exploitative leadership and exploring the driving forces that gave rise to the occurrence of this leadership style.

The meta-analytic review by Jimbun et al. (2022), which covers around 70 studies and an additional 80 studies this article is covering, reveals that nearly all of the research utilized Schmid et al. (2018) scale as a compound, holistic measure without examining its dimensions

separately. None of the studies assessed or discussed the individual dimensions separately. Therefore, future research could focus on measuring and analyzing the impacts of each dimension of exploitative leadership separately. Future studies could also explore how each dimension leads to different outcomes and the varying magnitudes of their effects.

The era of polarized and isolated environments is over. With globalization and a more diverse workforce, organizations now deal with people from different cultures and perspectives. This requires a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding. In today's world, organizations face fast-changing environments and new challenges. This means they need fresh ideas and innovative management approaches, as past experiences may not always be helpful or relevant (Fang, 2010). Table 2 shows that most of the studies are done in the West and China only, and there are hardly a few studies from Pakistan or other continents like Australia and African countries. So, in the future, researchers might focus on countries from these continents to validate the existence of and measure of exploitative leadership in those cultures.

Since the introduction of EL's scale developed by Schmid et al. (2018), subsequent research has consistently employed this same scale to measure the construct. However, there is a pressing need for the creation of new scales that incorporate additional and previously overlooked dimensions of exploitative leadership. These new scales should be rigorously designed and validated across diverse organizational settings and cultural contexts.

An additional limitation in existing studies is that exploitative leadership is typically measured using follower-rated scales. Future research should consider incorporating supervisor-rated assessments as well to capture both perspectives and provide a more comprehensive understanding.

Conclusion

The study sought to synthesize eight years of research on exploitative leadership by providing a concise overview of the literature on this construct, which was much needed. The researchers reviewed the outcomes linked to exploitative leadership, the theories used to underpin the research models, as well as the countries and organizations where these studies were conducted. They also identified several limitations and proposed future directions for research on exploitative leadership. The study underscored the need for more comprehensive actions to comprehend this concept, as suggested by other researchers (Syed et al., 2023), emphasizing the significance of developing new scales to measure its other features. Such scales would allow for a more in-depth exploration of exploitative leadership across various contexts that have been largely overlooked in studies over the past seven to eight years.

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