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# [From Command to Care: Exploring the Mediating Role of Organizational Ambidexterity between Leadership Styles and Psychological Wellbeing]

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**ABSTRACT**

Nowadays, maintaining the psychological wellbeing (PWB) of employees is one of the most significant challenges for organizations. Hence, the leadership role is critical in managing PWB when organizational dynamics are changing, particularly in terms of the exploration and exploitation of emerging technologies and innovation. Therefore, this study examines the influence of transformational (TFL) and transactional (TSL) leadership styles on PWB with the mediating role of organizational ambidexterity (OA). A deductive approach was adopted to test the developed hypothesis. At the same time, data were gathered from 253 employees working in pharmaceutical companies using a questionnaire, and the collected data were analyzed using SmartPLS. Results indicate that TFL has a significant impact on PWB while TSL has no impact. Furthermore, OA mediates the relationship between TFL, TFL, and PWB. Hence, the organization needs to develop strategies for the improvement of the PWB of employees, utilising leadership styles in the presence of OA. Additionally, this study offers policy implications and future directions for researchers.

**Keywords:** Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Organizational Ambidexterity, Psychological Wellbeing

**Introduction**

The wellbeing of employees is seen as a critical aspect to be managed in today's environment. Today's organizational working environment is dynamic; thus, the importance of good leadership is crucial in managing employees' wellbeing by creating a healthy work environment that ensures employees are satisfied, able to manage stress, and maintain good mental health (Ryff, 2023; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Hence, how leaders approach their teams leaves a long-lasting effect on the overall satisfaction and mental health of employees (Avolio et al., 2009; Wallis et al., 2021).

Numerous leadership styles can be employed, which impact the wellbeing of employees, including transformational leadership (TFL) and transactional leadership (TSL). TFL not only manages tasks but also inspires and empowers employees, fostering a sense of belonging & motivation, which leads to reduced stress (Ausat et al., 2024; Bass & Riggio, 2006) and improved employee wellbeing (Kim & Cruz, 2022). On the other hand, TSL maintains order and helps achieve short-term results, which may sometimes lead to stress and burnout (Hutama et al., 2024; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). This can negatively or positively influence the wellbeing of employees when rapid changes occur within the organization.

Accordingly, for the adoption of frequent changes, the notion of organizational ambidexterity (OA) has gained importance among researchers and practitioners. OA focuses on exploring new opportunities and optimizing current processes, and has become an important part of a workplace success formula (Sarmiento et al., 2024). This can be achieved by striking a balance between change and leadership roles to maintain efficiency, and by creating a healthier working environment for improved organizational and employee wellbeing (Taha et al., 2024). In literature, commonly discussed forms of leadership include transformational and transactional, both of which can affect

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employees in different ways (Khairy et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2025). However, the relationship between leadership styles and psychological wellbeing (PWB) remains unclear in the presence of OA.

Wellbeing is a major concern for organizations nowadays (Qin & Men, 2023). In this regard, leadership can help to preserve the wellbeing of employees. This means leadership is more than just a title; it shapes the workplace environment, drives employee performance, and influences overall PWB (Lindert et al., 2022). Leadership is key, especially in determining aspects that preserve the PWB of employees, which ultimately determines the overall organizational success (Kyambade & Namatovu, 2025). Different leadership styles have distinct impacts on motivation, job satisfaction, and mental health (Das & Pattanayak, 2023). Furthermore, in today's dynamic environment, OA has become an essential factor in determining leadership effectiveness (Kassotaki, 2022; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2011). As leaders' interaction with their teams can contribute significantly to not only performance, but also employees' mental state and general health (Jia et al., 2024).

On the other side, OA focuses on the organizational ability to balance innovation (exploration) and efficiency (exploitation) that can make all the difference between leadership styles that affect individuals' outcomes (Cardona-Cano et al., 2024) such as PWB, as limited studies have been conducted in the context of a developing country like Pakistan (Chakma et al., 2021; Zhaxylyk, 2023). This study addresses this gap by examining the impact of TFL and TSL on the PWB of employees. Furthermore, the mediating role of OA between TFL, TSL, and PWB in the context of Pakistani pharmaceutical organizations is also examined.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Leader-Member Exchange Theory**

In organizational settings, the way leaders interact with their team members can have a profound impact on PWB. Through the lens of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, strong relationships foster a sense of belonging and psychological safety, which contributes to better mental health and job satisfaction among employees (Jyoti & Bhau, 2015). For instance, TSL focuses more on setting clear expectations and offering rewards to maintain stability and structure. As a result, wellbeing can be improved by reducing ambiguity and stress (Diebig et al., 2024). However, if the relationship remains strictly formal or impersonal, it may limit the emotional support employees need, potentially impacting PWB over time.

On the other side, when leaders encourage both exploring new ideas and refining existing processes (OA), it helps employees grow without feeling overwhelmed. This balance gives people room to experiment while also feeling grounded in their day-to-day tasks (Ubeda-Garcia et al., 2021). If the leader-member relationship is strong, employees are more likely to embrace this balance with confidence and resilience, knowing their leader supports them using the TFL style. The human experience at work becomes more prosperous and more fulfilling when leadership styles, relationship quality, and OA come together to support not just performance, but the PWB of every team member (Aggarwal et al., 2020). In this study, LMX serves as a foundation that specifies how TSL and TFL styles affect the organizational process (OA) and employee outcomes (PWB).

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### **Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership Style and Psychological Wellbeing**

PWB is not just about feeling depressed, anxious, or overwhelmed by fear and anger. PWB refers to feeling good, finding meaning, building strong relationships, having a sense of control over life, and genuinely engaging with the world around you (Dhanabhakya & Sarath, 2023). In other words, wellbeing is not just the absence of struggle; it is the presence of fulfillment, purpose, and connection. It extends beyond the idea of simply being "happy" and instead embodies a richer, more comprehensive approach to thriving in life (Zahoor et al., 2022). PWB is delineated as encompassing both good and bad mental states that an individual experiences, including how we evaluate our lives overall and how we react emotionally to various moments (Lado et al., 2023; Mantello & Ho, 2023).

TFL enables followers to exceed expectations by linking organizational vision and values, focusing on idealised influence, motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Through this style, leaders build trust, which simultaneously enables innovative practices and promotes follower development through personal mentoring and the acknowledgement of individual needs (Gebreheat et al., 2023). Employee engagement and performance, as well as organizational commitment and innovation, have received positive effects from recent research studies (Ausat et al., 2024; Celestin & Sujatha, 2024; Eduzor, 2024).

The effect of TFL on PWB displays mixed results based on various work settings. The study performed by Saira et al. (2021) demonstrated that TFL behaviour continuously supported employee wellness through individualized consideration; however, anxiety levels during the pandemic were shown to reduce the overall influence of TFL. Raziq et al. (2021) demonstrated that TFL appears to yield better results for employee wellbeing, based on its cultural patterns and organizational frameworks for implementation. Teetzen et al. (2023) found that leadership had no direct effect on the long-term psychological state of workers. Studies have determined that wellbeing undergoes change through organizational context, as well as social capital and individual characteristics such as gender and personality, rather than through TFL itself. TFL demonstrates its value as a wellbeing tool but researchers have proven that its effects depend on organizational culture alongside employee emotion status combined with external crises (Abolnasser et al., 2023).

In contrast, TSL style emphasises clear task organization and performance-based rewards and punishments for compliance, focusing on incentive-based rewards and an exception observation system that can take on either an active or passive nature (Lui et al., 2024). Moreover, TSL produces positive consequences, especially through the form of contingent rewards; however, inappropriate management-by-exception practices can produce negative consequences (Ibrahim et al., 2024). However, this style discourages imaginative thoughts and curbs innovative processes, making it unsuitable for volatile operational underpinnings (Cantafio & Munna, 2024). The organized discourse of TSL enhances the PWB in the work setting where support from the organization is available. Khan et al. (2021) demonstrated that organizational climate serves as a mediator, enhancing the positive effects of TSL on employee well-being. Emotional intelligence is

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utilized as a mediator, connecting TSL to occupational stress (Lee et al., 2023). Thus, developed hypotheses are mentioned below:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** TFL affects PWB.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** TSL affects PWB.

### Organizational Ambidexterity as a Mediator

A business can succeed in the new circumstances by applying a dual capacity of organizational ambidexterity (OA) that balances exploratory activities, such as development and experimentation, with exploitative activities, like ability optimisation (Enang & Rudd, 2024). Through portraying its strategic foundation, studies from recent academic literature have declared the fundamental nature of OA in all fields. Schiavone (2024) elaborated OA as a systematic way for firms to organize their ambidextrous practices to achieve efficiency (Hamblin et al., 2024), technological innovation capabilities, and competitive advantages (Çelik & Uzunçarşılı, 2023). On the other side, leadership styles have gained increased academic focus during recent years because they act through TFL and TSL to shape OA.

Liu et al. (2019) observe that TFL significantly influences employees' conduct through psychological empowerment, as this approach also sparks innovation and facilitates harmonized exploratory and exploitative actions. TFL promotes indispensable innovative actions in organizations that support success in dynamic competitive settings (Saleh & Auso, 2025). According to Cardona-Cano et al. (2024), TFL has stronger organizational impacts on ambidexterity than TSL. Outcomes of research indicate that ambidexterity is favoured over TFL, even though TSL enables ambidexterity to a limited extent in dynamic industries that enhance exploration and adaptability. Continued research supports the notion that superior leadership drives the pursuit of OA, which is becoming increasingly crucial for organizations competing in dynamic environments (Patel, 2024). However, limited studies exist in this regard as table 1 shows the related studies.

**Table 1. TFL, TSL, OA, and PWB Studies**

Context Specificati on	Leadership (Styles)	Dependent Variable	Mediator(s)	Key Findings	Source
German Company	TFL	PWB	None	A positive link exists between TFL and PWB	(Lindert et al., 2022)
Hotel employees	TFL	PWB	Employee engagement and job satisfaction	TFL positively affects PWB and EE, and JS mediates the link	(Abolnasse et al., 2023)
Electronic Companies - China	TFL, TSL, Ambidextro us	Creativity	Psychological empowerment, promotion focus	Leadership styles amplify creativity through PE and PF	(Tung, 2016)

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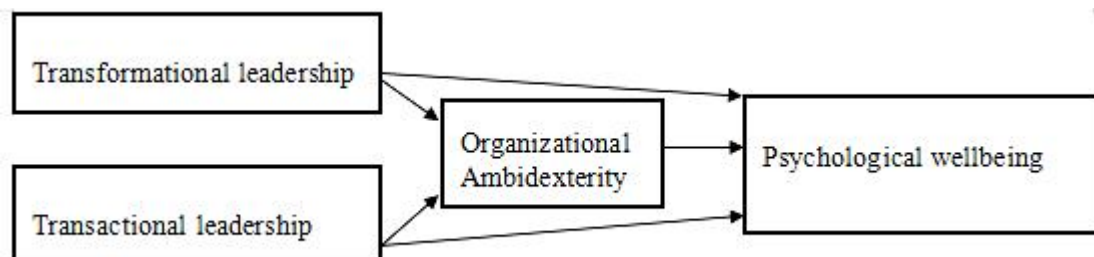
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Tourism and hospitality in Egypt	TSL	Organizational agility & ambidexterity	Organizational Trust and ambidexterity	TSL increases trust, ambidexterity and agility	(Khairy et al., 2023)
IT industry- Amman City SMEs	Digital transformational	Job performance	OA	OA mediates between digital TFL and performance.	(Alawneh et al., 2025)
IT companies in Pakistan	TFL & Ambidextrous	Performance	Ambidexterity	OA mediates the link between TFL and performance	(Qammar & Abidin, 2020)
Cement sector- Pakistan	TSL trust	and EWB	Organizational Climate	TSL affects EWB, and OC mediates the link.	(Khan et al., 2021)

According to Hanu & Khumalo (2024), the stabilization of employee wellbeing proved better from exploitation-focused ambidexterity operational methods than from exploration-focused approaches during crisis periods. The success of OA in fostering PWB depends on leadership style, as well as the crisis environment and individual psychological resources. Therefore, the developed hypotheses are mentioned below, and Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** OA mediates the relationship between TFL and PWB.

**H<sub>4</sub>:** OA mediates the relationship between TSL and PWB.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study**

### Methodology

This research employed a deductive research approach to test each hypothesis. The target population consists of employees working in the pharmaceutical industry. The pharmaceutical sector is characterized by a highly regulated environment, continuous innovation, and a dynamic workforce comprising research scientists, production managers, quality control specialists, marketing professionals, and administrative staff. Employees in this industry are often exposed to high work pressures, strict regulatory compliance, and evolving leadership dynamics, which can notably impact their psychological wellbeing.

For our research, we decided to sample the responses using the (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019) recommendation with a sample of 253 and a convenience sampling technique was used to collect responses based on availability and willingness of people to participate (Golzar et al., 2022) using a scale adopted from Rawung et al. (2015) to

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measure TFL and TSL using five items for each variable while PWB was measured using six items taken from Prasad and Mangipudi (2021) and OA was measured using Martínez-Falcó et al. (2024) scale with six items. Primary data collection methods were employed to gather firsthand information from respondents using a five-point Likert scale. To analyze our data, SPSS and SmartPLS were used.

### Findings

Table 2 shows the respondents' representation in the sample.

**Table 2. Respondents Profile**

Respondents Profile		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	149	58.9%
	Male	104	41.1%
Age	21-30	73	28.9%
	31-40	79	31.2%
	41-50	77	30.4%
	50 above	24	9.5%
Education level	Undergraduate	8	3.2%
	Graduate	81	32%
	Postgraduate	136	53.8%
	Others	28	11.1%
Job position	Entry level	36	14.2%
	Midlevel	60	23.7%
	Senior level	124	49%
	Executive	33	13%
Work experience	0-3 yrs	46	18.2%
	4-7 yrs	51	20.2%
	8-10 yrs	71	28.1%
	10+ yrs	85	33.6%

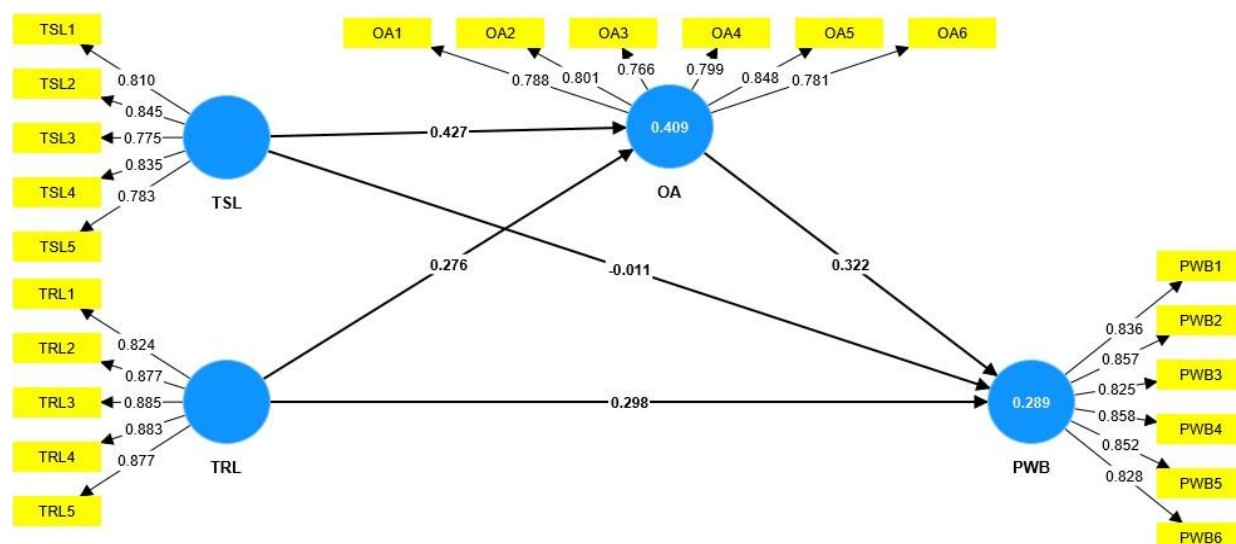
### Factor Loadings

Table 3 presents the measurement results for OA, PWB, TFL, and TSL. Every measure comprises several items that demonstrate the strength of each item in representing its core construct through factor loadings, where each standardized variable loading exceeds 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). Figure 2 shows the measurement model.

**Table 3. Factor Loadings**

	OA	PWB	TRL	TSL
OA1	0.788			
OA2	0.801			
OA3	0.766			
OA4	0.799			
OA5	0.848			
OA6	0.781			
PWB1		0.836		
PWB2		0.857		
PWB3		0.825		

PWB4	0.858		
PWB5	0.852		
PWB6	0.828		
TFL1		0.824	
TFL2		0.877	
TFL3		0.885	
TFL4		0.883	
TFL5		0.877	
TSL1			0.81
TSL2			0.845
TSL3			0.775
TSL4			0.835
TSL5			0.783



**Figure 2: Measurement Model**

### Construct Reliability and Validity

Table 4 presents the key indicators, including Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted, for each variable. Cronbach's alpha of all the variables are greater than the threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2011). The AVE value of all variables is greater than 0.50 (Hamid et al., 2017), indicating no issues with construct reliability and validity.

**Table 4. Construct Reliability and Validity**

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Composite reliability	AVE
OA	0.885	0.888	0.913	0.636
PWB	0.918	0.921	0.936	0.710
TFL	0.919	0.923	0.939	0.756
TSL	0.869	0.874	0.905	0.656



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### Discriminant Validity

Table 5 demonstrates discriminant validity by showing that the constructs remain separate from one another (Hamid et al., 2017). The values of all the variables lie below the threshold of 0.85, indicating that the constructs are distinct and not overlapping (Henseler et al., 2015).

**Table 5. Discriminant Validity (HTMT)**

	OA	PWB	TFL	TSL
<b>OA</b>				
<b>PWB</b>	0.525			
<b>TFL</b>	0.604	0.503		
<b>TSL</b>	0.679	0.405	0.713	

### R Square Value

R-squared value indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is predictable from independent variable. The R-squared value of OA is 40.9%, and that of PWB is 28.9%. This explains that the OA model explains a higher proportion of variance in the outcome compared to the PWB model, as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6. R-Square**

	R-square	R-square adjusted
<b>OA</b>	0.409	0.404
<b>PWB</b>	0.289	0.281

### Multi Collinearity

Table 7 shows the multicollinearity values, which are less than 5. A VIF score lower than 5 indicates that there are no multicollinearity problems (Salmerón-Gómez et al., 2025).

**Table 7. Multi Collinearity**

	VIF
<b>OA1</b>	2.041
<b>OA2</b>	2.197
<b>OA3</b>	1.798
<b>OA4</b>	1.974
<b>OA5</b>	2.569
<b>OA6</b>	2.068
<b>PWB1</b>	3.244
<b>PWB2</b>	3.356
<b>PWB3</b>	2.579
<b>PWB4</b>	3.706
<b>PWB5</b>	3.623
<b>PWB6</b>	2.68
<b>TFL1</b>	2.364
<b>TFL2</b>	2.996
<b>TFL3</b>	3.014
<b>TFL4</b>	3.363
<b>TFL5</b>	3.18
<b>TSL1</b>	2.018
<b>TSL2</b>	2.48

TSL <sub>3</sub>	1.823
TSL <sub>4</sub>	2.158
TSL <sub>5</sub>	1.961

### Hypothesis Testing

The structural equation model analysis shows key relationships exist between these variables. The research shows that OA has a strong impact on PWB, with a path coefficient value of 0.322 ( $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that OA leads to increased employee PWB. TFL shows direct impact on PWB and simultaneously boosts OA ( $\beta = 0.298$ ,  $p < 0.001$  and  $\beta = 0.276$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ). Moreover, TSL serves as a positive predictor for OA ( $\beta = 0.427$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). The TSL variable shows no substantial connection to PWB ( $\beta = -0.011$ ,  $p = 0.913$ ), as shown in Table 8.

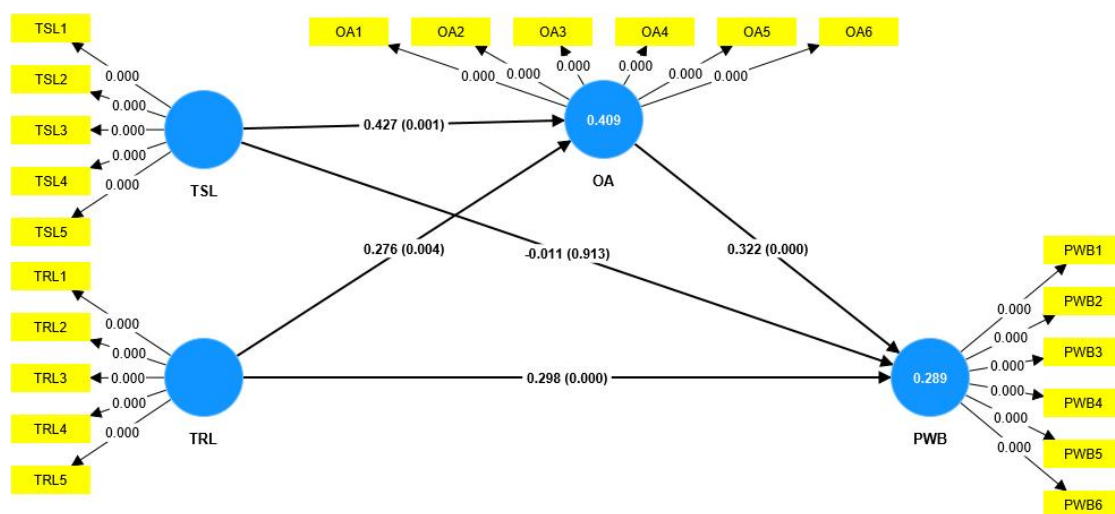
**Table 8. Path Coefficient**

	Beta	STDEV	T statistics	P values
OA → PWB	0.322	0.09	3.586	0.000
TFL → OA	0.276	0.097	2.858	0.004
TFL → PWB	0.298	0.081	3.66	0.000
TSL → OA	0.427	0.124	3.448	0.001
TSL → PWB	-0.011	0.103	0.109	0.913

The findings in Table 9 show that both leadership styles play a meaningful role in enhancing PWB by first strengthening employees' emotional connection to their organization. Specifically, OA mediates the link between TFL and PWB ( $\beta = 0.089$ ,  $p = 0.026$ ), as well as between TSL and PWB ( $\beta = 0.138$ ,  $p = 0.030$ ). With both p-values falling below the 0.05 threshold, the results confirm that these relationships are statistically significant, suggesting that OA is a key mediator between TFL, TSL, and PWB. Figure 3 shows the structural model.

**Table 9: Specific Indirect**

	Beta	Standard deviation	T statistics	P value
TFL → OA → PWB	0.089	0.04	2.225	0.026
TSL → OA → PWB	0.138	0.063	2.17	0.03



**Figure 3: Structural Model**

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### **Discussion**

This study examined the impact of leadership styles, including TFL and TSL, on PWB, with the mediating role of OA. According to the analysis, TFL has a significant effect on the PWB. This indicates that TFL style encourages its employees and instils a culture that challenges them to remain inspired in the workplace. Results align with the elaboration presented by Fang (2023), indicating that TFL can create meaningful jobs and facilitate work engagement and job satisfaction in a stressful work environment, thereby protecting wellbeing. Moreover, the results align with the study by Abolnasser et al. (2023). In addition, TSL has an insignificant effect on PWB. This indicates that the influence of leadership style may vary from context and sector, as studies have highlighted that TSL focuses on more structured, clear, and predictable workplaces, reducing stress and improving trust (Hutama et al., 2024). However, the results are not aligned with those of Khan et al. (2021).

Consequently, OA mediates the link between TFL, TSL, and PWB. The findings also support the notion that TFL and TSL are most beneficial in a dynamic environment where strategic flexibility exists in the form of an OA. On one hand, leaders must encourage creativity and risk-taking, while on the other, they need to ensure that the enhancement process does not compromise the individual's wellbeing. Likewise, Liu et al. (2019) specified that TFL plays a crucial role in increasing ambidexterity by encouraging discretion and by providing visionary direction. This is not only beneficial to the organization but also caters to the psychological safety and wellbeing of the employees as elaborated by Salas-Vallina et al. (2022) and Cardona-Cano et al. (2024). Accordingly, Khairy et al. (2023) and Hanu & Khumalo (2024) asserted that TSL per se will not facilitate creativity or enhance respondents' levels of PWB; however, when supplemented by ambidextrous approaches, it leads to positive mental health results, including decreased uncertainty and enhanced task effectiveness.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

It is concluded that leadership style can play a crucial role in enhancing the PWB of employees. According to the results, TFL improves the PWB of employees, while TSL has no impact on PWB. On the other hand, OA mediates the relationship. This study extends the leader-member exchange theory by integrating leadership style with OA along with PWB as an outcome variable. While there are perceived limitations of TSL in increasing PWB, it offers formal direction in various operational environments.

At the same time, the impact of leadership on wellbeing is contingent upon cultural factors, as well as the traits of the individual and the organization. Those organizations that foster such leadership, and at the same time backing ambidextrous processes, are likely to maintain high performance and enhance the PWB of their workforce in the current volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous work climates. Leadership development and organizational approaches in the future should embrace both leadership styles and ambidextrous capabilities to foster well-being and performance among their employees.

Based on the results, it is recommended that organizations should cultivate and enhance TFL and TSL styles. This can be achieved by providing training and development opportunities to managers and top management, leading to better outcomes through

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effective management of PWB, emotional intelligence, individual consideration, and inspirational motivation. Moreover, the pharmaceutical organizations should aim to create a balance between exploration and exploitation processes for better management of change and PWB of employees.

### **Limitations of Research and Directions for Future Researchers**

This study has a few limitations that future researchers should consider to expand the research horizon. First, the research was conducted in the pharmaceutical industry. Therefore, the generalization of the results could be restricted. Future research may be conducted in other sectors to broaden the scope of the study. Moreover, a cross-sectional study was conducted. Future research may conduct a longitudinal study. Hence, future researchers may consider including other mediating and moderating factors, such as emotional resilience, organizational justice, cultural aspects, personality, and role demands, to define the circumstances under which leadership styles have a greater influence.

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