

Examining the Impact of Aversive Leadership on Employee Psychological Distress: The Mediating Role of Anger and the Moderating Role of Psychological Resilience

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Abstract

This study examined aversive leadership and employee psychological distress, focusing on anger as a mediator and psychological resilience as a potential moderator. A quantitative and cross-sectional design approach was used to analyzing survey data from 122 participants in Pakistan's healthcare, education, manufacturing, and services facilities through regression and mediation/moderation analysis using SPSS. Aversive leadership has a significant impact on employees' psychological distress, and this relationship is shaped by anger. Psychological resilience had no reduced effect. To ensure employee well-being, toxic leadership must be addressed. This study highlights the importance of emotional reactions – especially anger – in linking poor leadership to psychological distress among employees. By highlighting this relationship, the study highlights the importance of companies addressing toxic leadership styles to protect employee health and promote a more positive work environment. Future research should focus on secondary and alternative resilience designs to address the limitations of this study regarding the non-significant moderating role of resilience, perhaps in terms of issues with a cross-sectional design that limits causal inference or the use of self-reported data, for which the same method may introduce bias. The results show how important it is for companies to develop leadership initiatives that support emotional intelligence and reduce negative leadership practices. Employee psychological distress can be reduced through interventions that focus on stress and anger management. Furthermore, even if communication resilience did not change significantly in this study, the construction of organizational resilience is still important.

Key Words: Aversive Leadership, Employee Psychological Distress, Psychological Resilience

Introduction:

Aggressive motivation, characterized by toxic behaviors and harmful consequences, has been the focus of leadership research (Krasikova et al., 2013). Extensive research has shown that abusive leadership poses a serious threat to employee well-being (Liu, et al., 2012). As the field has gained momentum and recognition (Ryan et al., 2023), there has been a corresponding increase in the number of diverse ideas. To address this paradox, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between two key aspects of toxic behavior (Kou, 2020)—negative feedback and exclusion (Baumeister et al., 2007)—and their impact on employee well-being (Truss et al., 2013). Through comprehensive, multi-level analysis, we seek to enrich the field of toxic leadership and our understanding of employee well-being (Milosevic et al., 2019).

Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping any organizational environments and employee well-being (Alameeri et al., 2020). Effective leadership fosters growth, innovation, and satisfaction, the darker aspects of leadership (Haynes et al., et al., 2015), such as Aversive Leadership (AL), can have detrimental effects (Liu et al., 2012). Aversive leadership, characterized by hostility, coercion, and manipulation (Mehraein, 2021), creates a toxic work environment that undermines morale, productivity, and mental health (Chamberlain & Hodson, 2010). This destructive

leadership style is increasingly recognized for its impact on employees' emotional and psychological well-being (Mackey et al., 2018), including heightened stress, moral disengagement, and reduced performance. This study makes an important contribution to the existing literature on adversarial leadership (Majeed et al., 2020) and highlights its complex dynamics and impact on individual well-being in the organization as a whole (van den Berg et al., 2021). By examining the relationship between negative feedback and deviance, we sought to uncover the underlying mechanisms through which hostile leadership affects employee well-being (Peng & Zeng, 2016). Using a multilevel meta-analysis approach, we aimed to synthesize findings from a wide range of studies involving different populations and organizations from different sectors (Vishwanathan et al., 2019). This comprehensive approach provides a comprehensive assessment of the relationship between hostile leadership, negative perceptions, disengagement, and employee well-being (Almeida et al., 2021). By examining the combined effects of these toxic behaviors, we will provide a comprehensive understanding of how they contribute to overall workplace satisfaction, mental health, and job performance (Caillier, 2020). Additionally, this study sheds light on potential moderating factors that may influence the effects of aversive leadership (Gauglitz et al., 2022). Factors such as organizational climate, employee demographics, and power dynamics can play an important role in shaping the effects of toxic leadership behaviors (Zaabi, Elanain, & Ajmal, 2018). Through detailed analysis, we sought to identify these demographic variables and their significance in the inverse relationship between leadership and well-being (Majeed & Fatima, 2020).

A particularly concerning consequence of aversive leadership is the elicitation of Anger (A) as an emotional response (American Journal of Psychiatry, 1976). Anger arising from experiences of injustice, humiliation, or disrespect, is often exacerbated in environments dominated by aversive leaders (Rice et al., 2020). This emotional state not only disrupts individuals' cognitive and emotional stability but also mediates the relationship between leadership behavior and adverse psychological outcomes (Syed et al., 2020). The persistent experience of anger contributes to Psychological Distress (PD) (Conway et al., 2020), manifesting as symptoms of anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion (Tseng et al., 2019). Research highlights the cascading impact of such distress, affecting not only individual health but also organizational dynamics (Moussa et al., 2024). The presence of Psychosocial Resilience (PR), which is defined as an individual's capacity to adapt and recover from adversity, can significantly alter these dynamics (Denckla et al., 2020). Resilient and Stronge individuals are better equipped to regulate emotions, manage stress, and maintain psychological well-being, even in adverse situations (Parsons et al., 2016). By moderating the impact of aversive leadership on psychological distress, resilience serves as a critical protective factor, mitigating the negative effects of toxic leadership behaviors (Syed et al., 2020).

A large amount of research on aversive leadership had been going around for the past few years, but still the gaps remain in understanding the intricate relationships between these mention variables (Macfarlane et al., 2024). Specifically, the mediating role of anger and the moderating role of psychosocial resilience in the context of psychological distress require further exploration (Denckla et al., 2020). Our study's main aim is to address these gaps by examining the interplay of the 04 factors, aversive leadership, anger, psychological distress, and resilience. The findings will provide valuable insights to diminish the harmful effects of toxic leadership practices and foster healthier organizational environments. By filling a gap in literature, our study not only advances knowledge about aversive leadership, but also has practical implications for organizations and leaders. Findings from this study can inform leadership development programs, organizational policies, and interventions aimed at reducing the negative effects of negative behaviors like aversive leadership behaviors. Ultimately, our efforts aim to create a healthy and supportive work environment, improve employee well-being, productivity, and overall organizational success. In conclusion, this comprehensive, multilevel meta-analysis expands knowledge about aversive leadership and demonstrates the relationship between negative perceptions, disengagement, and employee well-being. Through an in-depth literature review, we aim to provide valuable insights and concepts that can shape research, theory

development, and practical interventions for both leaders and organizations.

Based on 122 independent samples, this multi-level study investigates the relationship between aversive leadership and employee well-being by examining the impact of feedback and ostracism on emotional exhaustion, physical symptoms, and job satisfaction. The findings showed that aversive leadership is strongly related to worsened employee well-being variables (Skogstad et al., 2014). This study also shows that toxic behaviors that may not seem very serious on their own, in combination with others, can be a substantial problem for subordinate employees' well-being. This study contributes to the aversive leadership field by tying single toxic behaviors' varying levels of impact into the more general aversive leadership construct.

Theoretical Framework:

COR (Conservation of Resources) Theory Overview

The conservation of resources (COR) theory proposed by Hobfoll (1989) suggests that people want to conserve and protect their resources, including mental, emotional, and physical resources. According to COR theory, stress occurs when people feel a threat to their resources or a loss of their resources. The basic classification of leadership theory is aversive leadership (Mehraein, 2021). It involves patterns of behavior often used by managers and supervisors to achieve goals and improve employee performance and can be done in the employee's best interest (Slemp et al., 2018). This is defined as preventing top-down employee behaviour, including abuse and, most damagingly, hostility, ignoring their needs or not seeing things from their point of view (Marchington, 2015). Little research has been done on impaired driving (Berthelon & Galy, 2020). Preliminary evidence suggests that hostile leadership is a form of perceived leadership in the workplace and can have serious consequences for employee behavior and performance (Mackey et al., 2018).

Applying COR Theory to the Research Model

In the context of the research model, hostile or aversive leadership can be viewed as a threat to employees' psychological resources such as emotional well-being, self-esteem, and control (Majeed et al., 2020). When employees face undesirable management, they may lose these resources, resulting in psychological distress.

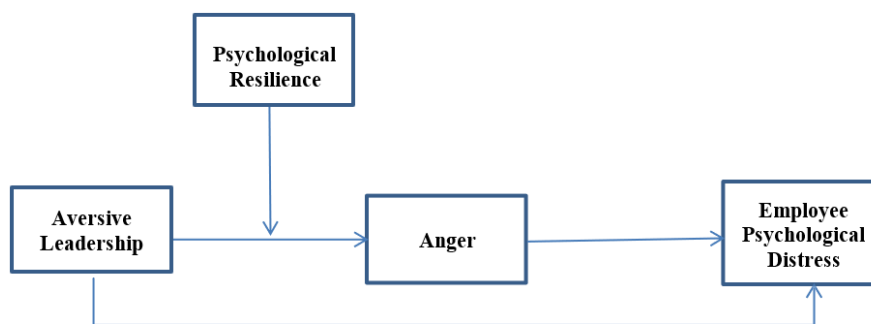


Figure 1. Hypothesized moderated-mediation model.

Although research on the relationship between work stress and well-being has expanded over the past 20 years (Ganster et al., 2013), research on the physiological processes of stress has also made significant progress. Previous researchers used various philosophies to describe that the adverse work results related to dark leaderships styles, for example, transactional theory of stress by Folkman and Lazarus (1984). Starting with someone who “uses force and punishes his employees for doing their jobs” would be quite non-identical to an aversive leadership (AL), who’s create pressures on employees through their infirmity. Opposition leaders often exploit this behavior to drain the resources of their subordinates. This process is well established in conservation of resource theory (COR). He argued that when employees encounter stressful situations, this can lead to a loss of resources, which Hobfoll (1989) calls “personal characteristics.” A good workplace is essential for employees to work (Harrison et al., 2006). If employees have negative feelings about their environment, the result may be negative feelings about the employee's performance (Eisenberger et al., 1986) or personal life problems (Bakker

et al., 2003). Finally, COR theory provides a framework for understanding the research model. Hostile leadership can lead to psychological distress, which is perceived as a threat to employees' psychological resources. Anger and mental toughness can mitigate this relationship. By understanding application of COR theory, companies can develop programs to reduce the negative effects of aggressive leadership and improve employee well-being.

Theory and Hypotheses:

Aversive Leadership & Employee Psychology Distress

Aversive leadership encompasses behaviors that undermine employee well-being through coercion, intimidation, and hostility. Unlike constructive leadership styles, aversive leadership erodes trust, fosters fear, and creates a climate of negativity within organizations (Bligh et al., 2007). Employees subjected to such behaviors often experience moral disengagement, a psychological mechanism enabling them to rationalize unethical actions in response to hostile leadership (Ali et al., 2022). These findings emphasize the pervasive influence of aversive leadership on both individual and organizational outcomes, highlighting the need to understand its broader psychological effects.

Hypothesis 1: Aversive Leadership will be positively related to Employee Psychology Distress

High levels of psychological presence are often associated with and working with hostile leaders (Anerson et al., 2007; Tepper, 2000). According to Kekulet-Glaser et al. (2002), leaders who display negative behaviors can create a toxic work environment in which employees experience high levels of stress, anxiety, and frustration. Research (Harris et al., 2007). Furthermore, research shows that aggressive leadership has a positive relationship with employee anxiety and depression (Yin et al., 2017). Aversive leadership increases psychological distress; it also has a significant impact on employees' mental health. According to research, aversive leadership is associated with emotional responses such as helplessness and fear that reduce employees' ability to perform well. For example, according to Einarsen et al., aversive supervision is a strong predictor of psychological distress and depressive symptoms. (2007). Moreover, as shown by Harris et al. (2007) found that aversive leadership increases employees' anxiety and emotional levels, making them feel helpless. The findings highlight the need for organizations to recognize aversive leadership as a major psychological stressor that affects employee well-being.

Aversive Leadership & Employee Anger

Anger is a critical emotional response triggered by perceived injustices and mistreatment. In the context of aversive leadership, anger emerges as a natural reaction to the toxic behaviors of leaders. This emotional response not only exacerbates interpersonal conflicts but also serves as a mediating factor between leadership styles and psychological distress (Syed et al., 2020). For instance, leaders who display despotic or morally corrupt behavior often provoke anger among subordinates, which in turn heightens stress, reduces self-esteem, and contributes to emotional exhaustion. Such findings underscore the importance of addressing anger as a pathway through which leadership influences mental health outcomes.

Hypothesis 2: Aversive Leadership will be positively related to Employee Anger

Employee depression is one of the most common emotional states people experience as a result of work stress, including stress, anxiety and anger. (Karasek, 1979; Wang et al., 2018). The stressful, anxious, and uncertain environment created by aversive bosses affects employees' mental health (Tepper, 2000; Habman et al., 2009). Employees who feel that they are not receiving the help they deserve or being treated fairly in the workplace are more likely to experience unacceptable leadership (Tepper et al., 2017). Employee anger is often associated with hostile like aversive leadership (Anerson et al., 2007; Tepper, 2000). Leaders who use aversive tactics such as verbal abuse and intimidation can create frustration, Anger and hostility in employees in the workplace (Glumb, 2002). According to research, employees with aversive leadership are more likely to express anger, resentment, and anger (Harris et al., 2007). Moreover, research has shown that conflict, anger, and resentment among employees are

closely related to aversive leadership (Yin et al., 2008).

Employee Anger & Employee Psychology Distress

One way to conceptualize anger is as an emotional response to the perceived harm associated with a harmful driving experience. According to COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), anger can be one of the coping strategies that people use to try to regain control of their resources. However, anger can cause psychological distress by draining psychological resources. It has been shown that the relationship between employee anger and psychological distress can be moderated through the use of psychological flexibility (Tugad & Frederickson, 2004). Resilient employees are better able to cope with stress and adversity, which may reduce the harmful effects of anger on psychological disorders (Wigneld & Young, 1993). Research shows that more resilient employees are less likely to experience psychological distress, even when they are angry (Block et al., 2011).

Hypothesis 3: Employee Anger will be positively related to Employee Psychological Distress

Employee anger and dissatisfaction have been shown to significantly predict employee psychological distress (Kiccolt-Glesser et al., 2002). According to Bono et al. (2012) found that angry employees are more likely to experience stress, anxiety, and depression, which can negatively impact their overall health. According to several studies, employee anger is positively associated with anxiety and depressive symptoms (Fox et al., 2001). Furthermore, research shows that employee anger is strongly associated with emotional exhaustion, psychological distress and burnout (Geddes et al., 2011). Psychological distress, characterized by symptoms of anxiety, depression, and emotional instability, is a common outcome of prolonged exposure to aversive environments. Studies have consistently linked hostile leadership styles to increased levels of distress, emphasizing the role of toxic workplace dynamics in shaping employees' mental health (Hunter & Sawyer, 2011) The long-term effects of psychological distress extend beyond the individual, impacting team performance, organizational productivity, and workplace morale. This highlights the critical need for interventions aimed at mitigating the psychological toll of aversive leadership.

Mediating Role of Employee Anger

Reviews of leadership practices style have found associations with a number of harmful emotional and behavioral outcomes among followers, such as low self-esteem (Mathessen & Einarsen, 2007; Burton & Hobler, 2006; Ashforth, 1994), self-efficacy, Gustern, & Pagon, 2002), and social (Mattsen and Einarsen, 2007); an increase in anti-citizenship behavior (Ball, Trevino, & Sims, 1994). increased stress, anger, resistance, and avoidance, and lowered performance goals (Baron, 1988); decreased career satisfaction, normative and affective commitment, increased work-family conflict, intention to leave work, and psychological distress (Tepper, 2000). and decreased work unit efficiency and cohesion, in addition to increased frustration, stress, interaction, helplessness, and isolation at work (Ashforth, 1994). Schaubroeck, Wollumbwa, Ganster, and Kipps (2007) recently tested an interaction model between job scope, leader hostility, and the negative impact of leadership on subordinates' physical and psychological stress, work attitudes, and organizational commitment. Their findings indicate that leader hostility and/or negative emotions have detrimental effects on the levels of anxiety, somatic complaints, depression, dissatisfaction, and organizational performance of subordinates who reported less satisfying work. Collectively, these data highlight several negative consequences associated with different types of after-dark driving accidents.

Hypothesis 4: The relationship between Aversive leadership and employee psychological distress will be mediated by employee anger

Employee anger has been shown to mediate the relationship between psychological distress and unsatisfactory or aversive leadership (Glumb, 2002). Poor leadership can cause anger and hostility in employees, which can lead to greater psychological distress (Kiccolt-Glasser et al.,

2002). Research has shown that employee psychological distress and dissatisfaction with leadership are entirely the cause of employee anger (Harris et al., 2007).

Moderating Role of Psychology Resilience

According to Block and Kermin (1996), resilience is a personal characteristic that helps people deal with stress and challenges. According to COR theory, people with high psychological resilience may be more likely to conserve psychological resources and resist the harmful effects of reckless driving. This can reduce the chance of developing mental disorders.

Hypothesis 5: Psychology Resilience will moderate the relationship between Aversive leadership and employee anger

Psychosocial resilience refers to an individual's capacity to adapt and recover from adversity, resilience is particularly relevant in buffering the effects of toxic leadership on psychological outcomes (Ledesma, 2014). Research indicates that resilient employees are more likely to maintain emotional balance, regulate stress, and avoid the detrimental effects of anger and distress, even in adverse conditions (Bardoel et al., 2014). By moderating the relationship between aversive leadership and psychological distress, resilience plays a vital role in fostering employee well-being and mitigating the impact of negative leadership behaviors (Plimmer et al., 2021). Building on the existing literature, this study posits a conceptual framework in which anger mediates the relationship between aversive leadership and psychological distress, while psychosocial resilience moderates this dynamic (Bani-Melhem et al., 2021). This integrated approach provides a nuanced understanding of the interplay between these variables, offering insights into both the mechanisms of harm and potential pathways for intervention (Jaureguiberry et al., 2022). By addressing these relationships, the research aims to contribute to the development of strategies for promoting resilience and reducing the negative impact of toxic & aversive leadership in organizational settings.

Methodology:

Sample and Data Collection

This study uses a quantitative, cross-sectional approach to explore how hostile leadership affects employees' psychological distress, revealing the moderating effect of psychological flexibility and the mediating function of anger. Using convenience and snowball sampling, participants were selected from among full-time employees in various sectors such as manufacturing, services, healthcare and education. To be eligible, participants must meet the criteria as, be at least eighteen years old, have worked under direct supervision for at least six months, and not have any serious mental disorder that may directly affect them that has not been diagnosed. Power analysis of intensity rating showed an ideal sample size of 122 participants. The online survey used Qualtrics to collect data, and a validation tool was used to measure relevant variables. The participants included senior/junior managers, laboratory technicians, medical specialists, medical assistants, lecturers and administrative staff. Aversive leadership was assessed using the Aversive Leadership Scale (ALS), which measures aversive and aggressive supervisor behaviors. The Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10), which focuses on symptoms of anxiety and depression, was used to measure psychological distress, and the State Anger subscale of the Trait Anger Expression Inventory-2 (STAXI-2) was used to measure anger. Adaptability and coping strategies were measured using the Connor Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), which was used to assess psychological flexibility. A Likert-type response structure was used for all scales to ensure standardization of measures.

The survey was distributed via professional networks, email invitations, and social media, and the data collection period lasted four weeks. The institutional ethics committee granted ethics approval, and all participants provided informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. Descriptive statistics were used to determine means, standard deviations, and correlations for each variable, and Cronbach's alpha was used to measure reliability. Hierarchical regression was used to test the direct effect hypotheses, PROCESS macro (Model 4) for mediation analysis to examine the role of anger, and PROCESS macro (Model 1) for moderation

analysis to assess the effect of psychological flexibility. Demographic factors such as age, gender, length of service, and job type were used as controls to reduce the possibility of confounding effects. Using reliable statistical methods and proven equipment, this method places great emphasis on accuracy and reliability. Valid measures and inclusion of control variables help address issues including cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported data, which may influence causal interpretation. This approach provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how psychological distress, anger, avoidant leadership, and workplace resilience interact.

Measures:

We used the scales that had already been employed in earlier research to test our theories. We used seven-point anchors to measure each of the focal variables.

Aversive Leadership

Aversive Leadership was accessed using a well-established 06-item scale (Pearce & Sims, 2002) on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5”

Psychological Resilience

Psychological Resilience was accessed using a well-established 09-item scale (Naswall & Katharina et al., 2019), (CD-RISC) on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5”

Anger

Anger was accessed using a well-established 04-item scale of Anger Expression Inventory-2 (STAXI-2), (Naswall & Katharina et al., 2019) on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5”

Psychological Distress

Psychological Distress was accessed using a well-established 10-item scale Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10), (JSS., 1999) on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5”

Results:

Control Variables

To examine the potential effect of control variables, a one-way ANOVA test was performed. Data was collected on a range of demographic factors including age, qualifications, position, length of service and experience in current management position. Based on the results of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), we controlled relevant demographic variables because of their influence on the main results. The results showed that age was significantly associated with employee psychological distress ($F = 5.66, p = 0.001$) and anger ($F = 2.45, p = 0.067$). Overall work experience showed a statistically significant relationship with employee psychological distress ($F = 3.28, P = 0.023$). Skills, positions held and experience with current leadership did not show statistically significant differences for the variables studied. Therefore, age and number of work experience were controlled by subsequent analyses.

Correlation and Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 represents bivariate correlations and descriptive statistics for the study variables. Aversive Leadership (AL) exhibited a positive and significant correlation with Employee Psychological Distress (EPD; $r = 0.450, p < 0.01$) and Anger (AS; $r = 0.400, p < 0.01$), suggesting that higher levels of aversive leadership are associated with greater psychological distress and anger. EPD demonstrated a strong positive correlation with AS ($r = 0.727, p < 0.01$), indicating that individuals experiencing higher distress are more likely to report elevated anger levels. Employee Psychological Resilience (EPR) showed a small negative correlation with EPD ($r = -0.186, p < 0.05$) but no significant associations with AL ($r = -0.018$) or AS ($r = -0.136$). These results highlight the significant relationships between aversive leadership,

psychological distress, and anger, while resilience appears to have a limited inverse association with psychological distress. Employee psychological resilience (EPR) is determined by a consistent correlation with EPD ($r = -0.186, p < 0.05$) but not limited to a significant relationship with aversive leadership AL ($r = -0.018$) or AS ($r = -0.136$). These results showed a significant relationship between bad leadership and implementation and adoption, while the media had a limited inverse relationship with commitment to it.

TABLE 1: Correlations, descriptive statistics, and alpha reliability

Sr. No.	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1	AL	28871	0.90733	(0.796)			
2	EPD	242891	1.0724	0.450**	(0.948)		
3	AS	2.4318	1.08781	0.400**	0.727**	(0.855)	
4	EPR	4.0891	0.73990	-0.18	-186	-1.36	(0.899)

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Direct and Indirect Effects

We conducted direct and mediation analysis using the bootstrap method and the Sobel test (Table 2). The direct path model supports hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. Specifically, aversive leadership (AL) had a significant direct effect on employee psychological distress (EPD; $b = 0.4555, SE = 0.0999$) and anger (AS; $b = 0.6187, SE = 0.0665$). Additionally, AS showed a significant direct effect on EPD ($b = 0.2097, SE = 0.0777$), confirming the hypothesized relationships. Mediation analysis supported Hypothesis 4, revealing a significant indirect effect of AL on EPD through AS ($b = 0.2818, SE = 0.0755, 95\% CI: [0.1439, 0.4379]$). These findings suggest that anger partially mediates the relationship between aversive leadership and employees' psychological distress. Bootstrapping and confidence interval results support indirect effects, highlighting the importance of anger as a mechanism in the model.

TABLE 2: Direct and indirect effects using bootstrapping Sobel test

Standardized direct path coefficients of the hypothesized model					
	Path	Estimate	SE		
H1	AL \rightarrow EPD	0.4555	0.0999		
H2	AL \rightarrow AS	0.6187	0.0665		
H3	AS \rightarrow EPD	0.2097	0.0777		
Bootstrap results for indirect effects (Mediator)					
Indirect Effect (Bias Corrected Confidence Interval)					
	Paths	Effect	Boot SE	LLCI 95%	ULCI 95%
H4	AL \rightarrow AS \rightarrow EPD	0.2818	0.0755	0.1439	0.4379

Note. $N = 300$. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Moderated Regression Analysis

Table 3 Presents the results of a moderated regression analysis examining the interaction effect of psychological resilience (moderator) on the relationship between Aversive Leadership (IV) and psychological distress (DV). In Step 1, the independent variable (IV) and the mediator showed no significant main effects on psychological distress ($b = 0.1660, SE = 0.7170, 95\% CI: [-1.2539, 1.5859]$ for IV; $b = -0.3977, SE = 0.4927, 95\% CI: [-1.3734, 0.5780]$ for the moderator).

In Step 2, the interaction term (IV \times Moderator) also had no significant effect ($b = 0.0013, SE = 0.0743, 95\% CI: [-0.2616, 0.4102]$), indicating that psychological flexibility was significantly related to maladaptation. Between bad driving and psychological distress. The slope test also confirmed that there were no significant conditional effects on levels of psychological flexibility

The effect of pessimistic leadership on psychological stress was not significant (-1 SD; $b = 0.0918$, $SE = 0.2799$, 95% CI: [-0.4624, 0.6460]), moderate (mean; $b = 0.1660$, $SE = 0.7170$, 95% CI: [-1.2539, 1.5859]), and high (+1 SD; $b = 0.2401$, $SE = 0.2427$, 95% CI: [-0.2395, 0.7198]) levels of Psychological Resilience. These results indicate that psychological flexibility does not moderate the effect of aversive leadership on psychological distress.

TABLE 3: Moderated regression analysis (Moderator: Psychological Resilience)

Psychological Distress					
Predictors	R ²	Estimate	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Step-1					
Constant		2.7024	2.0857	-1.4282	6.8330
Moderator		-0.3977	0.4927	-1.3734	0.5780
IV		0.1660	0.7170	-1.2539	1.5859
Step-2					
IVx Moderator	0.0013	0.0743	0.1696	-0.2616	0.4102
Conditional effect of X on Y at values of the moderator: Slope Test					
Psychological Distress					
Moderator	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	
Moderator -1 SD (-1.01)	0.0918	0.2799	-0.4624	0.6460	
moderator M (0.00)	0.1660	0.7170	-1.2539	1.5859	
moderator +1 SD (1.01)	0.2401	0.2427	-0.2395	0.7198	

Aversive leadership, employee psychological distress, anger, and psychological resilience are all linked, and research findings shed important light on these links. The data show that abusive leadership directly and significantly affects employees' psychological distress and anger. Moreover, as indicated by the significant indirect effects found through bootstrap, anger mediated the relationship between psychological distress and aversive leadership. This highlights how important emotional responses are in linking poor leadership to adverse psychological effects on employees, especially anger. The effect of impaired driving on psychological stress was hypothesized to be moderated by psychological flexibility, but moderated regression analyzes indicated that this interaction was not significant. Psychological resilience did not moderate the relationship between impaired driving and psychological distress, suggesting that resilience may not always moderate the psychologically harmful consequences of impaired driving. All things considered, the results of this study show the negative impact of diverse leadership on employee well-being, especially when it comes to its impact on psychological distress and anger. Although an important individual trait, psychological resilience may not always be able to fully counteract the negative effects of impaired leadership. To ensure the psychological safety of employees, interventions should focus on eliminating toxic leadership and creating a conducive work environment.

Discussion

Strengths of the Study

To better understand workplace stress, this study examined how aversive leadership affects employees' psychological distress, using employee resilience as a mediator and employee anger as a mediator. This significant mediation path indicates the important role that emotions play in the dynamics of workplace stress, with anger partially explaining the relationship between employee psychological distress and aversive leadership (total effect = 0.4916; indirect effect = 0.2818). , $P < 0.001$). According to previous research, pessimistic driving causes negative emotional reactions that, if left unchecked, may turn into psychological problems. These findings are consistent with (Smith and Kim, 2021). The strength of this study lies in its methodological rigor, which includes the use of PROCESS macro moderation and mediation analyses, which provides robust statistical tests of the hypothesized relationships that are consistent with best practices in organizational behavior research and allow for detailed

investigations. The model's indirect relationships include indirect effects and conditional effects (Hayes, 2018). Furthermore, the inclusion of employee psychological resilience as a potential mediator represents an attempt to understand factors that protect against stress in the workplace, a perspective that is increasingly recognized in the stress literature (Luthans et al., 2006).

The impact of toxic leadership styles – and especially aversive leadership – on employee well-being is a topic to which this study contributes. By revealing the mediating function of anger in the relationship between employee psychological distress and aversive leadership, this study identifies an important emotional channel through which leadership practices influence employee outcomes. These findings support previous research that has shown that abusive leadership not only negatively impacts employees' mental health but also increases emotional stressors such as anger (Smith and Kim, 2021). The methodological accuracy of the study is one of its main strengths. The use of valid scales with high reliability (Cronbach's alpha range from 0.796 to 0.948) ensures that the results are reliable and robust, additionally, using PROCESS macro for moderation and mediation analyzes increases the validity of statistical tests and is consistent with best practices in organizational psychology research (Hayes, 2018). The indirect effect that this study highlights on anger as an important variable highlights the need for workplace interventions focused on emotion regulation.

Theoretical Implications

Thanks to this research, we have a better understanding of the emotional mechanisms behind stress in the workplace. Performance is an important mediator of anger, lending empirical validity to theories of workplace behavior that emphasize emotion, such as the “the Affect Infusion Model” (Forgas, 1995), which states that emotions significantly influence people's thoughts and behavior in the workplace. This study provides a more detailed understanding of how toxic leadership increases stress and suggests that anger is part of the relationship between bad leadership and employee psychological distress. It is worth noting that resilience plays a non-significant moderating role, in contrast to some previous studies that highlighted resilience as a protective factor against stress in the workplace (Luthans et al., 2006). When emotional triggers such as anger are present, resilience may not be sufficient to counteract the psychological and emotional damage resulting from long-term aversive driving (AL).

Practical Implications

There are important organizational applications for the findings. First, the study shows that aversive leadership has negative effects on employee well-being, both directly and indirectly through the anger. As a result, organizations should highly prioritize leadership development programs that reduce aversive behaviour's and promote constructive leadership. For instance, the training programs that emphasize emotional intelligence, empathy, and conflict resolution could give the leaders as tools they need to create healthier work environments (Goleman, 1998). According to Hülshager et al. (2013), “the organizations could provide workshops or interventions to help the employees to manage anger and other negative emotions. Additionally, the mediating role of anger highlights the importance of addressing emotional regulation in the workplace. Cognitive-behavioral techniques and the mindfulness training have demonstrated the promise in reducing the workplace anger and improving the psychological well-being”. Third, the findings imply that emotional reactions to unpleasant leadership are influenced by age. Perhaps because they have more life experience or may have the better emotional control, so the older or experience workers seem less likely to become angry in the reaction to the toxic leadership actions (Carstensen et al., 1999) but have the probability to become anger in extreme toxic leadership actions (Schwarz Müller et al., 2018). This study emphasizes the necessities for the age-specific interventions, like mentorship programs where senior staff members assist the junior co-worker's in coping with the stress at work and the need of cultivating a positive team culture and appreciation culture where everyone feels appreciated, heard, and inspired, which reduces the likelihood of an angry reaction (Lee et al., 2021). Last, but certainly not least, creating a flexible organizational culture is still essential, even if psychological flexibility moderates the relationship between aversive leadership (AL) and anger. In this case, flexibility

may not immediately reduce the effects of aversive leadership (AL), but it is still useful in helping employees overcome general problems in the workplace. Initiatives that create a supportive work environment that supports overall well-being include team building training, resiliency training, resilience training, and the availability of mental health resources. This study highlights the importance of focusing on supporting a resilient organizational culture.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, determining causal relationships is more difficult due to the cross-sectional design of the study. A longitudinal study design that tracks changes over time may provide stronger evidence, although significant mediation effects support the theoretical hypothesis that anger mediates the relationship between alienating leadership and employee psychological distress (Podsakoff et al., 2003). To explore causal pathways and assess the temporal dynamics of these relationships, future studies should use experimental or longitudinal designs. Despite the advantages of this study, it also has many disadvantages. Because of the cross-sectional method, it is not possible to draw conclusions about causal links between poor driving (AL), anger (A) and psychological distress (PD). Longitudinal studies may shed light on how these processes change over time. Moreover, the non-significant moderating effect of psychological resilience (PR) may be due to operating errors. Future research could explore different frameworks or indicators for assessing resilience, such as trait resilience versus state resilience (Connor and Davidson, 2003). Second, although psychological flexibility was included as a moderator, it was not significant (interaction term coefficient = 0.0743, $p = 0.6621$), which may be due to the measurement scale or contextual limitations of flexibility in this study. Future research should refine the operationalization of psychological resilience (PR) or include other moderators who have demonstrated buffering effects in similar contexts, such as emotional intelligence, job control, or perceived organizational support (Zantopoulou et al., 2007; Goleman, 1998). Another drawback is the use of self-reported data, which may introduce common method bias. Although care was taken to ensure participant anonymity, future research could benefit from using data from multiple sources, such as peer or supervisor evaluations of leadership behaviors.

Third, this study did not explicitly consider cultural and organizational context. Hofstede's cultural dimension theory (Hofstede, 2001) suggests that leadership styles and employee responses may vary significantly across cultures, and future research could examine how specific cultural or industry factors influence the relationship between Parkinson's and anger (A) and resentment affect. Except for example, collectivist cultures may show different patterns of emotional responses and adaptations compared to individualistic cultures. The cultural and organizational background of the sample may influence the results of the study. According to Hofstede (2001), leadership styles and emotional responses vary across cultures. Future research could examine these dynamics in different cultural contexts. Finally, even though the sample size ($N = 120$) is sufficient, it may restrict generalizability to the range of an organizational context. To improve the external validity of the results, future studies could include the bigger, more varied samples from the range of sectors and occupations.

Future Research Directions

Future studies should take into account the following directions in order to build on these findings:

1. **Longitudinal Designs:** Monitoring workers over an extended period of time would assist identifying the causal relationships among psychological distress PD, anger (A), and aversive leadership AL.
2. **Alternative Moderators:** Other factors that might be considered as moderators include coping mechanisms, emotional intelligence, and perceived organizational support.
3. **Culture:** A closer look at how cultural norms and values influence how people react to aversive leadership may yield more profound understandings.
4. **Research on Intervention:** Assessing the efficiency of leadership development and anger management initiatives in reducing the detrimental impacts of aversive leadership AL.

Managerial Implications

Aversive leadership AL has a significant impact on employee psychological distress (EPD) through direct and indirect pathways. Organizations should establish leadership development programs to avoid aversive leader negative behaviors and encourage positive and constructive leadership styles (Goleman, 1998). Anger, as the primary mediator in this study, can be reduced by training leaders in conflict management and emotional intelligence. (Indirect effect = 0.2818, $p < 0.001$). These findings have important implications for management practice.

The key element of the intervention should be employees' emotional control. Employees may experience less psychological distress if they are able to deal more effectively with hateful leaders, for example through stress reduction programs or anger management courses (Smith & Kim, 2021). Effect of age = -0.4003, $p = 0.0187$, indicating that age differences in anger (A) responses to AL aversive driving should be taken into account. Aversive leadership appears to make older, experienced employees less angry, which may be a sign of better emotional control and resilience. Interventions tailored to generational differences in thinking may be more effective. Building organizational resilience is still crucial, even if psychological resilience is not. In this study, the relationship between anger (A) and aversive driving was not moderated by PR psychological flexibility. However, building organizational resilience is still crucial. According to Luthans et al. (2006), practices such as resilience training, encouraging a positive workplace culture, and providing mental health resources can help create a more resilient workforce. Organizations should also implement procedures to keep an eye on and deal with aversive leadership AL practices. 360-degree feedback systems and anonymous employee surveys are two examples of how to spot and address toxic leadership behaviour's before they get out of hand. Organizations may protect worker well-being and boost productivity by cultivating a positive leadership environment.

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