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Effect of empowering leadership on work engagement via psychological empowerment: Moderation of cultural orientation
--Manuscript Draft--

29th September 2022

Professor Marianna Sigala

Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*

Dear Editor-in-Chief

Please find enclosed a revised research paper entitled "*Effect of empowering leadership on work engagement via psychological empowerment: Moderation of cultural orientation*" for reconsideration by *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*. This work is original and has not been published elsewhere, nor is it currently under consideration with any other publication. There is no conflict of interest linked to this study. This research paper was reviewed by all authors before submitting including Dr. Jun Wen, Prof. Songshan (Sam) Huang, and Prof. Stephen Teo. In addition, all authors have read and have abided by the statement of ethical standards for manuscript submitted to *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*.

We greatly appreciate the three reviewers' thorough, insightful comments and constructive suggestions. The comments were extremely helpful in further improving the quality of our manuscript. We have revised the paper accordingly by addressing all comments and suggestions; we hope the revised paper meets the standards for publication in *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*.

It is an honour and privilege to be able to contribute to your prestigious journal. Should you need further information regarding this submission, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at j.wen@ecu.edu.au.

Yours Sincerely,

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Edith Cowan University
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Manuscript JHTM-D-22-00093.R1 entitled "Effect of empowering leadership on work engagement via psychological empowerment: Moderation of cultural orientation"

Authors' overall response:
We greatly appreciate the three reviewers' thorough, insightful comments and constructive suggestions. The comments were extremely helpful in further improving the quality of our manuscript. We have revised the paper accordingly by addressing all comments and suggestions; we hope the revised paper meets the standards for publication in *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*. Please see our detailed responses below.

Reviewer 1:

Comments:

1. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development
   The literature review encompasses a comprehensive and exhaustive coverage of available appropriate literature.
   Furthermore the literature review entails a critical analysis which further expounds the research problem.
   However a contemporary literature is needed in order to update some relationships between variables.

   For example, in the following sections:

   Page 4 Line 9 2.2 Relationship between Empowering Leadership and Psychological Empowerment

   Page 5 Line 1 2.3 Relationship between Psychological Empowerment and Work Engagement

   Page 6 line 5 2.6. Moderation of collectivist orientation in the relationship between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment.

Response: Thank you for acknowledging that our literature review is comprehensive, exhaustive, and critical. Following your suggestion, we have updated our literature review with more recent relevant references.

2. Page 5 line 2 "as an important job resource". The authors must justify the reason for this statement. Is there any model, theory or approach that supports this claim? Will the Demand-Resources Model be able to support it?

Response: Thank you for your comments. We revised the sentence and added two recent references to support the argument. The sentence now reads:

"Psychological empowerment, according to Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, can be regarded as an important type of job resource that employees can retrieve (Lei, Hossain,

Mostafiz, Khalifa, 2021; Li, Yu, Huang, Zhou, Yu, & Gu, 2021), and thus can trigger work engagement (Moura et al., 2015)." (page 5, lines 19-22).

3. Page 10 Line 14 Please standardize "H5" to be described as the previous hypotheses: Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2, Hypothesis 3, and Hypothesis 4.

   Page 10 Line 17 Please standardize "H6" to be described as the previous hypotheses: Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2, Hypothesis 3, Hypothesis 4, Hypothesis 5.

Response: Thank you for your careful reading. We have changed H5 and H6 to "Hypothesis 5" and "Hypothesis 6".

4. Methods
   This section should be rewritten in a more systematic way in order to highlight and individualize the sub-dimensions "design and data collection", "participants", "measures", "data analysis".

   At "Descriptive statistical" and "Statistical analysis" sections authors are describing the method again.

   For example:

Page 9	line 13/14	These factors were then applied to test the hypothesised model in IBM 14 AMOS v26".
page 10	Line 10	"The hypothesised five-factor model was tested via hierarchical multiple regression in IBM 3 AMOS v26"

Response: Thank you for this comment. The changes have been made and highlighted in red. Please refer to the Methods section and Results section in the manuscript (p. 9).

5. An adapted justification for some options is needed.
   For example:
   Page 7 Line 35 "Data were gathered via convenience sampling with frontline employees at five upscale or 36 luxury hotels in Beijing, China".(…)

   Please, explain the criterion to select those five upscale or 36 luxury hotels in Beijing, China.

Response: Thank you very much for this comment. Relevant justifications were provided in Section – 3.1 Design and data collection, and are highlighted in red (p. 8, lines 20-28).

6. Page 7 Line 39 (..)"to frontline employees of the hotels".
    Please, explain what "frontline employees" are and why this investigation used "frontline employees" and not other types of employees.

Response: Thank you for this comment. In the literature, "frontline employees" tends to refer to employees who play critical roles in service delivery and recovery roles. Examples of such roles include front desk agents, food servers, and concierges (see Karatepe and Uludag, 2007).

Karatepe, O. M., & Uludag, O. (2007). Conflict, exhaustion, and motivation: A study of frontline employees in Northern Cyprus hotels. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *26*(3), 645-665.

In addition, more justifications were offered in the section – Introduction, highlighted in red (p.3, lines 1-14).

7. Page 8 Line 17 A single-factor test was conducted to check for common method bias (Podsakoff & Organ, 18 1986). 11 factors with eigenvalues of greater than 1.0 were extracted and the largest single 19 factor explained 15.5% of the variance; therefore, common method bias was not significant issue. A specific bias test was also performed in AMOS (Gaskin & Lim, 2017) to incorporate an unmeasured method factor into the model to check for common method variance. Specifically, the chi-square test was compared between a zero constrained model (i.e., a model with the common latent factor) and an unconstrained model. Results revealed no specific response bias (Gaskin & Lim, 2017).

    In the previous paragraph the authors are already presenting results, however, they are doing so in the "Methods" section. A new section could be opened called "Preliminary Analysis" which shows that a preliminary analysis has been done.

Response: Thank you for this comment. We have restructured the manuscript to offer a better flow to how we report our preliminary analysis.

8. TABLES AND FIGURES
    Please, review the subtitle of the table 3:
    Table 3 Comparisons between Model 1 and the remaining alternative models demonstrated that the hypothesised five-factor model demonstrated the best fit to the data and confirmed the discriminant validity of selected constructs

    The word "demonstrated" is written twice. If one of the words "demonstrated" will be replaced by a synonym, then the sentence would be more understandable.

Response: Thank you for this comment. We corrected this sentence.

9. Please, reformat table 4:
    Table 4 Numbers 1 (…) 9 They are not properly aligned so that they are centered.

    Please describe the initials:
    Figure 2 "EmpLead" - needs to be described

Response: Thank you for this comment. This has been corrected.

10. Discussion and Findings
    Authors should be cautious in the generalizations they make which are described in the sentences they write because the study they did restricts this investigation to an exploratory study that is not representative.

    For example:

Page 12	Line 12	"This study showed that Chinese employees" (..)

Response: Thank you for noting this issue. We revised that sentence to be more accurate:

"This study showed that in the context of hotel workplaces in China, the collectivist orientation of individual employees did not affect the relationship between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment." (page 13, lines 21-25).

We also added one sentence in the limitations section:

"We cautioned that the study findings may not be generalisable to hotel employees outside China or in other non-collectivistic cultures." (page 13, lines 36-38).

11. Overall, the manuscript makes a useful contribution to the promotion and development of new knowledge.

    However, the practical implications within Hospitality and Tourism Management need to be highlighted and why this generates further interest and debate.

Response: Thank you for the overall positive evaluation of our paper. In the managerial implication section, we added more explicit management recommendations to link the study findings to hotel management practices in China and highlight the value of our study to industry practices. Please refer to page 12 for the revisions (lines 8-13 & 21-25).

Reviewer 2:

Comments:

1. Most of the hypotheses are evidenced in previous research, why did you repeat the causes and results in your study again? For the further explanation, did you want to

check the west cultural setting (such as, individualism) that adopted in Chinese organizations get the same results? What's new for them in Chinese cultural orientation if you want to test the relationships among them? You might state more cultural concept in your study.

Response: Thank you for this comment. We agree that most of the hypotheses are tested in the Western context in the literature; however, relevant knowledge in the Chinese context rooted in a high power distance and collectivist culture is under-researched, especially tested at the individual level. The rationale of the current study aiming to explore the relationships among empowering leadership, psychological empowerment, and work engagement by considering Chinese cultural orientation as moderators is sufficiently justified in the Introduction section (highlighted in red). By achieving the proposed objectives of the current study, relevant knowledge has been advanced to understand how to apply these West-centered management concepts in the context of Chinese cultural orientations. This era of globalisation has caused management practices rooted in certain cultures to gradually dismantle geographical boundaries to promote business performance and higher-quality customer service such as in the global hotel industry. We believe the current study not only offers theoretical insights on culture and hotel management, but also the hotel practitioners will also benefit from the study findings with information regarding applying these management concepts in Chinese or similar cultures.

2. Another issue for this study is the theoretical problem. You did not infer your hypotheses by management theory. That is, you should build your theory or refer the management theory and infer your hypotheses by the theories. Your test and research design should also be based on the theories. However, I did not read any management theory in your study. Your study also did not mention any theoretical implication.

Response: Thank you for the comment. The current study was informed by Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions as a theoretical lens. This study explores how differing degrees of power distance orientation and collectivist orientation influence the extent of empowering leadership and employee engagement as a moderator among Chinese hotel employees.

In terms of the entire hypothesis development process, all proposed relationships are rooted in relevant theories and previous empirical studies as foundations. For example, psychological empowerment theory informed relevant hypotheses such as the relationship between psychological empowerment and empowering leadership. In addition, for hypothesis 5, we discussed locus of control born out of social learning theory and social exchange theory as a theoretical foundation to propose power distance orientation as a moderator for the relationship between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment.

We carefully reviewed the entire Literature Review section by also considering the comments from the other 2 reviewers. We believe the section including hypothesis development is robust and comprehensive, rooted in various theories as foundations.

3. You collect the data by convenience sampling at 5-star hotels. Why did you choose 5-star hotels? How did you control your data not to gathering in few hotels? You should state more details about this in the sampling.

Response: Thank you for this comment. By answering the similar comment from Reviewer 1, the relevant information has been added in section – 3.1 Design and data collection, highlighted in red.

4. In your measurements, some of the constructs are belonged to level 2 (IV and moderators), others are belonged to level 1. You emphasis that this study focus on individual level, but the measurements are different level measurements. That is, you might use no good measurements to test your constructs or you should test the relationships among the constructs by multi-level analysis.

Response: Thank you for this comment. Please allow us to clarify. First, the current study focused on the individual level, especially considering that Hofstede's cultural theory was only valid at the national level in literature. Thus, required treatments on cultural orientation measurements were given in order to have a rigorous research design with accurate measurement scales. Second, by checking all the study constructs with respective measurement items, only the construct – psychological empowerment – includes four dimensions, all other constructs are all single-dimension structures. Third, all these constructs' measurement scales were employed by previous studies with demonstrated reliability and validity. Therefore, by checking the research design and relevant data analysis process, we confirmed that all results are checked for quality assurance and the current study is irrelevant for possible multi-level analysis.

5. In addition, you remove some test items due to a low factor loading. You should also explain the reasons why you delete them? Will this action influence the validity on these measurements?

Response: Thank you for this comment. As shown in Table 2, measurement items factor loading lower than 0.500 were eliminated in the data analysis stage. As shown in Table 4, all the constructs' AVE and CR were tested. Based on the results, power distance orientation (AVE=0.46) and collectivist orientation (AVE=0.44) were slightly lower than the recommended threshold of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981); however, their respective composite reliability values of 0.72 and 0.70 exceeded the preferred 0.60 threshold (Bagozzi & Kimmel, 1995). Thus, these cultural orientation constructs were deemed acceptable. Such findings echo Wen, Huang, and Ying (2019), who identified that two cultural value dimensions – life enrichment and quality and modern personal values – had AVE values lower than 0.50 (0.425 and 0.482). The results further confirmed that cultural values are difficult to measure and vary situationally (Schwartz et al., 2001).

Therefore, we had a careful check with thorough justifications on all constructs' measurements, validity, and reliability in the current study.

6. Another problem is related to CMV. You collect the data in one time and one source. This is easy to produce type 1 error. It's a fatal problem in your study.

Response: Thank you for this comment. In this study, we have followed the literature (e.g., Podsakoff & Organ, 1986; Min et al., 2016) to check for CMV.

Min, H., Park, J., & Kim, H. J. (2016). Common method bias in hospitality research: A critical review of literature and an empirical study. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 56*, 126-135.

7. The next question is about regression. In your test, Beta in H1 is only 0.094, but p value is under .001. It might mean that the empowering leadership is positively associate with work engagement, but empowering leadership is not an important construct that influence work engagement. Meanwhile, the Beta in H3 is .949. This might mean that psychological empowerment is very important to work engagement. According to these two figures, the mediating effect would be easy shown significant even though that empowering leadership is not an important construct that influence work engagement. So, I don't think you have found an important construct that leads to employee's work engagement. Moreover, the Beta in H4 is .528, should you mention more details about this Beta? Is it the Beta for IV to mediator? or mediator to DV? If it is mean the effect that empowering leadership affect to psychological empowerment in mediation. The Beta of 0.528 is larger than 0.094 (the Beta of H1). You cannot say the Hypotheses 4 is supported.

Response: Thank you for this comment.

The beta of 0.528 was the indirect path coefficient for H4 (mediates Empowering Leadership → Psychological Empowerment → Work Engagement). Based on the mediation analysis using IBM AMOS, there was a significant indirect relationship as the 95% CI did not pass through zero (β= 0.528, s.e. 0.036, 95% CI [0.461, 0.607], p<.05). The direct path from Empowering Leadership → Work Engagement, was statistically significant (while small) at the p<.001 level.

8. Finally, you might consider some control variables in your study. If you read more reference, you might find some variables which influence work engagement.

Response: Thank you for your suggestion. As previously reported in the manuscript (see descriptive table), we controlled for "Age," "Gender," "Education," and "Departments." We have inserted a sentence to report this in the Methods section. As you can see from the correlation table, these had significant correlations with the variable of interest in our model. However, the only control variables which were significant in the path analysis using AMOS, were "education" (with psychological empowerment) and "age" (with collectivism). This is now reported in the results section.

Reviewer 3:

Comments:

1. In abstract the contents may be systematically organized in the form of the independent and dependent variables (Employee empowerment, cultural values, beliefs).Either qualitative or quantitative studies can be mentioned clearly.

Response: Thank you for this comment. We revised the Abstract section, highlighted in red.

2. The introduction can be started in the sequence of defining about the employee engagement, employee empowerment).

Response: Thank you for this comment. The main contribution of the current study focused on cultural differences by testing these West-centered management concepts in the Chinese context at an individual level. All definitions of the research constructs were provided in the Introduction section.

3. Clearly the framework can be started from independent variables(culture,values), followed by moderating variable power distance between empowering leadership and how leadership influences psychological empowerment like employee empowerment.

Response: Thank you very much for this comment. Cultural orientations, including power distance orientation and collectivist orientation, served as moderators in the proposed model. Thus, we checked the model carefully and confirmed that it accurately reflected all proposed relationships in the study.

4. Sampling- You have a definite sample then better go for probability sampling, why convenience sampling.

Response: Thank you for this comment. We checked the Methods section and agreed with your suggestion that this should be purposive sampling. It has been corrected in the manuscript, highlighted in red.

5. Analysis part is good with Confirmatory factor analysis and AMOS,but clear description can be enhanced in the interpretation part.

Response: Thank you for this comment. We have revised the Methods section to make it clearer to the reader.

6. Conclusion may be based on the theoretical model as wholesome output of the study can be given

Response: Thank you for this comment. The Discussion and Managerial Implication sections are well structured based on the theoretical model with extensive discussions on relevant findings.

Title Page

Effect of empowering leadership on work engagement via psychological empowerment: Moderation of cultural orientation

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Declaration of interest statement

Declarations of interest: none.

Submission declaration and verification

The authors of this research confirm that the work described has not been published previously, that is not under consideration for publication elsewhere, that its submission and publication is approved by all authors and tacitly or explicitly by the responsible authorities where the work was carried out, and that, it will not be published elsewhere in the same form,

Author contribution statement:

Dr. Jun Wen: conception and design; data collection; draft the manuscript; critically revise the manuscript; and give final submission approval

Prof. Songshan (Sam) Huang: conception and design; data analysis; critically revise the manuscript; and give final submission approval

Prof. Stephen Teo: data analysis: critically revise the manuscript; and final submission approval

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Author confirm that no subsequent addition of authors' names will be permitted by the journal.

Effect of empowering leadership on work engagement via psychological empowerment: Moderation of cultural orientation

Abstract

Employee empowerment can lead to work engagement; however, this process may be influenced by employees' cultural values and beliefs. This quantitative study focused on the efficacy of employee empowerment in organisational management practices and performance within the Chinese cultural setting. Specifically, we examined the impacts of empowering leadership on work engagement, with psychological empowerment functioning as a mediator and cultural orientation as a moderator. Based on a sample of 498 frontline employees in five upscale or luxury hotels in Beijing, China, findings revealed that empowering leadership was positively correlated with work engagement and psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment partially mediated the relationship between empowering leadership and work engagement. Chinese hotel frontline employees generally perceived a low power distance orientation and high collectivist orientation in the workplace. Power distance orientation was the only moderator of the effect of empowering leadership on psychological empowerment. Theoretical and practical contributions are discussed.

Keywords: Chinese cultural orientations; power distance orientation; collectivist orientation; psychological empowerment; empowering leadership; work engagement

1. Introduction

Culture has been recognised as an essential factor influencing human behaviour across myriad situations (Ekiz & Au, 2011; Huang & Wen, 2021). In an organisational management context, individual and organisational success largely depends on leadership style (Turner & Müller, 2005) and an understanding of employees' values and beliefs that vary culturally (Bochner & Hesketh, 1994). Globalisation has caused management practices rooted in certain cultures to gradually dismantle geographical boundaries to promote business performance and higher-quality customer service. One such concept is employee empowerment, referring to employees having agency over their daily work activities (Yin, Wang, & Lu, 2019). Different from following standard procedures, empowered employees generally display greater trust in leadership, higher work engagement, and motivation (Moura, Orgambídez-Ramos, & de Jesus, 2015).

Extensive research on empowering leadership in the hospitality industry has revealed empirical evidence of positive relationships between empowerment and its effects on employees' work-related outcomes (Tsaur, Hsu, & Lin, 2019). To enhance individual and organisational performance in hospitality organisations, employee empowerment has been heavily implemented in the West since 1990 (Lashley, 1995) and slowly introduced in the East (Fock, Hui, Au, & Bond, 2013). Yet within different cultural settings, scholars and practitioners continue to doubt whether empowering leadership truly benefits organisational management practices and performance (Cheung, Baum, & Wong, 2012). For instance,

cultural perspectives can impede employee empowerment (Cheung et al., 2012). Obstacles include traditions of hierarchy, fear of retaliation, and failure to identify with employee empowerment. Drawing upon Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions, researchers generally agree that cultural issues can be detrimental to empowerment – especially in countries with a high power distance and collectivist culture, such as China (Yin et al., 2019). In these countries, leaders and frontline employees tend to be suspicious and pessimistic about empowerment practices (Littrell, 2007).

Despite acknowledging the importance of cultural differences, most related studies have focused exclusively on the cultural impacts of employee empowerment at a national level (e.g., Humborstad, Humborstad, Whitfield, & Perry, 2008) rather than an individual level (e.g., work attitudes and cultural orientations) (Chen, Cheung, & Law, 2012). Individualism is gaining traction in China (Hsu & Huang, 2016). Simply exploring cultural impacts on employee empowerment at a national level may not sufficiently capture individuals' perceptions in this country. The Chinese value harmony and group performance, which inevitably influences their working environment. Earley (1993) suggested that the extent of one's collectivistic beliefs can predict the effectiveness of many management practices. Empowerment strategies may spark a social dilemma as workers are caught between the collective interests of their organisations and personal interests (Chen & Chen, 2009). Currently, in the hospitality management literature, little is known about how individuals' cultural orientations influence employees' work-related outcomes when considering factors such as workplace leadership.

Empowering leadership may also affect psychological empowerment, referring to one's intrinsic motivations towards active involvement at work in various contexts such as a private hospital (Alotaibi, Amin, & Winterton, 2020; Kundu, Kumar, & Gahlawat, 2019). Chinese individuals' traditionally strong collectivist orientation may cause them to label people who deviate from social norms as being of poor character, which can compromise psychological empowerment (Littrell, 2007). Firm personnel aiming to adopt psychological empowerment in China must therefore acknowledge traditional Chinese norms (Littrell, 2007). However, knowledge of organisational management reveals an absence of studies on *how* individuals' cultural orientations may affect the implementation of psychological empowerment. The strength of one's power distance orientation and collectivist orientation may alter the role of empowering leadership in empowerment. However, a knowledge gap persists around the moderating role of cultural orientation in Chinese organisations.

By borrowing Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions as a theoretical lens, this study explores how differing degrees of power distance orientation and collectivist orientation influence the extent of empowering leadership and employee engagement as a moderator among Chinese hotel employees. In addition to considering the relationship between empowering leadership and work engagement, this paper investigates psychological empowerment as a mediator between both constructs to uncover the role of psychological empowerment in Chinese organisational practices. An accurate understanding of the role of individuals' cultural orientations in organisational management is pivotal to businesses' survival in today's competitive environment. This research enhances knowledge of how individuals' cultural orientations can influence the adoption of Western-centric management concepts in Chinese organisations.

There are many reasons why it is important to address the gaps in the literature regarding hotel frontline service employees. The importance of employee empowerment has been established previously, and scholars and practitioners both agree that frontline-level service employees are crucial for a lucrative hospitality business (Meng & Han, 2014). Frontline employees significantly impact a hotel's success, especially given their customer-facing roles (Ro & Chen, 2011). They must deliver high-quality service as this is a requirement of hotel management (Namasivayam, Guchait, & Lei, 2014). Even in the food and beverage industry, the frontline service employees' roles are important since they also interact closely with customers (Yen, Yeh, & Lin, 2016). The hospitality industry depends on its service employees since they are the heart of the business and they have the power to directly affect customers' opinions of the business (Diker et al., 2022). There are many impacts of frontline service employees who provide high-quality customer service. They can enhance an organisation's competitive advantage, improve its reputation, increase customer repurchase intention, and reduce customer loss (Yen et al., 2016).

Therefore, this study is guided by three objectives:

(1) To test the direct relationships among empowering leadership, psychological empowerment, and work engagement;
(2) To test the mediating role of psychological empowerment between empowering leadership and work engagement; and
(3) To test the moderating role of Chinese cultural orientations (i.e., power distance orientation and collectivist orientation) in the relationship between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Relationship between Empowering Leadership and Work Engagement

Empowering leadership is defined as "behaviours whereby power is shared with subordinates that raise their level of intrinsic motivation (p. 1240)" (Srivastava, Bartol, & Locke, 2006). This form of leadership focuses on delegating authority to employees, enabling them to make decisions without direct supervision. Its impact has been examined in the context of customer-empowering behaviour, knowledge management system adoption, citizenship behaviour, employees' creativity, and employees' intentions to take initiative (e.g., Li, Chiaburu, Kirkman, & Xie, 2013). At the individual level, empirical studies have assessed the benefits of empowering leadership on employees' attitudes and behaviour (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Scholars have also focused on empowering leadership in hospitality management (Boukis, Christos, Daunt, & Papastathopoulos, 2020; Lin, Zhang, Ng, & Zhong, 2020) in Chinese organisations (Lin, Ling, Luo, & Wu, 2019). For instance, Boukis et al. (2020) discovered that an empowering leadership style can mitigate the consequences of customer incivility on frontline hotel employees' role stress, rumination, retaliation, and withdrawal intentions. Lin et al. (2019) developed an integrated model including the antecedents and consequences of empowering leadership from hotel service employees' and managers' perspectives. Although existing literature has increasingly accounted for empowering leadership, what is often overlooked is that empowerment differs across cultures (Hui, Au, & Fock, 2004). The authors found that empowering leadership positively influenced employees' service-oriented

behaviour. To date, however, there is a lack of attention to cultural influences when studying empowering leadership in tourism and hospitality management.

Work engagement, characterised by dedication and commitment, refers to a positive state of mind and productive behaviour in the workplace (Tsaur et al., 2019). Work engagement has attracted interest in fields such as healthcare, education, and hospitality due to its direct impacts on job performance, employee loyalty, and job satisfaction (e.g., Giallonardo, Wong, & Iwasiw, 2010). Several scholars have identified work engagement as particularly important in hospitality because employee behaviour influences customer satisfaction (Tsaur et al., 2019). The drivers of work engagement are diverse, covering workplace empowerment (Cho, Laschinger, & Wong, 2006), leadership, and employees' psychological states (Kundu et al., 2019) among other factors. Empowering leadership and psychological empowerment have been stressed as crucial aspects of work engagement.

Several studies have highlighted leadership as a primary antecedent of work engagement (Tuckey, Bakker, & Dollard, 2012). Researchers have considered specific leadership styles (e.g., transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) and their relationships with work engagement and work outcomes (Gemeda & Lee, 2020). Employees, upon being granted a high degree of autonomy through empowerment, can assume greater responsibility at work and become more motivated (Vecchio, Justin, & Pearce, 2010). Coaching and support of personal growth allows leaders to foster their subordinates' engagement and work conditions as well (Tuckey et al., 2012). Empowering leadership is thus presumed to benefit work engagement as postulated below:

H1. Empowering leadership positively influences work engagement.

2.2 Relationship between Empowering Leadership and Psychological Empowerment

The close association between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment has garnered attention in the organisational management literature. Psychological empowerment emerged as a Western management concept before being introduced in Eastern cultures (Fock et al., 2013). Spreitzer (1995) defined psychological empowerment as "a motivational construct manifested in four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact" (p. 1444). *Meaning* reflects the alignment between one's values and work, *competence* involves self-efficacy, *self-determination* is akin to task-related autonomy, and *impact* refers to one's control over job-based outcomes (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). These four factors capture employees' active orientation at work (Spreitzer, 1995). Although studies have revealed a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and its impact on employees' work performance in the West (e.g., Fong & Snape, 2015), results remain inconsistent in Eastern cultures. For instance, managers in Chinese organisations were found to be unfamiliar with psychological empowerment and expressed uncertainty about how to empower their subordinates this way (Fock et al., 2013). The complex nature of Chinese society renders psychological empowerment difficult to implement (Cheung et al., 2012). The current research seeks to bridge this knowledge gap by exploring ways to apply the typically Western concept of psychological empowerment in Eastern cultures, taking Chinese frontline employees as a case.

Based on a sample of employees and their supervisors at an information technology firm in China, Zhang and Bartol (2010) observed the positive consequences of empowering leadership on psychological empowerment. Research has also revealed a positive association between self-determination and empowering leadership in terms of psychological empowerment (Ahearne, Mathieu, & Rapp, 2005). Zhang and Bartol (2010) found that the impact of empowering leadership on employees' psychological empowerment depends on the degree to which employees view empowerment as part of their role identity at work. Examining a sample of Indian banking employees, Kundu, Kumar, and Gahlawat (2019) reported that empowering leadership positively affected psychological empowerment, which in turn enhanced job performance. In another study by Alotaibi, Amin, and Winterton (2020), empowering leadership was found to positively affect psychological empowerment and work engagement. Empowering leadership also fosters individuals' intrinsic motivation based on meaning, competence, and self-determination (Bowen & Lawler, 1992). Compared with approaches such as transformational leadership, empowering leadership is more focused on psychological empowerment (Fong & Snape, 2015). Accordingly, we presume the following:

H2. Empowering leadership positively influences psychological empowerment.

2.3 Relationship between Psychological Empowerment and Work Engagement

According to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, psychological empowerment can be regarded as an important type of job resource that employees can retrieve (Lei, Hossain, Mostafiz, Khalifa, 2021; Li, Yu, Huang, Zhou, Yu, & Gu, 2021) that can in turn trigger work engagement (Moura et al., 2015). Studies have uncovered a direct relationship between employees' perceptions of psychological empowerment and job engagement, satisfaction, and organisational citizenship behaviour (e.g., Saleem, Nisar, & Imran, 2017). Wu and Short (1996) focused on teachers to explore the relationships among empowerment, job involvement, and job satisfaction. Their findings indicated that teachers' professional growth, self-efficacy, and status were significant predictors of job involvement. Similarly, in a hospitality context, Moura et al. (2015) observed a positive relationship between psychological empowerment, work engagement, and job satisfaction: high psychological empowerment enabled hotel practitioners to motivate employees, causing workers to become more engaged and satisfied (Moura et al., 2015). Ahmad and Gao (2018) identified that psychological empowerment partially mediated the effect of ethical leadership on work engagement, confirming psychological empowerment as a proximal predictor of work engagement. Thus, we assume the following:

H3. Psychological empowerment positively influences work engagement.

2.4 Psychological Empowerment as a Mediator between Empowering Leadership and Work Engagement

Psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and job outcomes. For example, according to Kundu et al. (2019), psychological empowerment serially mediated the effects of empowering leadership on work performance. Tripathi and Bharadwaja (2020) framed psychological empowerment as a second-order construct, which partially mediated the relationship between empowering leadership and employees' mental

health. The authors also discovered a partially mediating role of psychological empowerment between empowering leadership on organisational commitment and employees' job-related attitudes. Psychological empowerment has further been shown to partially mediate the relationship between empowering leadership and other personal elements (e.g., behavioural intention) (Dewettinck & Ameijde, 2011).

Affording workers more autonomy and responsibilities influences their perceptions of psychological empowerment (Zhang & Bartol, 2010), which can then inspire outcomes such as high job engagement (Wang & Liu, 2015). The link between empowering leadership and work engagement should thus be examined while taking psychological empowerment as a mediator. We posit the following:

H4. Psychological empowerment partially mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and work engagement.

2.5 *Moderation of power distance orientation in the relationship between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment*

Numerous scholars have indicated that myriad cultural factors facilitate the implementation of psychological empowerment in Asian countries (e.g., Cheung et al., 2012). This study applies Hofstede's (1980, 2001) national culture theory to model the impact of Chinese culture on psychological empowerment. Hofstede (1980, 2001) identified five major national cultural dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, and long-term versus short-term orientation. Specifically, China is characterised by high power distance (Fock et al., 2013; Hofstede, 1980, 2001) and collectivism (Zhang & Shavitt, 2003). Although Hofstede's national culture theory is most meaningful at the societal/national level (Brewer & Venaik, 2012), some researchers have adapted his theory at an individual level (Kirkman, Chen, Farh, & Lowe, 2009). This study considers power distance orientation and individualist/collectivist orientation, the strongest predictors of differences according to cultural leadership studies (Lee, Scandura, & Sharif, 2014), as individual-level constructs to distinguish the aforementioned cultural dimensions at the country and individual levels in the workplace.

Culture has been taken as a moderator to identify its effects on organisational and individual practices. Power distance and collectivism are salient values previously tested in a Chinese context (e.g., Yang, 2020; Zhang & Begley, 2011). For instance, as a moderator, high power distance has been shown to lead to greater team participation among Chinese workers. The connections among power distance, empowerment, and team participation appear complex and call for a more empirical investigation to explore culture's impact on organisational management. Lee, Willis, and Tian (2018) performed a meta-analysis on empowering leadership and pointed to cultural context as a primary moderator in the association between empowering leadership and task performance. Lee et al. (2018) found that empowering leadership's role in task performance was significant in collectivist cultures but not in individualistic cultures. It is thus necessary to further explore cultural values as moderators in the relationship between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment at the individual level. This study takes China as a suitable setting.

The notion of locus of control, born out of social learning theory (Rotter, 1954), reflects the degree to which individuals believe that actions can guide outcomes. If a person feels they are in control of their circumstances, then they have an internal locus of control: they are more confident, proactively search for information to help them pursue their goals, and favour situations featuring the possibility of achievement (Bush, 1988). People with an internal locus of control are more apt to think that they can shape their work setting. They are likely to feel empowered as well (Wang, Zhang, & Jackson, 2013). Yet these reactions are contingent on workplace factors such as power distance orientation, which can influence management practices including decision making (Lam, Chen, & Schaubroeck, 2002) and transformational leadership (Kirkman et al., 2009). Workers with a high power distance orientation are more resistant to active communication and are somewhat hesitant to cultivate relationships with their superiors. These workers typically maintain greater social distance from leaders (Farh et al., 2007) and willingly allow managers to make decisions free from personal input. These employees are also less inclined to contribute to decisions than employees displaying low power distance (Kirkman & Shapiro, 1997). A high power distance orientation could therefore adversely affect leadership practices and diminish workers' empowerment. Social exchange theory has frequently been adopted to address interpersonal interaction entailing risks and rewards in organisational contexts. In particular, the norm of reciprocity is less likely to influence employees in a high power distance environment (Farh et al., 2007). China, as a high power distance country, has molded its citizens' power distance orientation. We, therefore, predict that workers with high power distance will be less likely than those with low power distance to express psychological empowerment:

H5. Power distance orientation moderates the relationship between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment; specifically, a strong power distance orientation decreases the effects of empowering leadership on psychological empowerment.

2.6 *Moderation of collectivist orientation in the relationship between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment*

Individuals adhering to a *collectivist orientation* generally consider themselves part of a team. They tend to be committed to in-group goals and are willing to sacrifice their own interests for the betterment of the group (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). This orientation emphasises forming relationships with others even when individual benefits are unclear (Ravlin, Yuan, Morrell, Au, & Thomas, 2012). The Chinese, compared to their Western counterparts, are expected to forgo personal interests in favour of group aims (Hofstede, 1980). For instance, members with higher levels of collectivism may be more motivated and engaged on a team out of a desire to improve group performance. Thomas (2015) offered empirical evidence that empowering leadership is effective in cultures featuring high and low power distance, as well as collectivism, due to solidarity and loyalty based on study samples from Rwanda and the United States. This type of leadership hence influences psychological empowerment. Other scholars reported that organisational collectivism moderates the relationship between psychological empowerment and willingness to take on additional duties (Cho & Faerman, 2010). Conversely, in a strong collectivist culture, individuals must obey organisational orders without giving feedback to upper management. Employees in these settings are subjected to constant supervision and may feel hopeless about their development prospects (Kong, Cheung, & Song, 2012). Overall,

individuals who focus on the group rather than individual benefits within a collectivist work environment may feel less empowered due to having limited job discretion and authority (Amor, Xanthopoulou, Calvo, & Vazquez, in press).

Previous studies suggested that collectivist orientation at the individual level may moderate relationships pertaining to leadership (e.g., Rohlfer, Hassi, & Jebsen, 2022; Zheng, & Tian, 2019). For example, Rohlfer et al. (2021) found that middle managers' collectivist orientations strengthened the effect of CEO's empowering leadership on middle managers' voice behaviours.

We, therefore, predict the following:

H6. Collectivist orientation moderates the relationship between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment; specifically, a strong collectivist orientation decreases the effects of empowering leadership on psychological empowerment.

Fig. 1 depicts the proposed model and suggested relationships.

Insert Figure 1 about here

3. Methods

3.1 Design and data collection

Data were gathered via purposive sampling of frontline employees at five upscale or luxury hotels in Beijing, China. In order to achieve the current study objectives, large-scale hotels with different departments such as front desk, housekeeping, food and beverage, etc. were targeted so we could achieve a sufficient sample size of study respondents. Upscale or luxury hotels in China normally have an international standard of management system and relevant human resource policies that would be more likely to enable frontline service employees to experience relevant leadership styles from supervisors, as well as employee empowerment, as part of their workplace culture. The five selected hotels' managers were approached to assist with the coordination of data collection from their frontline service employees. A questionnaire survey was administered between May and July 2019. Under coordination from a collaborating market research company and with assistance from upper-level management at each chosen hotel, copies of the questionnaire and a cover letter were randomly distributed to frontline employees of the hotels. After removing 36 incomplete and unusable responses, 498 questionnaires remained for analysis.

3.2 Participants

Out of 498 participants, as shown in Table 1, most were between 18 and 30 years old ($n = 379$, 76.1%) and 31 to 40 years old ($n = 109$, 21.9%). Approximately 67% were women. Nearly half of the participants had a technical/vocational education ($n = 239$, 48.0%). The largest participant segment was employed in a hotel's front of house ($n = 163$, 32.7%),

followed by the event and conference (n =150, 30.1%) and food and beverage ($n = 117$, 23.5%) departments.

Insert Table 1 about here

3.3 Measures

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section 1 covered the variables of interest. The scale used to measure power distance orientation was adapted from Dorfman and Howell (1988). The assessment of individualist/collectivist orientation was adapted from Wagner (1995). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA; see Table 2) led to three items being retained for power distance orientation, as the remaining items had low factor loadings. Collectivist orientation included three items once the original item (see Table 2) was eliminated due to a low factor loading. Empowering leadership measures were drawn from Cook, Hepworth, Wall, and Warr (1972). One item was removed due to a low factor loading. Psychological empowerment was assessed using Spreitzer's (1995) 12-item scale. Work engagement measures were drawn from Seppälä et al. (2009). One item was removed due to a low factor loading. All measures were scored on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Section 2 measured employees' demographic characteristics, including gender, age, education level, and work department. These variables were incorporated as control variables.

Insert Table 2 about here

3.4 Data analysis

Due to the cross-sectional research design in this study, we conducted a number of tests to check for common method bias (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986; Min et al., 2016). Despite the potential of affecting the interpretation of our findings, Min et al. (2016, 127) that common method variance (CMV) may not be a "serious measurement error". To check for CMV, we conducted Harman's single-factor test to check for common method bias (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). 11 factors with eigenvalues of greater than 1.0 were extracted and the largest single factor explained 15.5% of the variance; therefore, common method bias was not significant issue. To supplement the weakness of Harman's single factor test (Min et al., 2016), a specific bias test was also performed in AMOS (Gaskin & Lim, 2017) to incorporate an unmeasured method factor into the model to check for common method variance. Specifically, the chi-square test was compared between a zero-constrained model (i.e., a model with the common latent factor) and an unconstrained model. Results revealed no specific response bias (Gaskin & Lim, 2017).

4. Results

Following Anderson and Gerbing (1980), a two-step approach was applied by using the measurement model to identify latent factors in the hypothesised model. First, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to specify the measurement model by evaluating the goodness of fit indices. These were then used to compute latent constructs for hypothesis testing as noted by Anderson and Gerbing (1980, 411), "the measurement model in

conjunction with the structural model enables a comprehensive, confirmatory assessment of construct validity…". CFA and model testing were undertaking using IBM AMOS v26.

4.1 Measurement model

To determine discriminant validity, a series of χ^2 tests were performed by comparing the baseline model's goodness of fit (i.e., the hypothesised model with all five variables) across different models. Table 3 lists models' fit indices and indicates that the hypothesised model had a better fit than alternative models. Therefore, discriminant validity of the five variables was confirmed. As reported in Table 3, the hypothesised five-factor model yielded an acceptable fit and met the minimum cut-offs for goodness-of-fit indices (Hu & Bentler, 1999): $\chi^2 = 972.265(466)$, CFI = .948, TLI = .941, RMSEA = .047, SRMR = .055). The items and their associated factor loadings appear in Table 1. Factor loadings ranged from .523 to .904, which were considered significant and indicative of convergent validity.

Insert Table 3 about here

As displayed in Table 4, the AVE values of cultural orientation constructs – power distance orientation (0.46) and collectivist orientation (0.44) – were slightly lower than the recommended threshold of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981); however, their respective composite reliability values of 0.72 and 0.70 exceeded the preferred 0.60 threshold (Bagozzi & Kimmel, 1995). Thus, these cultural orientation constructs were deemed acceptable. Such findings echo Wen, Huang, and Ying (2019), who identified that two cultural value dimensions – *life enrichment and quality* and *modern personal values* – had AVE values lower than 0.50 (0.425 and 0.482). The results further confirmed that cultural values are difficult to measure and vary situationally (Schwartz et al., 2001).

Insert Table 4 about here

4.2 Descriptive statistics

All means, standard deviations, inter-correlations, alpha values, and average variance extracted (AVE) values are reported in Table 4. Surprisingly, Chinese frontline employees generally rated power distance orientation was much lower than the midpoint of the 7-point scale ($M = 1.33$, $SD = 0.82$), reflecting a low power distance orientation. On the contrary, consistent with the literature, they rated a collectivist orientation highly ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 0.67$). Participants also rated empowering leadership ($M = 4.96$, $SD = 0.88$) and work engagement ($M = 5.66$, $SD = 0.76$) positively in the chosen hotels. However, given an overall neutral rating ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.41$) on psychological empowerment, frontline employees did not seem to widely embrace this construct in China's hotels.

4.3 Statistical analyses

Results are shown in Table 5 along with standardised path coefficients. Overall, the hypothesised structural model met the minimum goodness-of-fit indices recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999): $\chi^2 = 3.450(3)$, CFI = 1.000, TLI = .999, RMSEA = .017, SRMR = .019. Education had a positive association with psychological empowerment while age had a positive association with collectivism and psychological leadership. Hypothesis 1 was

1	supported, as empowering leadership was positively associated with work engagement (β =
2	0.094, $p < .001$). Hypothesis 2 was supported as well: empowering leadership demonstrated a
3	positive association with psychological empowerment (β = 0.618, $p < .001$). A positive
4	relationship was observed between psychological empowerment and work engagement (β =
5	0.949, $p < .001$), lending support to Hypothesis 3. These three hypotheses provided support
6	for Hypothesis 4, which implied that psychological empowerment mediated the relationship
7	from empowering leadership to work engagement (β = 0.528, s.e.: 0.036, 95% confidence
8	interval [CI]: [0.461 0.607], $p < .05$).
9	
10	**Insert Table 5 about here**
11	
12	
13	There was support for Hypothesis 5 with power distance orientation moderating the impact of
14	empowering leadership on psychological empowerment (β = 0.054, $p < .01$). Collectivist
15	orientation did not moderate the relationship between empowering leadership and
16	psychological empowerment (β = .01, n.s.); therefore, Hypothesis 6 was not supported.
17	Figure 2 depicts the moderation plot suggesting that when power distance orientation is high,
18	the relationship between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment is low. The
19	converse applies when power distance is low; that is, the relationship between empowering
20	leadership and psychological empowerment is positive.
21	
22	
23	**Insert Figure 2 about here**
24	
25	**5. Discussion**
26	Taking power distance orientation and collectivist orientation as moderators, this study
27	developed a moderated mediation model to empirically evaluate empowering leadership's
28	impacts on work engagement and psychological empowerment. Power distance orientation
29	moderated the relationship between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment
30	among Chinese hotel service employees. Collectivist orientation played no apparent
31	moderating role. Meanwhile, psychological empowerment partially mediated the association
32	between empowering leadership and work engagement. China has traditionally been
33	characterised by high power distance and collectivism, although these values continue to
34	evolve (Hsu & Huang, 2016). This study sheds new light on the roles of Chinese hotel workers'
35	cultural orientations in the link between empowering leadership and psychological
36	empowerment.
37	This study found a positive relationship between empowering leadership and psychological
38	empowerment in a Chinese context. The positive effects of empowering leadership on
39	psychological empowerment align with earlier studies (e.g., Wu & Chen, 2015). This outcome
40	fills a notable knowledge gap. This finding also indicates that empowering leadership practices
41	such as coaching, decision-making participation, individual development, and delegation of
42	authority help service employees become more engaged in their work.

1   This study provides empirical evidence of service employees' moderate attitudes towards
2   psychological empowerment and its positive impact on employees' work engagement in a
3   Chinese context. This finding echoes prior studies (e.g., Moura et al., 2015) and supports the
4   feasibility of psychological empowerment in Chinese organisations. This Western management
5   concept is becoming better understood in Eastern cultures as its positive influence on
6   organisational management practices draws supervisors' attention. Similar to studies indicating
7   that psychological empowerment mediates relationships between leadership and job-related
8   outcomes (e.g., Krishnan, 2012), the current study showed that psychological empowerment
9   strengthens the relationship between empowering leadership and employees' work
10   engagement. Thus, the partial mediating effect of psychological empowerment is essential to
11   clarify how empowering leadership can improve employees' work-related outcomes based on
12   psychological empowerment's role in organisational management.

13   The current findings also advance understanding of the moderation roles of cultural
14   orientations in organisational management in a Chinese context. Specifically, our results
15   contradict those of studies in which Chinese employees reported high power distance in the
16   workplace (e.g., Wang, Mao, Wu, & Liu, 2012). In this type of work environment, our research
17   recognises employees' power distance as a crucial factor in strengthening the relationship
18   between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment. The moderating effect of
19   power distance orientation shows that Chinese hotel employees perceived a low power distance
20   orientation, which enhanced the relationship between empowering leadership and
21   psychological empowerment. This finding aligns with work showing that high power distance
22   decreases psychological empowerment (Farh et al., 2007; Kirkman & Shapiro, 1997).
23   Likewise, other scholars reported that low power distance strengthens the effect between
24   leadership and psychological empowerment (Ahmad & Gao, 2018). These findings can be
25   explained by locus of control and social exchange theory. Employees with a low power distance
26   orientation are more open to active communication and establish close relationships with their
27   managers, leading to less social distance from their superiors (Farh et al., 2007). These workers
28   are also more willing to contribute to decisions (Kirkman & Shapiro, 1997) owing to being
29   psychologically empowered. This study empirically revealed how a low power distance
30   orientation at the individual level serves as a moderator in facilitating empowering leadership
31   practices and psychological empowerment. Employees can then have productive work-related
32   outcomes.

33   No moderating effect of a collectivist orientation was observed in the relationship between
34   empowering leadership and psychological empowerment. Such results contradict research
35   suggesting that a collectivist culture, among other factors, reduces the effectiveness of
36   empowerment practices in Asian countries (e.g., Cho & Faerman, 2010; Fock, Chiang, Au, &
37   Hui, 2011). Two possibilities justify the present study's finding. First, Chinese employees may
38   highly value relationships (also known as *guanxi*) in the workplace by focusing on in-group
39   goals. Job discretion and authority may be granted to groups rather than individuals, such that
40   employees could find the team to be empowered rather than themselves. This situation could
41   explain the absence of collectivist orientation's direct impact on empowering leadership
42   practices and psychological empowerment at an individual level. Second, Chinese people have
43   had more opportunities to interact with Western culture and philosophy in recent decades;
44   collectivist values are no longer mainstream in contemporary Chinese society (Sun & Ryder,
45   2016). Related changes include applying Western-centric management tools to Chinese
46   organisational practices to enhance both employee and organisational performance. As such,
47   Chinese people, especially the younger generation, could be best described as holding mixed
48   cultural values due to modernisation and Westernisation (Loubere, 2010). Managers in Chinese

organisations should consider a certain level of cultural amalgamation between China and the West when implementing conventionally Western management practices in Chinese organisations (Chen & Kim, 2010; Cheung et al., 2012). As a result, employees' collectivist orientation in the workplace in China could be more complicated to navigate than it was in the past.

6. Managerial Implications

This study provides managerial implications regarding the application of Western-centric management concepts in Eastern cultures (e.g., China) and how Chinese hotel managers can apply the knowledge of empowering leadership and employee psychological empowerment to encourage hotel employees' work engagement. This study showed that in the context of hotel workplaces in China, the collectivist orientation of individual employees did not affect the relationship between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment. Hotel practitioners can investigate this outcome from managers' and employees' perspectives to better address a collectivist orientation in the workplace. Power distance was found to moderate the relationship between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment from service employees' perspectives; a low power distance orientation enhances this relationship in the Chinese context. These trends provide guidance for Chinese hotel managers to consider the extent to which service employees accept an unequal power distribution in Chinese hotel management for better work-related outcomes when applying empowering leadership and psychological empowerment. Chinese hotel managers should prioritize existing low power distance relationships and develop a less hierarchical workplace culture. These actions will increase the effect of empowering leadership on employees' psychological empowerment (as a psychological resource) and that will eventually lead to positive workplace outcomes such as a higher degree of work engagement. Moreover, empowering leadership can be considered for integration into hotel management. This practice positively influences employees' work engagement, with psychological empowerment further serving as a mediator. These outcomes can inform evidence-based solutions to enhance employees' work-related outcomes. These findings can help organisational managers understand cultural transitions in the workplace as perceived by Chinese employees. These results can also help managers comprehend factors that might influence the adoption of Western management concepts in Eastern cultures.

7. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Our findings should be considered cautiously; data were obtained from one source and at one time (Min et al., 2016), although common method variance was assessed via Harman's single-factor test and an unmeasured method factor approach (Min et al., 2016). We cautioned that the study findings may not be generalisable to hotel employees outside China or in other non-collectivistic cultures. Subsequent studies could include waves of survey data to mitigate common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). We also did not examine standalone associations within psychological empowerment (i.e., among meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact). Future research could examine the relationships between cultural orientations and these four dimensions to conceptualise psychological empowerment more thoroughly as a management strategy in Chinese hotels.

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Figure 1. Proposed Research Model
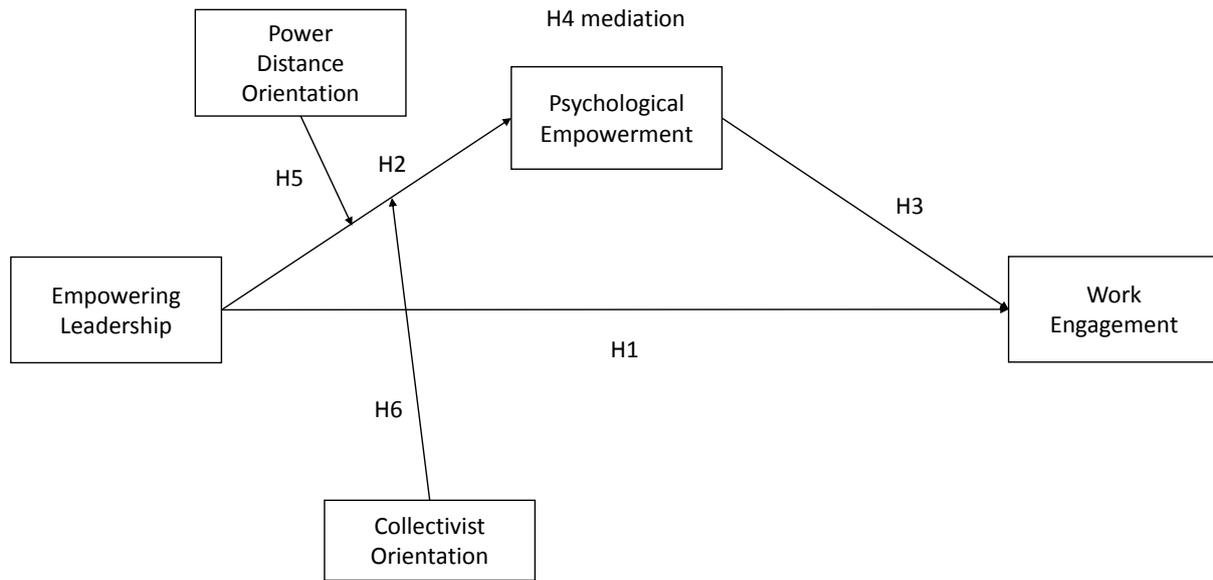
Figure 2. Empowering Leadership as Moderator: Johnson-Neyman Plot
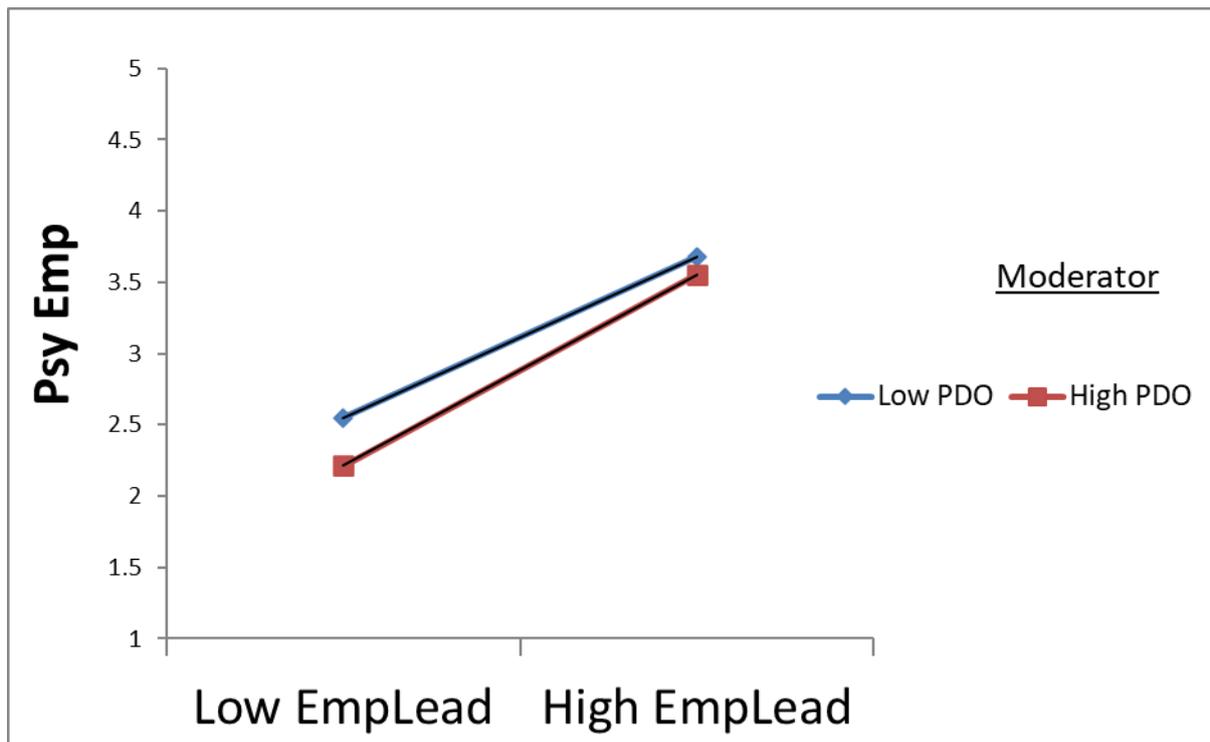
Legend:

PDO: Power Distance Orientation

PsyEmp: Psychological Empowerment

PsyLead: Psychological Leadership (moderator)

Table 1. Sociodemographic Profile of Respondents ($n = 498$)

	n	**%**
Age		
18–30	379	76.1
31–40	109	21.9
41–50	9	1.8
51–60	1	0.2
Gender		
Male	160	32.1
Female	334	67.1
Prefer not to say	4	0.8
Educational Background		
Primary school	9	1.8
Junior high school	71	14.3
Senior high school	162	32.5
Technical/vocational college	239	48.0
Bachelor degree	17	3.4
Work Department		
Housekeeping	52	10.4
Front desk	163	32.7
Concierge	8	1.6
Food and beverage	117	23.5
Event and conference	150	30.1
Other (e.g., fitness centre, sauna)	8	1.6

Table 2. Overall measurement model test results ($n = 498$).

	CR	AVE	Factor Loading	C.R.	p
Power Distance Orientation	0.72	0.46			
Supervisor should make most decisions without consulting employees			0.639	12.147	***
It is frequently necessary for a supervisor to use authority and power when dealing with employees					
Supervisors should seldom ask for the opinions of employees			0.786	22.491	***
Supervisors should avoid off-the-job social contacts with employees					
Employees should not disagree with management decisions			0.594	17.100	***
Supervisors should not delegate important tasks to employees					
Collectivist Orientation	0.70	0.44			
An employee should accept the group's decision even when personally he or she has a different opinion					
Problem solving by groups gives better results than problem solving by individuals			0.569	8.203	***
The performance of one's work group or unit is more important than one's own individual performance			0.762	37.625	***
Working with a group is better than working alone			0.633	24.462	***
Psychological Empowerment	0.83	0.54			
The work I do is very important to me			0.655	31.434	***
My job activities are personally meaningful to me			0.870	65.871	***
The work I do is meaningful to me			0.836	49.880	***
I am confident about my ability to do my job			0.821	73.297	***
I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities			0.801	56.188	***
I have mastered the skills necessary for my job			0.681	38.566	***
I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job			0.647	41.857	***
I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work			0.679	50.444	***
I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job			0.812	51.134	***
My impact on what happens in my department is large			0.866	118.807	***
I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department			0.846	82.342	***
I have significant influence over what happens in my department			0.904	119.532	***
Empowering Leadership	0.89	0.54			
Complete freedom is allowed by supervisor in employees' work			0.730	22.491	***
Employees are permitted by supervisor to use their own judgement in solving problems			0.742	17.100	***
Employees' initiative is encouraged by their supervisor			0.703	12.147	***
Employees are allowed by their supervisor to do their work the way they think best			0.773	8.203	***
Supervisor turns his/her employees loose on a job, and lets them get on with it			0.523	37.625	***
A high degree of initiative from employees is allowed by their supervisor			0.753	24.462	***
Employees are trusted by their supervisor to exercise good judgement			0.846	27.983	***
Employees' tasks are assigned by their supervisor, then employees are allowed to handle them					

		CR	AVE			
Work Engagement		0.92	0.60			
	At my work, I feel that I am bursting with energy			0.777	13.268	***
	At my job, I feel strong and vigorous			0.798	12.991	***
	I am enthusiastic about my job			0.810	12.717	***
	My job inspires me			0.843	12.179	***
	When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work			0.719	13.820	***
	I feel happy when I am working intensely			0.582	14.844	***
	I am proud of the work that I do			0.789	13.078	***
	I am immersed in my work			0.772	13.326	***
	I get carried away when I am working					

Note: CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; C.R. = critical ratio; all items = $p < 0.001$.

Italicised and underlined items were removed.

Table 3. Alternative Model Testing

Model	χ^2	*Df*	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	Δ (Df), sig level
Based model: 5 factors (WE, Psy Emp, Lead, PD, CO)	972.265	466	.948	.941	.047	.055	Preferred mode
4 factors (WE+Psy Emp, Lead, PD, CO)	1010.489	470	.945	.938	.047	.058	38.224(4), ***
3 factors (WE+Psy Emp+ Lead, PD, CO)	1408.662	473	.905	.894	.063	.064	398.173(3), ***
2 factors (WE+Psy Emp+ Lead+PD, CO)	1617.833	475	.884	.871	.070	.069	209.171(2), ***
1 factor (WE+Psy Emp+Lead+ PD+CO)	1881.758	476	.857	.842	.077	.075	263.925(1), ***

Note: $N = 498$; TLI = Tucker–Lewis index; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation, SRMR = standardised root mean square residual.

WE=Work engagement; Psy Emp = psychological empowerment; Lead = empowering leadership; PD = power distance; CO = collectivist orientation.

Comparisons between Model 1 and the remaining alternative models demonstrated that the hypothesised five-factor model demonstrated the best fit to the data and confirmed the discriminant validity of selected constructs.

Table 4. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of All Variables in the Study

Correlations	M	SD	AVE	CR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	1.26	0.49	--	--	1.00								
2. Gender	1.69	0.48	--	--	-0.08	1.00							
3. Education	3.37	0.83	--	--	-0.02	0.10*	1.00						
4. Departments	3.35	1.49	--	--	0.05	-0.12**	0.34***	1.00					
5. Power distance orientation	1.33	0.82	0.46	0.72	0.13**	-0.03	0.04	0.07	1.00				
6. Collectivism orientation	4.71	0.67	0.44	0.70	0.07	-0.02	-0.07	-0.03	-0.31***	1.00			
7. Empowering Leadership	4.96	0.88	0.54	0.89	0.19***	-0.10*	-0.03	0.02	0.37***	0.07	1.00		
8. Psychological empowerment	3.54	0.41	0.54	0.83	0.18***	-0.04	0.11*	0.12**	0.67***	-0.29***	0.43***	1.00	
9. Work engagement	5.66	0.76	0.60	0.92	0.18***	-0.03	0.08	0.09*	0.78***	-0.21***	0.47***	0.86***	1.00

$N = 498$. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.
M = Mean Score
SD = Standard Deviation
CR = Composite Reliability
AVE = Average Variance Explained

Table 5. Results of Multiple Regression Analyses: Psychological Empowerment

Hypothesis	Standardised Estimates	Sig. level
H1. Empowering Leadership → Work Engagement	0.094	***
H2. Empowering Leadership → Psychological Empowerment	0.618	***
H3. Psychological Empowerment → Work Engagement	0.949	***
H4. Psychological Empowerment mediates Empowering Leadership → Work Engagement	β 0.528, s.e. 0.036, 95% CI [0.461, 0.607], *	
H5. Empowering Leadership x Power Distance Orientation → Psychological Empowerment	0.054	*
H6. Empowering Leadership x Collectivist Orientation → Psychological Empowerment	0.010	n.s

*$p<.05$, ***$p < .001$.
n.s. = not significant