

## WHEN MINDFULNESS DRIVES PERFORMANCE: THE MODERATING ROLE OF MINDFULNESS IN EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYEE INNOVATIVE BEHAVIOR

Muhammad Qurban Rafiq<sup>\*1</sup>, Dr. Ghazanfar Ali<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Muhammad Zulqarnain Asab<sup>3</sup>

<sup>\*1</sup>PhD Scholar, Institute of Business Management and Administrative Sciences

<sup>2</sup>Lecturer, Institute of Business Management and Administrative Sciences

<sup>3</sup>Research Scholar, Institute of Business Management and Administrative Sciences

<sup>1</sup>muhammad.qurban@iub.edu.pk, <sup>2</sup>ghazanfar.ali@iub.edu.pk, <sup>3</sup>zulqarnain.asab@iub.edu.pk

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Corresponding Author: \*

Muhammad Qurban Rafiq

### Abstract

Empowerment strategies have been widely recognized as effective mechanisms for boosting employee output and creative performance. Nonetheless, the empirical examinations regarding the effect of Empowering Leadership (EL) on Employee Innovative Behavior (EIB) are limited, particularly in the hospitality industry in Pakistan. Moreover, the role of mindfulness as a moderator in this relationship is not explored enough. The current work attempts to describe the relationship between EL and EIB, hypothesizing mindfulness as a moderating construct based on Self-Determination Theory. A structural equation modeling approach was used to analyze survey data collected from 450 frontline employees in Pakistan's hospitality industry. Findings indicate that EL increases the degree of attention among the employees, which combined with mindfulness results in a higher degree of EIB. The positive/negative impact on EIB is further enhanced when the capacities of mindfulness among employees act as a moderator. This investigation is a valuable contribution to the study of leadership as it demonstrates the interplay between leadership practices and wellbeing of employees to achieve organizational performance. Consequently, hospitality executives ought to take up leadership strategies that foster empowerment and spur innovative behavior among their workforce, thereby maximizing workplace effectiveness.

### INTRODUCTION

Innovation in Pakistan's hospitality industry has become a strategic imperative since the sector strives to rebound from the effects of the Covid-19, pressures on its currency, and the sudden shifts in the guest expectation towards digital and sustainable services (Travel et al., 2024). The development of competences around contactless technologies, operations based on data and the design of

experiences is fundamental to improving the quality of service, productivity, and resilience needed to sustain the sector's contribution to the economy (Travel et al., 2024). Global benchmarking shows that the current levels of competitiveness are now driven by digital readiness, human capital and enabling ecosystems, hence making it crucial and urgent for

Pakistani operators to invest in innovation across the value chain (WEF, 2024).

The global tourism and hospitality industry has grown to become one of the fastest-growing industries in the world economy, both in terms of the number of people employed and the significant economic contribution to GDP growth (Ramzan et al., 2025). In Pakistan, the hospitality industry is gaining strategic importance in the country because of its potential to create jobs, attract foreign direct investment, and facilitate cultural exchange. With governmental priorities more and more towards the development of tourism industry, the role of human capital in guaranteeing sustainable development of the industry has become paramount (Ramzan et al., 2025). In order to maintain competitiveness and adapt to the changing expectations of their customers, organizations operating in this space need to introduce innovative behavior to their workforce.

The hospitality sector in Pakistan faces unique challenges such as limited resources, skill shortages in the workforce and fluctuating demand due to the instability created by political and economic factors (Sann et al., 2024). Nonetheless, these obstacles are spread with enormous growth opportunities that will be realized through innovation and sustainable operational practices. As the number of projected tourists is growing, organizations need to develop innovative organizational cultures backed by empowering leadership (Ramzan et al., 2025). Empirical researches in the hospitality and tourism industries of Pakistan have validated the positive influence of EL on innovative climate and creativity among employees (Jameel et al., 2025; Qadir et al., 2024).

Within the highly dynamic and competitive environment of the hospitality industry, innovation is being recognized as an increasingly important mechanism for sustainable growth as well as to acquire competitive advantage. The empirical research has shown that empowering leadership that is characterized by delegation of authority, facilitation of generating new ideas, and building employees' autonomy has a strong impact on innovative behavior of employees (Lee & Yoo, 2019).

Leadership is one of the most critical factors that determines the work outcomes of employees in organizations (Roberson et al., 2022; Singh et al.,

2025; Wu & Shen, 2024). Leach (2005) describes empowering leadership (EL) as "a practice, or set of practices, involving the delegation of responsibility down the hierarchy to give employees greater decision making authority with regard to execution of their primary work tasks." EL is characterized by its emphasis on power distribution and delegation of authority features and therefore it contrasts with other forms of leadership (Kim & Beehr, 2023). EL theory states that leaders constantly grant staff full liberty and encourage power-sharing (Mitchell, 2023). According to Lee et al. (2018) these empowering behaviors have a favorable effect on workers' motivation to actively engage in workplace interactions and increase their sense of recognition from their leaders.

This ultimately contributes into the alleviation of workplace loneliness, which has been evidenced by studies conducted by (Basit & Nauman, 2023; Ozelik & Barsade, 2018). As a result, we suggest that the practice of implementing EL is a very effective strategy for supervising employees to improve the employees view of autonomy in the workplace. EL involves behaviors such as stressing on the importance of work to be done, encouraging participating decision makers, building confidence that subordinates are capable of performing well and eliminating the bureaucratic barriers (Ahearne et al., 2005; Tripathi et al., 2020). The use of EL boosts the self-efficacy of workers that raise their trust in their competencies and portrays them to more willing to engage in some risky initiatives (Lin et al., 2020). EL is not only theoretically different from other established forms of leadership but also practically different from them (Arshad et al., 2022). The unique characteristic of EL is the sharing of power and sense promoted autonomy of subordinates in the organization (Young et al., 2021). EL represents an additional leadership model which is associated with creativity and innovation and sharing characteristics with the participative leadership.

Tourism organizations, including hotels, travel agencies and destination management companies, rely heavily on the creativity and problem-solving abilities of their workforce to differentiate themselves and meet evolving consumer demands. Empowering leaders in this sector empower employees to take initiative, suggest novel ideas and implement

innovative solutions to enhance customer experiences, operational efficiencies and service quality (Anderson, 2018).

Innovative work behavior is a multistage process encompassing idea generation, idea promotion and idea implementation (Carmeli et al.; De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010; Janssen & psychology, 2000). In hospitality sector, IWB may involve frontline-led service design tweaks, micro-innovations in guest interaction, workflow streamlining and improved service recovery practices (Ottenbacher et al., 2005).

Empirical evidence has suggested that leader behaviors, psychological empowerment, motivation and supportive organizational climates are critical antecedents of workplace creativity and innovation as documented in the empirical research works by (Anderson et al., 2014; CHEONG et al., 2022; Hammond et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2018; Seibert et al., 2011). These findings converge on the proposition that empowering leadership (EL) facilitates innovative work behavior (IWB) through the existence of identifiable psychological mechanisms, which are conditional on the existence of contextual boundary conditions.

Mindfulness characterized by a sense of present focus and growth, serve as crucial moderating mechanism in understanding how empowering leadership influences employee innovation in tourism organizations. Employees who are experiences mindfulness are more likely to proactively engage in innovative behaviors, leveraging the autonomy and support provided by empowering leaders to drive organizational innovation (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018).

Theoretically, different leadership styles produce positive and negative effects on EIB. Thus, it is central to identify and review the leadership style that best promotes innovative behavior as earlier evidence has been mixed. The ideal leadership style therefore depends on achieving organizational goals, in which the successful conduct of both individual employees and employees of the whole organization plays a role. This is especially important considering research on the connection between EL and EIB.

While prior studies have recognized Empowering Leadership (EL) as an important driver of Employee Innovative Behavior (Liu et al., 2020). The underlying mechanisms that explain how and why this

relationship occurs remain insufficiently explored. Existing research often establishes a direct relationship between EL and EIB but it fails to adequately address the psychological processes that connect leaders' empowering behaviors with employees' innovative outcomes (Cheong et al., 2016; X. Zhang & K. M. J. A. o. m. j. Bartol, 2010). The lack of understanding of this phenomenon limits the development of both theory and empirical applications, especially in a very dynamic service area such as hospitality, where innovation becomes a prerequisite not only to compete but also to maintain a sustainable business. We aim to address important research questions (RQs), which include;

**RQ1:** Is there a relationship between EL and EIB?

**RQ2:** When does Mindfulness moderates the relationship between EL and EIB?

Based on this gap in the research, we develop our theoretical model and explore how EL affects EIB in organizations. We believe that EL has a positive impact on EIB. Our study is not just examining how EL influences EIB, but we also examine the key psychological traits of mindfulness that do influence the moderating relationship of our proposed relationship.

Overall, the present study contributes to both a theoretical understanding and practical knowledge of the integration of leadership and motivation awareness into a coherent, empirically grounded model to explain innovation in hospitality work settings. Our research findings on the innovation resulted that high MF in work setting may have some negative effect on the performance of the employee in the organizations. But it could be varying from the different contextual boundaries like outside the Pakistan. Not always it gives a negative result but it has more positive results in some other context in the World. So, with the current contextual findings we conclude that there is negative effect of MF through the mediation mechanisms in our study with respect to Pakistan.

Innovative behavior in employees' intrinsic motivation and resource development can be managed by EL (Kim et al., 2018). As per theory of Self-Determination, employees under such leadership show intrinsic motivation, confident in their abilities and autonomously search for new technology or procedures (Guo et al., 2022). We believe that the

moderating relationship between EL and EIB has a positive relationship which is shown in our

theoretical framework in Figure: 1

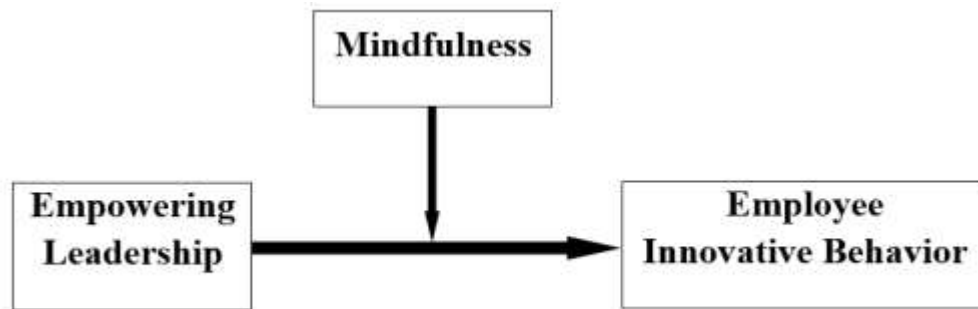


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

**Theory and Hypothesis Development**

**Self-Determination Theory**

Self Determination Theory provides the theoretical underpinning for understanding the mechanisms through which EL fosters EIB. According to SDT, employees are more expected to demonstrate intrinsic motivation and innovation when their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness are fulfilled (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Empowering leadership facilitates these needs by delegating authority, providing constructive feedback and creating collaborative work environments (Knevelsrud et al., 2024). Recent studies highlight that when employees feel intrinsically motivated, they are more engaged, proactive and willing to take creative risks (McAnally & Hagger, 2024; Wang et al., 2024).

Self Determination Theory is based on fulfilling autonomy, belonging and competence needs. Humans have an inborn aspiration for personal growth and fulfillment. Intrinsic motivations are given more importance in SDT as compared to previously studied external motivations (St Clair-Thompson et al., 2015).

**Empowering Leadership and Employee Innovative Behavior**

“Empowering Leadership (EL) as a leader who shares power with subordinates to inspire them” (Srivastava et

al., 2006). “EL is a style of leadership that fosters employee involvement in decision making, increases their self-efficacy and autonomy and eliminates feelings of powerlessness”. This style creates necessary conditions for employee participation (Ahearne et al., 2005). “EL as the belief of subordinates that their leaders have transferred, shared or delegated power”.

The objective is to empower subordinates to exercise autonomy in their job roles (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014; X. Zhang & K. M. Bartol, 2010). Empowerment is the result of giving subordinates more autonomous opportunities. Scholars suggest that EL leads to better outcomes for organizations in the long run (Amundsen, 2019; Cheong et al., 2016; I. Wong Humborstad et al., 2014).

“Employee Innovative Behavior refers to tasks that aid workers in creating, promoting and implementing new and creative ideas”(Afsar et al., 2020). It also refers to employee’s intentionally introduce new ideas for services or work procedures, successfully promoting and executing them (Atitumpong & Badir, 2018; Grošelj et al., 2021). Individuals Innovative Behavior in the workplace by generating novel ideas, advocating for them and ensuring their successful implementation (Hsiao et al., 2011). Innovative Behaviors are not part of the regular pattern of behavior and are executed informally by employees who do not usually engage in them (Chen et al., 2021). Innovative Behavior is central for organizational development in today’s

competitive era, as it enables higher productivity, technological advancement and competitive edge (Hooda & Singla, 2020; Newman et al., 2018).

One of the researcher acknowledged the advantages of EL approach in the services sector, as it allows for Individual Innovative Behavior by removing the control and influence of a single leader over subordinates (Carmeli et al., 2006). EL, as posited by (Mutonyi et al., 2020) pertains to the conviction held by employees that their leaders have bestowed or shared authority with them, thus enabling them to exercise autonomous decision-making within their respective work roles.

There are some studies that show a optimistic association between empowerment and innovation in the services sector but further research is necessary (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013). Empowerment leads to increased independent action and greater likelihood of demonstrating Innovative Behavior (Cheong et al., 2016). Empowered employees perform better due to their willingness to try new methods and confidence in generating and implementing useful ideas (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013).

The services sector often faces challenges, such as excessive formalization that can impede empowerment (Rainey, 2009). Therefore, it is important to explore how EL can positively impact Individual Innovative Behavior in this sector.

As a result, our study presents the hypothesis that EL and EIB has a positive correlation;

### **H1: The EL and EIB has a positive relationship.**

#### **Moderating effect of Mindfulness**

*“Mindfulness has been termed as being a receptive attention and awareness of the going on and experience in the present moment.”*(Brown et al., 2007). Mindfulness allowed employees to meet their targets and is associated with desirable outcomes like leadership, initiative, creative work, career flexibility, joy and self-development, which gives the organizations a competitive advantage. However, mindfulness can allow employees to save the energy spent on dysfunctional response patterns and to invest it in the creation and implementation of new ideas (Good et al., 2016; Shapiro et al., 2006).

Particularly, mindfulness involves the act of paying attention to external activities and internal

experiences, ideas and emotions in a benevolent and open way (Baer & practice, 2003); (Bishop et al., 2004). Building on previous identification of the considerable advantages of mindfulness for fundamental aspects of human functioning, that is attention, cognition, emotion, behavior and physiology (Brown et al., 2007). Organizational research has only more recently started to investigate and provide empirical support regarding the positive effects of mindfulness for workplace functioning (Glomb et al., 2011; Good et al., 2016). However, researchers have recently called for more studies that would examine the potential benefits of mindfulness in workplace performance because the field's research activity was still in its infancy (Good et al., 2016). In the present study, we address this request by elucidating how mindfulness can act as a moderator to encourage creative behavior in workers.

Increased cognitive flexibility (increased cognitive functioning), more constructive reframing of one's circumstances (increased emotional functioning), and more neutralized or fitting personal values (increased self-regulatory functioning) are all facilitated by the phenomenon's enhancement of attention skills. These factors are all essential for rerouting an individual's energetic resources to the creation and implementation of novel and valuable ideas. Therefore, our arguments lead to the hypothesis that when in a state of mindfulness, people with higher levels of mindfulness are more likely to truncate their running response and to focus their available energy on an innovative response pattern driven by resource acquisition. We therefore hypothesize:

### **H2: Mindfulness moderates the relationship between EL and EIB.**

## **3.0 METHOD**

### **3.1. Participants and procedure**

The research aimed to determine the effects of Empowering Leadership on Employee Innovative Behavior in the Hospitality Industry in Pakistan. Using the research model formulated above, the analysis examines the relationships among the major constructs, such as Mindfulness. Structural Equation Modeling was used to analyze responses obtained from structured questionnaire for testing

the hypothesized relationship. This chapter begins with a major overview of the data screening and preparation procedures, which is followed by an assessment of the measurement model, which includes data assessments of reliability, validity and model fit indices. This was followed by assessing the structural model to test the direct and intervening effects of the variables. The findings derived from the objectives and theoretical context of the study can provide empirical evidence to confirm or disprove the proposed hypotheses. This chapter is, therefore, a key milestone towards comprehending the role of EL in refining EIB.

**Table 1** indicates the questionnaire response rate for the questionnaires used to collect data from the target population. The 450 questionnaires were distributed, of which 60 were not returned due to numerous reasons, such as non-participation, shortage of time or lack of interest. The study response rate was 86.66%, although an over 50 percent response rate is deemed sufficient in survey research, particularly in tourism research, the potential for non-response bias due to unresponsive data should be recognized. The sample size was sufficient to provide a robust statistical analysis with

PLS-SEM and to ensure the research findings are valid and reliable. The response rate indicates participation by the target population in moderation, suggesting a reasonable level of interest in the research topic and that respondents have no issue providing opinions on tourism. The author has employed quota sampling to ensure equitable allocation of this study. This method ought to enable us to elicit the opinions of every group in proportion to their total percentage of the entire population. In line with Hair Jr et al. (2021) quota sampling constitutes an acceptable methodological approach in business and social science research with the lack of practicality in probability sampling and availability of complete lists of a population. Within the hospitality and tourism sector of Pakistan, it is difficult to access a comprehensive and complete sampling frame due to the ownership policies and the employees and also changing operations which makes it impossible to implement random sampling. Accordingly, the use of quota sampling in the present investigation is consistent with established methodological recommendations related to study feasibility as well as methodological rigor in a-field based doctoral research.

Response	Frequency/Rate
Total Questionnaires Distributed	450
Returned Questionnaires	390
Not Returned	60
Actual Response Rate	88.66%

**Table 1: Response Rate of the Questionnaires**

Descriptive	Label	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	312	80%
	Female	78	20%
Age Groups	18-24 years	102	26.2%
	25-34 years	146	37.4%
	35-44 years	96	24.6%
	45-54 years	46	11.8%
Education	High School Diploma	60	15.4%
	Associate Degree	156	40.0%
	Bachelor's Degree	138	35.4%
	Master's Degree	36	9.2%

Experience	Less than 1 year	60	15.4%
	1-5 years	150	38.5%
	6-10 years	110	28.2%
	More than 10 years	70	17.9%
Employment Status	Frontline employees	190	48.7%
	Supervisors/Middle Managers	120	30.8%
	Senior Managers / Executives	80	20.5%

**Table 2: Demographic Profile of Responses**

*Table 2* gives the demographic data of the 390 respondents responding to the study. The sample size is 312 male respondents (80 percent) and 78 female respondents (20 percent), which means that most of them are male.

The age distribution indicates that the greatest amount of the respondents is in the age group of 25-34 years (37.4%), 18-24 years (26.2%), 35-44 years (24.6%), and 45 years and above (11.80%). This implies that the sample size has a huge number of middle-aged people and the youthful adults constitute a good percentage as well. This population information is very helpful in understanding the structure of the employees of hospitality industry.

**3.2 Measures**

The EL construct was measured on a three item scale created by (Amundsen and Martinsen (2014). The scale explores four dimensions: increasing the meaningfulness of work, encouraging participation in decision making, indicating confidence in high performance and offering autonomy from bureaucratic constraints. The EIB was measured using Scott and Bruce (1994) the six item scale assesses three phases of innovation, including idea generation, promotion of ideas and realization of ideas. A 10-item scale adapted for Mindfulness construct which capturing the attentiveness, relational awareness and integration of effort within teams (Yu and Zellmer Bruhn, 2018).

**4.0 Analyses and results**

Once the researchers determined the reliability and validity of the model being measured (see figure 1), they then proceeded to evaluate the structure model to determine the hypothesized relational structure among the latent constructs.

The features of the structural model assessment in PLS-SEM were based on the analysis of collinearity problems, the path coefficients, coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) and effect sizes ( $f^2$ ) following the recommendation of (Hair Jr et al., 2021; Sarstedt et al., 2014). The researcher used two different procedures of PLS-SEM to analyze the data. Specifically, the study identified between the outer (measurement) model and the inner (structural) model, which is a methodology validated by (Sarstedt et al., 2014). Assessment of the measurement model in PLS-SEM is done through an assessment of the outer loadings and outer weights. Reflective indicators are operationalized through outer loadings while formative indicators are depicted based on outer weights (Sarstedt et al., 2014). Each item must have an outer loading of over 0.70 with all the constructs. Items that produced loadings of between 0.40 and 0.70 may be retained if their exclusion would result in a drop in composite reliability. On the contrary items with outer loadings that do not meet criterion of 0.40 should be eliminated (Sarstedt et al., 2014). In this research, all the measurements of the constructs have been conducted without formative measurement model evaluation since the items were considered well-aligned and inter related. **Table 3** shows that 19 items of the three variables have reliable external loadings, at least 0.70. Cronbach's alpha was used to confirm the internal consistency reliability of each construct (Hair Jr et al., 2017).

It is a measure of the degree of which items on a construct consistently measure the same latent variable. The sensitivity of this test focuses on individual items within the constructs, as it uses outer loadings from indicator measurements. A

indicator measurements. A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 or higher is considered satisfactory and

provides a benchmark for good internal consistency and for the construct's intended reliability. **Table 3** shows the internal reliability and construct validation measures. Within the framework of the measurement model, each of the constructs meets the appropriate requirements of reliability and validity. Additionally, variance inflation factors (VIFs) were calculated for each of the constructs included in this study to perform an overall collinearity test. The VIF values, as listed in **Table 3**, are all close to unity and hence, indicate that there is no existence of multicollinearity among the variables. These VIF statistics are one more indication that common method variance (CMV) may not be a problem in the current analysis. Cross

loading is another method of testing the discriminant validity that stipulates that the items should have greater outer loading on their respective variables as compared to the rest of the construct (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

**Table 4** indicates that all cross-loadings are according to the required thresholds. Figure 2 shows the HTMT analysis chart and the results indicate that all HTMT values are below 0.85. A score below 0.90 confirms that variables demonstrate discriminant validity in their relationship. SRMR values below 0.10 indicate model fit according to the research standards where SRMR equal to zero represents a perfect model fit.

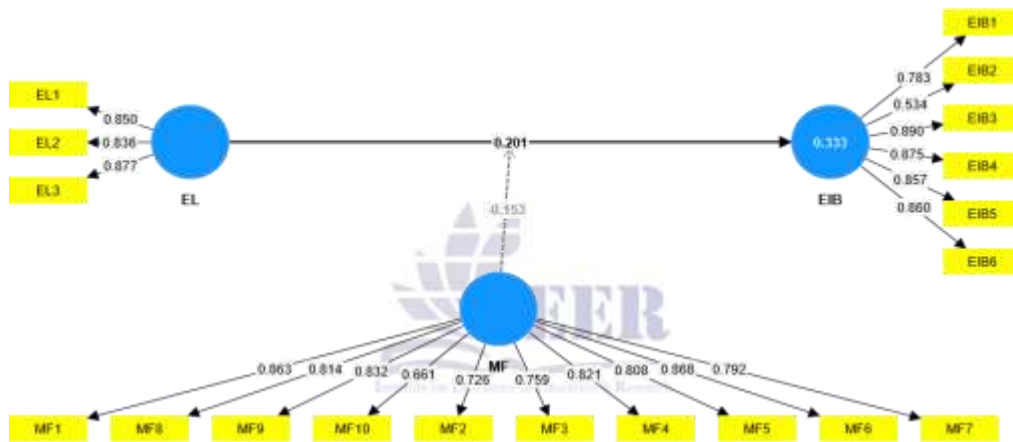


Figure 1: Measurement Model

Variable	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha (CA)	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)	VIF
EIB	0.533-0.891	0.89	0.917	0.655	1.18
EL	0.836-0.877	0.815	0.89	0.730	1.08
MF	0.774-0.878	0.947	0.952	0.667	1.22

Note(s): Empowering Leadership (EL), Employee Innovative Behavior(EIB), Mindfulness (MF)

Table 3: Reliability and Validity

	EL	MF	EIB
EIB1	0.334	0.345	0.783
EIB2	0.206	0.19	0.533
EIB3	0.407	0.393	0.891
EIB4	0.384	0.402	0.875
EIB5	0.376	0.395	0.857
EIB6	0.384	0.396	0.859
EL1	0.85	0.321	0.376
EL2	0.836	0.342	0.343

EL3	0.877	0.372	0.403
MF1	0.36	0.86	0.394
MF10	0.351	0.843	0.377
MF2	0.427	0.688	0.409
MF3	0.173	0.774	0.242
MF4	0.395	0.835	0.384
MF5	0.255	0.824	0.29
MF6	0.327	0.878	0.405
MF7	0.26	0.796	0.36
MF8	0.384	0.82	0.345
MF9	0.282	0.825	0.366

Table 4: Cross Loading Values

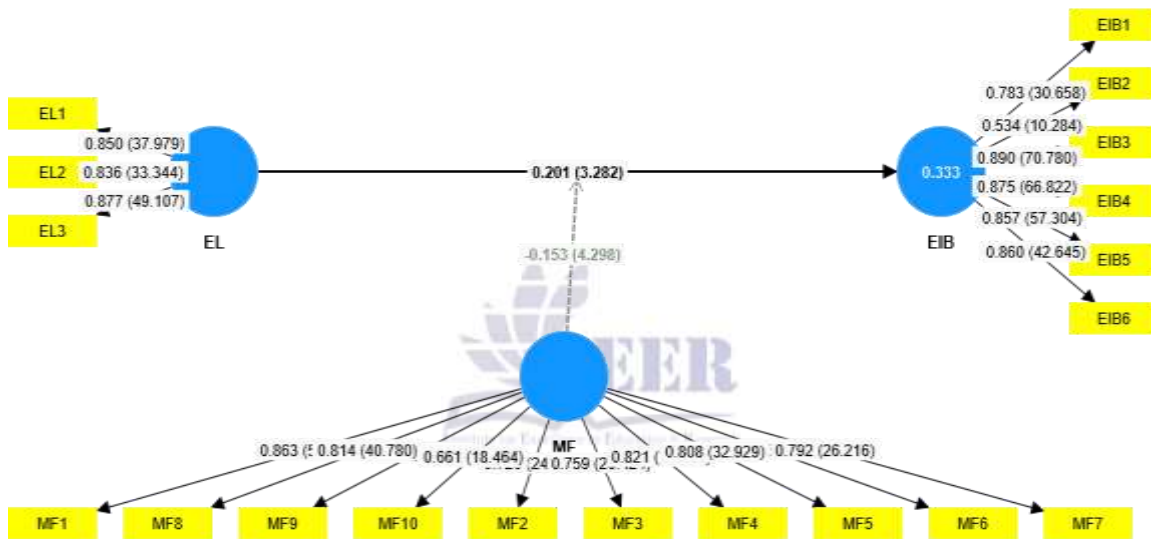


Figure 2: Structural Equation Model

The outcomes of this study, in order to show the table, the Saturated Model values of the SRMR of 0.053 while the SRMR value is also 0.056 for the Estimated Model. Those values validate that this model is well-fitting.

In *Table 5* to check the strength and direction of the relationships between constructs, path coefficients were analyzed. A bootstrapping procedure was used with 5,000 resamples to measure the significance of the hypothesized relationships as suggested by (Hair Jr et al., 2021). The statistical significance for each of the paths was

calculated on the basis of t-values and p-values. Structural paths with p-values below 0.05 considered as statistically significant. The outcomes showed that all of the hypothesized relations were supported, the confirmation of the theoretical structure of the research.

*Table 6* in addition to R<sup>2</sup>, effect sizes (f<sup>2</sup>) were investigated in order to understand and judge the relative influence of each exogenous construct over the endogenous construct. f<sup>2</sup> values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 are considered as small, medium and large

effects respectively (Hair Jr et al. (2021)). The outcomes revealed the effects of empowering leadership and motivation factors to have at least large effect sizes on employee innovative behavior which confirmed their relevance in theory and labeled their importance in practice in the context of the hospitality and tourism industry.

In **Table 7** the level of explanation provided by the model was evaluated as a function of the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), which gives the level of

explanation represented by the independent variables for variance in the dependent variable(s).  $R^2$  values of 0.75, 0.50 and 0.25 can be called as large, moderate and weak respectively (Hair Jr et al. (2021)). In the present study, the  $R^2$  value of the dependent construct (EIB) showed that the degree of prediction was of moderate to substantial level and thus demonstrated that the factors chosen for prediction contributed significantly to the explanation of variation in employee outcomes.

	Path coefficients
EL -> EIB	0.507
EL -> MF	0.449
MF x EL -> EIB	0.532

**Table 5: Path Coefficients**

	$f^2$	effect size
EL → EIB	0.048	Large

**Table 6: Effect size of  $f^2$**

	R-square	Adjusted R-square
EIB	0.321	0.316

**Table 7: R square values of Model**

The results show as indicated in **Table 8** that Empowering Leadership positively significantly influences Employee Innovative Behavior, as represented by t-value of 3.282 and a p-value of 0.001. This is an indication to the extent of the effect of EL in the development of IB of Employees in the Hospitality Industry.

The results depicted the t-values in the relationships of the t-value is 3. 282. Surprisingly, the t-value exceeds the threshold value of 1.64, that is, there is a significant relationship. These findings show that EL and EIB have a positive and statistically significant relationship.

**H1: Employee Innovative Behavior has a direct relationship with Empowering Leadership.**

Relationships of DV and IV (values of P and T)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values	Decision
EL -> EIB	0.061	3.282	0.001	Supported

**Table 8: Direct Relationship**

In **Table 9**, the p-value of the moderating effect of Mindfulness on the relationship of EL and EIB is 0.000, which is a smaller value than 0.05, which means the moderation effect of MF on the relationship of EL and EIB is significant.

The **Table 9** shows that the t-value of the moderating effect of MF on the relationship between Empowering Leadership and Employee Innovative Behavior is 4.298, which is greater than 1.64 and the P-value is 0.000 which is less than

0.05. This indicates that the moderating effect of MF on the association between EL and EIB is

significant leading to the acceptance of hypothesis.

STDEV, T-Values, P-Values	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values	Decision
MF x EL -> EIB	0.036	4.298	0.000	Supported

Table 9: Moderating Effect

5.0 Discussion and conclusion

The key purpose of the current research was to discuss the role of EL on EIB in the hospitality sector of Punjab, Pakistan. The findings of the present research confirm that empowering leadership is a key developmental component that drives innovative behavior and creates adaptive and forward thinking team members. This leadership approach integrates respect for the autonomy of employees and confidence building to foster an innovative outlook and maximize process enhancement capabilities and transformative change within the evolving hospitality industry. Hospitality sectors that have trust based leadership that has sharing decision making and employee empowerment are set to be sustainably successful in the long term. EL places a strong emphasis on employee ownership, claiming that such ownership is sufficient to generate work behaviors geared toward enhanced performance. By adopting authority structures that are decentralized and fostering a psychological safety culture within, leaders turn their employees from being merely reactionary workers to proactive change agents, in turn, leadership addresses organizational goals while concurrently building capabilities for the hospitality industry. Organizations belonging to the hospitality industry are obligated to shift their main approaches to building resilience from traditional supervisory paradigms to those that are empowerment oriented. EL teaches workers essential skills, including self-motivation, risk taking skills and fast decision making strategies that they need to respond to unexpected problems and develop sustainable solutions. Specifically, the of literature by specifying the processes of EL in a developing country service setting and highlighting the need for hospitality and tourism managers to

purpose of the study was to test a moderated model grounded on Self Determination Theory: EL is expected to foster EIB both directly and indirectly through the mindfulness. Furthermore, the study attempted to know the moderating ability of mindfulness in the relation between EL and EIB. This research was motivated by several gaps in the literature. Although EL has been widely studied in Western and manufacturing contexts, there is limited empirical evidence on its influence in the hospitality sector of developing economies such as Pakistan (Ahmed et al., 2022). By focusing on Punjab’s hospitality industry, this study addressed the regional cultural and operational characteristics that may influence leadership innovation dynamics, such as hierarchical work structures, collectivist orientations and high power distance. These findings provide empirical support for SDT in a hospitality industry context, confirming that autonomy/supportive leadership enhances intrinsic motivation which is critical for innovation. However, the differential moderation results highlight that motivation alone may not always yield innovation unless coupled with an enriched psychological state.

Overall, the empirical findings propose that the use of EL has positive and potentially negative effects on task performance, depending on the intensity and the mode of use. These findings explain the heterogeneity seen in previous studies and validate the idea that EL is a context dependent notion, rather than a strategy with universal utility. Consequently, the existing study adds to the body

apply empowerment appropriately (without over applying it). Empowering leadership has always been linked with higher innovative work behavior

(IWB) of employees particularly in dynamic service industry such as the hospitality industry. By providing autonomy, supporting self-confidence and promoting the use of participative decision-making, empowering leaders cooperatively stimulate their employees' intrinsic motivation to consider new ideas and carry out creative solutions at work. Empirical support for this relationship has taken place in several settings such as the hotel industry in Pakistan. For example, Wihuda et al. (2017) initiate that EL had a significant influence on employee service innovation in hospitality hotel settings, while Jan et al. (2021) supported the claim that empowering leaderships in the hospitality industry in Pakistan has promoted IWB through the development of harmonious passion and psychological engagement, both of which are critical motivational states for innovation.

### Practical Implications

The outcomes of the study have a substantial real world relevance and practical implications in the hospitality industry as they relate to managers, leaders, human resources professionals and policymakers. The strong positive direct impact of EL on EIB demonstrates the importance of leadership approaches that are driven by delegation of authority, facilitation of participative decision making and initiative. Leaders in a hospitality sector are supposed to establish a full training course for the supervisors so as to share the decision making roles with the employees. From a managerial point of view, leaders are likely to adopt measurements that strengthen trust, foster collective understanding and encourage proactive help among employees. They also should empower staff to value the complexity of roles that make up the chains of the hospitality service to foster awareness of the requirements and working operation of colleagues. Furthermore, it is recommended that schedule debriefing sessions, in which teams practically review service encounters, identify areas for improvement and recognize team accomplishments. By incorporating conscious practices of relationships for daily operations, hospitality establishments can complement both innovation and dependable services. Organizations delivering leadership development programs should teach

leaders how to maintain psychological safety because it enables employee initiative and idea contribution while operational efficiency still remains essential. Mindfulness should be considered as a vital factor in EL efficiency. The combination of good mindfulness and supportively empowered leadership fails to produce full innovation and engagement among employees. Organizations should create strategies that support employee mindfulness habits since it will benefit their operations.

These results suggest that the enhancement of innovation by inducing empowering leadership that is not caused by itself individually. Consequently, practitioners should incorporate motivational interventions in addition to empowerment initiatives, instead of concentrating on goal and performance based incentives. Leaders are now required to realize that high levels of mindfulness orientation among followers does not automatically lead to innovative performance and that innovation is dependent on a broader climate in the work situation and the quality of emotional support.

### Limitations and Future Research Directions

Nonetheless, even though the theoretical and practical contributions progressed in this study, there are some limitations that want to be acknowledged explicitly. Acknowledging these constraints not only contributes to the transparency that is inherent to the research but also facilitates the path of future research that is built upon the research here. Firstly, this study adopted a non-probability, quota sampling method and in this study, hospitality employees in selected districts of Punjab, Pakistan were taken. Future studies should employ probability based sampling methods or multi regional sampling designs that include diverse cultural, geographic organizational settings. Secondly, the cross sectional design of the current study measures relationships between variables at a single point in time and thus limits the ability to discern cause and effect relationships. Subsequent research should therefore use longitudinal designs to explain causal mechanisms over time which might be achieved by tracking innovative behaviors of employees prior to and after leadership interventions or developmental programs. Thirdly,

this study was shepherded exclusively in the hospitality industry, which is highly service oriented and customer facing. While this focus offers deep sector specific insights, the results may not fully apply to industries with diverse structures, innovation processes or leadership dynamics. Replications in manufacturing, IT, education or healthcare sectors could test whether the observed moderated-mediation relationships hold in settings with different innovation drivers and operational structures.

### 5.1 Conclusion

This research empirically validates that **empowering leadership** plays an important role in fostering EIB in Pakistan's hospitality industry. The research shows EL leads employees toward mindful behavioral conduct that enabling their organizations to be adaptable and innovative. This study establishes employee mindfulness as an essential moderating variable that indicates that employees with good emotional capability maximal benefits from EL positive impact on employee innovative behaviors. The outcomes of this research prove that EL is a critical important driving innovative behavior to retain organizational growth and sustainability. The performance of services employees is dependent on EL in combination with the job adaptability and organizational commitment because these variables enable the process of values congruence between the employee and the organization. Empowering Leadership consisting of the delegation of authority, development of trust and participative decision making processes have been found to have a favorable effect on employees moderated through mindfulness. Leadership practices that create sense of value alignment between employees and organizations are related to higher levels of job satisfaction, motivation and effort and ultimately contribute to the achievement of innovation and the providing of high value services. Through implementation of well-being practice like emotional stability, psychological empowerment, management strategies could improve the performance of the hospitality sector employees.

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