How Human-centric Leadership Catalyses Employee Voice Behavior and Employee Empowerment in the Hospitality Industry: The Mediating Role of Job Crafting

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ABSTRACT

Human-centered leadership (HCL) substantially benefits service sector organizations by investing in employees' capabilities and skills, respecting their well-being and personal needs, and promoting empowerment. Empowered employees often exhibit higher levels of trust and citizenship behaviors, enhancing workplace engagement. Based on self-determination theory, this study explores factors shaping employee empowerment (EE) within the hospitality sector, most notably HCL. A quantitative online survey was designed and shared with employees of five-star hotels in Sharm El-Sheikh and Hurghada, Egypt. The empirical work yielded 312 valid responses covering frontline and backline hotel employees. After the screening phase, PLS-SEM examined the model's quality and tested the hypothesized paths. We found that human-centric leadership (HCL) directly catalyzes job crafting (JC), employee voice behavior (EVB), and EE. JC has significantly mediated the nexuses between HCL and both EVB and EE. On the contrary, EVB had no direct influence on EE. Our examination paves the way for an additional grasp of how leadership style impacts employee outcomes in the hospitality arena. The study provokes managers to adopt human-based administration styles that stimulate employee empowerment and favorable behaviors. Such contributions can force hotels to appreciate employee well-being, resulting in quality performance.

KEYWORDS

Human-centric leadership, job crafting, employee voice behavior, employee empowerment, HRM, hospitality, Egypt.

دور القيادة المرتكزة على الإنسان في تحفيز سلوكَ التعبير عن الرأي وتمكين الموظفين في قطاع الضيافة: التأثير الوسيط لإعادة تشكيل الوظائف

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الملخص

تحوي القيادة المرتكزة على الإنسانفي طيّاتها على منافع جوهرية لمؤسسات القطاع الخدمي، من خلال الاستثمار في قدرات ومهارات العاملين، واحترام رفاههم واحتياجاتهم الشخصية، وتعزيز تمكينهم.إذ غالبًا ا ما يتمتع الموظفون المُمكَّنون بمستويات مرتفعة من الثقة وسلوكيات المواطنة التنظيمية، مما يعزّز مشاركتهم داخل بيئة العمل. واستنادا إلى نظرية تقرير المصير، تستكشف هذه الدراسة بعض العوامل المؤثرة في تمكين الموظفين داخل قطاع الضيافة على رأسها القيادة المرتكزة على الإنسان. لهذا الغرض، تم تطوير استبيان كَمي إلكتروني وتوزيعه على موظفي فنادق الخمس نجوم في شرم الشيخ والغردقة، مصر. وقد أسفرت الدراسة التجريبية عن 312 استجابة صالحة من موظفي الخطوط الأمامية والخلفية في الفنادق. وبعد مرحلة التنقية، تم تطبيق نمذجة المعادلات الهيكلية بالمربعات الصغرى الجزئية (PLS-SEM) لتقييم جودة النموذج واختبار فروضه. أظهرت النتائج أن القيادة المرتكزة على الإنسان تؤثر بشكل مباشر في إعادة تشكيل الوظائف وسلوك التعبير عن الرأي وتمكين الموظفين .كما تبين أن إعادة تشكيل الوظائف تتوسط بشكل معنوي العلاقة بين القيادة المرتكزة على الإنسان وكلِّهن سلوك التعبير عن الرأي وتمكين الموظفين. في المقابل، لم يظهر لسلوك التعبير عن الرأي تأثير مباشر على تمكين الموظفينتُمهِّد هذه الدراسة لفهم أعمق لكيفية تأثير أساليب القيادة في استجابات الموظفين داخل قطاع الضيافة، كما تُوصي باعتماد نهج إداري يرتكز على تلبية الاحتياجات الإنسانية للموظفين بما يُسهم في تعزيز تمكينهم وتشجيع سلوكياتهم الإيجابية. ومن شأن هذه النتائج أن تدعم جهود الفنادق في تحسين رفاهية العاملين وتحقيق أداء تنظيمي عالي الجودة.

الكلمات الدالة

القيادة المرتكزة على الإنسان، سلوكَ التعبير عن الرأي، تمكينَ الموظفين، إعادة تشكيل الوظائف، إدارة الموارد البشرية، إدارة الضيافة، مصر.

Introduction

Among academic sources, the central figure, which determines organizational performance, is always referred to as leadership (Wang et al., 2019). Traditional hierarchical systems have given way to more flexible ones (Safuan, 2025), which means that organizational structures that used to serve diligently in the previous decades are finding it harder to maneuver modern complexities. As such, the stress on empathy, member well-being, and self-empowerment has resulted in another leadership, often referred to as human-centric leadership (HCL). Based on transformational leadership, HCL argues that any organization's success is pegged to employee delight and well-being (Wang et al., 2019). Unlike in previous times, where interpersonal relations and emotional intelligence would be considered secondary, HCL focuses on teamwork, inclusion, and flexibility (Paul, 2024), where human aspects are considered the key to achieving shared goals. For instance, measures of leadership, where quarterly goals measured leadership success; human-oriented leaders would look at other measures (e.g., team morale, innovation, and long-term viability). This leadership orientation fosters resilience and creates spaces where individuals and organizations can thrive by developing trust and fostering open communication (Carayannis et al., 2022). However, due to resource limitations, managers cannot give each employee personal consideration. Thus, organizations have broken down new bottom-up job-design principles that involve employees' ability to design their jobs (Srivastava & Pathak, 2020).

Job crafting (JC) has attracted an intense interest in hospitality research scholarship (Cheng et al., 2018). Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) mentioned that JC is the bundle of physical and psychological alterations employees make to extend or detail jobs or the relationship aspects of their jobs. In hospitality settings, there is a need for endless customer contact and provision of multi-differentiated, unpredictable customer needs and expectations. As such, JC plays a critical role (Teng, 2019). With these behaviors, hospitality employees develop a more profound knowledge of what they value and their purpose in their work, developing job passion and boosting performance (Cheng et al., 2016). Therefore, JC significantly influences employees' customer-service behaviors (Cheng & Chen, 2017). Since the turnover issue is severe in this industry, employee voice is a mechanism that cannot be neglected when managing firms and employees (Dogonyaro, 2021). Employees' voices can also be encouraged to increase their job satisfaction (Elbaz et al., 2022) and organizational commitment (Kim et al., 2018). Protective voice can be inculcated as employees' explanation about practices that are harmful to organizations, and primitive voice may be describing employees' contributions, bringing new ideas or suggestions (Yu et al., 2021).

Scholarly consideration of employee voice has been massive, and its systematic review discusses available empirical evidence (e.g., Chamberlin et al., 2017; Morrison, 2023). These syntheses suggest that most studies in the past took place in high-technology firms where the hierarchy is relatively flat and the belief that employees would provide new ideas to everyday work is shared (Gilmore et al., 2013). According to Teng (2019), the integrative framework covers voice antecedents, where three broad categories are job and organizational attitudes and employee perceptions, leader

behaviors, and contextual factors. Following this broadness, job attitudes are extensively studied as predictors in business aspects (Huang et al., 2023).

Employee empowerment (EE) can be described as providing information to personnel and authorized decision-making authority to manage specific areas of work performance in organizations (Sulistio & Darmastuti, 2024). Jacquiline (2014) shows that empowered employees are much more motivated, enabling them to gain more authority and use critical knowledge and skills to meet clients' expectations. Therefore, empowerment programs are developed to decentralize responsibilities and give employees power and authority, increasing recognition and promotion chances (Dasgupta & Dey, 2024).

Most organizations present leaders with the need to overcome resistance to change when there are long-established hierarchies. Employees and supervisors oriented to strict working processes view empathic, team-building operations as an obstruction and may disrupt organizational goals in favor of personal desires (Kaushal & Mishra, 2020). On the other hand, employee well-being is a necessity that has to be given priority. It is challenging to balance between these imperatives and leave it to intense industries where deadlines are stringent (Paul, 2024). Thus, this paper analyses how HCL enhances JC and voice behavior within five-star hotels. We also establish how HCL contributes to empowerment magnification and how employee voice behavior (EVB) contributes to it. Lastly, this investigation observes the amplifying function of JC in the associations between HCL, EVB, and EE.

HCL views employees as active subjects and reshapes its work into a social transaction in which employees invest their knowledge, time, and energy in exchange for material benefits. With such rewards, there will be financial payment, career growth, recognition, intrinsic delight, fulfillment, and accomplishment, redefining performance into behaviors and results visible to organizational objectives (Krywalski-Santiago, 2024). The existing paper builds on knowledge with some findings regarding the intellectual structure of HCL and explains such relevant themes as EVB, empowerment, and JC. Therefore, it has practical implications for organizations developing inclusive and employee-first working cultures. Based on Self-determination theory (SDT), the current paper contributes to existing evidence bases. Little work has undertaken the consequences of leadership climate on job involvement in hospitality settings.

While links between leadership and empowerment are well-documented, this study offers a more nuanced understanding by (1) introducing HCL as a specific, contemporary leadership style relevant to service industries; (2) empirically testing the crucial mediating mechanism of JC, which explains how HCL influences outcomes; and (3) examining these dynamics in the under-researched context of the Egyptian hospitality sector, where cultural and organizational norms may differ.

Theoretical foundation and hypothesis development
Self-determination theory (SDT)

SDT proposes that psychological needs' satisfaction of competence, autonomy, and relatedness creates a triangular framework without which intrinsic motivation is impossible and the feeling of meaning in life at workplaces is none (e.g., Lepisto & Pratt, 2017; Nikolova & Cnossen, 2020). Therefore, employees should feel able, have

autonomous decision-making, and develop two-dimensional relationships with other employees, management, and organizations (Henstra, 2020). All these requirements make up about 60 percent of the meaningfulness at the workplace and have the most substantial impact on meaningfulness than other needs, with relatedness being the most dominant requirement (Nikolova & Cnossen, 2020). Compared to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where the emphasis is placed upon proximal issues, SDT is more apt regarding distal factors (e.g., autonomy, competence, and relatedness) that help to provide a more specific insight into employee engagement and fulfilment at modern organizations (Hebert, 2025).

Autonomy, competence, and relatedness are the main psychological requirements for maintaining motivation, well-being, and high performance. According to SDT, motivational states are also multi-dimensional; autonomous motivation involves doing what we find meaningful or what is intrinsically gratifying to ourselves. Ego needs, incentives, or penalties drive controlled motivation. Motivation is a lack of engagement or motivation, which may result from frustration or perceived lack of independence. Motivation deficit could be determined when employees have no interest in undertaking some activity (Hebert, 2025). According to empirical research, compared to employees undergoing controlled motivation or motivation, autonomously motivated employees show greater well-being and performance correlates (Chiu et al, 2024). Such a connection is observed in measurable rises in efforts, dedication, ability to embrace change, and decreased desire to change the organization (Shaw, 2025). Leaders increase autonomous motivation, enabling employees to give constant feedback and support. Hence, this satisfies employee needs regarding autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Van Zoonen et al., 2021).

Human-centric leadership (HCL)

HCL is prominent in contemporary leadership discourse as a philosophy where people are at the core of leadership, and employee well-being and inclusivity are valued attributes. Based on leadership theory (Bass, 1985) and its associated precepts of vision and empowerment, HCL also strays into servant leadership (Safuan, 2025), with its respect for servicing subordinates. Recent studies stated that HCL corresponds with the agendas of contemporary organizations, as sustainability, innovation, and well-being have become the main issues (Wang et al., 2019). Empirical studies also demonstrate that HCL significantly affects employees' productivity through psychological health (Eva et al., 2019). Such results confirm the ability of HCL to meet the challenges faced by global issues (e.g., digitalization and hybrid working).

Empathy emerges as the key or central concept of HCL that gets high consideration in the post-pandemic context, where mental and emotional health concepts become supreme (Yadav & Dhar, 2024). Whereas this empathy encompasses sensitivity and comprehension, it also requires leaders to do more demanding tasks (e.g., listening, identifying the challenges facing team members, and responding to them in an actionable way). Empathetic leader outcomes create environments where employees feel appreciated, acknowledged, and cared about, lifting morale and productivity. Based on these dynamics, trust can be discussed as the keystone to any successful team and leader relationship in fast technological development (Cvetkovski & Tomanovic, 2023). Human-centric leaders build trust by being transparent, consistent,

and authentic: communicating about their decisions, admitting mistakes when required, and delivering on promises (Cvetkovski & Tomanovic, 2023).

Job crafting (JC)

According to Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), JC is an organizational construct that focuses on jobs' physical, relational, and mental aspects. Changes in cognitive boundaries refer to that affecting workplace representation to employees; changes in task boundaries refer to those affecting the extent of activities covered, and changes in relational boundaries entail control over communication and relations among fellow employees. Employees design individual job posts by amalgamating discrete elements within the structure established in 2001. JC has been cited as one of the proactive work behaviors. JC uses this construct as a method of job calibration. Consequently, JC can maximize benefits, enjoyment, meaning, and satisfaction (Junça-Silva et al, 2022). JC is also mentioned in managerial literature as a means of maintaining the organizational advantage. Employees' proactive work intention is in line with job requirements and individual characteristics. As such, this is defined to attract researchers and practitioners from various fields (Kim & Yoon, 2025). As evidenced empirically, JC has crucial personal implications (e.g., better engagement, performance, well-being, and an increase in career identities means) and organizational consequences (e.g., increase in organizational commitment, prosocial behaviors, and prodding) (Lee et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2018; Kim & Yoon, 2025).

Employee voice behavior (EVB)

Employee voice can be explained as speaking up, questioning the existing situation, and trying to improve it (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998, p. 853). In hospitality settings, employee voice fits activities concerning service improvements and operational management (Jung & Yoon, 2018). Empirical research noted voice behavior expressing proactive concerns and well-founded suggestions about existing affairs. Therefore, employee voice points to the propensity of individuals to promote change (Lin & He, 2024). A central theme supported in the extensive literature is that employee voice is a significant tool of organizational performance, and it helps to innovate, learn, and avoid or rectify mistakes (Yu et al., 2021). It is worth noting that this kind of conduct stresses expressing useful information to pursue improvement and vitriolic criticism (Lin & He, 2024). Thus, when expressing their discontent with organizational factors, employees do not confine themselves to mere manifestation; they also provide proposals to promote business in competitive environments, achieving long-term progress (Lin, 2023).

Voice behavior over the last few years has contributed positively to organizations, personal values' elevation, and employees' stature (Chen & Treviño, 2023). It is seen as a favorable career development mechanism in the backdrop of crises in the workplace. Second, employees voicing their ideas and opinions in organizational contexts can demonstrate expertise and a unique way of thinking. They can increase their profiles within teams. This behavior initiates innovation and constant improvement and rests on the esteem and acknowledgment of others in workplaces and management teams (Weiss et al., 2022). Moreover, voice behavior characterizes initiatives and employees focused on their jobs and the organization's goals. Such a holistic perspective and sense of possession assists employees in developing a

dependable image in organizations. Hence, this establishes environments where employees can flourish and advance their careers (Azevedo et al., 2021).

Employee empowerment (EE)

Empowerment refers to the process by which employees and managers are empowered to work their way, which is achieved through developing attitudes, skills, and knowledge. Empowerment can guarantee employee engagement, maximize development, and flex the muscle impact on organizational goal achievement (Riyadi, 2022). In domestic contexts, high EE is associated with increasing trends in national tourism jobs for several reasons. First, empowered employees' motivation and engagement will be improved as they take on duties and work in their positions, improving customer service quality (Abdulmawla et al., 2025). Therefore, this spurs positive word-of-mouth communication and satisfaction levels, impelling the attraction of more tourists, increasing demand for tourism activities, and creating destination growth (Al Saba et al., 2023).

Moreover, when empowered, employees will be more willing to propose new ideas and solutions that will be used to improve tourism experiences (Sulistio & Darmastuti, 2024). They are encouraged to think innovatively and suggest refinements to processes, customer relations, and services. This kind of culture of innovation leads to offering unique tourism products, adventures, and services to tourists, spurring tourism growth and creating new jobs (Al Saba et al., 2023; Lin & He, 2024). Moreover, the increased feeling of possession and obligation that comes with empowerment encourages employees to be active, effective, and result-oriented. This increased productivity enhances corporate efficiency, allows a business to grow, and enables service delivery to more customers (Al Saba et al., 2023).

Human-centric leadership and job crafting

JC refers to employees' willed changes to their job design to foster higher meaning perception (Luu, 2020). Four major job design dimensions that are potentially subject to employee crafting was articulated in Tims et al. (2012): enhance structural resources, expand social resources, and increase challenge job resources. It should be noted that prior studies pointed out that HCL results in proactive employee behavior, which is positively related to JC (Thun & Bakker, 2018). HCL is a process in which leaders exchange their authority by handing more work control, decision-making on tasks, and the resources necessary to perform those tasks (Mäkikangas & Schaufeli, 2021).

The HCL executives have a purposeful habit of instilling a sense of meaningfulness in employees and granting them adequate time and freedom to identify their strategies regarding workplace execution, and the necessary support in case they need to shoulder extra responsibility (Thun & Bakker, 2018). Such leaders develop self-determination in employees by inspiring self-management abilities to foster more comprehensive organizational contribution (Chen et al., 2024). SDT holds that autonomy and competence are imperative antecedents of intrinsic motivation (Abdulmawla et al., 2025), supporting creative, practical, and self-oriented behaviors (Tims et al., 2022). In addition, SDT assumes that the interpersonal style of managers is one of the most significant social contextual determinants in facilitating intrinsic motivation. Martin et al. (2013) argued that HCL behaviors have allowed employees

more self-sufficiency and capability. Increased perceived autonomy and competence further enhance intrinsic motivation and trigger proactive behaviors and JC. According to our conceptual framework, HCL can ensure that employees engage in an extended period of JC due to leadership empowerment. This leads to more favorable results of organizational performance (Junça-Silva et al., 2022). Hence, this paper proposes that:

H1: Human-centric leadership amplifies job crafting within five-star hotels.

Human-centric leadership and employee voice behavior
HCL proves to be cognitively effective in challenging employees to consider other new opportunities, challenge established ways of doing things, and view old challenges in a more mainstream light. Liang et al. (2017) revealed that human-centric leaders inspire psychological safety, or beliefs that taking risks has no personal consequences. Therefore, they can eliminate restrictions on raising their voice to produce employees, whose participation becomes vocalized. In the same scheme, Duan et al. (2017) specified that employees have a wider leeway to present innovative ideas with HCL because of the increased trust and intense social exchanges. Motivation also makes followers understand the organization's vision and motivates them to achieve the organizational goals through frequent interaction with each other (Ajmal et al, 2025). Human-centric leaders' motivation drives employees towards achieving ordinary meaning and purpose. Hence, this leads to members generating suggestions in line with shared visions (Sulistio & Darmastuti, 2024).

In addition, employees tend to obtain a stronger sense of trust and self-efficacy through idealized influence and individualized concern, in which human-centric leaders focus on employees' personal development and address their ambitions (Huang et al, 2023). Therefore, this leads to increased readiness among employees to take some chances in expressing their opinion and feeling less afraid of potential consequences because of a sense of support, encouragement, and trust by leaders (Martin et al, 2016). Employees with human-centric leaders have an increased tendency to share their views and are less afraid of failing when they see that leaders support them. Hence, this paper assumes that:

H2: Human-centric leadership amplifies voice behavior among five-star hotel employees.

Human-centric leadership and employee empowerment
Existing literature has found it possible to name two primary ways empowerment can be studied, enhancing our understanding of this concept. Psychological empowerment at the individual level will be conceived as a totality of intrinsic task motivation, workplace control, and active orientations to job roles (Hassi, 2019). Simultaneously, early socio-structural theories circumscribe empowerment climate at the group to collective perceptions on organizational structures, policies, and practices to decentralize power and to enable organizational employees to make suitable decisions (Shehawy, 2022). Among such organizational practices are information sharing and structural and process arrangements that motivate work group members to take responsibility at the group level. Applying suitable leadership is one of the practical ways of instigating these practices in work groups (Guchait et al., 2023). The literature concerning organizational behavior explains that leadership styles that fall under

autonomy-supportive help integrate the core job characteristics, which are motivational. Thus, this can enhance intrinsic motivation and lead to workgroup empowerment (Hoang et al, 2021).

This leadership approach has to be further explained in Shehawy (2022) and Guchait et al. (2023). Therefore, this allows followers to achieve high success levels and develop proactive and self-confident attitudes and a feeling of their power in workgroups. According to Konar et al. (2018), EE is an effective tool in hospitality management that defines ideas and priorities regarding service quality. It provides a competitive industry that motivates employees and empowers them with motivation and empowerment. This HCL has numerous benefits within hospitality settings: employees searching for customer satisfaction (Huang et al., 2016) and is linked to job performance enhancement (Shehawy, 2022). Hence, this paper assumes that:

H3: *Human-centric leadership amplifies empowerment among five-star hotel employees.*

Employee voice behavior and empowerment
Within workplace dynamics, employee voice and empowerment are interrelated dimensions that positively impact each other by influencing and exerting a positive reinforcement on the other within the institutional environment (Xue et al., 2020). EVB is the aptitude and desire of workforces to express their opinions, issues, and suggestions concerning various workplace aspects (Ajmal et al., 2025). Such a behavior involves providing feedback, concerns, constructive suggestions, and engaging in a discourse with management and other employees (Eibl et al., 2020). EVB and EE are linked so that several relevant dimensions may explain their relationship. For instance, organizational innovation is triggered by EVB (Ajmal et al., 2025). Employees who feel empowered and free to express their ideas, concerns, and creativity are more inclined to perform behaviors that align with organizations' innovation process (Carvalho de Azevedo et al., 2020). Their ideas and proposals reveal novel chances or issues that can be resolved with the help of leadership decisions.

Additionally, EVB in organizational environments will foster psychological well-being because such environments encourage employees to share notions without anxiety of reprisals or implied criticisms (Ajmal et al., 2025). In this vein, empowered employees are more willing to innovate in their behavior because creative employees have better chances of feeling that their effort is not discredited (Yang et al., 2021). In addition, EVB is a feedback loop in nonstop improvement and novelty (Basheer et al., 2021). Such a feedback system allows prescribing contexts that need advanced solutions and gives employees a feeling of belonging to the organization's progress (Tsai et al., 2019). Therefore, this paper proposes that:

H4: *Employee voice behavior amplifies empowerment among five-star hotel employees.*

Intensifying effects of job crafting
By making uniqueness and a sense of belonging at the forefront of HCL, it is evident that such a leadership style will enhance JC. Consequently, the positive affect increases internal resources, stimulating employees to pursue innovation-oriented

behavior (Elhadidy & Gao, 2025). Human-centric leaders' approach encourages self-image-seeking, builds social solidarity in workgroups, and instigates intrinsic enthusiasm among workers. These measures allow the externalization of JC practices. Employees aim to increase the demands and opportunities when designing their job (Guo et al., 2022). The bottom-up approach, which involves seeking supervisor feedback and assistance, enables employees to create the resources themselves. Hence, this makes their job more fun and increases the willingness to engage in extra-role behavior (Demerouti et al., 2015). JC seems to mediate the relationship between HCL and such behavior, as explained by the leader-member exchange scheme (Costigan et al., 2005).

Prior empirical evidence suggested that good-quality relationships between superiors and subordinates motivate workers to participate in extra-role activities that create and adopt pioneering ideas (Guo et al., 2022). Existing studies also reported job usefulness crafting in explaining how HCL modes impact employee voice in challenging environments (Elhadidy & Gao, 2025). Managers emphasizing empathy, empowerment, and customized support establish working cultures where employees feel respected, secure, and intrinsically motivated to involve (Luu, 2023; Abdulmawla et al., 2025). When workplaces incorporate such conditions, employees stand a better chance of reconfiguring the job aspects to suit their skills and individual needs. Such a proactive work design, which can also be called JC, builds employees' stronger purpose and engagement levels. Hence, this makes them more likely to make meaningful contributions through feedback. Several empirical studies validate that JC effectively links supportive leadership styles to expressive workplace behaviors (Dickson et al., 2022). This understanding is because of the dynamic and socially conscious characteristics of luxury hospitality settings. Therefore, this paper posits that:

H5: Job crafting mediates the connection between HCL and EVB in five-star hotels.

Despite the limited exploration of the extant literature, existing studies have granted slight attention to the effects of HCL on EE (Peral & Davidovitz, 2024). Thus, this is evident as scholars have concentrated on employees' mental state instead of overt behaviors when comparing processes through which HCL results in empowerment. Psychological empowerment (Kundu et al., 2019), self-efficacy (Ahmed et al., 2022), and task thriving (Ali et al., 2018) are examples of psychological constructs that are documented to mediate the relationship. However, few studies have considered the focal role of HCL towards employee behavior and subsequent performance. For instance, Vuong and Hieu (2023) showed that working innovative behavior mediates the connection between HCL and EE. The same relationship is contained in Qian et al. (2018), where feedback-seeking behavior is one of the mediators.

According to Davidovitz (2023), employee-oriented leadership is indirectly connected with EE via promotion-focused JC. That is, leader motivationally orienting behaviors regarding empowerment promotes job resources and demands that are challenging to perform. All these findings showed that the relationship between HCL and EE should be further investigated to better understand its dynamics (Peral & Davidovitz, 2024). As mentioned by Costantini and Weintraub (2022), human-centric managers promote increased resource availability. Hence, this motivates them to interact proactively and

increase work engagement. They argue that self-leadership's internalized motivational capital can make employees create proactive adaptations involving JC and developing work engagement. Thus, this paper postulates that:

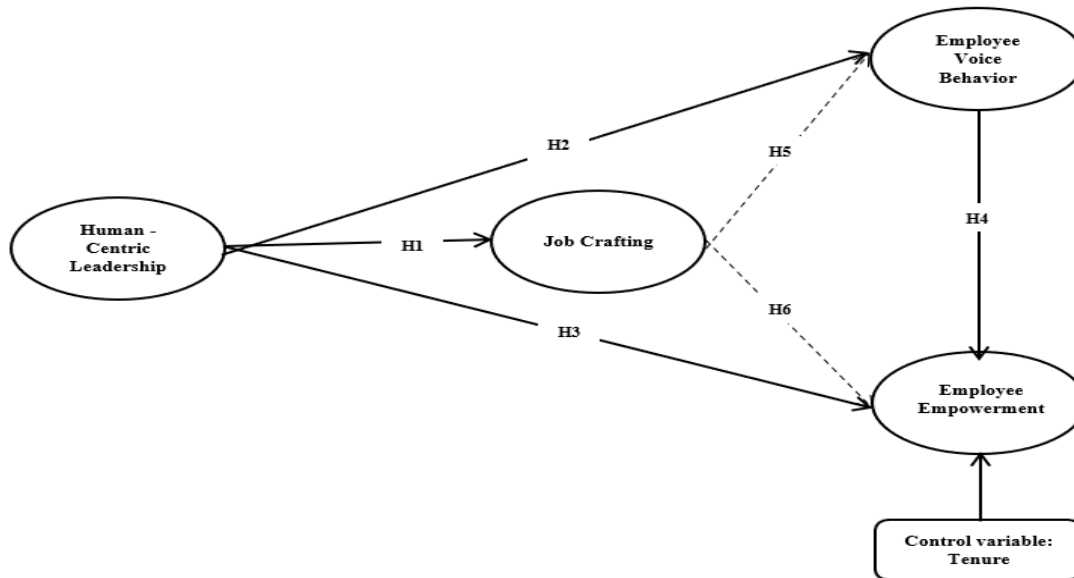***H6:*** *Job crafting mediates the connection between HCL and EE in five-star hotels.*

Figure 2: Hypothetical model

Methodology

Measures conceptualization

A modified pre-validated measure of the four variables under investigation has been included in the questionnaire survey to gather the field data. HCL was measured through six indicators adapted from Gursoy and Maier, (2023). EVB was assessed by five items suggested by Van Dyne & LePine (1998) and validated in the business sector by Tang et al. (2015). Six items focusing on growing structural resources and challenging demands were used to measure JC (Tims et al., 2012). Finally, EE was measured through five items proposed by Spreitzer (1995) and validated by Boudrias et al. (2011). 22 items were accordingly stated to obtain participants' responses through a five-point scale. The questionnaire also included a demographic section, which included data on gender, age, educational level, work area, and experience. The model uses the Experience period subsequently to employ tenure as a control variable. We conducted a pilot study to validate the survey further in the context of the study. To do so, 30 questionnaires were distributed to a random sample of frontline and backline hotel employees to ensure content validity. Respondents showed a high degree of the questionnaire's readability, clarity, and distinctiveness. However, two items formulated to measure EVB and EE were merged according to respondent recommendations, with a total of five indicators for each variable instead of six. We then proceeded to conduct and share the questionnaire through Google Forms.

Table 1: Measurement

Variables	Items
(HCL) Adapted from Gursoy	HCL1: My manager cares about my well-being. HCL2: My manager inspires me to share my opinions and ideas.

and Maier, (2023).	HCL3: My manager listens to me attentively. HCL4: My manager treats me with esteem and dignity. HCL5: My manager supports my professional development. HCL6: My manager shows empathy toward employees.
(EVB) Adapted from Van Dyne & LePine (1998); validated by Tang et al. (2015)	EVB1: I speak up with suggestions for new projects or hotel improvements. EVB2: I make beneficial proposals to improve the hotel's functioning. EVB3: I express opinions on work issues even when others disapprove. EVB4: I speak up and offer ideas to address problems. EVB5: I suggest changes to the hotel policies or practices when needed.
(JC) Adapted from Tims et al. (2012)	JC1: I try to learn new things at work. JC2: I actively seek out tasks that challenge me. JC3: I try to progress professionally. JC4: I require feedback on my performance. JC5: I look for ways to make my job more meaningful. JC6: I take on extra tasks when I see the opportunity.
(EE) Adapted from Spreitzer (1995); validated by Boudrias et al. (2011)	EE1: I have the power to make decisions at work. EE2: I can decide on my own how to do my work. EE3: I feel that my job significantly impacts the hotel. EE4: I have control over how I perform my tasks. EE5: I am self-assured in my capability to do my job well.

Sampling, data collection, and cleaning

The online survey was shared through the hyperlink to employees in five-star hotels in Sharm El-Sheik and Hurghada, Egypt. As our research aims to evaluate the role of leadership style on crafting, voice intention, and empowerment among hospitality employees, we excluded managers and supervisors from the sample. We accordingly used a non-probability convenience method to collect the data from a representative sample of frontline and backline hotel employees. Out of 346 collected responses, only 312 are valid for analysis. The removed responses included unfinished, straight-line, and suspicious responses (Abdulmawla et al., 2024; Hair et al., 2021). The number of remaining valid responses was adequate for the sample as it exceeded ten times the determined number of items used to quantify a single construct in the measurement (Hair et al., 2011).

As obtainable in Table 2, 53.85% of the sample were males and 46.15% were females, reflecting close ratios for each gender category. The 20:29 age group had 38.48% of the participating employees, followed by 29.17% for those between 30:39 years old. Employees with a bachelor's degree comprised more than half of the sample, with 62.18%, followed by those with intermediate education, with 28.20%. As for the period of work experience, the scores indicated that all the classifications (i.e., less than two years, 3:5 years, 6:10 years, and more than 10 years) appeared in the sample with close percentages ranging from 21.48% to 27.24%. Adding a question on work experience enabled us to examine job tenure as a control variable to enrich the study results. Noteworthy, we asked the employees whether they worked in the frontline or backline areas to ensure that the sample included several work backgrounds in various departments. The result showed that frontline workers were more than half, with 55.13%. However, backline employees also had a strong chance among participants with 44.87%.

Table 2: Sample profile

Characteristics	Descriptions	No.	(%)
Gender	Male	168	53.85

	Female	144	46.15
Age	≤19	28	8.97
	20-29	120	38.46
	30-39	91	29.17
	40-49	44	14.10
	>50	29	9.29
Education	Intermediate	88	28.20
	Bachelor	194	62.18
	Postgraduate	30	9.62
Experience	≤2	83	26.60
	3-5	85	27.24
	106-	77	24.68
	10More than	67	21.48
Hotel area	Frontline	172	55.13
	Backline	140	44.87

Analysis

As mentioned above, the study has four direct and two indirect cause-and-effect relationships. The examination was performed through a quantitative approach. We used the widely accepted PLS-SEM analysis to check the indicator and construct quality, ensure the model fit, and evaluate the postulated direct and indirect effects presented in the model. While applying the analysis through WarpPLS 7, we followed the pioneering recommendations by Hair et al. (2011) and Hair et al. (2021) on how to conduct an SEM analysis for reflective variables. The same procedures have been extensively used in hospitality research (Elgarhy et al., 2021; Abdulmawla et al., 2025). Hence, the analysis technique was well-suited for this kind of data.

Results

Measurement model

Referring to Table 3, the model's validity measures have achieved fitting scores. First, all the twenty-two indicators had +0.5 loadings, ranging from 0.708 for EVB5 to 0.885 for EVB1, which align with the threshold (Hair et al., 2021). Second, Torsion and Kurtosis (T&K) analysis disclosed that all values are between ±2, confirming that the data were free of non-normal distribution in an SEM analysis (Byrne, 2013). Third, all VIF values were less than 5.00; hereby, the construct's multicollinearity is established (Abdulmawla et al., 2025). Fourth, α and CR are used to ensure reliability. All scores exceeded 0.7, ensuring the construct reliability (Hair et al., 2011). Finally, to ensure construct validity with its two classifications- convergent and discriminant-, we applied the following: a) all AVE scores were greater than +0.5, establishing convergent validity, and (b) discriminant validity is established by achieving the requirements of both Fornell-Larcker (the square roots of AVEs) and HTMT standards (all construct achieved scores below 0.9) (Teo et al., 2008). Table 4 exhibits these results.

Table 3: Data distribution, reliability, convergent validity, and multicollinearity statistics

Variable	L	Mean	SD	SK	KU	CR	α	AVE	VIF
HCL						0.889	0.849	0.576	2.318
HCL1	0.813	3.141	1.430	-0.124	-1.260				
HCL2	0.848	3.402	1.424	-0.402	-1.128				

HCL3	0.809	3.585	1.327	-0.612	-0.741			
HCL4	0.716	3.116	1.461	-0.139	-1.345			
HCL5	0.726	3.199	1.483	-0.143	-1.379			
HCL6	0.749	3.293	1.471	-0.276	-1.300			
EVB						0.903	0.863	0.654	4.245
EVB1	0.885	3.222	1.515	-0.19	-1.408			
EVB2	0.867	3.367	1.464	-0.366	-1.247			
EVB3	0.819	3.511	1.412	-0.505	-1.066			
EVB4	0.839	3.000	1.496	0.029	-1.413			
EVB5	0.708	3.077	1.470	-0.024	-1.366			
EE						0.924	0.896	0.708	1.084
EE1	0.813	2.968	1.646	0.069	-1.631			
EE2	0.859	3.193	1.516	-0.112	-1.443			
EE3	0.854	3.199	1.502	-0.142	-1.412			
EE4	0.873	3.232	1.542	-0.185	-1.475			
EE5	0.805	3.196	1.534	-0.138	-1.471			
JC						0.935	0.916	0.706	3.409
JC1	0.754	3.135	1.524	-0.141	-1.469			
JC2	0.868	3.055	1.564	-0.025	-1.535			
JC3	0.877	2.990	1.561	0.0420	-1.533			
JC4	0.871	3.051	1.517	-0.032	-1.465			
JC5	0.857	2.958	1.503	0.071	-1.442			
JC6	0.809	3.392	1.457	-0.388	-1.258			

Table 4: Results of discriminant validity

	Fornell-Larcker				HTMT			
Construct	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
1- HCL	**0.759**							
2- EVB	0.744	**0.808**			0.877			
3- EE	0.659	0.735	**0.841**		0.763	0.838		
4- JC	0.226	0.222	0.263	**0.742**	0.261	0.253	0.290	

Structural model

As previously highlighted, our study assumed seven hypotheses, five of which hypothesized a direct effect between the variables under investigation based on SDT. The SEM analysis in Table 5 and Figure 2 confirmed that HCL significantly amplified JC ($\beta = 0.666$, t-value=13.020, p <0.001), and H1 is accepted. Likewise, HCL has significantly impacted EVB ($\beta = 0.333$, t-value=6.188, p <0.001) and EE ($\beta = 0.168$, t-value=3.043, p <0.001), supporting our propositions in H2 and H3. Surprisingly, H4 is rejected as EVB had no significant influence on EE ($\beta = 0.051$, t-value=0.900, p 0.184). Moreover, we used employee tenure as a control factor that may affect the endogenous variable EE. The analysis demonstrated no significant path ($\beta = -0.078$, t-value=-1.384, p =0.084). This outcome means that although there is a slight negative nexus between tenure and EE (i.e., as tenure increases, EE tends to decrease slightly), this effect is not statistically significant at the frequently acknowledged significance level of 0.05. Therefore, we cannot confidently demonstrate that tenure has a meaningful impact on EE in the hotel sector.

On the other hand, we used Hayes' (2018) criterion to examine indirect effects. To do so, we employed a 5.000 bootstrapping with 95% confidence intervals (CIs) in WarpPLS 7 to evaluate whether JC plays a significant mediating effect between the model's variables. In that case, the significance of mediation occurs when both the lower and the higher boundary (CIUL and CILL) of the CI remain different from zero.

The results in Table 5 depict that CI 95% lower and higher scores for the first (0.304-0.519) and the second (0.065- 0.276) indirect correlations are not equal to zero. Path estimates of (β =0.412, t-value=7.483, and p-value <0.001) and (β =0.187, t-value=3.157, and p-value <0.001) respectively, confirm the paths' indirect significance role. Accordingly, the mediating effect of JC between HCL and both EVB and EE is established, supporting H5 and H6. Accordingly, we conclude that crafting amplifies the nexus between the human-focused leadership style as an identifier factor and both employees' desire to speak and be empowered as consequences.

Table 5: Hypothesis testing

| Contral variables' effects							
H	Path	β	t-value	p-value	F^2		*Decision*
	Tenure → Employee Empowerment.	-0.078	-1.384	0.084	0.005		Slight effect
Direct effects							
H	Structural paths	β	t-value	p-value	F^2		*Decision*
H1	Human - Centric Leadership → Job Crafting.	0.666	13.020	<0.001	0.444		Supported
H2	Human - Centric Leadership → Employee Voice Behavior.	0.333	6.188	<0.001	0.248		Supported
H3	Human - Centric Leadership → Employee Empowerment.	0.168	3.043	<0.001	0.147		Supported
H4	Employee Voice Behavior → Employee Empowerment.	0.051	0.900	0.184	0.013		Rejected
Indirect effects							
H	Structural paths	β	t-value	p-value	CI 95%		*Decision*
H5	Human - Centric Leadership → Job Crafting → Employee Voice Behavior.	0.412	7.483	<0.001	0.304	0.519	Supported
H6	Human - Centric Leadership → Job Crafting → Employee Empowerment.	0.187	3.157	<0.001	0.065	0.276	Supported
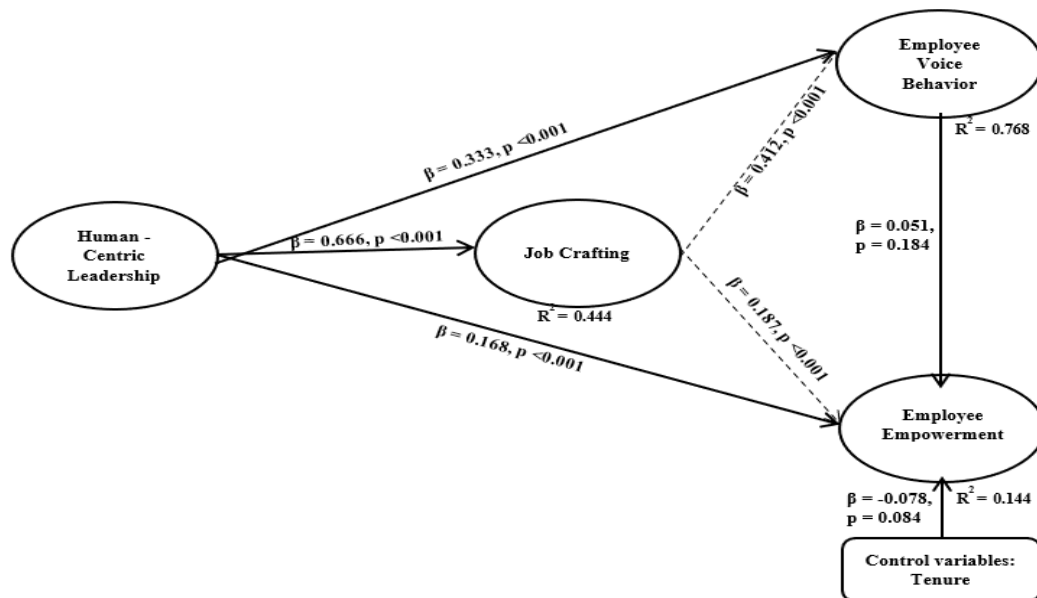
Figure 2: Path estimations

As for the in-sample exploratory power of our model, R^2 scores in Table 6 are used as an indicator (Rigdon, 2012). All the scores (0.444, 0.768, and 0.144) for the three model's endogenous variables (JC, EVB, and EE), respectively, were above the accepted minimum of 0.10 (Falk & Miller, 1992). These results indicate a sufficient variance in the independent variables. Hair et al. (2011) suggested that the model explanatory characteristics are moderate for JC, strong for EVB, and limited for EE, with a moderate and acceptable power of the overall model. Furthermore, F^2 values for the direct paths revealed an acceptable effect size except for H4, which has already been rejected. HCL had a significant effect on JC ($F^2= 0.444$), a moderate effect on EVB ($F^2= 0.248$), and a slight effect on EE ($F^2= 0.147$) (Cohen, 1988). While EVB had a negligible effect on EE, as F^2 values were less than 0.02. See Table 5. Finally, Table 6 exhibits Q2 statistics, which we used to examine our model's predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2013). The scores of JC and EVB were 0.403 and 0.755, respectively, reflecting a strong predictive ability. Meanwhile, EE had a Q^2 value of 0.110, which indicates a minor predictive feature. These results demonstrate that the holistic model had a strong predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2013).

Table 6: R^2 and F^2 statistics

Variables	R^2	Q^2
Job Crafting	0.444	0.403
Employee Voice Behavior	0.768	0.755
Employee Empowerment	0.144	0.110

Discussion and conclusions

This study set out to examine the influences of HCL on key employee outcomes— i.e., JC, EVB, and EE—within the context of five-star hotels in Egypt. Drawing from the ideas of SDT, the research aimed to understand how leaders who emphasize empathy, respect, and autonomy contribute to meaningful and proactive work behaviors, particularly in service-intensive sectors like hospitality. Data were collected from 312 frontline and backline hotel employees in Sharm El-Sheikh and Hurghada using a cross-sectional survey. The sample included diverse age, gender, and experience groups, reflecting the standpoints of different hotel operational roles. The data were gathered through a validated survey instrument that measured the constructs and was analysed using PLS-SEM on WarpPLS 7. The analysis demonstrated sound reliability and convergent and discriminant validity across all constructs. The structural model yielded several noteworthy findings as follows.

The significant and strong relationship between HCL and JC underscores the pivotal role of empathetic and supportive leadership in encouraging proactive job redesign behaviors among employees. This conclusion aligns with SDT and Chiu et al. (2024), arguing that leaders promoting independence and competence can promote intrinsic motivation (Abdulmawla et al., 2025), enabling employees to tailor their work duties and environment. (Human-centric leaders offer autonomy-supportive conditions, such as latitude in decision-making and developmental support, which encourage staff to pursue tasks that align with personal values and strengths (Junça-Silva et al., 2022). This human-oriented leadership contrasts with old-style command-and-control forms. It also offers employees psychological resources that catalyse personal initiative and ownership over their work. Mäkikangas and Schaufeli (2021) highlighted that these

behaviors allow employees to redefine their task limits, enhancing job meaningfulness and acceptance.

Our examination uncovered a significant, favourable influence of HCL on EVB, shedding light on the importance of inclusive leadership in boosting open communication. According to SDT, when employees feel emotionally safe and connected, they are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors like speaking up (Hebert, 2025). Leaders who approach a human-centric style promote this environment by being empathetic, requiring feedback, and recognizing employee contributions. It has been mentioned that this style amplifies a sense of relatedness and trust, decreasing fear of reprisal, thus allowing voice behavior (Huang et al., 2023). Likewise, Duan et al. (2017) demonstrated that voice behavior thrives where psychological care is nurtured through empowerment and personalised support. This upshot is also consistent with prior research in the hospitality area, which underscores the role of leadership in motivating discretionary intentions (Ajmal et al., 2025). Therefore, it remains vital for innovation and service enhancement.

Although the relationship between HCL and EE was statistically significant, the effect size was relatively modest. Nonetheless, it confirms the theoretical expectations of SDT by suggesting that HCL contributes to feelings of autonomy and competence—two core psychological needs necessary for empowerment (Guchait et al., 2023). Similarly, Linuesa-Langreo et al. (2016) discussed that human-centric leaders encourage decentralized decision-making and information sharing, fostering perceptions of control over work tasks. This study echoed these structural situations, showing that employees often feel psychologically and behaviorally empowered when supervisors show respect, constructive feedback, and vicarious guidance. Regardless, the judicious influence may be attributed to contextual restrictions in hospitality settings, such as inflexible hierarchical norms or low employee spaces, which can temper the impact of leadership practices. On the other hand, the confirmed association between HCL and EE in this study proposes that even slight shifts toward human-centric trends can contribute to higher empowerment. This empowerment can be more fruitful, particularly if sustained over time and reinforced by organizational structures (Sulistio & Darmastuti, 2024).

Surprisingly, the influence of EVB on EE was not statistically significant. This finding diverges from Eibl et al. (2020), who typically linked proactive communication to increased feelings of efficacy and autonomy. A logical justification may lie in the disconnect between voicing opinions and perceiving that those opinions lead to actionable change. Accordingly, voice may not be translated into empowerment unless managerial systems act on employee inclusion (Basheer et al., 2021). SDT accentuates the significance of feedback circles in reinforcing inducement and engagement. As such, if employees speak up but see no reaction from supervision or peers, the motivational advantages may dissipate (Nikolova & Cnossen, 2020). These circumstances fit the hospitality context where time pressures and operational constraints may also inhibit the realization of voice-related empowerment. To conclude, while HCL stimulates both voice and empowerment directly, this result indicates that voice behavior alone is inadequate to stimulate empowerment unless attached with leader receptivity and corporate responsiveness.

Another key finding of this study is that the mediating effect of JC in the relationship between HCL and EVB was both significant and robust. This outcome suggests that employees need a sense of authority in shaping their work atmosphere to feel comfortable donating thoughts or raising concerns. As Shaw (2025) offered, this pathway aligns seamlessly with SDT, underscoring autonomy as a requirement for influential and intrinsically motivated work performance. Hence, human-centric leadership helps employees to engage in JC, nurturing the spirit and role clarity crucial for voice behavior. Guo et al. (2022) support this affirmation, revealing that successful leaders sweeten employees' psychological needs, leading to more elevated voice behavior cases through the JC lens. We propose that while HCL sets the cultural tone, the intermediate crafting conditions that adjust job scope, tasks, and relationships empower workers to communicate upward.

The final result of this study reported a significant mediating role of JC between HCL and EE. The empowerment, then, is less a direct result of leadership and more a function of how employees reshape their roles in response to leadership practices. Van Zoonen et al. (2021) proposed that JC in the lens of SDT is a channel for meeting the needs for capability and sovereignty, both essential for psychological empowerment. According to that case, hotel employees who proactively craft their tasks tend to feel more capable and self-determined, leading to strengthened empowerment. Similar outcomes in hospitality settings are offered by Davidovitz (2023), where promotion-focused crafting improved perceived empowerment. Thus, JC may be highly critical in the service sectors where formal empowerment instruments are limited. Employees in such settings should follow informal empowerment through their agency. They must seek challenges, request feedback, and adjust their roles to reach personal and professional goals.

Implications

Existing results reflect agreement with the hypothesis that HCL can be regarded as an influential antecedent of JC behavior. Proactive work behaviors that exist in proactive work behaviors are examples of JC enabled by human-centric leaders, which mitigate demanding job aspects and enhance motivating aspects (i.e., job resources). Our findings reflected that jobs crafted under an HCL environment hold positive payback on organizational productivity. To this vein, it is recommended that practitioners be leaders with enabling behaviors, power sharing, autonomy, and the provision of development and instructions to be vested in followers. A strategy develops HR that will likely take proactive actions that make their work meaningful and increase organizational efficiency. Therefore, HCL should be fostered in organizations by training interventions and programs that will enhance crafting and employee self-regulation (Jonck & Manamela, 2025).

Human-focused leaders must engage more in JC to maintain a self-guided behavior and develop better EE. Furthermore, campaigns are to be established to highlight the position of leadership styles in improving engagement and organizational performance. HCL is essential to managerial innovativeness, creativity climate, service-oriented innovative behavior, self-efficacy, and self-improvisation (Elkhwesky et al, 2022). Practical recommendations for hospitality managers are to set high performance standards by setting an example through exemplary behavior. Hence, this

allows team members to share their thoughts and suggestions, use the ideas put across by other managers when making a decision involving employees, and give each team member a chance to present their views. Moreover, managers are expected to introduce training to some areas where employees need to improve and assist them in solving issues, setting firm objectives, and clarifying rules and expectations (Chiang & Chen, 2021).

HCL is a constellation of positive consequences (e.g., innovative behavior, a creative organizational climate, escalated firm innovativeness, and reinforced business performance), which improve organizational performance. The focus of leaders who embrace a human-centric orientation is more on the interests and needs of followers. Thus, the attention is corrected intra and extramurally within organizations (Elkhwesky et al, 2022). In hospitality settings, such orientations may be considered servant leadership by avoiding embedding ethical compromise in their commitment to success. Hence, this gives subordinate members latitude in determining how to solve situations facing them, promotes the interests of subordinate members over personal benefit, focuses on community service, and helps team members in their challenges.

Hospitality firms should intertwine HCL in their strategic activities, as they have linked it to employee engagement, organizational innovation, and sustainability (Khattak & O'Connor, 2021; El Reqib & Tariq, 2025). Empirical evidence showed that leadership programs incorporating the element of HCL lead to trust, engagement, and performance spillover across divisions and units (El Reqib & Tariq, 2025). Therefore, targeted intervention strategies are effective in implementation: leaders should structure training programs and conduct workshops to empower employees. Practical lessons (e.g., scenario-based evaluation) can develop human-centric mindsets. In contrast, case studies will help to respond to employees' needs and concerns. By these means, leadership may be charted and improved. Lastly, HCL relies on empowering the subordinates. Hence, supervisors must create a situation where employees can apply human-centric values.

Furthermore, our results suggest that to foster HCL, managers should be trained not only to show empathy (HCL6) but to actively support professional development (HCL5) and create a safe environment for sharing ideas (HCL2). To promote JC, managers can prompt employees to actively seek challenging tasks (JC2) or find ways to make their job more meaningful (JC5), rather than waiting for formal job redesign initiatives. Lastly, rejecting H4 is a critical lesson for managers: simply encouraging employees to 'speak up' (EVB) is insufficient. It must be paired with visible follow-through to foster a sense of empowerment (EE).

Limitations and future research
Despite our specific practical findings, multiple methodological issues are to be discussed. This paper used a cross-sectional research design, restricting the ability to conclude causality. Results should be interpreted cautiously, and a longitudinal design should be used in future research. Moreover, this paper employed a probability sampling technique, potentially enhancing the external validity. However, in-depth purposive sampling can be beneficial for specific hospitality case studies. Findings can be considered tendencies and not representative of a broader population since the sample was small. Further quantitative research should be conducted by carrying out

probability sampling that involves a large sample size. Moreover, empirical research might be carried out to investigate HCL consequences in different contexts, like restaurants, resorts, and non-commercial hospitality organizations.

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