

Investigating factors constituding paradoxical leadership and subordinate adaptation in hospitality industry: A multilevel perspective

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Introduction

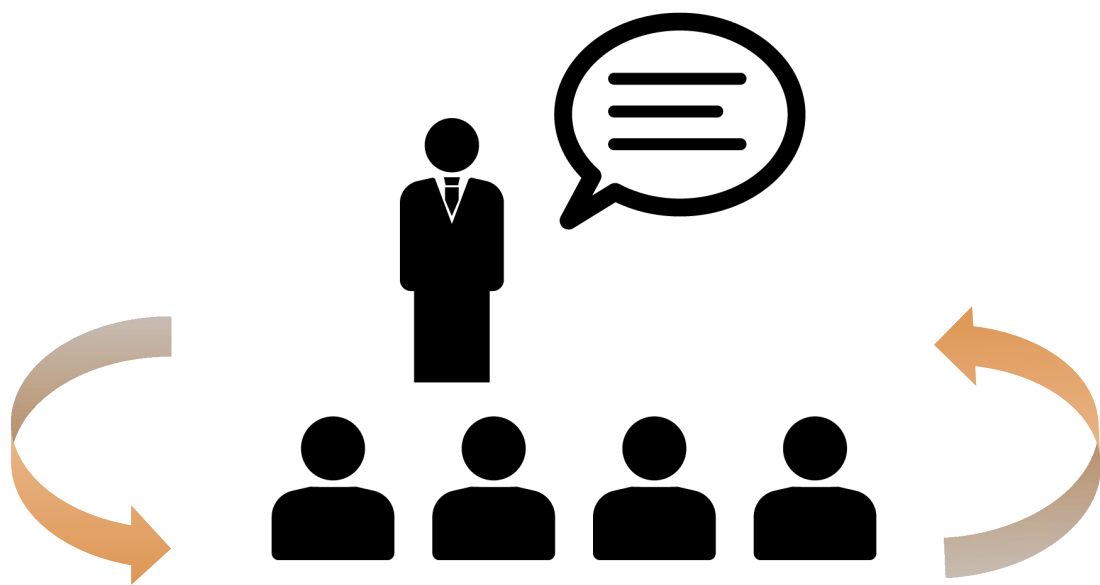
*This* study explores how empowering leadership at the managerial level influences paradoxical leadership behaviors among supervisors and how these behaviors, in turn, impact subordinates' cognitive dissonance and feedback-seeking behavior within the hospitality industry, drawing on **cognitive dissonance theory**. Additionally, it examines the moderating role of power distance beliefs, which may shape how middle managers respond to empowering leadership.

**Paradoxical leadership**, which involves balancing contradictory behaviors such as control and empowerment, has been widely studied for its positive effects. However, little is known about its antecedents and **potential negative consequences**, particularly in **hierarchical organizations** where middle managers play a key role in translating leadership strategies into practice.

Adopting a **multilevel perspective**, this **research aims to**:

1. Examine how managers' empowering leadership shapes supervisors' paradoxical leadership behavior.
2. Analyze how paradoxical leadership induces subordinates' cognitive dissonance, influencing their feedback-seeking behavior.
3. Investigate the moderating role of power distance beliefs in the relationship between empowering leadership and paradoxical leadership.

**By integrating leadership influences across hierarchical levels, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of paradoxical leadership and its implications for organizations.**



Research Model

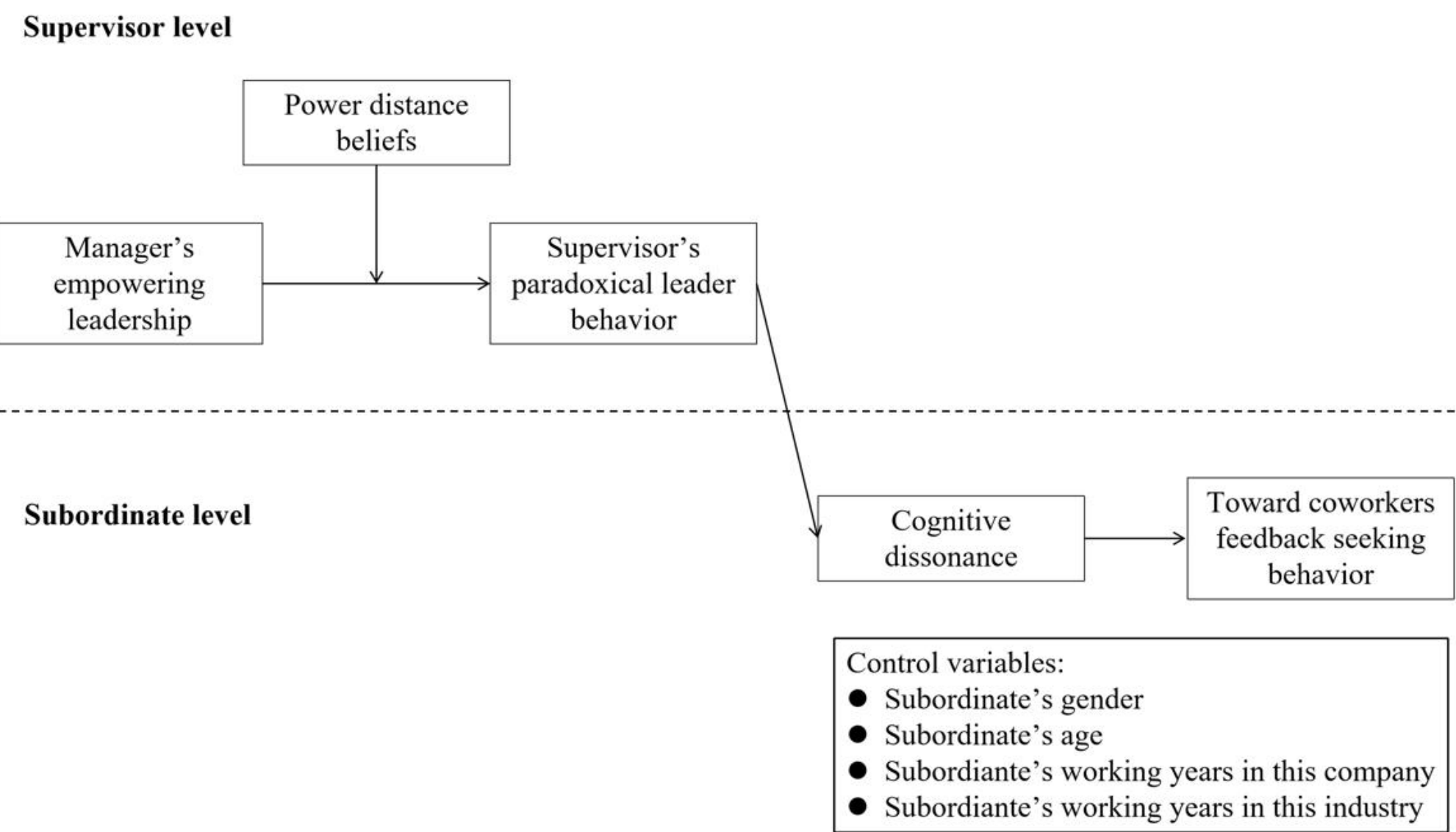


Figure 1. The proposed model.

Hypotheses

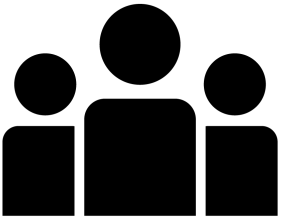
- H1:** Power distance beliefs will moderate the relationship between managers' empowering leadership and supervisors' paradoxical leadership behavior. Specifically, the positive relationship will be stronger when power distance beliefs are high rather than when power distance beliefs are low.
- H2:** Supervisors' paradoxical leadership behavior will be positively related to subordinates' cognitive dissonance, leading to increased feedback-seeking behavior toward coworkers.
- H3:** Power distance beliefs will moderate the indirect effect of managers' empowering leadership on subordinates' feedback-seeking behavior through supervisors' paradoxical leadership behavior and cognitive dissonance. Specifically, the indirect effect will be stronger when power distance beliefs are high rather than when power distance beliefs are low.

Method

Sample and Data Collection

This study was conducted in a large restaurant enterprise in Guangdong, China, with operations in Guangzhou, Dongguan, and Huizhou. Data were collected from **71 supervisors and their direct 261 subordinates**, forming matched groups.

**Supervisors** reported their manager's empowering leadership, power distance beliefs and paradoxical leadership behavior, while **subordinates** responded to cognitive dissonance and feedback-seeking behavior.



Category	Subcategory	Percentage (%)
Supervisors	Male	59.20%
	Aged 31-40	25.40%
	Aged 41-50	43.70%
	Company tenure ≥ 5 years	48.00%
	Industry experience 5-10 years	70.40%
Subordinates	Male	72.40%
	Aged 21-30	36.40%
	Aged 31-40	19.20%
	Company tenure ≥ 2 years	35.30%
	Industry experience ≥ 2 years	59.00%

Table1. Sample Characteristics.

Data Analysis

SPSS was used for descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and reliability testing. Mplus was employed for multilevel structural equation modeling (MSEM) to examine:

- The cross-level effect of empowering leadership on paradoxical leadership behavior.
- The mediation effect of cognitive dissonance.
- The moderating role of power distance beliefs in shaping paradoxical leadership.

Model fit was assessed using CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR to ensure the robustness of the results.

Results

Structural model				
Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient	P-value	Supported
H1	Managers' empowering leadership × Power distance beliefs → Paradoxical leadership behavior	0.1336	<0.001	Yes
H2	Paradoxical leadership behavior → Cognitive dissonance	0.388	<0.001	Yes
H3	Cognitive dissonance → Feedback-seeking behavior	0.136	<0.001	Yes

CFI=0.957 , TLI= 0.927 , RMSEA=0.075 , SRMR=0.093

Table2. Path analysis.



Figure2. Interaction effect of empowering leadership and paradoxical leader behavior on power distance beliefs.

Contributions

Theoretical Contributions

- ◆ **Extension of Cognitive Dissonance Theory:** Demonstrates how supervisors' paradoxical leadership induces cognitive dissonance in subordinates, linking leadership behaviors to psychological states and adaptation.
- ◆ **Antecedents of Paradoxical Leadership:** Identifies empowering leadership as a key factor driving paradoxical leadership at the supervisory level.
- ◆ **Multilevel Perspective:** Highlights cross-level leadership dynamics, showing how managerial leadership influences supervisors' behaviors and subordinates' adaptation.
- ◆ **Boundary Conditions:** Reveals power distance beliefs as a critical moderator shaping the relationship between empowering and paradoxical leadership.

Managerial Implications

- ◆ **Tailored leadership practices:** Empowering leadership should be adapted to cultural contexts, particularly in high power distance environments, to avoid unintended consequences.
- ◆ **Supervisor training:** Organizations should train managers to balance empowerment and control effectively.

References

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