

Benevolent Leadership on Job Engagement

Subjects: **Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism**

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This research examines how job engagement (JE) is affected by benevolent leadership (BL). This research also explores psychological safety (PS) and workplace friendship (WF) as mediators.

benevolent leadership

job engagement

psychological safety

1. Introduction

The tourism and hospitality industry is renowned for its fast-moving and dynamic character, demanding employees to navigate a multitude of obstacles while delivering exceptional customer experiences ^[1]. Within this setting, adept leadership assumes a crucial role in fostering a constructive workplace atmosphere and improving employee results ^[2]. Job engagement pertains to the degree of emotional commitment and devotion that employees exhibit toward their tasks, ultimately contributing to heightened levels of performance and overall well-being ^[3]. In the tourism and hospitality industry, job engagement holds particular significance, as employees directly interact with customers and play a crucial role in delivering exceptional experiences ^[4]. Engaged employees are more likely to exhibit greater commitment, motivation, and performance, resulting in enhanced customer satisfaction and loyalty. Consequently, comprehending the factors that influence job engagement is essential for organizations operating in this industry ^{[5][6]}.

In recent years, one leadership style that has gained attention is benevolent leadership. Benevolent leaders demonstrate genuine concern for the well-being of their employees, offer support, and cultivate positive relationships ^{[7][8]}. This leadership approach is associated with favorable employee outcomes, including increased job engagement, satisfaction, and productivity ^{[9][10]}. Leaders who adopt a benevolent approach prioritize employee well-being, provide support, and establish a positive work environment. This leadership style is linked to positive outcomes such as enhanced job satisfaction and organizational commitment ^{[11][12]}. Leadership styles that emphasize values, respect, dignified treatment, and support contribute to employee well-being and organizational sustainability ^[13]. Through its four components—spiritual depth, ethical sensitivity, positive engagement, and community responsiveness—benevolent leadership may support the long-term viability and sustainability of organizations ^[8]. Benevolent leadership is also connected to organizational citizenship behavior and is one of the main criteria for sustainable organizational growth, which contributes to an organization's long-term competitive advantage ^[14].

By examining the impact of benevolent leadership on job engagement, valuable insights into effective leadership practices can be gained [15]. Benevolent leadership also fosters psychological safety, which refers to employees' perception of a secure work environment for taking interpersonal risks, enabling them to freely express ideas, concerns, and opinions without fear of negative consequences [15][16]. Furthermore, this leadership style promotes the prevalence of workplace friendships, which pertains to the extent of friendly relationships among colleagues within the organization [11][12].

Furthermore, psychological safety encompasses individuals' belief in their work environment, where they feel secure to express their thoughts, opinions, and ideas without fear of negative consequences [17][18]. When employees perceive their work environment as psychologically safe, they are more likely to actively engage, take risks, and contribute their best efforts [18]. Psychological safety acts as a mediator through which benevolent leadership influences job engagement, playing a pivotal role in fostering a supportive work environment, particularly in high-pressure situations and customer interactions [19][20][21]. When employees perceive psychological safety, they are more inclined to take risks, share ideas, and engage in collaborative problem-solving, ultimately leading to higher levels of job engagement [22].

Similarly, workplace friendships significantly impact employee engagement and well-being. In situations where teamwork and cooperation are critical, the presence of positive workplace friendships contributes to a cohesive and supportive work environment [23]. When employees experience a prevalence of workplace friendships, they feel a sense of belonging, social support, and camaraderie, which can enhance their job satisfaction and overall engagement [24].

2. Social Exchange Theory

The relationships among benevolent leadership, psychological safety, workplace friendships, and job engagement can be examined through the framework of Social Exchange Theory [25][26][27]. Social Exchange Theory posits that individuals engage in social relationships based on an exchange of resources, such as support, trust, and cooperation. Benevolent leadership can be seen as a positive manifestation of social exchanges between leaders and employees [28][29]. Benevolent leaders offer support, care, and encouragement, creating a favorable environment for social exchange that leads to positive employee outcomes, including job engagement [30]. Psychological safety and workplace friendships can be viewed as valuable resources exchanged within the workplace that have an impact on job engagement [31]. Benevolent leadership plays a crucial role in fostering psychological safety by creating an environment where employees feel supported, valued, and respected. When employees perceive their leaders as benevolent, they are more likely to experience psychological safety, which subsequently enhances their level of job engagement [32][33]. This sense of psychological safety enables employees to feel comfortable taking risks, expressing their thoughts, and engaging in open communication, which leads to increased job satisfaction and commitment [34]. Furthermore, benevolent leadership plays a crucial role in fostering the formation of workplace friendships. When leaders exhibit care, concern, and support, they cultivate a positive social climate that encourages positive relationships among employees [8]. Workplace friendships contribute to a sense of belonging, social support, and camaraderie, all of which have a positive impact on job

engagement. Employees who have strong friendships at work are more likely to feel connected, motivated, and satisfied in their roles [35]. Within the framework of Social Exchange Theory, benevolent leadership acts as a catalyst for positive social exchanges, leading to the development of psychological safety and workplace friendships. These resources, in turn, contribute to higher levels of job engagement. Employees recognize the benefits of benevolent leadership and reciprocate by investing their time and effort into and committing to their work [25].

3. Benevolent Leadership

The literature was analyzed to determine which leadership styles launch sustainable development and aid in the implementation of sustainable human resource management [36]. The sustainability of a business may be greatly defended by its leadership style [37]. Leadership interacts with HR behavior and practices to improve employee tasks [37] and to create sustainable work environments where high levels of employee well-being can be achieved. These environments also support HR models that can coexist with social sustainability and that are advantageous to both organizations and employees [38].

Benevolent leadership is a leadership style characterized by leaders who demonstrate care, support, and concern for the well-being and growth of their followers. It goes beyond traditional leadership approaches that primarily focus on task completion and performance, placing significant emphasis on fostering positive relationships and establishing a supportive work environment [11][15]. Benevolent leaders provide guidance, mentorship, and support to their followers, offering resources, advice, and assistance to help employees overcome challenges and reach goals. They prioritize the personal and professional development of their followers. Benevolent leadership is often categorized as a relationship-oriented or people-oriented leadership style, highlighting the importance of building positive relationships, fostering trust, and creating a supportive work environment [39][40]. Leaders who embrace a benevolent leadership style give priority to the needs and concerns of their followers and endeavor to establish strong interpersonal connections [41]. Numerous favorable outcomes are associated with benevolent leadership for both individuals and organizations. Benevolent leadership cultivates a positive work environment, enhances employee well-being and engagement, boosts employee satisfaction and retention, and contributes to organizational success [11]. By prioritizing their followers' needs, demonstrating empathy, and fostering positive relationships, benevolent leaders create a supportive and fulfilling workplace that brings out the best in their employees [28][42].

4. Relationship between Benevolent Leadership and Job Engagement

Job engagement pertains to the degree of enthusiasm, dedication, and involvement exhibited by employees in their work. Engaged employees are driven to invest their utmost efforts, take initiative, and actively contribute to their organization's achievements [43]. Benevolent leaders empower their employees by granting them autonomy in decision making and task execution. This empowerment cultivates a sense of ownership and accountability,

ultimately boosting job engagement. When employees feel trusted and empowered, they are more likely to be motivated, take initiative, and experience a sense of fulfillment from their work [44][45]. Benevolent leadership places a strong emphasis on fostering the development and growth of employees through mentorship, coaching, and learning opportunities. This focus on personal and professional advancement satisfies employees' intrinsic motivation and their aspiration for continuous growth and advancement, ultimately bolstering job engagement [46]. In addition, benevolent leaders consistently offer feedback and recognition to their employees. They acknowledge contributions, provide constructive feedback, and celebrate accomplishments. This recognition and feedback enhance employees' feelings of competence and worth, resulting in heightened job engagement and motivation for exceptional performance [10][47]. Moreover, benevolent leaders recognize the significance of work-life balance and employee well-being, emphasizing the need for a harmonious equilibrium between work and personal life. By prioritizing well-being, they alleviate stress, cultivate job satisfaction, and encourage a positive integration of work and personal life, thereby enhancing job engagement [48][49][50]. In conclusion, the connection between benevolent leadership and job engagement is a reciprocal one. Benevolent leaders establish an environment that aligns with the principles of job engagement by promoting support, trust, and personal growth opportunities. Engaged employees, in return, contribute to a positive organizational culture and enhanced outcomes. The presence of benevolent leadership acts as a catalyst for heightened job engagement, leading to heightened productivity, satisfaction, and overall success for both employees and the organization [42][51][52].

5. Relationship between Benevolent Leadership and Psychological Safety

Psychological safety refers to an individual's perception that they can freely express themselves, share ideas, take risks, and voice their thoughts without facing negative repercussions such as embarrassment or retaliation [53]. In an environment that fosters psychological safety, individuals feel at ease being their authentic selves and openly expressing their opinions [17]. The relationship between benevolent leadership and psychological safety is mutually reinforcing [15]. As leaders exhibit benevolent behaviors, they enhance psychological safety, which, in turn, strengthens their effectiveness as leaders. Psychological safety plays a pivotal role in promoting employee well-being, satisfaction, engagement, and innovation [54]. When employees experience a sense of psychological safety, they are more inclined to contribute their utmost efforts, effectively collaborate, and take calculated risks that drive organizational success [55]. Benevolent leadership, characterized by leaders who demonstrate care, support, and concern for their followers, positively influences psychological safety in the workplace [15][56]. Benevolent leaders cultivate trust and foster open communication with their followers, establishing an environment where employees feel at ease expressing their thoughts, ideas, and concerns without the fear of negative repercussions [57][58]. When employees perceive their leaders as accessible, empathetic, and supportive, they are more likely to engage in transparent and sincere communication, thereby enhancing psychological safety. Benevolent leaders foster a nurturing work environment in which employees feel esteemed, respected, and acknowledged. They offer guidance, resources, and aid to assist employees in overcoming obstacles and attaining their objectives. Through their display of care and support, benevolent leaders establish an atmosphere that promotes employees' willingness to take risks, express their viewpoints, and participate in decision-making processes, ultimately

augmenting psychological safety [59][60]. Psychological safety is closely tied to employees' willingness to take risks and express their opinions. When employees experience psychological safety, they are more inclined to engage in proactive behaviors, share innovative ideas, and challenge the existing norms without fear of negative repercussions [61]. This approach enhances psychological safety by assuring employees that their leaders genuinely care about their well-being and are invested in their success. Employees feel secure to make mistakes, learn from them, and receive guidance on improvement. Benevolent leadership significantly contributes to the establishment of psychological safety within the workplace [8].

Overall, benevolent leadership plays a significant role in promoting psychological safety by creating a culture characterized by trust, support, empathy, inclusivity, and a commitment to continuous learning. When employees experience psychological safety, they are more inclined to engage in open communication, take risks, share ideas, effectively collaborate, and give their utmost efforts toward the organization's success. The nurturing of psychological safety by benevolent leaders contributes to a positive work environment and enhances employee well-being, engagement, and overall organizational performance [19][53].

6. Relationship between Benevolent Leadership and Workplace Friendship Prevalence

Workplace friendships are characterized by strong bonds, built on shared experiences, trust, and mutual support, that go beyond professional interactions, contributing to a more cohesive and harmonious work environment [62][63]. Benevolent leaders, who demonstrate supportive behaviors such as genuine care, guidance, and fostering a positive workplace, play a role in facilitating the formation of workplace friendships [64]. When employees perceive their leaders as caring and supportive, they feel more at ease in establishing social connections with their colleagues [65]. Benevolent leadership fosters a culture of open and transparent communication, establishing an environment where individuals feel secure in expressing their thoughts, concerns, and ideas. This atmosphere of open communication can facilitate the development of workplace friendships, as individuals engage in meaningful conversations and establish connections based on shared interests or goals [41]. Through cultivating a culture characterized by respect, fairness, and collaboration, benevolent leadership contributes to fostering a positive organizational climate. This climate creates a supportive and amiable work environment that promotes social interactions and the establishment of workplace friendships [66]. Benevolent leaders demonstrate empathy and offer emotional support to their employees, taking the time to comprehend their team members' emotions, challenges, and personal circumstances. This empathetic approach nurtures a sense of connection and closeness, leading to the formation of workplace friendships based on mutual understanding and support [8][67]. Moreover, benevolent leadership contributes to fostering a positive emotional climate within the workplace. Leaders who exhibit positivity, optimism, and gratitude have the ability to influence the overall mood and atmosphere of the organization. A positive emotional climate enhances employee well-being and satisfaction, creating an environment conducive to the establishment and sustenance of workplace friendships [48]. The relationship between benevolent leadership and the prevalence of workplace friendships highlights the significant connection between leadership

style and the development of meaningful interpersonal relationships among employees within an organization [68][69][70].

7. Relationship between Psychological Safety and Job Engagement

Psychological safety and job engagement are closely intertwined concepts that exert a significant influence on individual and team performance within organizations [71]. Organizations that prioritize and cultivate psychological safety are more likely to observe higher levels of job engagement, employee satisfaction, and overall organizational success [72]. Psychological safety plays a vital role in fostering job engagement, as individuals who feel psychologically secure in their work environment are more inclined to actively participate in their roles [71][73]. Furthermore, psychological safety encourages individuals to take risks and engage in experimentation without the fear of failure or negative repercussions [74]. It establishes an environment where employees feel at ease suggesting new ideas, challenging the status quo, and pursuing innovative approaches. This freedom to take risks stimulates engagement by providing a sense of autonomy and empowerment, ultimately fostering creativity [17]. Psychological safety also cultivates a feeling of inclusiveness and support within teams and organizations. When individuals perceive acceptance, respect, and value, it strengthens their connection to the work and the organization. This sense of belonging promotes job engagement by establishing a positive work environment, reducing stress, and enhancing overall well-being [75]. Psychological safety mitigates fear and anxiety in the workplace. When individuals feel secure in expressing themselves, sharing ideas, and voicing concerns without apprehension of negative consequences, it fosters a relaxed and positive work atmosphere. Decreased fear and anxiety contribute to higher levels of job engagement, as employees can dedicate their energy to tasks rather than worrying about potential adverse outcomes [74][76]. Similarly, psychological safety is closely intertwined with trust and relationship building. When employees experience psychological safety, it establishes a foundation of trust within teams and across the organization. Trust enhances job engagement by fostering positive relationships, effective communication, and a sense of support and camaraderie. In the presence of trust, employees are more inclined to go the extra mile and efficiently collaborate [17][77].

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