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**The role of empowering leadership and psychological empowerment on nurses' work engagement and affective commitment**

Journal:	<i>International Journal of Organizational Analysis</i>
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Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	Empowering leadership, Psychological empowerment, Affective commitment, Work engagement, Leader-member exchange theory, Healthcare

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**Table 1. Measurement model**

First-order Construct	Second-order Construct	Items	Loadings	CR	AVE
Authority		DA1	0.791	0.862	0.678
		DA2	0.922		
		DA3	0.746		
Accountability		ACC 1	0.905	0.939	0.836
		ACC 2	0.958		
		ACC 3	0.879		
Self-directed making		SDM1	0.927	0.926	0.808
		SDM2	0.966		
		SDM3	0.794		
Information sharing		IS1	0.927	0.908	0.831
		IS2	0.896		
Skills development		SD1	0.655	0.908	0.772
		SD2	0.981		
		SD3	0.961		
Coaching		CIP1	0.805	0.883	0.717
		CIP2	0.924		
		CIP3	0.806		
	Empowering Leadership	Authority	0.667	0.812	0.423
		Accountability	0.777		
		Self-directed making	0.579		
		Information sharing	0.540		
		Skills development	0.594		
		Coaching	0.712		
Meaning		ME1	0.967	0.981	0.945
		ME2	0.990		
		ME3	0.959		
Competence		COM1	0.905	0.933	0.823
		COM2	0.962		
		COM3	0.852		
Self-determination		SDL1	0.821	0.874	0.698
		SDL2	0.778		
		SDL3	0.904		
Impact		IM1	0.834	0.924	0.802
		IM2	0.930		
		IM3	0.920		
	Psychological Empowerment	Meaning	0.857	0.854	0.606
		Competence	0.884		
		Self-determination	0.833		
		Impact	0.462		

1					
2					
3	Affective Commitment	AC1	0.681	0.900	0.644
4		AC2	0.742		
5		AC3	0.871		
6		AC4	0.846		
7		AC5	0.856		
8					
9					
10	Vigour	VII1	0.838	0.924	0.672
11		VII2	0.861		
12		VII3	0.834		
13		VII4	0.881		
14		VII5	0.839		
15		VII6	0.640		
16					
17	Dedication	DE1	0.870	0.927	0.718
18		DE2	0.851		
19		DE3	0.857		
20		DE4	0.784		
21		DE5	0.871		
22					
23	Absorption	AB1	0.836	0.925	0.673
24		AB2	0.862		
25		AB3	0.840		
26		AB4	0.892		
27		AB5	0.704		
28		AB6	0.774		
29					
30					
31	Work Engagement	Vigor	0.746	0.816	0.598
32		Dedication	0.717		
33		Absorption	0.850		
34					
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**Table 2. Discriminant validity**

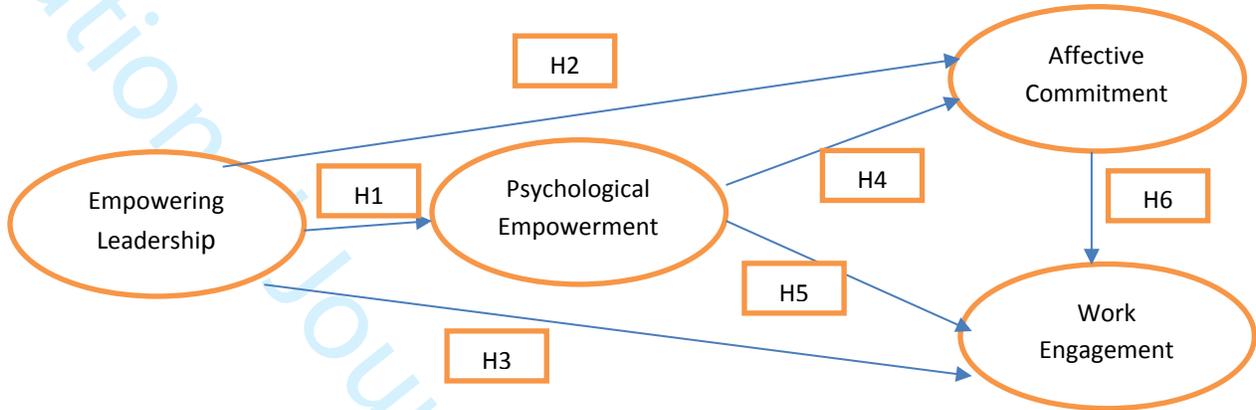
Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Fornell & Larcker														
1. Absorption	<b>0.820</b>													
2. Accountability	0.321	<b>0.915</b>												
3. Affective Commitment	0.852	0.338	<b>0.775</b>											
4. Authority	0.295	0.539	0.270	<b>0.823</b>										
5. Coaching	0.355	0.516	0.339	0.428	<b>0.847</b>									
6. Competence	0.314	0.465	0.349	0.342	0.363	<b>0.907</b>								
7. Dedication	0.438	0.097	0.382	0.079	0.158	0.135	<b>0.847</b>							
8. Impact	0.234	0.045	0.255	0.144	0.060	0.274	0.037	<b>0.896</b>						
9. Information sharing	0.171	0.254	0.195	0.250	0.151	0.407	0.108	0.245	<b>0.911</b>					
10. Meaning	0.326	0.440	0.347	0.458	0.395	0.720	0.175	0.151	0.306	<b>0.972</b>				
11. Self-determination	0.520	0.426	0.487	0.329	0.484	0.616	0.364	0.395	0.420	0.567	<b>0.836</b>			
12. Self-directed making	0.233	0.219	0.293	0.194	0.198	0.408	0.206	0.390	0.477	0.311	0.523	<b>0.899</b>		
13. Skills development	0.332	0.303	0.281	0.155	0.371	0.454	0.200	0.228	0.249	0.369	0.482	0.259	<b>0.879</b>	
14. Vigour	0.424	0.038	0.381	0.005	0.052	0.129	0.337	0.169	0.063	0.153	0.413	0.182	0.154	<b>0.820</b>
Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)														
1. Absorption														
2. Accountability	0.341													
3. Affective Commitment	0.944	0.359												
4. Authority	0.342	0.595	0.300											
5. Coaching	0.394	0.587	0.376	0.531										
6. Competence	0.383	0.515	0.360	0.395	0.392									
7. Dedication	0.470	0.134	0.407	0.093	0.192	0.140								
8. Impact	0.273	0.109	0.251	0.197	0.143	0.271	0.071							
9. Information sharing	0.268	0.296	0.228	0.318	0.194	0.473	0.137	0.266						
10. Meaning	0.337	0.464	0.353	0.525	0.418	0.768	0.176	0.139	0.341					
11. Self-determination	0.639	0.489	0.572	0.409	0.565	0.709	0.437	0.441	0.515	0.974				
12. Self-directed making	0.284	0.228	0.307	0.232	0.239	0.444	0.214	0.433	0.578	0.577	0.605			
13. Skills development	0.336	0.288	0.290	0.168	0.367	0.451	0.204	0.233	0.307	0.499	0.523	0.272		
14. Vigour	0.473	0.122	0.424	0.122	0.140	0.183	0.363	0.183	0.108	0.332	0.520	0.199	0.169	

**Table 3. Structural results**

Hypothesis	Beta	t-value	p-value	BCI LL	BCI UL	R2	f2	Decision
H1. EL -> PE	0.717	15.041	0.000	0.606	0.794	0.515	1.060	Supported
H2. EL -> AC	0.238	2.813	0.005	0.066	0.394	0.243	0.036	Supported
H3. EL -> WE	0.058	0.865	0.387	0.188	0.076	0.556	0.004	Not supported
H4. PE -> AC	0.293	3.459	0.001	0.131	0.463	0.243	0.055	Supported
H5. PE -> WE	0.158	2.38	0.017	0.029	0.287	0.556	0.026	Supported
H6. AC -> WE	0.690	18.472	0.000	0.605	0.754	0.556	0.813	Supported
Mediation testing								
H7. EL -> PE -> AC	0.210	3.203	0.001	0.109	0.328			Supported
H8. EL -> PE -> W E	0.113	2.276	0.023	0.044	0.207			Supported

Note: Significant level at 5%

Figure 1: Hypothesised pathways from empowering leadership to employee outcomes



## Appendix 1: Measurement items

Construct	Sources
Empowering Leadership: Konczak et al. 2000	
<i>Delegation of Authority</i>	
My manager gives me the authority I need to make decisions that improve work processes and procedures	
My manager gives me the authority to make changes necessary to improve things.	
My manager delegates authority to me that is equal to the level of responsibility that I am assigned.	
<i>Accountability</i>	
My manager holds me accountable for the work I am assigned.	
I am held accountable for performance and results.	
My manager holds people in the department accountable for customer satisfaction.	
<i>Self-directed Decision Making</i>	
My manager tries to help me arrive at my own solutions when problems arise, rather than telling me what he/she would do.	
My manager relies on me to make my own decisions about issues that affect how work gets done.	
My manager encourages me to develop my own solutions to problems I encounter in my work.	
<i>Information Sharing</i>	
My manager shares information that I need to ensure high quality results.	
My manager provides me with the information I need to meet customers' needs.	
<i>Skill Development</i>	
My manager encourages me to use systematic problem-solving methods (e.g., the seven-step problem-solving model).	
My manager provides me with frequent opportunities to develop new skills.	
My manager ensures that continuous learning and skill development are priorities in our department.	
<i>Coaching for innovative performance</i>	
My manager is willing to risk mistakes on my part if, over the long term, I will learn and develop as a result of the experience.	
I am encouraged to try out new ideas even if there is a chance they may not succeed.	
My manager focuses on corrective action rather than placing blame when I make a mistake.	
Psychological Empowerment: Spreitzer, 1995; Eo, et al. 2014; Meng et al, 2016	
<i>Meaning</i>	
The work I do is very important to me.	
My job activities are personally meaningful to me.	
The work I do is meaningful to me	
<i>Competence</i>	
I am confident about my ability to do my job.	
I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities.	
I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.	

*Self-determination*

I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job.

I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work.

I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job.

*Impact*

My impact on what happens in my department is large.

I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department.

I have significant influence over what happens in my department.

Work Engagement: Schaufeli et al. 2006; Schaufele et al. 2002; Eo, et al. 2014; Yan, et al. 2016

*Vigor*

At my work, I feel bursting with energy

At my job, I feel strong and vigorous

When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work

I am immersed in my work.

I can continue working for very long periods at a time.

At my job, I am very resilient, mentally.

At my work, I always persevere, even when things do not go well.

*Dedication*

I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.

I am enthusiastic about my job.

My job inspires me

I am proud of the work that I do.

To me, my job is challenging

*Absorption*

Time flies when I am working

When I am working, I forget everything else around me.

I feel happy when I am working intensely

I am immersed in my work.

I get carried away when I am working

It is difficult to detach myself from my job

*Affective Commitment: Nelson 2012*

I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this hospital

This hospital has a great deal of personal meaning for me

I enjoy discussing my hospital with people outside it

I feel a strong sense of belonging to this hospital

I feel strong ties with this hospital

---

## The role of empowering leadership and psychological empowerment on nurses' work engagement and affective commitment

### Abstract

**Purpose:** The present study fosters nurses' work engagement by empowering leadership while taking a perspective on leader-member exchange theory. The authors extend existing research by examining the mediating role of psychological empowerment in the link between empowering leadership and work engagement.

**Design/Methodology/approach:** Self-administered questionnaire data from 231 nurses working in a university hospital in Saudi Arabia were analysed using a cross-sectional research design using SEM to assess the relationship between empowering leadership, affective commitment, and work engagement, while testing for the mediating role of psychological empowerment.

**Findings:** Structural equation modelling analysis demonstrated that empowering leadership significantly relates to affective commitment. Affective commitment similarly significantly relates to work engagement. Further, the results showed that psychological empowerment substantially mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and work engagement. There is no significant direct relationship was found between empowering leadership and work engagement.

**Practical implications:** The study findings are essential for nursing managers. They illustrate that nurses become more committed to their organisation and, in return, more engaged with their work when they receive empowering leadership. Therefore, nursing managers could train their leaders to practice empowering leadership as increased work engagement has been found to result in other positive work attitudes such as reduced turnover intention.

**Originality/Value:** Our study corroborates the relationships between empowering leadership, affective commitment, and work engagement, as well as the mediating role of psychological empowerment. However, our research is unique as the long-established relationship between empowering leadership and work engagement was not supported. It shows that the propositions of leader-member exchange theory may not hold for unique non-Western contexts, in this case, Saudi Arabia.

**Keywords:** Empowering leadership, Affective commitment, Work engagement, Psychological empowerment, Healthcare, Leader-member exchange theory

**Paper type:** Research paper

**Acknowledgment:** The authors extend their appreciation to the Deanship of Scientific Research at King Saud University and the Research Center at the College of Business Administration for supporting this work.

## Introduction

The role of leadership in organisations has been an active phenomenon for research for the past decades, resulting in a wide variety of leadership styles being practiced in organisations nowadays. One such leadership style that has received increased attention recently is empowering leadership (EL). EL refers to the actions taken by a leader to delegate decision-making power to employees, while psychological empowerment (PE) considers subordinates' reactions to devolved power (AlMazrouei, 2021; Amundsen and Martinsen, 2014; Kundu *et al.*, 2019; Liang *et al.*, 2021). From a structural standpoint, empowerment refers to an employee's ability to access information, support, resources, and opportunities to complete tasks accordingly (Hayes *et al.*, 2014; Kanter, 1993). This definition was derived from structural empowerment theory was developed by Kanter (1977; 1993) that proposes a theory-driven method to describe how the work environment will impact employee attitude and behaviour outcomes, such as job satisfaction, job stress, and burnout (Heyes *et al.*, 2014; Laschinger, 2012).

On the other side, the fundamental concept of PE is that employees will be more efficient in demonstrating positive interactions in responding to the needs of customers or patients while also developing innovative ideas (Bock *et al.*, 2016) that help improve work performance (Seibert *et al.*, 2011). Employees who feel empowered will develop dynamic behaviours rather than a passive static orientation towards their work, unit, or organisation (Ali *et al.*, 2020; Guerrero *et al.*, 2018). Following the leader-member exchange theory (Dansereau *et al.*, 1975) underpins the importance of the role of leaders to their subordinates. Leader-member exchange theory proposes that when leaders positively stimulate their subordinates when they perform job tasks, employees will respond positively. Employees feel they are in an exchange relationship where reciprocity is followed. In practice, this means that leaders and subordinates work according to an exchange relationship in which the leader's behaviour influences the employee's work behaviours. The positive work behaviour of the leader will result in a positive work behaviour of the employee, and vice versa.

There is empirical evidence of the importance of the relationship between nurses and their superiors on PE and affective commitment (AC) (Brunetto *et al.*, 2012; Laschinger *et al.*, 2007). Equally, there is evidence that EL positively influences absenteeism and turnover intentions by engendering organisational commitment in subordinates (Kim and Beehr, 2018; Cafferkey *et al.*, 2017). Nurse empowerment in hospitals has been shown ultimately to influence both employee and patient satisfaction (Greco *et al.*, 2006). Studies have identified how the lack of nurse empowerment in hospitals create stressful working conditions that reduce work satisfaction and increase the risk of burnout (Greco *et al.*, 2006; Nursalam *et al.*, 2018; Sarmiento *et al.*, 2004). In contrast, empowerment has been found to lead to improved organisational outcomes. For example, in the context of Saudi Arabia, Falatah and Salem (2018) note that most hospitals have a shortage of nurses and are negatively impacted by high levels of turnover, attributed to a combination of factors including poor working conditions and inadequate financial compensation, factors exacerbated by, and contributing to, the poor image of the nursing profession in general (Abu Yahya *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, Falatah and Conway (2019) demonstrate that nurses' dissatisfaction with their work is correlated with their work relationships and interactions and low levels of appreciation, respect, and support (Zaghloul *et al.*, 2008).

1  
2  
3 Extant research has investigated the effect of EL and PE on work engagement (WE) across  
4 industries (Albrecht and Andreetta, 2011; Albrecht *et al.*, 2015; Chang *et al.*, 2010; Kundu *et al.*,  
5 2019). However, relatively few studies have examined vibrant relationships and PE as mediating  
6 constructs in the relationship between EL and AC and WE in hospitals. For example, Park *et al.*  
7 (2017) provided empirical evidence for the importance of PE on the relationship between EL and  
8 nurses' WE. Other scholars argued that PE and EL would significantly contribute to WE (Guest  
9 2014; Chen *et al.*, 2015; Fong and Snape, 2015; Li *et al.*, 2016). Chang *et al.* (2010) describe how  
10 PE plays a mediating role in the relationship between EL and OC in hospitals in China. Laschinger  
11 (2012) explains that nurses empowered to complete their work with good support from  
12 organisational structures will significantly impact nurse performance and retention. They will  
13 develop a sense of belonging and perform effectively and efficiently (Cayaban *et al.*, 2022).  
14 Nurses who receive support and are empowered will display increased commitment and exhibit  
15 enhanced work attitudes through the effect of EL on PE (Castro *et al.*, 2008) and will perform  
16 significantly better (DeCicco *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, commitment is considered an individual  
17 psychological state derived from numerous encouraging organisational aspects (Boukamcha,  
18 2022).

19  
20 Although nurses have been the focus of research for many decades (Price, 1977), nurse  
21 attachment to organisations is still not fully understood. There are significant nurse shortages  
22 and high nurse turnover globally, including in Saudi Arabia. Consequently, nurse turnover is  
23 becoming a global issue and significantly impacts hospitals' performance and quality (Alsufyani  
24 *et al.*, 2020; Amor *et al.*, 2021). However, nurse empowerment can improve their engagement  
25 and commitment to enhance hospital performance remains a challenge, especially in Saudi  
26 Arabia. These arguments raise the following research questions: (1) how empowering leadership  
27 and psychological empowerment will affect affective commitment and work engagement, and  
28 (2) how psychological empowerment plays an essential role a mediating role in the relationship  
29 between empowerment leadership and affective commitment and work engagement. A better  
30 understanding of this notion will help nurse managers and hospital management empower their  
31 nurses, reduce turnover and increase work engagement of nursing staff.

32  
33 The World Health Organization ranks the Saudi health care system 26th out of 190 global  
34 health systems (Almalki *et al.*, 2011). In Saudi Arabia, there are three types of health care services:  
35 (a) those provided by the Ministry of Health, (b) other Governments, and (c) private providers  
36 (Almalki *et al.*, 2011). A shortage of healthcare professionals (physicians and nurses) is noticeable  
37 in Saudi Arabia's healthcare system (Almalki *et al.*, 2011). Saudi Arabia has 36 nurses per 10,000  
38 people, significantly lower than other developed countries. The majority of health personnel are  
39 expatriates, which results in a high rate of turnover and workforce instability (Almalki *et al.*,  
40 2011).

## 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 **Literature review**

### 51 *Empowering Leadership*

52 Alotaibi *et al.* (2020) define EL as a process of sharing power with employees by providing them  
53 with autonomy in making independent decisions. In the EL process, an employee's motivational  
54 state can be enhanced by delegating authority and responsibility, reducing formal organisational  
55 practices, and removing conditions that foster feelings of powerlessness (Humborstad *et al.*,  
56  
57

2014; van Dijke *et al.*, 2012). Park *et al.* (2017) argued that empowerment is a motivational process, rather than simply delegating power to subordinates, helping subordinates better to understand their roles by involving them in the decision-making process. More importantly, Kim *et al.* (2018) describe EL as relational-oriented behaviours that treat employees with respect, show concern, build trust and create a supportive atmosphere. EL also provides employees with full individual autonomy and increases confidence levels among employees (Li *et al.*, 2016).

Konczak *et al.* (2000) found EL as a multidimensional construct and categorised it into six dimensions: authority, accountability, self-directed decision making, information sharing, skill development, and coaching for innovative performance. Authority refers to delegating power to the employees, allowing them to make independent decisions (De Klerk and Stander, 2014; Hakimi *et al.*, 2010). Accountability is defined as an implicit or explicit expectation that the individual making the decision is responsible and accountable for the decision when evaluated (Stander and Coxen, 2017). Self-directed decision-making entails providing an opportunity for employees to discuss and solve problems amongst each other and make a decision independent of leadership (Stander and Coxen, 2017). Information sharing involves an open flow of communication through which tacit knowledge is verbally shared among organizational members to improve performance (Stander and Coxen, 2017; Van Dierendonck and Dijkstra, 2012). Skill development includes devoting sufficient time to employees to engage in self-development activities through a training and development program (Joo *et al.*, 2019; De Klerk and Stander, 2014; Hakimi *et al.*, 2010; Stander and Coxen, 2017). Coaching refers to leader behavior in encouraging and creating new ideas and providing opportunities for employees to learn (Konczak *et al.*, 2000; Stander and Coxen, 2017). When these aspects have been incorporated into the organisation's strategy, it could lead to improved employee engagement.

### *Psychological Empowerment*

Spreitzer (1995) characterized PE as an individual's experience of the motivational process that enhances self-efficacy with work through four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Meaning refers to an employee feeling personally important and fit for their job. Competence describes having the skills to perform job tasks successfully (Kwak and Jackson, 2015b; Namasivayam *et al.*, 2014; Winterton, 2009; Zhang and Bartol, 2010), and when individuals possess high levels of competence it is found to increase their confidence in performing job tasks (Blaique *et al.*, 2022; De Klerk and Stander, 2014; Dewettinck and van Ameijde, 2011). Self-determination refers to the individuals' motivation to take on job roles through their initiative. A high degree of self-determination has been shown to significantly influence both the individual and the organizational levels (Deci *et al.*, 1989). Impact refers to an employees' achievement that can provide a diverse range of meaningful outcomes (De Klerk and Stander, 2014; Kwak and Jackson, 2015a; Zhang and Bartol, 2010). In short, these four constructs characterise how employees can feel empowered (Bester *et al.*, 2015; Spreitzer, 1995) through individual experiences of empowerment (Dewettinck and van Ameijde, 2011; Lee and Nie, 2017).

Additionally, De Klerk and Stander (2014) claimed that the four constructs disclose an orientation in which individuals wish to perform their job and feel able to do so actively rather than passively. Similarly, MacPhee *et al.* (2014) discussed a psychological perspective defining empowerment as a self-motivating factor that reflects individual beliefs on personal relationships, and in particular, a set of perceptions that emphasize the motivational aspect of

1  
2  
3 self-competence or self-efficacy, including the perception of personal control (Khuntia *et al.*,  
4 2017; Meng *et al.*, 2016; Spreitzer, 1995). Extant research reveals a consensus that employees  
5 who feel more empowered at work are more productive, effective, and satisfied compared to  
6 lesser authorized employees (Al Zaabi *et al.*, 2016; Meyerson and Kline, 2008). The established  
7 assumption of PE theory is that empowered employees are more active and productive than  
8 employees who are not empowered (Kang *et al.*, 2017).  
9  
10

### 11 *Affective Commitment*

12 Porter *et al.* (1974) characterized organizational commitment as a strong belief in and acceptance  
13 of the organisation's goals and values, willingness to expend tremendous effort on behalf of the  
14 organisation, and a positive desire to maintain organizational membership. In this definition,  
15 organisational commitment refers to a psychological state describing the relationship between  
16 an employee and the organisation. Individuals who are highly committed to an organisation's  
17 goals and are willing to devote more effort are more likely to stay at the organisation (Porter *et al.*,  
18 1974). Although there are various definitions of commitment, the most common approach to  
19 organisational commitment is the theory outlined by Allen and Meyer (1990). Their hypothesis  
20 describes a psychological linkage between the employee and their organisation. This linkage, in  
21 return, makes it less likely that the employee will leave the organisation (Araujo and Figueiredo,  
22 2019).  
23

24 Meyer and Allen (1991) proposed a three components model of organisational  
25 commitment consisting of continuous, normative, and affective organizational commitment.  
26 Continuous commitment refers to an employee's desire to remain with the organisation and  
27 awareness of the costs associated with leaving. Normative commitment reflects a feeling of  
28 obligation on the part of the employee to stay with the organisation. Affective commitment (AC)  
29 refers to the employee's emotional desire to remain with the organisation because of their  
30 feelings of attachment (Jang and Kandampully, 2018; Mendes and Jesus, 2018; Yahaya and  
31 Ebrahim, 2016).  
32

33 While the three types of organisational commitment have received research attention  
34 from various disciplines (reference), AC commitment is the focus of this study because it  
35 represents the assertive attitude employees develop towards their organisation ( Aboramadan  
36 *et al.*, 2021; Salminen and Miettinen, 2019). Employees who are highly committed to the  
37 organisation are more likely to achieve organisational goals (Rhoades *et al.*, 2001; Sharma and  
38 Dhar, 2016) and exhibit higher performance (Franczukowska *et al.*, 2021; Jang and Kandampully,  
39 2018; Meyer *et al.*, 2002).  
40  
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45

### 46 *Work Engagement*

47 Kahn (1990) defined WE as a motivational construct, reflecting an employees' total commitment  
48 to work roles. In reality, this reflects engaged employees who are organised and at the same time  
49 direct themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally in performing at work. The cognitive  
50 characteristic relates to the employee's perspective on working conditions and how and by whom  
51 the firm is directed (Saks 2019; Kahn, 1990). The emotional aspect reflects employees' real-life  
52 experiences of these factors (De Klerk and Stander, 2014). In a similar vein, Schaufeli *et al.* (2002)  
53 defined WE as a positive work-related state of mind and conceptualised this via three constructs:  
54 vigor; dedication; and absorption. Vigor refers to high levels of energy and cognitive resilience,  
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the willingness to invest effort, and persistence in the face of difficult situations at work. Dedication describes an experience of a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge while working. Absorption refers to being fully concentrated and intensely fascinated with one's work, in other words, being deeply engrossed and not easily distracted by diversions (Al Zaabi *et al.*, 2016; Dåderman and Basinska, 2016; Eldor and Vigoda-Gadot, 2017; Lu *et al.*, 2018; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006).

Drawing on the definition of WE by Schaufeli *et al.* (2002), Daderman and Basinska (2016) argued that vigor and dedication establish the foundation of work engagement, while absorption is related to the idea of flow and plays a different role to the other engagement dimensions (Schaufeli *et al.* 2006; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009). Schaufeli *et al.* (2002) emphasized in their definition that WE are not a work attitude or behaviour but an established and flexible work state. Bakker *et al.* (2008) argued that WE focus on the positive and momentary experience that portrays an individual's physical, emotional, and cognitive immersion in the work. Furthermore, WE differ from work attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, to which WE are often found an antecedent (Bakker *et al.*, 2008; Blaique *et al.*, 2022; Christian *et al.*, 2011; Lu *et al.*, 2018). Work attitudes describe individual and emotional evaluations of the work itself, and work behaviour refers to personal purposeful and planned actions to achieve set goals (Lu *et al.*, 2018). In short, various authors have immersed themselves in the WE concept, leading to additional nuances in understanding. Nonetheless, WE's role in organisational outcomes is not yet fully understood, which is why this study focused on WE.

## Hypotheses

*Empowering leadership, psychological empowerment, affective commitment, and work engagement*

In employment, an employee's effort into work can not be drawn from a contractual agreement. Instead, a higher-level stimulus is needed to stimulate an employee's behavior at work, for which a leader plays an important role (Dansereau *et al.*, 1975). Leader-member exchange theory underpins this by suggesting an interpersonal exchange relationship between subordinates and leaders in which a leader's behaviour influences the employees' work behaviour. For our study, when leaders exhibit empowering leadership to their subordinates, employees will experience positive work behaviours, such as affective commitment and work engagement. This proposition has received numerous supports from empirical research.

Park *et al.* (2017) argued that when leaders have a positive leadership perspective, they might directly enhance employees' psychological resources. Also, employees who perceive higher support from their supervisors are more likely to report greater empowerment (Amin *et al.*, 2014; Amin *et al.*, 2017; García-Juan *et al.*, 2019; Young *et al.*, 2021). Zhang and Bartol (2010) showed that EL plays a significant role in influencing PE when an employee wants to be empowered, i.e. when they possess a high role identity. Similarly, Kwak and Jackson (2015b) demonstrated that EL facilitates decision-making participation, in return providing subordinates with a greater sense of meaningfulness in their jobs. Some scholars argued that EL enhances subordinates' confidence (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Konczak *et al.*, 2000), self-determination (Arnold *et al.*, 2000; Konczak *et al.*, 2000), and leaders to an impactful performance (Rai and Kim, 2021; Zhang and Bartol, 2010). In healthcare, Laschinger *et al.* (2009) showed that structural

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3 changes in empowerment would lead to changes in PE, in return leading to improved job  
4 satisfaction. Staff nurses who experienced and are receptive to empowering working conditions  
5 felt that their managers and colleagues effectively facilitated their ability to perform job tasks  
6 and support workplace respected professional nursing standards (Faulkner and Laschinger,  
7 2008).

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9 In addition, leadership practices that empower nurses to practice autonomy within  
10 interdisciplinary teams are found to improve nurses' working conditions (Laschinger and Finegan,  
11 2005). It has also been reported that the relationship between staff nurses, leaders, resources  
12 accessibility, and an autonomous work atmosphere supports and improves staff nurse job  
13 satisfaction and performance, fostering nurse retention (Andrews *et al.*, 2012; Anthony *et al.*,  
14 2005; Cowden *et al.*, 2011). Consequently, Blaique *et al.* (2022) argued that implementing  
15 empowerment would create positive feelings among their employees, including self-confidence.  
16 They ultimately will improve employees' dedication, vigour, and absorption in their work.  
17 Research has shown that EL plays a vital role in enhancing employee commitment (Albrecht and  
18 Andreetta, 2011) and work engagement (Islam & Amin, 2021; Ahmad *et al.*, 2005) while  
19 simultaneously reducing turnover intention (Bester *et al.*, 2015; Haque & Islam, 2022; Meyerson  
20 and Kline, 2008). Support from supervisors has been shown to enhance nurse well-being  
21 (Alotaibi *et al.*, 2020; Nelson, 2012) and affective commitment (Brunetto *et al.*, 2012). We,  
22 therefore, propose the following hypotheses:

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26 *H1. Empowering leadership has a significant relationship with psychological empowerment.*

27 *H2. Empowering leadership has a significant relationship with affective commitment.*

28 *H3. Empowering leadership has a significant relationship with work engagement.*

### 29 30 31 *Psychological empowerment, affective commitment, and work engagement*

32 From a leader-member exchange theory (Dansereau *et al.*, 1975) perspective, employees who  
33 are empowered by receiving trust from their superiors to perform tasks and resolve issues  
34 independently, while a positive work atmosphere is maintained, will exhibit more excellent  
35 reciprocal behaviours towards their job tasks, unit, and organisation. Also, this could reflect in  
36 employees taking greater responsibility and commitment to the organisation. It may benefit  
37 other organisational members as they do not have to involve themselves in work tasks or issues  
38 left unattended. The employee in charge will take greater ownership, which benefits the unit or  
39 the entire organisation.

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42 Numerous empirical works support this theoretical stance of the significant relationship  
43 between PE and WE. For example, May *et al.* (2004) found that when an organisation provides a  
44 harmonised workplace atmosphere emphasizing the psychological circumstances of  
45 meaningfulness (i.e. job enrichment, work-role fit), safety (i.e. supportive manager and co-  
46 workers), and availability (i.e. resources availability), it is more likely to have engaged employees.  
47 Consequently, employees feel recognised and reinforced in the workplace, ultimately improving  
48 employee psychological security and contributing to higher work engagement (Liu *et al.*, 2022).  
49 Concretely, psychologically empowered employees have the willingness and capability to  
50 facilitate proactive behaviour and act independently (Groselj *et al.*, 2021). Psychologically  
51 empowered employees are more committed to their work and organizations (Albrecht and  
52 Andreetta, 2011; Frazier and Jacezko, 2021; Jose and Mampilly, 2015). Other scholars highlighted  
53 that empowered employees are more involved in their organisations and exhibit lower rates of  
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intention to quit (Bhatnagar, 2012; Islam and Amin, 2021; Nelson, 2012; Quek *et al.*, 2021). In healthcare, Salminen and Miettinen (2019) show that supervisory support for development enhances AC, which in return increases their likelihood of remaining at their current workplace. The more nurses experience PE, the higher their AC is and the lower their intention to leave (Araujo and Figueiredo, 2019; Robson and Robson, 2016). Other studies have suggested that PE will help employees make positive changes to their roles and work units (Jose and Mampilly, 2015; Seibert *et al.*, 2011). We, therefore, propose the following hypothesis:

*H4. Psychological empowerment has a significant relationship with work engagement.*

*H5. Psychological empowerment has a significant relationship with affective commitment*

*H6. Affective commitment has a significant relationship with work engagement.*

#### *Psychological empowerment as a mediating role*

Several studies demonstrated a positive relationship between EL, PE and WE (Park *et al.*, 2017; Zhang and Bartol, 2010). For instance, Park *et al.* (2017) provided empirical evidence for the importance of PE on the relationship between EL and WE. Similarly, Li *et al.* (2016) proposed that EL is highly relevant to organisational change behaviour because of its power-sharing and decision-making autonomy. A leader practicing EL supports employees and provides them with high levels of empowerment (van Knippenberg *et al.*, 2021; Zhang and Bartol, 2010), fostering WE (Albrecht and Andreetta, 2011; Bhatnagar, 2012; Jose and Mampilly, 2015). PE and WE are both influenced by EL, and some authorities have argued that EL might be the most effective way of impacting WE through PE (Chen *et al.*, 2015; Fong and Snape, 2015; Li *et al.*, 2016). Chang *et al.* (2010) found PE playing a partially mediation role in the relationship between EL and organisational commitment in Chinese hospitals.

Similarly, Castro *et al.* (2008) found that employees who experienced EL at their organisations were more committed and exhibited enhanced work attitudes through its effect on their PE. These empirical findings confirm the propositions of leader-member exchange theory (Dansereau *et al.*, 1975). An employee may experience greater psychological involvement due to receiving PE from their leaders. Most scholars described that employees with higher responsibility and autonomy tend to have higher work engagement and affective commitment (Aldabbas *et al.*, 2021; Blaique *et al.*, 2022; Haque and Islam, 2022). This leads us to two further hypotheses:

*H7. The relationship between empowerment leadership and work engagement is mediated by psychological empowerment*

*H8. The relationship between empowerment leadership and affective commitment is mediated by psychological empowerment*

## **Methodology**

### *Questionnaire development*

Six dimensions of the EL construct were adapted from Konczak *et al.* (2000): authority; accountability; self-directed decision making; information sharing; skill development; and coaching for innovative performance. Four dimensions of psychological empowerment were adapted from Spreitzer (1995): meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Each item was a seven-point scale ranging from '1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)'. Other scholars

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3 have used these constructs in their studies (Eo *et al.*, 2014; Meng *et al.*, 2016). The WE construct  
4 was adapted from Schaufeli *et al.* (2002; 2006) and contains three dimensions: vigor, dedication,  
5 and absorption, which is consistent with other studies conducted among staff nurses (Eo *et al.*,  
6 2014; Yan *et al.*, 2018). WE were measured by a six-point scale rating ranging from '0 (never) to  
7 6 (always)'. The AC construct was adapted from Nelson (2012), consisting of six items rated using  
8 a seven-point scale ranging from '1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)'.  
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### 11 *Data collection process*

12 Five hundred questionnaires were distributed to staff nurses between February and May 2018 at  
13 two-state university hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, two hundred and fifty in each hospital.  
14 After receiving ethical approval from the university hospital's authority, the managers at each  
15 hospital were requested to circulate the questionnaires to staff nurses who had worked full-time  
16 for at least one year, inviting them to participate. A convenience sampling was implemented to  
17 distribute the questionnaire to the respondents. Employing convenience sampling produced 231  
18 useable questionnaires (46.2% response rate). There were 200 females and 31 male respondents.  
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### 24 **Data analysis**

#### 25 *Common Method Variance*

26 According to Podsakoff *et al.* (2003), the common method variance has an issue in the social  
27 science study, including common rater, item characteristic, item context, and measurement  
28 context effects. Other factors are predictor and criterion variables measured at the same point  
29 in time, predictor and criterion variables measured in the exact location, predictor and criterion  
30 variables measured using the same medium. Therefore, to address these common method  
31 biases, Harman's single factor test procedure was performed by uploading all items into principal  
32 component factor analysis without a rotation (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). The results showed that  
33 all factors were extracted in one factor and explained 42% of the total variance, which established  
34 that common method variance was not an issue and, therefore, further analysis was performed.  
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#### 39 *Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)-Smart-PLS*

40 Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using the Smart-PLS 3.0 software (Ringle *et al.*, 2015) was  
41 performed for analysing the research model. The PLS-SEM approach is a commonly used method  
42 in management research (Amin *et al.*, 2021; Alotaibi *et al.*, 2020; Herjanto *et al.* 2021), providing  
43 a robust way of analysing survey data and more accurate estimation (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Following  
44 the recommendation from Hair *et al.* (2019), two analytical techniques were conducted in this  
45 study: the measurement model and the structural model (hypothesis testing).  
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#### 48 *Measurement model*

49 The measurement model indicates how each construct is measured, and the structural model  
50 describes how each construct relates to the others (Hair *et al.*, 2019). To assess the measurement  
51 model, the internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were  
52 examined. Factor loading, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance  
53 extracted (AVE) were performed. Table 1 shows the measurement results: Cronbach's alpha  
54 ranges from 0.623 to 0.963, the composite reliability (CR) ranges from 0.819 to 0.957, and the  
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average variance extracted (AVE) ranges from 0.502 to 0.93, indicating confirmation of construct validity (Hair *et al.*, 2019). In this study, two approaches were used to confirm discriminant validity: the Fornell-Larcker procedure (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) and the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) technique (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2016). Table 2 shows the results of the Fornell-Larcker calculation explaining that the square root of AVE between each pair of factors is more significant than the correlation estimated between factors, thus establishing adequate discriminant validity. The heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations explaining all values of HTM is lower than the recommended level of 0.90, thus confirming acceptable discriminant validity for all constructs.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

### *Structural model*

To test the structural model and hypothesis, Hair *et al.* (2019) suggested reporting path coefficient ( $\beta$ ), coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), and effect size ( $f^2$ ). A bootstrapping technique is applied with a re-sampling of 5,000, and path estimates and t-statistics are calculated to examine the hypothesized relationships. Table 3 and Figure 1 show the structural model analysis. The result shows that the EL has a significant relationship with PE and AC ( $\beta = 0.717$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ;  $\beta = 0.238$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), and EL has no significant relationship with WE ( $\beta = 0.058$ ,  $p = 0.387$ ). Thus, H1 and H2 are supported, and H3 is not supported. Meanwhile, PE has a significant relationship with EC and WE ( $\beta = 0.293$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ;  $\beta = 0.158$ ,  $p = 0.017$ ), thus H4 and H5 are supported. AC has a significant relationship with WE ( $\beta = 0.690$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), thus H6 is supported. In addition to mediation analysis, the results show that PE plays a significant role as a mediating variable in the relationships between EL and AC and WE ( $\beta = 0.210$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ;  $\beta = 0.113$ ,  $p = 0.023$ ), thus H7 and H8 are supported.

The corrected  $R$ -squared values reported in Figure 1 demonstrate the predictor variable's explanatory power ( $s$ ) on the respective constructs. PE explains 51.5 per cent of EL ( $R^2 = 0.515$ ), affective commitment explains 24 per cent of EL ( $R^2 = 0.243$ ), and work engagement explains 56 per cent of EL ( $R^2 = 0.556$ ). The effect size ( $f^2$ ) value shows that EL has a medium effect on PE (1.060) and a small effect on AC (0.036) and WE (0.004). PE has a small effect on AC (0.055) and WE (0.026), and AC has a large effect on WE (0.813). In addition, to test mediating effects, the bootstrapping procedure was employed to calculate the mediation of PE on the relationships between EL and EC and WE. Table 4 shows that PE plays a significant role as a mediating variable in the relationships between EL and AC and WE ( $\beta = 0.210$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ;  $\beta = 0.113$ ,  $p = 0.023$ ), thus H7 and H8 are supported.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

## Discussion

This study aims to investigate the effect of EL and PE in enhancing AC and WE. More specifically, the role of PE as a mediating variable in the relationship between EL and AC and WE in the context of Saudi Arabia. The results show that EL has an impact on both PE and AC. This study adds an important distinction to understand the role of EL on PE and AC. It described that leaders of nurses with authentic leadership views would play an essential role in developing a better atmosphere and creating employees feeling personally important, fit to their work, and committed. The findings of this study are consistent with other studies (Albrecht and Andretta, 2011; Jose and Mampilly, 2015). Most scholars have suggested that empowered employees will do their job more competently and with greater self-determination (García-Juan *et al.*, 2019; Shapira-Lishchinsky and Benoliel, 2019). For example, Singh and Singh (2019) found that where employees perceive being relatively empowered, this will significantly increase employee motivation and propensity to stay productive, thereby improving organisational outcomes.

This study also finds that EL does not have a significant relationship with WE. However, the results of mediating analysis indicate that PE acts as an essential mediator in this relationship. This finding is consistent with Aryee and Chen (2006). It suggests that a high-quality LMX relationship boosts employees' intrinsic motivation or sense of control in the workplace, resulting in improved work outcomes (i.e. work engagement). In the LMX process, psychological empowerment plays a critical role. The experience of both leaders and members is influenced by the quality of their exchanges based on interpersonal trust, which affects their role performance (Kang and Stewart, 2007). This study finds that PE plays a mediating role in enhancing AC. The interpersonal relationships of LMX are built on cooperation, information sharing, and emotional support between leaders and members (Kang and Stewart, 2007). Nurses with these relational obligation behaviours exhibit enhanced empowerment and more dedication to their workplace (Kang and Stewart, 2007).

### *Theoretical implications*

Several theoretical implications can be derived from the findings. Trust and empowerment (as a motivating factor) have emerged as critical components of LMX relationships. The results of this study bolster Kang and Stewart's (2007) arguments that the LMX relationship is a process of enhancing trust and empowerment. The study's results provide a complete understanding of how EL and PE significantly improve nurses' AC and WE. The findings suggest that hospital management, especially nurse managers, should empower their nurses by providing them with more authority and accountability while also coaching them to perform tasks independently. Second, the results demonstrate the importance of PE in enhancing nurses' AC and WE, showing that a good relationship between nurses and managers will increase AC and improve work performance. Third, the mediating role of PE is analyzed between EL and AC and WE, indicating that PE is a relevant construct to explain how EL correlates with AC and WE for nurses working in the hospital in Saudi Arabia. Fourthly, contrary to previous research, we found an insignificant relationship between EL and WE, likely resulting from the unique context as explained in the discussion. This finding shows that seemingly straightforward relationships do not hold in non-Western contexts. It contributes to further understanding the role of leader-member exchange (Dansereau *et al.*, 1975) in a non-Western context. Lastly, this study contributes to the literature

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3 by providing a comprehensive EL and PE practices model in increasing AC and improving nurses'  
4 WE.  
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### 6 7 *Managerial implications*

8 Nursing is a critical function in hospitals because nurses are frontline workers and are responsible  
9 for providing direct patient care. Therefore, nurses are not only expected to be committed to  
10 their work. They are required to be committed to delivering high-quality care to patients. The  
11 findings suggest that nursing and hospital managers could empower their nurses, leading to  
12 improved work performance. More importantly, the results demonstrate the determining role of  
13 nurse managers' commitment and their support for EL in hospitals' success in achieving  
14 organisational performance. The results suggest that when nurses perceive EL from which they  
15 experience valued work, they feel more committed, and experience increased WE. So, healthcare  
16 organisations can benefit from practicing EL as these motivational states have been found to  
17 positively affect several organisational outcomes, such as reduced turnover intention  
18 (Aboshaiqah *et al.*, 2016). Also, Faulkner and Laschinger (2008) found that staff nurses who have  
19 more access to empowering structures are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards their  
20 work, creating healthy work motivation to achieve better performance (Zhang *et al.*, 2018). In  
21 this respect, nursing and hospital management should support nurses by providing them  
22 legitimate power, transparency, and practicing high ethical standards to improve nurses' AC and  
23 improve their WE. Leaders willing to share their passion, knowledge, and skills with nurses will  
24 develop a harmonious relationship and increase their satisfaction and hospital performance.  
25 Building a healthy work environment is essential to reduce nurse turnover intention in an acute  
26 shortage of nursing staff. Hospitals need to develop strategies to increase nurse retention and  
27 improve the quality of care through upgrading nurses' skills and building good relationships  
28 within nurse teams.  
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### 35 **Limitations and future research directions**

36 The first limitation is that our research did not attempt to explore the depth of actual  
37 empowerment practiced by the hospital, as opposed to perceptions of rhetorical empowerment  
38 perceived by nurses, resulting from the challenging organisational context (Biron and Bamberger  
39 2011). Further work could explore the concordance between actual empowerment and  
40 perceptions by investigating hospitals with different degrees of (actual) empowerment  
41 performing a multi-level investigation (Holtom *et al.*, 2008).  
42

43 This research has focused on EL as an abstraction, and inevitably the effects of EL on-  
44 employee outcomes are embedded in more complex pathways involved in high performance and  
45 high involvement work (Cafferkey *et al.*, 2020; Boxall *et al.*, 2019), where other mediation effects  
46 such as human capital (Raineri, 2017), skill utilization (Boxall *et al.*, 2015), and forms of work  
47 organisation (Boxall and Winterton, 2018) are also significant. This study can be seen as an  
48 attempt to identify the extent to which EL increases WE through the pathways of PE and AC.  
49 Future research could usefully consider other employee outcomes, such as work stress, burnout,  
50 and actual turnover.  
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52 Another obvious limitation is that the study was conducted at two-state university  
53 hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. There are some limits to the extent that the findings can be  
54 generalized beyond that context. The number of hospitals should be involved in future research.  
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Leadership theory shows that leadership practises needing to be considered in context. There are potential differences between Western and non-Western countries (Chang *et al.*, 2010), on which we addressed the insignificant relationship found between EL and WE. Expanding the research to cover other geographical areas and increasing the sample size to include the perceptions of leaders and managers would allow for a better understanding of the role of EL, PE, AC, and WE. A comparative study could clarify how and perhaps why different institutional and cultural settings influence the relationships demonstrated in this paper.

### Disclosure statement

The authors reported no potential conflict of interest.

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