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## Article

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# **Empowering Leadership Navigating the Employee's Entrepreneurial Orientation Through Work Uncertainty: Evidence from Tourism and Hospitality Industry**

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## **Abstract**

This research investigates the impacts of empowering leadership (EL) on work uncertainty (WU) and employee's entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and its dimensions (risk-taking, pro-activeness, and innovativeness). Furthermore, this study also exploring the intervening role of work uncertainty in the connection between empowering leadership and entrepreneurial orientation and its dimension. The data (n=271) were gathered from individuals employing in hospitality and tourism industry of Pakistan by utilizing a time-lag research approach. Using AMOS software for data analysis, findings suggested that empowering leadership is meaningfully related with work uncertainty and individual's entrepreneurial orientation. Similarly, work uncertainty mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and entrepreneurial orientation and its dimensions. This study suggests that empowering leadership can be an effective tool for encouraging employee's entrepreneurial orientation. Therefore, managers and leaders of hospitality and tourism sector, who aim to achieve employee's entrepreneurial orientation need to induce empowering leadership in their organization. The article bridges the gap relating to factors

and antecedents that impact individual's entrepreneurial orientation in a time lag research design. This research is one of the pioneer studies which examining, how empowered leadership affects entrepreneurial orientation, with employing work uncertainty as a mediating role. The practitioners of tourism and hospitality industry such as investors, managers, employees and other stakeholders, will find this study quite useful as well.

**Keywords:** Empowering leadership, work uncertainty, entrepreneurial orientation, self-determination theory, tourism and hospitality industry.

### **1. Introduction**

The tourism and hospitality industry significantly contribute to the economy of developing countries like Pakistan by creating jobs, generating foreign exchange, and earning money for the government through tax collection (Kyei-Frimpong et al., 2024). However, this industry has been totally disregarded because of the state of law and order, terrorism, and the dearth of government-provided infrastructure (Kyei-Frimpong et al., 2024). According to recent research, the tourism and hospitality sectors are linked to a number employment issues, including job uncertainty, little opportunity for personal development, and reliance on seasonal demand. Therefore, this sectors need to encourage a higher level of dedication among their employees in every area of competence if they want to boost performance and nurture entrepreneurial orientation (EO) in the workforce through the effective leadership (Kyei-Frimpong et al., 2024).

Employee efficiency and productiveness are essential for organizational functioning, growth and development. Especially, in the case of tourism and hospitality industry, the efficiency of the individual employees is an essential element for superior services since the customers' feelings and expectations related to service quality is influenced by the communication and interactions of the employees with the customers (Nunkoo et al., 2020). Zhang and Bartol (2010) argued that it had been observed that employees could not achieve their optimal level without complete autonomy and control over their work. Excessive observance of rules and regulations adversely influences their performance (Kark et al., 2018). The period of the conventional organizational hierarchical model, controlling and directing employees, has departed and now, it is the era to authorize, empower, and enable them (Jung et al., 2020; Riaz et al., 2021). Empowered and authorized employees can achieve higher performance as they observe the perception of control of resources to perform their jobs (Al-Omari et al., 2020; Riaz et al., 2020). In this perspective, EL might arise as a vital tool that can actively improve the level of employees' empowerment in the firm and thus inducing entrepreneurial orientation (EO) in the employees.

The leadership and management literature have repeatedly emphasized on the leader's crucial influence on individual empowerment (Yadav et al., 2023). Empowering leaders encourage individuals to abandon passive mindsets, increase their self-responsibility and risk taking and make them responsible for their performance (Jada et al., 2019). Particularly, empowering leadership (EL) refers to a collection of behaviors exhibited by a

leader who provides autonomy, assigns more responsibilities, and shares the power with their subordinates by providing autonomy from bureaucratic constraints, articulating confidence in high performance, encouraging participation in decision making, and improving meaningfulness of the work (Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

Entrepreneurship is a key factor in achieving socio-economic development and play a crucial role in economic growth (Covin et al., 2020). Entrepreneurship helps in job creation, competitiveness and enhances productivity which stimulates organizations to operate effectively and efficiently (Wales et al., 2020), resulting in wealth generation and reduced unemployment (Hizarci et al., 2023). Hence, Entrepreneurial Orientation has acquired substantial significance (Ferreira et al., 2019). Moreover, there is ample empirical evidence and consensus that implementing EO leads to improved organizational performance, economic outcomes, and success rates (Ferreira et al., 2019). Multiple studies have demonstrated that businesses that employ a robust entrepreneurial orientation outperform enterprises that fail to adopt an EO (Kreiser et al., 2020; Wales et al., 2020)

Entrepreneurial orientation is one of the critical variables of examination that need to be investigated at the employee level in the field of entrepreneurial research (Wales et al., 2020; Hizarci et al., 2023). Research determinants advised that entrepreneurial orientation undergo a vigorous research concept and necessitates researchers' ongoing attention and vigorous involvement (Alalawi, 2020). EO has already been observed at the firm or business unit level (e.g., Kreiser et al., 2020; Wales et al., 2020). Yet, little empirical research has been conducted on entrepreneurial orientation at the employee level (Rigtering et al., 2019; Shahid et al., 2022). Moreover, despite several calls for a deeper understanding of how individuals can contribute to the entrepreneurial spirit of an organization (Wales, 2020; Clark et al., 2023). Consequently, it is essential to analyze entrepreneurial orientation at the employee level (Covin et al., 2020). Employees' entrepreneurial orientation characterize as an individual's propensity for pro-activeness, innovativeness, and risk-taking (Covin et al., 2020). This concept emphasizes that entrepreneurial employees are more motivated to be proactive, take risks, and be innovative in their behaviors (Lee & Peterson, 2000). Therefore, entrepreneurial individuals are more enthusiastic to take risks, more proactive in realizing and utilizing available possibilities, and more likely to engage in innovation. Furthermore, researchers have also emphasized on investigating the antecedent's side of the employees' entrepreneurial orientation (Bernoster et al., 2020).

Multiple scholars have conducted investigations and proposed that the hospitality and tourist industry is regarded as a crucial element in the economic development of various countries (Mzembe et al., 2019 Usman et al., 2023). The Pakistani hospitality and tourism industry's economic impact remains relatively small in comparison to that of other industrialized and developing nations. Pakistan possesses significant tourism potential and provides an extensive infrastructural network for international tourists, including the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and a comprehensive system of motorways

(Nazneenet al., 2019). In addition, Pakistan's tourism revenue is comparatively smaller than that of other South Asian countries (Khan et al., 2020). However, there are few exceptions where capital investments in the tourism sector are higher. This is a significant opportunity for the hotel and tourism industry to optimize and elevate their performance in order to bolster the economic growth of the nation. Economic growth and development are crucial for promoting expansion, improving company performance, increasing productivity, and reducing unemployment and internalization (Insan et al., 2021; Subhan et al., 2013). The hospitality and tourist industries constantly face significant strain as a result of fierce rivalry both domestically and internationally. The hospitality and tourism business must implement and enforce reforms, such as adopting entrepreneurial and effective leadership, to maintain productivity and compete on a global scale (Afsar et al., 2017). According to Afsar et al. (2017), effective leadership is crucial for organizations to maintain growth and profitability, as well as to inspire individuals to embrace new challenges and achieve exceptional business outcomes. Prior research has also emphasized the relationship between leadership and entrepreneurial orientation in developed economies, with less investigations undertaken in developing economies. This research suggested a mediating role of work uncertainty (WU) between empowering leadership and EO and its dimensions in Pakistani setting.

In multiple ways, our study adds to the existing body of knowledge. First, this research contributes to the entrepreneurial orientation literature by examining entrepreneurial orientation at the employee level. Previously, only a few researches have looked into entrepreneurial orientation among employees (Santos et al., 2020; Shahid et al., 2022). Secondly, this is one of the pioneer studies that investigates the crucial relationship between EL and entrepreneurial orientation via work uncertainty. Third, there is a recent call for researchers to investigate the antecedent of entrepreneurial orientation (Bernoster et al., 2020). Thus this study is proposing and empirically investigating the empowering leadership as a significant antecedent of employee's entrepreneurial orientation. Lastly, this study will also add to the present literature on the Pakistani hospitality and tourism industry, which is a neglected and under-researched field. The current study analyses the links between empowering leadership, work uncertainty, and entrepreneurial orientation among Pakistani hospitality and tourism personnel.

The tourism and hospitality industry in Pakistan faces unique challenges, such as political instability, security concerns, economic fluctuations, and infrastructural deficiencies. These factors create a high level of work uncertainty, making it crucial to explore how leadership can navigate this uncertainty to enhance employee performance. The pertinence of the problem to contextual performance in the Pakistani hospitality and tourism industry lies in the interplay between cultural differences, leadership styles, employee entrepreneurial orientation, and the unique challenges of the industry. Empowering leadership can significantly enhance employees' ability to perform contextually by fostering a proactive, innovative, and resilient workforce capable of navigating the uncertainties inherent in this sector. The study's focus on this dynamic offers valuable

insights into improving organizational performance and employee satisfaction in a critical industry for Pakistan's economy.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development**

The study utilizes the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2002) to propose that empowered leadership positively influences employees' inclination towards innovativeness, pro-activeness, and risk-taking, referred to as the employee's EO (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). In this reference, empowering leadership (EL) (involves delegating authority and power to people, so enhancing their autonomy and accountability (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014). An empowered leader influences their followers in such a way that made them autonomous individuals, who can initiate tasks by their own-selves, take responsibilities, and coordinate activities in order to achieve organizational goals in desired manners (Zhang et al., 2010). The main focus of this motivating procedure to enhance the follower's confidence and self-assurance by promoting participative decision-making (Jung et al., 2020; Riaz et al., 2021). Although there is a sufficient amount of evidence available in literature that supports the significant impact of empowering leadership on employees (Riaz et al., 2021; Kwan et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2023), but the various aspects of empowering leadership and entrepreneurial orientation has not yet been investigated. Remarkably, there has been a lack of research conducted to investigate the influence of empowered leadership on entrepreneurial attitude in business organizational contexts. While there is limited scholarly research on the impact of transformational leadership, a widely recognized leadership style, on individuals' entrepreneurial orientation and its dimensions, Oncer (2013) has examined the dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation, including innovativeness, proactive behavior, and risk-taking behavior among employees. In contrast, Dapper (2019) emphasizes the use of intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, customized consideration, and inspirational motivation, as described by Bass (1985), to foster entrepreneurial orientation among employees.

On the other hand, entrepreneurial orientation (EO) refers to the strategy-creating procedures which facilitate an entrepreneur establish a solid basis for entrepreneurial decisions and actions (Benevolo et al., 2021; Pérez & Guevara, 2023). Entrepreneurial orientation also includes the principles, preferences, management-related values, results, and behaviors exhibited by the organization's highest-level leaders (Covin et al., 2020). EO dimensions are conceptually associated with a company's proactivity and willingness to innovate, its capacity to adapt to expected modifications, and its risk-taking behavior (Kreiser et al., 2020). Innovativeness is the disposition to abandon the status quo by promoting new ideas and creative thinking. Proactivity refers to an organization's capacity to predict and capitalize on new business possibilities, usually gaining an edge over rivals. Finally, risk-taking can be described as a company's willingness to invest significant money in projects with high failure costs and unknown results.

In the continuing the above argument, the underpinning theory SDT, theorizes that humans retain three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2002). The urge for autonomy pertains to individuals' desire for self-governance and independence in their actions and decisions concerning their own conduct. The demand for competence pertains to the desire to proficiently do tasks and gain acknowledgement from others. The concept of relatedness pertains to the inherent need to establish connections and gain acknowledgement from others (Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to Deci and Ryan (2002), individuals experience a stronger sense of entrepreneurial orientation when their wishes are met to a larger extent. We argue that when leaders empower their people, it promotes the satisfaction of their autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs. As a result, this enhances employees' sense of entrepreneurial orientation by reducing job uncertainty. Satisfaction of these need encourage the innovativeness, pro-activeness and risk-taking behavior of employees. The core idea behind the self-determination theory is that people have an inherent drive to grow and develop to their full potential (Ryan, et al., 2021). According to (Haggard and Hamilton, 2020), the self-determination theory states that employees' actions are impacted by personal factors. As further discussed in the theory that the important mechanism for comprehending the development of intrinsic drive shed light on the relevance of the interaction between people and their social environments (Ryan, et al., 2021). In a supportive environment, people are encouraged to pursue their goals and objectives in a way that takes into account their unique organization-specific inclinations as well as their associated developmental requirements. On the other hand, various degrees of self-alienation may manifest in behavior in response to negative environmental conditions (DeRobertis & Bland, 2020).

According to the self-determination theory proposed by Deci and Ryan (2002), sentiments of autonomy and competence play a vital role in intrinsic motivation. Empowering leadership entails inspiring and equipping individuals to assume responsibility and supervise their own tasks, leading to heightened autonomy for staff members. By empowering leaders, faith in their colleagues' capacities is demonstrated (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014; Cheong et al., 2016), leading to an enhancement in employees' attitudes regarding their own competence. According to Kim et al. (2018), empowering leadership has a clear positive impact on employees' intrinsic motivation and resources. Based on self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2017), people that are under empowering leadership will be intrinsically motivated and have a strong belief in their own capabilities to autonomously exhibit innovation, proactivity, and willingness to take risks. The current investigation rested on the self-determination theory of workplace motivation. It seeks to clarify how empowering leadership relates to entrepreneurial orientation of the employees through the work uncertainty. Employees are gradually expected to engage in entrepreneurial orientation in the current work environment, characterized by instability, insecurity, complexity, and vagueness. Entrepreneurial orientation is employees' involvement in proactive, innovative, and risk-taking behavior (Covin et al., 2020).

According to the SDT theory, autonomy, competence, and relatedness enhance employees' confidence levels. Therefore, the motivation of autonomy, competence, and relatedness provided by the empowering leader will lessen work uncertainty by enhancing task control and encouraging the entrepreneurial orientation of employees.

- *H1: EL is positively connected with the employee's entrepreneurial orientation.*
- *H2a: EL is positively connected with innovativeness.*
- *H2b: EL is positively connected with pro-activeness.*
- *H2c: EL is positively connected with risk-taking.*

Work uncertainty (WU) can be defined as the absence of predictability in the activities and responsibilities of a job (Wall et al., 2002). The presence of uncertainty as a specific risky factor is mostly linked to interim employment, unemployment, or a combination of both (Bilal et al., 2021). The current work environment is undergoing significant fluctuations, which intensify the amount of uncertainty in the workplace. The presence of job ambiguity has a detrimental impact on the firm's employees and can lead to a decline in overall work performance (Wall et al., 2002). The ability of any business to survive in an unstable environment depends on its leadership's entrepreneurial spirit, skills, and talent (Lombardi et al., 2021). Scholars have studied the abilities and characteristics of empowering leaders for many years (Cheong et al., 2016; Kim & Beehr, 2023). Empowering leaders need the necessary knowledge and experience (Kim & Beehr, 2023), particularly creativity (Chow, 2017; Zhang & Bartol, 2010), opportunity orientation (Cheong et al., 2019), and interpersonal skills (Kwan et al., 2022), as these qualities may help them articulate the expected future picture and inspire employees to follow their view.

- *H3: EL is negatively related to the work uncertainty.*

SDT is helpful in comprehending individual thriving by decreasing work uncertainty (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2002). The individuals have profound emotional needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Therefore, workplaces that satisfy these needs promote job engagement, innovation, self-initiative behavior, and psychological well-being by lowering work uncertainty (Bilal et al., 2021; Kamel & Abou Hashish, 2015). Leading the entrepreneurial process inside an organization is a crucial duty of industry executives. To do this, a leader must create an environment that will encourage all employees to contribute through creating and applying fresh ideas, resulting in creative practices (Bilal et al., 2021). In addition, empowering leadership fosters employees' adventurous behavior and lessens job uncertainty by fostering a supportive environment (as an outcome of providing employees autonomy, competence, and relatedness).

The "absence of predictability in work activities and expectations" is one way to describe work uncertainty (Wall et al., 2002, p. 151). Uncertainty is a risk factor primarily linked to unemployment, temporary employment, or a combination of both (Ferrie et al., 1998). According to Armenakis and Bedeian (1999), the workplace is experiencing fast change,



consequently raising uncertainty. The employees are negatively impacted by this employment insecurity, which might lead to a general decline in work execution (Ferrie et al., 1998). Despite all theoretical and empirical support, no studies have looked at the role of work uncertainty (WU) in mediating the connection between EL and entrepreneurial orientation and its dimension. The present study intended to address this lacuna in the body of knowledge.

At the organizational level, it is imperative for business leaders to assume responsibility for cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset. A leader should create a favorable environment where all employees can generate and utilize innovative ideas, thereby promoting creative and proactive behaviors (Bilal et al., 2021). Empowering leadership is the act of a leader giving power to their team members by including them in decision-making, giving them control over resources, and assigning them more responsibility. This method motivates team members to surpass expectations and accomplish objectives in a manner that is both efficient and impactful. Additionally, it aids in diminishing ambiguity in work.

Despite the presence of theoretical and empirical data, there is currently no empirical research that explores the function of WU in the relationship between empowering leadership and entrepreneurial orientation, including its various dimensions. The current study aims to fill this existing vacuum in the literature. The empowering leader promotes autonomy and a sense of connection among team members, reducing work uncertainty by increasing task control and competence. Consequently, this fosters the entrepreneurial orientation of employees, which includes innovativeness, pro-activeness, and risk-taking behavior. Based on the information provided, we can infer that:

- *H4: Work uncertainty mediates the connection of EL with the employee's entrepreneurial orientation.*
- *H5a: Work uncertainty mediates the connection of EL with innovativeness.*
- *H5b: Work uncertainty mediates the connection of EL with pro-activeness.*
- *H5c: Work uncertainty mediates the connection of EL with risk-taking.*

Considering the above literature and arguments, following is the research framework of the study:

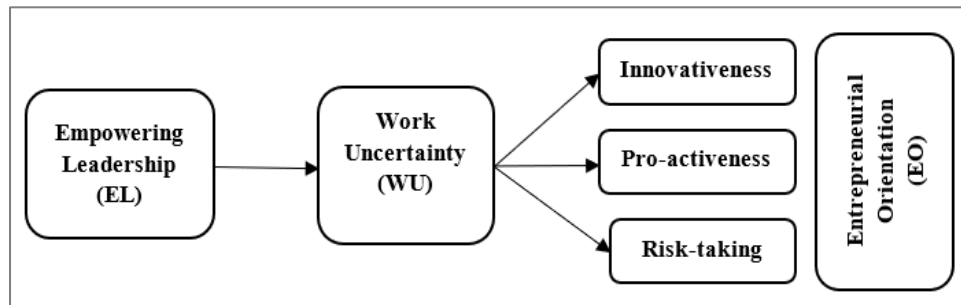


Figure 1. Research Framework

### 3. Methodology

The hospitality industry has been observed as a potential benefactor in the economic growth of any country (Mzembe et al., 2019; Lombardi et al., 2021). However, the Pakistani tourism and hospitality sector has high competition due to many foreign, cooperative, private, and public hospitality resorts. Hospitality-related business organizations can attain a competitive advantage and optimal performance over other hotels only by customer satisfaction and superior service performance. Since customers interact with frontline employees and get services from them, their satisfaction is mainly contingent on the services of these employees. Hence, it is essential for the hotel that every individual must perform at their best. Nevertheless, it can be achieved only through the support of leaders, who provide them autonomy, sovereignty, independence, and control over the resources to perform their job (Ahearne et al., 2005).

Only full-time employees of Pakistani tourism and hospitality businesses were involved in the study to gather data. The reason to include this sector only because very few studies has been conducted tourism and hospitality industry of Pakistan. In addition to this, job uncertainty and entrepreneurial orientation is very obvious in this industry. A time lag study approach was used to get information from tourism and hospitality related organization employees. Data were gathered on two separate stages three weeks apart. The goal of the time lag study approach was to lessen the impacts of common method bias. Podsakoff et al. (2012) recommended the separate measurements of independent and dependent variables. They further suggested that independent and dependent variables be computed individually, with a reasonable gap, reducing the impact of common method bias.

Three-week assessment interval was also performed in earlier research investigations by the researchers (e.g. Chaudhry et al., 2021; Shahid et al., 2022). The respondents input on the research constructs was gathered in two times: in the first time, the predictor variable (empowering leadership) and intervening variable (work uncertainty) data were collected, and the criterion variable (entrepreneurial orientation) and intervening variable (work uncertainty) data were collected in the second time.

A survey questionnaire was distributed to 450 individual employees of various Pakistani tourism and hospitality organizations. A total of 24 tourism and hospitality business related organizations were included in this study. On a 5-point Likert scale, employees rated their leaders' empowering behaviors, as well as their level of entrepreneurial orientation and perception of work uncertainty. In the first phase (time 1), just 382 out of 450 respondents filled out the questionnaire, including EL and work uncertainty related questions. After three weeks, in the second phase (time 2), 307 (68%) employees filled out the survey questionnaires related to entrepreneurial orientation and work uncertainty. From the response collected, 36 respondents' data were removed, including low-effort respondents (those who completed the questionnaire in less than half the time), missing data

questionnaires, and incomplete survey forms from Times 1 and 2. Finally, 271 responses were considered for data analysis purposes. Out of 271, 65.5% of the respondents were men, and 34.5 % were women. Further, 68% of employees were under 35 years old whereas 9.5% of employees were over 45 years old. Only 11.6% of individuals had a high school diploma, compared to 40.3% of individuals with an associate degree, 29.6% with a bachelor's, and 18.5% with a master's or higher degree. Employees at their present organizations have an average tenure of 4.52 years.

The time-one survey questionnaire consisted of empowering leadership and work uncertainty, whereas entrepreneurial orientation and work uncertainty related questionnaires were presented in the time-two survey questionnaire. The mediator work uncertainty questionnaire was included in both surveys. The researchers averaged the work uncertainty questionnaire results from both surveys ( $T1\frac{1}{2} + T2\frac{1}{2}$ ). Conceptually, the mediator has affected the temporality of the independent and outcome variables, suggesting that the data collection process be divided into three stages. Independent and dependent variable data should be measured separately, mediator data should be measured between these two, and there should be an appropriate time gap between each survey. The data collection in each phase is typically related to sample attrition, but we used two measurements three weeks apart to evade attrition. Mediator data were collected at both time points and took the average of both ( $T1\frac{1}{2} + T2\frac{1}{2}$ ) as the same was employed in previous studies (Shahid et al., 2022).

### *3.1 Measures*

#### *3.1.1 Empowering Leadership (Predictor Variable)*

Ahearne et al. (2005) 12-item scale was applied to assess the level of empowerment that leaders impart to their subordinates. A sample item is "My manager assists me in comprehending how my ambitions and goals link to those of the organization."

#### *Entrepreneurial orientation (criterion variable)*

Entrepreneurial orientation was measured by a scale developed by Covin et al. (2020). The scale contained nine items to measure employees' perceptions of entrepreneurial orientation. The EO scale consists of three dimensions, i.e., innovativeness (sample item; "I have relatively few issues with change and renewal"), proactiveness (sample item; "I am always seeking for new methods to better my job performance"), and risk-taking (sample item; "I appreciate innovative plans and ideas, even if I believe they will fail in practice"). Each dimension consists of three items. Many studies used the scale to assess employee's EO (Covin et al., 2020; Shahid et al., 2022).

#### *3.1.2 Work Uncertainty (Intervening Variable)*

The Leach et al. (2013) measurement scale was applied to assess the employee perception of work uncertainty. The scale consists of nine items. The scale was used in previous studies also (Bilal et al., 2021). Sample items include "Does the equipment you use work reliably?"

### 3.1.3 Control Variables

Demographic variables such as age, gender, experience, and education were investigated as control variables. The finding was statistically significant with or without the control variable. Moreover, Williams et al. (2009) proposed that findings might be presented without mentioning control factors; nonetheless, we shall discuss the findings using control variables.

### 3.1.4 Common Method Bias

Since self-reported scores were used in this study, common method bias (CMB) may be an issue. To reduce the chances of CMB, we ensured the participant's anonymity and confidentiality (Chang et al., 2010), encouraging them to be honest when rating the survey. In addition, according to Podsakoff et al. (2003) recommendation, the survey questionnaires were kept simple regarding understanding the employees. Finally, according to Podsakoff et al. (2003) recommendations, Harman's single factor test was carried out to validate the CMB. The outcome demonstrated that the one-factor model is inadequate. The one factor model described 42.36 percent of the variance, indicating that CMV was unlikely to threaten the present study.

## **4. Data Analysis**

### *4.1 Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)*

The exploratory factor analysis was conducted via Varimax rotation and Principal Component Analysis. As shown in table 1, the findings of the EFA revealed three factors derived from the 30 items, with factor loads ranging from 0.74 to 0.86. The factor analysis reveals that three variables account for 67.71% of the explained variance. The calculated Cronbach's alpha values for the three factors ranged from .94 (EO and WU) to .95 (EL). All of these values exceeded the threshold of .77 (Gordon & Narayanan, 1984), indicating a high level of consistency.

**Table 2: Exploratory Factor Analysis**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Item Loading</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
EL	EL1	.81	.61	.94	.95
	EL2	.75			
	EL3	.75			
	EL4	.78			
	EL5	.79			
	EL6	.75			
	EL7	.79			
	EL8	.80			
	EL9	.77			
	EL10	.79			
	EL11	.74			
	EL12	.77			
WU	WU1	.75	.62	.94	.94
	WU2	.76			
	WU3	.75			
	WU4	.78			
	WU5	.80			
	WU6	.79			
	WU7	.78			
	WU8	.86			
	WU9	.82			
EO	EO1	.80	.60	.93	.94
	EO2	.77			
	EO3	.78			
	EO4	.79			
	EO5	.79			
	EO6	.78			
	EO7	.75			
	EO8	.75			
	EO9	.76			

#### 4.2 Fit Indices

AMOS 22 was utilized for employing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the constructs' validity. We relied on many indices to assess measurement model fit (Tomarken & Waller, 2005). When the  $\chi^2/df$  ratio is less than 3.00; RMSEA and RMR are less than .05; GFI, TLI, and CFI are greater than 0.90, an acceptable model fit can be inferred. However, when the RMR and RMSEA values are between .05 and .08, the model suggests a reasonable fit, and a marginal fit when the values range from 0.08 to 0.10 (Browne & Cudeck, 1992). For the proposed measurement model,  $\chi^2 = 578.35$ ,  $df = 402$ , RMR = .05, RMSEA = .04, GFI = .90, TLI = .97, and CFI = .97, as demonstrated in Table 2 and figure 2, indicate that the 3-factor measurement model is an acceptable fit. The statistical analysis reveals significant factor loadings ( $p = 0.01$ ). We performed several alternative models to determine discriminant validity. The results of a single-factor measurement model indicate that the data are inadequately matched,  $\chi^2 = 3021.58$ ,  $df = 405$ , RMR = .25, RMSEA = .16, GFI = .35, TLI = .55, and CFI = .58. The findings revealed that the three-factor measurement model outperformed the two-factor and single-factor models.

**Table 2: Comparison of Alternative Models**

Measurement Model	$\chi^2$	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	RMSEA	RMR	TLI	GFI	CFI
1. 3-factor model	578.35	402	-	.04	.05	.97	.90	.97
2. 2-factor model	1770.35	404	1192.00**	.11	.20	.77	.51	.78
3. 2-factor model	1962.95	404	1384.60**	.12	.20	.73	.49	.75
4. 2-factor model	1774.31	404	1195.96**	.11	.21	.76	.52	.78
5. 1-factor model	3021.58	405	2443.23**	.16	.25	.55	.35	.58

Notes:  $n = 271$ . Model 2 EO and WU were combined, model 3 EL and WU were combined, model 4 EO and EL were combined. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

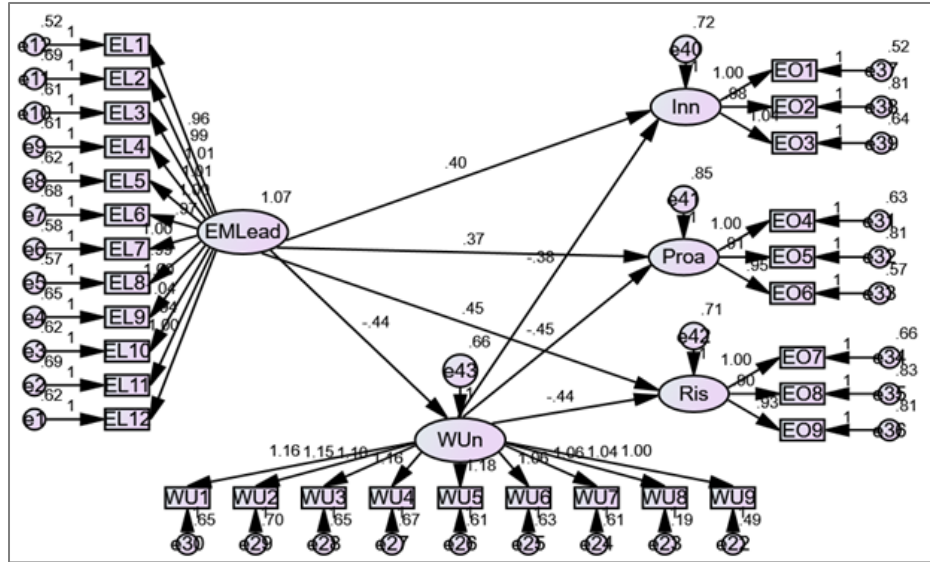


Figure 2: 3-Factor Measurement Model

SPSS 22, a statistical software package, was applied to perform data analysis. The descriptive statistics of the study variables were defined using the mean and standard deviation. A correlation analysis was also conducted to evaluate the association between the study variables. Furthermore, discriminant validity of the study variables is presented in table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics, Correlation, and Discriminant Validity

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender	.62	.49							
2. Age	2.16	.92	.03						
3. Edu	2.43	.62	-.10	.07					
4. Exp	1.74	.68	.03	.64**	-.01				
5. EL	2.63	1.05	.04	.07	-.08	.08	(.78)		
6. EO	3.34	1.13	.09	-.03	.03	-.03	.49**	(.77)	
7. WU	3.37	1.06	-.02	.01	.11	-.05	-.47**	-.48**	(.79)

Note. n=271; Edu = education; Exp = experience; EL empowering leadership; WU = work uncertainty; EO = entrepreneurial orientation; \*p <.05, \*\*p <.01; discriminant validity of the study variables is demonstrated in parentheses.

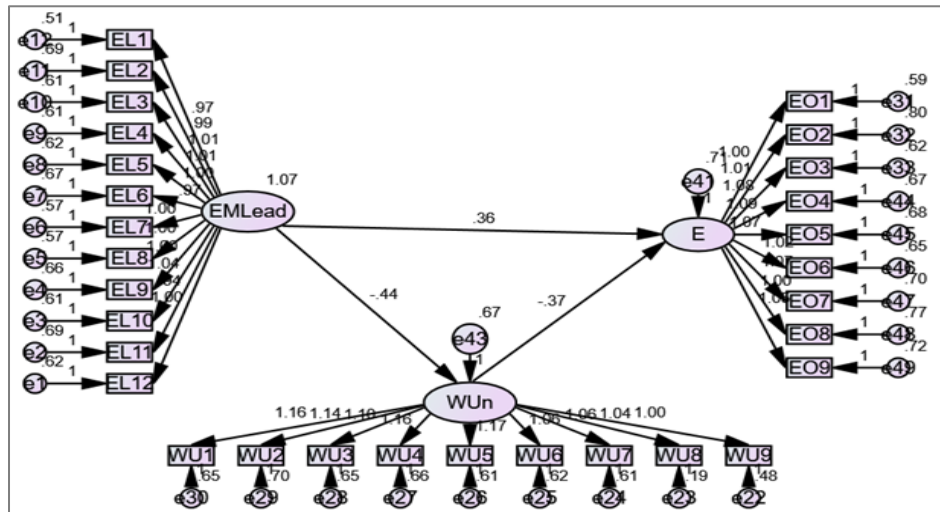
4.3 Regression Results

AMOS was applied to examine the direct connection between EL and work uncertainty, entrepreneurial orientation, and its dimensions.

**Table 4: Regression Results**

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Path	Path coefficient	SE	C.R.	p-Value
H1	EL -> EO	0.36	0.062	5.38	.000
H2a	EL -> Inno	0.40	0.078	5.54	.000
H2b	EL -> ProA	0.37	0.083	4.85	.000
H2c	EL -> RT	0.45	0.082	5.93	.000
H3	EL -> WU	-0.44	0.064	-7.53	.000

As seen in Figure 2 and 3 the findings demonstrate that the connections between EL, EO, innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking, and WU were significant ( $\beta = .36$ ,  $SE = .062$ ;  $\beta = .40$ ,  $SE = .078$ ;  $\beta = .37$ ,  $SE = .083$ ;  $\beta = .45$ ,  $SE = .082$ ;  $\beta = -.44$ ,  $SE = .064$  respectively), H1, H2a, H2b, H2c, and H3 hypotheses are supported presented in table 4.



**Figure 3: Structural Model**



#### 4.4 Mediation and Bootstrapping

In addition, bootstrapping investigations were performed utilizing Hayes and Scharkow's (2013) PROCESS macro to conduct more rigorous mediation analyses, as proposed in Hypotheses 4 and 5a, 5b, and 5c. Table 5 displays bootstrapped estimation's indirect and direct effects with 95 percent confidence intervals (CIs). Work uncertainty mediated the association between EL and entrepreneurial orientation and its dimensions significantly. In addition, their CIs did not contain zero value supporting the effects of mediation.

**Table 5: Mediation Analysis with 5000 Bootstrapping**

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Path	Indirect Estimate	SE	LLCI	ULCI	p-Value
H4	EL -> WU -> EO	0.16	0.04	0.11	0.24	.000
H5a	EL -> WU -> Inno	0.16	0.04	0.10	0.24	.000
H5b	EL -> WU -> Pro	0.18	0.04	0.12	0.26	.000
H5c	EL -> WU -> RT	0.18	0.04	0.12	0.26	.000

Note. N = 271. SE = standard error. LLCI = lower limit confidence interval, ULCI = upper limit confidence interval

For example, the model consisted of EL as a predictor and entrepreneurial orientation as a dependent variable, and work uncertainty mediated this connection. The indirect effect of EL on entrepreneurial orientation through work uncertainty was significant (estimate = .16, [95 percent confidence interval]: LLCI = .11, ULCI = .24,  $p > .001$ ). The evidence supports hypothesis 4.

Hypothesis 5a, 5b and 5c were also statistically significant as the confidence intervals did not include zero value; the intervening effects were revealed in the second (estimate = .16, [CI 95 percent]: LLCI = .10, ULCI = .24,  $p > .001$ ), third (estimate = .18, [95 percent confidence interval]: LLCI = .12, ULCI = .26,  $p > .001$ ), and fourth row (estimate = .18, [95 percent confidence interval]: LLCI = .12, ULCI = .26,  $p > .001$ ) of Table 5 respectively.

#### 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Utilizing self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2002) as the primary theoretical framework, this study developed and examined a mediation model. The model showed that the impact of empowered leadership on entrepreneurial orientation and its dimensions was highly influenced by work uncertainty. Consistent with prior OB research influenced by Deci and Ryan's work, our findings affirm that empowering leadership behavior, such as setting an example, involving employees in decision-making, providing guidance and information, and displaying attention, has a favorable impact on entrepreneurial orientation. The study demonstrated a noteworthy and positive correlation between EL and EO. The discovery is consistent with prior studies that have examined the correlations between leadership conduct and employee entrepreneurial orientation and its many aspects. In a study conducted by Öncer (2013), it was discovered that there is a direct correlation

between the perception of empowering behavior exhibited by leaders and the entrepreneurial orientation of employees. The study was conducted on a sample of 171 employees from three multinational firms located in Istanbul.

The study found a strong inverse correlation between empowering leadership and work uncertainty. This work uncertainty, in turn, had a substantial correlation with employees' entrepreneurial orientation and its many aspects. These results are consistent with the conclusions of recently published studies. Bilal et al. (2021) highlighted the crucial significance of work uncertainty as a mediator in the relationship between leadership and proactive work behavior of employees. The results confirm our argument that empowering leadership can lead to positive work behaviors in employees by influencing work uncertainty. Thus, it is confirmed that the results as well as the theoretical implications of self-determination theory are verified.

### *5.1 Practical Implications*

The study's findings can be practically exploited by leaders to promote employees' entrepreneurial orientation. The authors suggest implementing an empowering leadership style to promote employees' entrepreneurial orientation (Kim & Beehr, 2023). The findings indicate that when a leader empowers their followers by delegating power and authority (Riaz et al., 2021), it instills a sense of confidence in the followers, encouraging them to take risks and explore new ideas (Zhang & Bartol, 2010), ultimately resulting in workplace entrepreneurial orientation. Effective leaders provide ample opportunities for their followers to explore and innovate in their jobs, which in turn promotes employee entrepreneurial orientation (Majali et al., 2022). An empowering leader elicits a sense of reciprocation among followers. This, in turn, motivates them to engage in creative thinking (Kim & Beehr, 2023; Riaz et al., 2021; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Consequently, followers generate unique ideas and suggestions to contribute to the organization's growth. Furthermore, the research confirms that leaders who empower their subordinates effectively decrease the level of uncertainty in the workplace within businesses (Kim & Beehr, 2023), hence promoting entrepreneurial orientation. A leader who empowers others takes the initiative to eliminate work uncertainty by serving as a role model and openly sharing information with colleagues in the organization (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Leaders can empower their team members by promoting participative decision-making and encouraging collaborative problem-solving. This fosters a supportive environment for information sharing and helps reduce uncertainty among team members in the organization.

Supporting the mediating function of WU between EL and EO, the authors propose that leaders should not only delegate power and authority to team members but also boost employee confidence in order to effectively confront and resolve uncertain situations with greater courage and enthusiasm. Employee empowerment promotes individuals' autonomy and boosts their self-assurance (Coun et al., 2022), thereby fostering a culture of

information sharing among followers to minimize work uncertainty and collaboratively seek inventive solutions within the organization. The suggested beneficial effect of EL in diminishing work uncertainty provides additional support for selecting an EL approach to foster entrepreneurial orientation in the workplace.

In theory, this work makes several contributions to the academic literature. The study enhances our understanding of how empowering leadership can facilitate and promote an employee's entrepreneurial orientation. This is demonstrated by the positive impact of empowerment on an employee's entrepreneurial mindset, as shown in previous research conducted by Covin et al. (2020), Rigtering et al. (2019), and Yodchai et al. (2022). This study enhances the current understanding of leadership and entrepreneurship by investigating the role of WU as a mediator in the connection between empowering leadership and entrepreneurial orientation. Scholars have not previously examined this particular issue. The research conducted also confirms the significance of the characteristics of entrepreneurial orientation. This study is distinctive due to its emphasis on the importance of the components (innovativeness, pro-activeness, and risk-taking) of the entrepreneurial orientation. It offers excellent insights that contribute to the existing body of knowledge on self-determination theory and the literature on leadership-entrepreneurial orientation. The results of the study suggest that EL is an effective method for enhancing EO, as opposed to transformative leadership, which has demonstrated inconsistent results in terms of increasing employees' EO (Majali et al., 2022; Obeidat et al., 2018).

### *5.2 Conclusion*

Conclusively, this study emphasized on the importance of EL in fostering EO in Pakistani tourism and hospitality industry employees and in addressing the present issues that tourism and hospitality-associated firms are facing. This work emphasizes the importance of promoting EL and incorporating entrepreneurial-oriented conduct, or EO (Bernoster et al., 2020), into EO theory and research advancement. This study also highlighted the need for tourism and hospitality businesses to employ empowering behavior of leaders in the execution of jobs to cultivate EO in their employees.

This study, like other investigations, has limitations that must be focused on upcoming investigations. The first research examined the intervening effect of WU on EO. Future research should include the moderating effect of contextual factors like team climate for innovation on EO. Second, this study examines the EO of employees. Future studies should use a multilevel approach to assess the effect of the team on employees EO in identical investigations, with EL as a team-level variable. At the group and individual levels, EL is a powerful activator of EO; therefore, it is crucial to identify its antecedents. EL encourages employees' pro-activeness, innovativeness, and risk-taking behaviors, which are in the company's best interest. Future research must investigate the individual and team EO interactions with the team's climate for innovation. To emphasize the relevance of EL and EO, we propose conducting the same study in different cultural contexts with the same

variables. Another option is to investigate how organizations dealing with the COVID-19 situation are acting innovatively. As a result, this study may assist discover cultural and non-cultural factors which impact EO. Furthermore, the components found might inspire further study, it is especially important in developing and expanding economies, such as Pakistan.

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