

Leadership Behaviors and Employee Engagement in the Hospitality Industry in Myanmar

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Received: Mar. 27, 2022 Accepted: Apr. 29, 2022 Online published: May. 24, 2022

doi:10.5296/ijhrs.v12i2.19675

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijhrs.v12i2.19675>

Abstract

This research investigates leadership behaviors, hotel employee engagement and the impact of leadership behaviors on employee engagement in strongly collectivist country, Myanmar. Quantitative research method was applied. Questionnaires were distributed to the hotel employees in Mandalay, Myanmar, using non-probability convenience sampling method. Descriptive statistics and multiple regression were used to measure the leadership behavior, employee engagement and the impact of leadership behavior on employee engagement. The results show that hotel managers in Myanmar have exercised informing, coaching, supporting team, leading by example, showing effective performance and displaying integrity behaviors. But their employees are only somewhat emotionally, physically, and cognitively engaged. The results also show that displaying integrity, informing, coaching, and supporting teams have positive impact while participative decision making has negative impact on employee engagement. This research findings provide both theoretical and practical implications which are useful for leaders in collectivist cultured countries. The research findings highlight the fact that leaders should display integrity and practice coaching more in a collectivist culture as it can make employees more engaged. Employers can also support managers to exercise these behaviors on a daily basis by redesigning evaluation programs for leaders. This study is also one of the first to investigate the relationship between leadership behavior and employee engagement in the Myanmar hospitality industry. The findings will be useful specially for Myanmar hotels to reduce the risk of employee turnover and keep their employees engaged.

Keywords: leadership, employee engagement, human resource management, collectivist culture, Myanmar

1. Introduction

The effect of employee engagement on organizational outcomes has gained research attention during recent years. Employees who have higher engagement has lower turnover intentions (Lu, Lu, Gursoy & Neale, 2016). Albdour & Altarawneh (2014) and Lu, Lu, Gursoy & Neale (2016) also showed that employee engagement has a positive relationship with many organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which can reduce the risk of employee turnover, boost customer satisfaction, increase company success and establish more effective and productive workforce (Kappel, 2018). Employee engagement has been proven to reduce staff turnover, improve productivity and efficiency, improve customer service and retention, and deliver higher profits. In order to survive in the highly competitive business environment, the organizations should retain the talented employees in every way as they are one of the most important capitals in the service industry. One of the best ways for the organizations to settle his is to make the employees engaged in the work so that they would have lower turnover intention. However, Blessing White (2013) reported that fewer than 1 in 3 employees are engaged globally and nearly 1 in 5 (17%) are disengaged. Meesangphrao (2016) also stated that having disengaged workers are one of the major challenges for the recent business.

Employees in Myanmar tend to change jobs a lot in a time and they are not engaged in an organization for a longer term and as a result, labor turnover rate is very high in Myanmar. Mizzima News (7th January, 2017), which is one of the most popular multimedia news organization in Myanmar, reported that HR Manager in Myanmar Distribution Group, which is one of the leading FMCG (Fast-moving consumer goods) distributors in Myanmar, stated that there was high turnover rate in their company and 50 new staffs per month have to be recruited to fill the gap. Aung (2018) also mentioned that one of the biggest challenges in the hotel industry in Myanmar is employee turnover as the market is very competitive. This has been the same problem for big cities such as Yangon and Mandalay. One of the very important issues is turnover and one of the causes of high turnover is low engagement.

The hospitality industry being a service industry requires human resources mainly. An organization must deliver the best service and value to the customers to survive and be peculiar in this highly competitive sector (Commeey, Howard & Turkson, 2014) which is why the need to find the factors to make employees successfully engaged is very vital. One of the major factors which can contribute to employee engagement is leadership (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002; Cheese, Thomas & Craig, 2008). It is important for leaders to find ways to make employees engaged as well as make them committed in contributions to the organization with the utmost efforts and abilities (Book, Gatling & Kim, 2019).

Over the past decade, transformational leadership and empowering leadership have gained increasing attention by organizations in western culture countries, which tend to be strongly individualistic, to the importance of how it can increase employee engagement (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2013; Alban-Metcalf & Alimo-Metcalf, 2007; Cai, Cai, Sun & Ma, 2018). So, it is interesting to investigate whether their findings are still relevant to non-western hospitality organizations in traditional high power-distance oriented cultures.

Therefore, this purpose of this study was to investigate whether leadership behaviors, which have been found to have a positive influence on employee engagement in many western countries, have the same impact in a collectivist culture country like Myanmar. Moreover, according to Kahn (1990) employee engagement can be measured along three dimensions, emotional, physical and cognitive. However, few studies have researched the impact of leadership behavior on each of the dimensions of engagement. Therefore, the study also attempted to fill that gap in the hospitality literature by investigating the impact of leadership behavior on each dimension of employee engagement.

The research objectives are:

1. To explore the leadership behaviors exercised by hotel managers in Myanmar.
2. To assess the physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement of hotel employees in Myanmar.
3. To investigate the relationship between leadership behaviors and employee engagement (physical, emotional and cognitive).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Employee Engagement

Over the years, business leaders have faced one of the toughest challenges, which is to make sure that their employees are engaged in their work. An engaged employee is enthusiastic, committed, and fully involved in his/her work and will be willing to “go the extra mile” for the company success (Seijts & Crim, 2006). Engaged employees have full positive commitment in their work (Kahn, 1990), more productive (Rich, Lepine & Crawford, 2010), stay longer in their jobs (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Saks, 2006) and adopt more positive attitudes and behaviors (Saks, 2006). Therefore, in order to be successful in a competitive environment, employee engagement has become a key driver for every organization (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014).

Academic theories which are related to different aspects of employee engagement have been studied by many scholars. The definition of engagement proposed by Kahn (1990, p. 694) was: “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally, during role performances”.

The physical aspect of engagement refers to the amount of effort, which include brain power, extra time as well as energy that employees put into their jobs and consists of employees’ behaviors and factors which inspire them to work towards organizational success (Kahn, 1990, Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013). Having positive affective states i.e. passion, commitment, and job satisfaction and having positive job outlook will have emotional engagement at work, whereas cognitive engagement refers to employees devoting more attention to their work and their beliefs regarding the organization, its leaders and their working circumstances (Kahn, 1990). Moreover, highly engaged workplaces are created with a trustworthy and competitive environment in which employees are motivated to participate

(emotional engagement) and offer new ideas to advance the business (cognitive and physical engagement). (Chutke, 2016; Ugwu, Okoroji & Chukwu, 2018).

2.2 Leadership and Employee Engagement

Leadership has been recognized as one of the most important factors in organizations and transformational and empowering leadership are among the styles most often noted to be most effective in recent literature (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades & Drasgow, 2000; Othman, Hamzah, Abas & Zakuan, 2017). Many studies (May, Gilson & Harter, 2004; Alban-Metcalf & Alimo-Metcalf 2008; Zhu, Avolio & Walumbwa, 2009; Albrecht & Andreetta, 2011; Xu & Cooper Thomas, 2011; Aryee, Walumbra, Zhou & Hartnell, 2012; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2013) have found that there is a positive relationship between transformational and empowering leadership and employee engagement.

Transformational leadership can enhance employee performance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman & Fetter, 1990; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006), have positive effects on job satisfaction and motivation (Judge & Piccolo, 2004), organizational commitment (Jain & Duggal, 2018) and employee engagement (Zhu et al., 2009; Aryee et al., 2012) and have impact to reduce turnover intention (Ariyabuddhipongs & Kahn, 2017). Leaders become transformational when they challenge processes to convince their underlings to give their all and inspire them to think creatively to find solutions to complex issues (Bass, 1990; Kouzes & Posner, 2003).

Empowering leadership style of giving the employees responsibilities and authority, while following a particular set of behaviors has become more popular in the business management sector as it helps motivate employees to complete their duties excellently (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Wang, Wu, Zhang & Chen, 2008; Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Albrecht & Andreetta, 2011; Tuckey, Bakker & Dollard, 2012). The empowering leadership style has been noted to be a driver of organizational effectiveness as it can act as both an intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factor, which stimulates and enhances employee engagement (Tuckey et al., 2012; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2013). Moreover, Kundu, Kumar & Gahlawat (2019) found that the empowering leadership style has a positive impact on the psychological empowerment and job performance of employees, factors which are also related to employee engagement.

Some types of empowering leadership behaviors include encouraging participative decision making, leading by example, information sharing, coaching, and showing concern for employees (Arnold et al., 2000; Pearce & Sims, 2002) whereas the behaviors of transformational leaders also include showing genuine concern, acting with integrity, focusing effort and solving problems as well as fostering supportive relationships with employees and ensuring that teams and their leaders perform their tasks effectively (May et al., 2004; Alban-Metcalf & Alimo-Metcalf 2008; Xu & Cooper Thomas, 2011).

2.3 Leadership Behaviors and Employee Engagement

From the leadership styles mentioned above, there were a number of studies which investigated the effect of individual leadership behaviors from both transformational and empowering leadership styles on employee engagement. The details are shown below:

Participative decision making: Employees will be more engaged when they can make decisions freely and act without continuously consulting the boss. (Macey & Schneider, 2009) which can increase their commitment and enthusiasm which are emotional and cognitive engagement on their tasks, and directly leads to increasing employee performance (physical engagement) (Ugwu et al., 2018).

Leading by example: which means leaders contributing before followers and this leadership behavior is effective in improving group performance as well as individual level of followers (Potters, Sefton & Vesterlund, 2007, Qiu, Zhang, Hou & Wang, 2018). According to Dannenberg (2014), followers follow their leaders, therefore if leaders sets a good example, the employees will be motivated and feel personally connected to the job and the workplace (emotional engagement), follow their leaders (physical engagement) and consequently, have more confidence on their leaders and on their work (cognitive engagement).

Information sharing: Leaders articulate the corporate vision and its underlying logic to ensure that the team members understand well and have effective performance (Colbert & Witt, 2009). Information sharing has many contributions towards employees. For instance, employees can have awareness of the company's goals, and have understanding of their responsibilities which as a result, employees will have high confidence in their work and responsibilities (cognitive engagement), have a sense of mission and increase commitment and motivations (emotional engagement) to analyze the problems and consequently they will make suggestions on the problems and increase task productivity (physical engagement) (Gao, Janssen & Shi, 2011, Wilkinson & Fay, 2011).

Coaching: The team members can use this to find their upcomings and weaknesses, as well as gain motivation (emotional engagement) and improve their ability to fulfill their goals (Tuckey et al., 2012) which have direct link to actual performance (physical engagement) (Ho, Wong & Lee, 2009). Costen & Salazar (2011) studies show that employees, who have the perception that there are some opportunities to develop new skills, are satisfied with their jobs, have loyalty and more likely to stay in the organization which are determinants of employee engagement.

Showing concern for team members' well-being: Leaders need to build a caring environment (Qi & Liu, 2017) such as listening to the opinions of the employees treating the members fairly and equally, taking care of their personal issues and taking time to discuss their concerns and leaders find time to have a chat with his followers (Alban-Metcalf & Alimo-Metcalf, 2007; Qi & Liu, 2017). As a result, employees will have positive feelings (emotional engagement), and they will be confident on their work as well as the organization (cognitive engagement) as they are given care and warmth and consequently, the employees will be more productive on their work (physical engagement) (Qi & Liu, 2017).

Displaying integrity: This is one of the relationship-oriented leadership behaviors, having positive impact on employee engagement (Atwater & Brett, 2006; Alban-Metcalf & Alimo Metcalf, 2007; Xu & Cooper Thomas, 2011) and consists of the items such as demonstrates high ethical standards, communicates openly and honestly, can be trusted with confidential information, etc. (Xu & Cooper Thomas, 2011). By displaying integrity, leaders can gain

employees' trust, which influences their performance (physical engagement), and their loyalty to the company (emotional engagement) (Robinson, 1996), then improve their job dedication (cognitive engagement) (Brown, Treviño & Harrison, 2005).

Support the team: When employee acquired adequate opportunities of teamwork, his/her performance is automatically improved (physical engagement) and inversely he/she will be satisfied with job (emotional engagement) and cooperative with each other to utilize their full potential in their jobs (cognitive engagement) (Manzoor, Ullah, Hussain & Ahmad, 2011; Reina, Rogers, Peterson, Byron & Hom, 2017).

Effective performance: Leaders who display effective performance by securing this perception and let the employees fully believe on their jobs and organization (cognitive engagement), can create the highly engaged workforce and top performers with loyalty (emotional engagement) (Wiley, 2010) and become productive workforce (physical engagement) (Chutke, 2016).

Based on the previous researches, therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

H₁: There is a statistically significant relationship between leadership behaviors and employee engagement.

H₂: There is a statistically significant relationship between leadership behaviors and physical aspect of employee engagement.

H₃: There is a statistically significant relationship between leadership behaviors and emotional aspect of employee engagement.

H₄: There is a statistically significant relationship between leadership behaviors and cognitive aspect of employee engagement.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Sampling and Data Collection

A quantitative approach was applied to measure the hotel leadership behaviors, employee engagement and examine the relationship between hotel managers' leadership behaviors and employee engagement in Myanmar. This research was conducted in Mandalay which is one of the ten most tourist visited destinations and one of the top three places in Myanmar based on the number of hotels, most of which have been locally established independent hotels.

Hogan & Hogan (2001) opined that the only valid and reliable way of assessing aspects of management performance is to base ratings on the views of subordinates. Further, McEvoy & Beatty (1989) compared data from managers and their direct subordinates' anonymous ratings, relating to their managers' performance, and it was discovered that both, the subordinates' assessments were more accurate two and four years later. Therefore, the researcher in the present study concluded that subordinate ratings would be a more reliable method of assessing managers' leadership performance. To investigate how hotel managers, exercise their leadership qualities at work, the target population of the study was hotel employees. However, since no information for specific numbers of working hotel employees

in Mandalay was available, the formula of Cochran (1963) was used and the minimum sample size determined for this research was 384.

The list of hotels available from Mandalay hotel association was accessed and the list has more than 200 hotels and all the hotels listed were contacted by telephone. Next, the researcher made appointments with either the General Manager or Human Resource Manager at each hotel to ask for their support in data collection. It was challenging to get help from the hotels since most of them did not participate in the survey either in accordance to their rules and regulations, or for the fear that they might be revealing internal information to others. Among the thirty eight hotels that agreed to help, some distributed the survey to every employee while others only gave out the survey to a few randomly selected employees. The number of questionnaires distributed to each hotel was varied based on the hotel size. Approximately 30-40 questionnaires were sent to the general managers as well as to the human resource departments of the participating hotels. The respondents were informed clearly that their participation was strictly voluntary, all the collected information would be confidential and the data would only be used for academic purposes. Total of 1500 questionnaires were distributed. After two months, 1000 questionnaires were returned. Out of all returned questionnaires, 459 were completed and utilized in the data analysis. The rest were not usable due to the missing information. The response rate is 30.6%

3.2 Measures

This questionnaire includes two parts:

Part 1: Employee Engagement

In order to measure employee engagement, the three dimensions (emotional, cognitive and physical) from Kahn's (1990) study were adopted. The measures consisted of three subscales: emotional (two items) – for example, “Overall, I'm satisfied with my job” and “I feel a sense of commitment to this organization, cognitive (two items) - “I take an active interest in what happens in this organization” and “Overall, I would recommend this organization as a great place to work”, physical (two items) “I feel inspired to go the extra mile to help this organization succeed” and “I look for ways to do my job more effectively”. This structure was used in the previous studies of May et al., (2004), Alfes, Bailey, Soane, Rees & Gatenby (2010) and Xu & Cooper Thomas (2011). The respondents were asked to select degree of agreement or disagreement with the statements based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = ‘totally disagree’ to 5 = ‘totally agree’.

Part 2: Leadership Behavior

The leadership behavior which included eight constructs was measured using a 50- items scale developed by Arnold et al., (2000) and Xu & Cooper Thomas (2011):

- Informing (5 items) - The leader distributing information about the organization's goals, mission and vision as well as other critical information. It contained five items. The sample items are “Keep others well informed” and “Explains the purpose of the hotel's policies to my team”.

- Coaching (7 items) - The leaders' behavior in relation to training and educating team members and fostering their self-development. It contains seven items. The sample items are "Helps the team members identify and develop their skills and potential" and "Suggests ways to improve my team's performance".
- Participative Decision Making (3 items) - How far the leaders consider team members' opinions in making decisions. It contains three items which includes "Gives all team members a chance to voice their own opinions", "Encourages team members to express ideas/suggestions", and "Considers my team's ideas when he/she disagrees with them".
- Supporting the team (8 items) - The leaders' behaviors encouraging a high level of team performance as well as developing team members' potential thus encouraging a better customer service performance and team pride as well. It contains eight items. The sample items include "Takes a genuine interest in the personal development of the team members" and "Supports my team's efforts".
- Leading by Example (2 items) - Behaviors that display the leaders' commitment to his/her own work and set a good example. It contains two items which include "Works as hard as he/she can" and "Sets a good example by the way he/she behaves".
- Showing concern for team members' well-being (5 items) - Behaviors which display a general regard for the team members' well-being. It contains five items. The sample items include "Takes the time to discuss team members' concerns patiently" and "Cares about team member's personal problems".
- Effective performance (11 items) - The leaders' skills in resolving complex problems, showing good management skills as well as the ability to prioritize things according to their importance. It contains eleven items. The sample items are "Makes timely decisions, without unnecessary delay or haste" and "Personally strives to excel in all activities".
- Displaying Integrity (9 items) - Behaviors demonstrating a high level of ethics and good interpersonal skills. It contains nine items. The sample items include "Builds positive, long-term internal working relationships" and "Can be trusted with confidential information".

A 5-point Likert scale was employed in all the items to measure the subordinates'/employees' views as to what extent the various aspects of leadership behavior were exercised by their managers.

3.3 Validity and Reliability

A draft of the questionnaire was delivered to three university professors who have expertise in related fields and their feedback was sought based on an index of item-objective congruence (IOC) form. Based on the experts' feedback, the final version of the questionnaire was developed and translated to Burmese. The translation was then checked using the back-translation method to ensure the accuracy of the translation. Before the questionnaire

was employed in the main study, a pre-test was conducted in order to examine the reliability. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients calculated using the SPSS statistical program for each of the sections ranged between 0.74 and 0.92. These results showed that the questionnaire sections dealing with leadership behavior and employee engagement had generally acceptable reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.60 or higher are deemed to be acceptable according to Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1998).

4. Results and Data Analysis

From a total of 459 respondents, there was 51.6 % male and 49.4 % female working in hotels in Mandalay. The majority of the respondents were aged between 20 and 29 (58.8 %), and the largest group (46.4 %) held a bachelor's degree. Of the respondents, 53.8 % worked in the front office, 73.2 % worked in non-managerial positions and 26.8 % worked in managerial positions. More than one third of the respondents had been working in the hotel industry for more than five years. However, almost half of the respondents had been working in their current hotel for less than one year.

4.1 Leadership Behavior

Table I presents the results for the respondents' level of agreement relating to the extent to which aspects of leadership behavior were practiced by their managers. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the eight leadership behavior dimensions were calculated and their value were ranged from 0.79 to 0.95, which indicated acceptable reliability. The leaders exercised the most in leading by example and coaching. Their managers "work as hard as he/she can" (Mean = 3.73), "set a good example by the way he/she behaves" (Mean = 3.59), "encourages the team to deliver superior levels of customer service" (Mean = 3.92), and "suggests ways to improve team's performance" (Mean = 3.71) were rated as the most exercised behaviors by their leader.

The leaders also did well in informing, having effective performance and displaying integrity (Mean = 3.58, 3.55 and 3.54 respectively). The top variables that the leaders did well in informing were "explaining the purpose of the hotel's policies to the team" (Mean = 3.65), following with "explaining hotel's decisions and goals" as well as "keeping others well informed" (Mean = 3.61 each). The statement, "personally strives to excel in all activities", was rated the most agreed variable of effective performance (Mean = 3.74). The variables of display integrity which are "willingly shares own knowledge and ideas with others" and "builds positive, long-term internal working relationships" were rated the top among other variables with Mean = 3.64.

For the leadership behavior of support team, most of the respondents agreed that their leaders "encourages commitment to organization objectives" (Mean = 3.61), "helps the team focus on the goals" and "pay attention to my team's efforts" (Mean = 3.44 each), "tells the team when we perform well" (Mean = 3.43), "supports my team's efforts (Mean = 3.42) However, they neither agreed nor disagreed when they were asked that their supervisor "Shows concern for team members' success", "takes a genuine interest in the personal development of his/her team members" and "celebrates his/her team's success". Moreover, the respondents neither

agreed nor disagreed with statements of “showing concern for team members’ well-being”, indicating their leader “takes the time to discuss team members’ concerns patiently” and “finds time to chat with team members”. Similarly, in terms of Participative Decision Making, the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that their leader “gives all team members a chance to voice their opinions” and “considers the team’s ideas when he/she disagrees with them”.

Out of eight factors, Leading by example and Coaching were rated by the employees as the behaviors most exercised by their managers (mean = 3.66 and 3.65, respectively). In contrast, Showing concern for team members’ well-being (mean = 3.40) and Participative decision-making (mean = 3.39) were the behaviors least exercised by their managers in the employees’ perception. (Table 1)

Table 1. Leadership behaviors

Dimensions	Cronbach’s Alpha	Mean	S.D
Leading by Example	0.84	3.66	1.02
Coaching	0.89	3.65	0.96
Informing	0.87	3.58	0.94
Effective Performance	0.95	3.55	0.97
Displays Integrity	0.94	3.54	1.04
Support Team	0.87	3.43	1.16
Shows concern for the team members’ well-being	0.79	3.40	1.16
Participative Decision Making	0.83	3.39	1.02

4.2 Employee Engagement

Three dimensions with two statements relating to each were used to measure the employees’ engagement and the ratings from the two items were combined to analyze the level of engagement under each dimension. Employees were asked to indicate the level of their own engagement by using six statements. The three dimensions, as previously noted, were emotional, cognitive and physical engagement. In terms of emotional, the results indicated that the hotel employees in Mandalay, Myanmar are somewhat engaged. The respondents somewhat agreed with the emotional statements “I feel a sense of commitment to this hotel” (Mean = 3.90, S.D. = 0.97), “Overall, I am satisfied with my job” (Mean = 3.64, S.D. = 0.97).

In term of behavioral engagement, the respondents considerably agreed that they look for ways to do their job more effectively” (Mean = 3.86, S.D. = 1.00), they felt inspired to go to extra mile to help their organization succeed” (Mean = 3.76, S.D. = 1.00). In term of cognitive engagement aspect, the respondents slightly agreed that they take an active interest in what happens in their hotel (Mean = 3.82, S.D. = 0.95), and they would recommend their organization as a great place to work” (Mean = 3.61, S.D. = 1.08). The mean values for each dimension range from 3.61 to 3.90 with Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranging from 0.67 – 0.84 (see Table 2). Therefore, the respondents were found to be somewhat engaged based on

all three dimensions.

Table 2. Employee Engagement

Employee Engagement Dimensions	Grand Mean	S.D.	Cronbach's Alpha
Emotional Engagement	3.77	0.87	0.75
Physical Engagement	3.81	0.93	0.84
Cognitive Engagement	3.72	0.88	0.67

4.3 Relationship Between Leadership Behavior and Employee Engagement

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the proposed hypotheses 1-4. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Multiple regressions on leadership behavior with employee engagement as dependent variable

Dependent Variables	Adjusted R-square	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
			B	Std. Error	Beta		
Overall Engagement	0.404	(Constant)	1.202	0.153		7.841	0.000**
		Displays integrity	0.299	0.056	0.318	5.329	0.000**
		Coaching	0.297	0.068	0.279	4.358	0.000**
		Informing	0.149	0.058	0.142	2.569	0.011*
		Participative Decision-Making	-0.152	0.055	-0.167	-2.788	0.006**
		Supports Team	0.117	0.057	0.125	2.069	0.039*
Emotional Engagement	0.318	(Constant)	1.325	0.175		7.587	0.000**
		Displays integrity	0.288	0.057	0.287	5.030	0.000**
		Informing	0.221	0.066	0.196	3.343	0.001**
		Coaching	0.173	0.071	0.152	2.443	0.015*
Physical Engagement	0.322	(Constant)	1.276	0.180		7.102	0.000**
		Coaching	0.422	0.076	0.347	5.553	0.000**
		Displays integrity	0.285	0.071	0.266	4.002	0.000**

		Participative Decision-Making	-0.142	0.062	-0.136	-2.291	0.022*
		Leading by Example	0.126	0.058	0.130	2.171	0.030*
		(Constant)	1.168	0.167		7.004	0.000**
		Displays Integrity	0.319	0.061	0.312	5.200	0.000**
		Coaching	0.348	0.070	0.300	4.950	0.000**
		Supports Team	0.171	0.064	0.167	2.671	0.008**
		Participative Decision-Making	-0.130	0.062	-0.131	-2.107	0.036*
Cognitive Engagement	0.358						

Remark: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between leadership behaviors and employee engagement.

In order to test Hypothesis 1, multiple regression analysis was conducted using overall employee engagement as the dependent variables, and the eight aspects of leadership behavior as the independent variables. The results showed that three aspects of leadership behavior, Leading by example, Showing concern for team members' well-being and Effective performance were excluded from the model as their significance did not reach the 0.05 confidence level. The adjusted R square value of the model indicated that 40.4 % of the variance in the dependent variable was explained by five out of the eight factors.

The results in Table 3 show the relationship between leadership behavior factors and employee engagement. Four variables showed a positive relationship with employee engagement, of which, Displays integrity had the highest impact followed respectively by Coaching, Informing and Supporting the team. However, Participative decision making had a negative relationship with employee engagement. This results partially supported H1. In conclusion, the employees will be more engaged in their work if their supervisors and manager display integrity and inform and support the team. However, since "participative decision making" negatively correlates with their engagement, the employees would be less engaged if the leaders force them to be part of the decision-making process.

The relationships between the eight aspects of leadership behavior on the three dimensions of employee engagement (emotional, physical and cognitive) were also investigated. Separated multiple regression analyses were conducted using each dimension of employee engagement as the dependent variable, with the eight aspects of leadership behavior as the independent variables.

H2: There is a statistically significant relationship between leadership behaviors and physical aspect of employee engagement.

For the physical engagement model, four dimensions of leadership behavior, Informing, Supporting the team, Showing concern for team members' well-being and Effective performance were excluded. The results showed that three variables of leadership behavior had a positive relationship with physical engagement, of which, Coaching had the highest impact with a beta value of 0.42, followed by Displaying integrity and Leading by example. On the other hand, Participative decision-making is negatively related with physical engagement.

The results partially accepted H2. In conclusion, the employees will be more engaged behaviorally in their work and work more harder if their supervisors and manager coach, display integrity and lead by example. However, since "participative decision making" negatively correlates with the behavioral engagement, the employees would be less engaged physically if the leaders force them to be part of the decision-making process.

H3: There is a statistically significant relationship between leadership behaviors and emotional aspect of employee engagement.

For emotional engagement dimension, five leadership behavior factors including Supporting the team, Leading by example, Showing concern for team members' well-being, Participative decision-making and Effective performance were excluded from the model. The results showed that Displaying integrity, Informing and Coaching had a positive relationship with emotional engagement when Displaying integrity showed the highest effect with a beta value of 0.29, followed by Informing (beta value = 0.22) and Coaching (beta value = 0.17).

The results partially accepted H3. To be summarized, the employees will be engaged emotionally if the leaders display integrity, inform and coach them.

H4: There is a statistically significant relationship between leadership behaviors and cognitive aspect of employee engagement.

Lastly, for the cognitive engagement model, four aspects of leadership behavior were excluded: Informing, Leading by example, Showing concern for team members' well-being and Effective performance. In each case, their significance level did not reach the 0.05 confidence level. Coaching, Displaying integrity, and Supporting the team had a positive impact on cognitive engagement and Coaching with the highest beta of 0.35, in contrast, Participative Decision Making had a negative relationship with cognitive engagement.

The results partially accepted H4. In conclusion, the employees will be engaged cognitively in their work when the leaders display integrity, coach and support team. However, since "Participative Decision Making" negatively correlates with the employees' cognitive engagement, the employees would be less engaged cognitively if the supervisors force them to be part of the decision-making process.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study explored the leadership behaviors of hotel managers, the level of hotel employee engagement and the relationship between leadership behaviors and employee engagement in the context of a collectivist culture. The first objective was to explore the leadership

behaviors exercised by hotel managers in Myanmar. The findings of this study revealed that most of the employees agreed that their managers practice all aspects of leadership behavior except showing concern for team members' well-being and participative decision-making to a good extent. This accords well with the collectivist culture of Myanmar, where power distance is very strong (Rudkin & Erba, 2018). Collectivists prefer not being called to participate in decision making, unlike individualists, who takes it as a loss of face if not given a chance to express voice. (Chelminski & Coulter, 2007). Individualists like Americans tend to have participative input (Pheng & Leong, 2000). On the contrary, the literature review of the Myanmar culture describes the Myanmar workforce's general unwillingness to voice out their thoughts, especially when they are against others' ideas. Thus, it is unsurprising that leaders do not involve them in the decision-making process.

The second objective was to assess the physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement of hotel employees in Myanmar. The results showed that the employees are only somewhat engaged in their job on the employee engagement scale. This could potentially be a cause for high turnover intentions; since it had negative relationship with engagement i.e an engaged employee would not consider quitting their job (Brummelhuis, Bakker & Euwema, 2010). Ngobeni & Bezuidenhout (2011) also mentioned that the more engaged the employees are, the longer their commitment to the organization will be. In fact, Myanmar's labour turnover rate is relatively high. Bernhardt, De & Thida (2017) found that it is 57 and 39 percent for garment producers and food processors respectively. Moreover, a survey by big firms Roland Berger, Dale Carnegie Myanmar and JobNet.com.mm indicated a high labour turnover rate in Myanmar. (Myanmar Times, 2018). This highlights a necessity for employees and managers to make employees more engaged in the organization.

The third objective was to investigate the relationship between leadership behaviors and employee engagement (physical, emotional and cognitive). This study found that leadership behaviors have a significant impact on employee engagement when displays integrity had the highest positive impact followed respectively by coaching, informing and supporting the team. In contrast, participative decision making had a negative relationship with employee engagement. This study also investigated in more detail how leadership behavior affects each dimension of employee engagement and found that the Informing variable bore a positive relationship to both emotional and physical engagement, while the Leading by example variable was positively related to physical engagement and Supporting the team had a positive relationship with cognitive engagement. Coaching and Displaying integrity had positive relationships with all three dimensions of employee engagement.

On the other hand, Erkutlu & Chafra (2013) and Deci, Olafsen & Ryan (2017) found that employee participation in decision-making can enhance employee motivation and employee engagement. Kundu et al., (2019) suggested that empowering leadership behaviors, can be very effective not only in Western cultures, but also in high-power-distance cultures. This study, however, found that the Participative decision-making variable had a negative relationship with employee engagement. *Clearly*, asking hotel employees in a collectivist culture that value formal hierarchies to participate in the decision-making process appears to lead to a negative effect on employee engagement, especially in respect of their level of

physical and cognitive engagement.

Although this study found that there was no significant relationship between Showing concern for team members' well-being and Effective Performance with overall employee engagement in Myanmar. Rudkin & Erba (2018) posited that gaining mutual trust, establishing personal relationships as well as celebrating group achievements have become key success factors in workplaces in Myanmar. In a collectivist culture, employees expect their leader to act like a good parent. Leaders are regarded as key performers in achieving organizational efficiency at all levels of organizations (Altunoğlu, Sahin & Babacan, 2019). In addition, Xu & Cooper Thomas (2011) and Erkutlu & Chafra (2013) also *found* that these leadership behaviors have a positive impact on employee engagement. Therefore, hotel managers should take care to exercise these behaviors in order to motivate employees to work effectively.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, this study employed a sample that includes hotel employees in Mandalay, a famous tourism destination in Myanmar in contrast to the prior empirical studies whose data were often exclusively drawn from western countries. It is perhaps the first study in Myanmar focusing on the investigation of leadership behavior and its impact on employee engagement. This study found that if managers emphasis on displaying personal integrity, coaching, informing and supporting team members, their employees would be more engaged. In particular, “informing” and “leading by example” behaviors can enhance employees' emotional and physical engagement respectively. Also, this study contributes to the literature relating to employee engagement and leadership behavior in the hospitality sector by showing that in countries with highly collectivist cultures like Myanmar where employees value formal hierarchies and hesitate voicing their opinions. If leaders try to involve employees in participative decision-making, the employees' physical, cognitive, and overall engagement levels may decrease.

5.2 Practical Implications

The results of this study could educate managers and employers to better understand and allow them to make adjustments to their leadership behaviors to increase employees' work engagement. Specifically, in order to keep Burmese employee engaged, hotel managers should exercise transformational and empowering leadership styles focusing on displaying integrity, coaching, supporting team and leading by example. For instance, hotel managers in Myanmar should set clear goals and encourage healthy communication practices to foster integrity. They should give support and guidance rather than instructions to their employees to learn how to adapt to constantly changing environments in ways that unleash fresh energy, innovation, and commitment. Additionally, hotel managers should see themselves as role models by setting high standards of accountability for their behaviors by taking responsibility for the decisions made for the betterment of the business. Also, hotel managers can consult their subordinates who have certain expertise in the area and acknowledge their subordinates' creativity and effort. This will not only include the employees as part of the team, but also inspire and allow them to hone their personal skills. These behaviors of acting in accordance

with their words and keeping their team informed could inspire team members to reach their full potential, which in turn will maximize the business's productivity as well.

International chain hotels are likely to be set up in Mandalay which is more renowned among foreign travelers, resulting in more competition within the hospitality sector. To survive in such situation, independent hotels need to invest more in their employees' training need assessment by observing their employees' performance and analyzing their knowledge and skills needed. Independent hotels can partner up with organizations or contractors who can provide soft-skill trainings to their employees. In particular, there has especially been an increase in popularity of coaching and self-empowerment trainings among business owners as well as managers. Similarly, the managers themselves can attend these trainings so that they themselves can build an arsenal of attributes that will allow them to be an effective leader. Additionally, there are also online platforms such as Coursera, LinkedIn Learning, or Future Learn that gives organizational courses for managers and employees alike.

It is also important to encourage their managers to develop and exercise the above mentioned leadership behaviors such as displaying integrity, coaching, giving adequate information and supporting the teams which have a direct impact on employee engagement. Additionally, hotels should redesign a performance appraisal program, which the rating standards are clear and in line with their corresponding expertise area and work ethics, to evaluate the individual or team performance. And reward system which can include giving bonuses and incentives to reinforce managers reflect upon the appropriateness of their behaviors.

Furthermore, people in collectivist cultures prefer indirect forms of communication in contrast to other cultures which place more emphasis on individualism. In many individualism countries, it is widely believed that the employee participation in decision making may affect employee's job satisfaction; employee productivity, and employee engagement especially in many individualism countries. However, managers who work in collectivist culture like that of Myanmar should be aware that participative decision-making might have a negative impact on employee engagement. To reflect the high-power-distance which the country's culture entails, in which people both accept and expect differences in authority, managers should modify their practices by using employee involvement and participation programs that favor consultation and expression, but not participation in decision making, may yield higher job satisfaction and employee engagement. The manager can do informal individual appraisals which employees can discuss personal and company matters with the managers or the employee attitude survey, which can examine the management practices areas such as financial reward, staff recognition and other training and development programs and opportunities which can develop a sense of ownership. They can also give the prizes, bonus and incentives with the title of "the best idea of the month" in order to encourage the employees to speak out more for the benefits of organizations and implement their ideas. They can even let them take charge of the projects. This, along with other incentives can encourage them to participate for the growth of the business. Interactions during the break time in a coffee room or through social activities outside of work can be one of the options.

6. Limitations and Future Research

There are some limitations to this study which should be considered when considering its results. Firstly, this empirical study used a quantitative methodology in the collection of data. Such quantitative methods, rely on the accuracy of answers provided by the respondents and the real emotions and behaviors of the respondents may not be captured because the respondents' answers are limited to the framework within which the data was collected, in this case, a questionnaire employing closed-ended items to which the participants responded using a pre-determined scale. To overcome this limitation, *it is recommended that qualitative methods should be used for data collection in future studies.* Since the majority of the hotels participated in this study was independent local hotels. it would be interesting to conduct a comparative study between independent and international chain hotels where the focus of staff training and development may be different and where a strong organizational culture may influence the attitudes, behaviors and perceptions of staff and management in the context of a country with a collectivist culture.

Acknowledgement

This work was supported by the Higher Education Research Promotion and the Thailand's Education Hub for Southern region of ASEAN Countries Project Office for the Higher Education Commission.

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