



## Article

# Paternalistic Leadership and Innovative Behavior: Psychological Empowerment as a Mediator

Alisher Tohirovich Dedahanov <sup>1</sup>, Faridun Bozorov <sup>1,\*</sup> and Sanghyun Sung <sup>2,\*</sup><sup>1</sup> School of Business, Yeungnam University, Gyeongsan 38541, Korea; Sarbon22513@ynu.ac.kr<sup>2</sup> POSTECH Entrepreneurship Center, Pohang University of Science and Technology, Pohang 37673, Korea\* Correspondence: Faridun86@hotmail.com (F.B.); flyparis@postech.ac.kr (S.S.);  
Tel.: +821068033222 (F.B.); +821085539838 (S.S.)

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**Abstract:** Purpose: The aim of this study is to examine the mediating role of empowerment on the relationship between paternalistic leadership styles such as benevolent, moral, and authoritarian and employee innovative behavior. Design/methodology/approach: The data were collected from 390 employees of manufacturing companies in the Republic of Korea. To assess the validity of hypotheses we used a structural equation modeling procedure. Findings: The findings suggest that empowerment mediates the relationships among moral and authoritarian leadership styles and employee innovative behavior. However, results indicate that employee innovative behavior does not mediate the associations between benevolent leadership style and employee innovative behavior. Originality/value: Our work is the first to investigate the mediating role of empowerment on the link between paternalistic leadership styles such as benevolent, moral, and authoritarian and employee innovative behavior.

**Keywords:** benevolent leadership; moral leadership; authoritarian leadership; empowerment; employee innovative behavior

## 1. Introduction

Employees' innovative behavior significantly contributes to organizational performance and helps companies to stay competitive in dynamic business environments [1–3]. Therefore, it is considered an indispensable asset to organizational success [4,5], and examining the factors that influence innovative behavior remains critical issue in business organizations.

A number of studies have analyzed the relationship between paternalistic leadership styles (authoritarian, benevolent, and moral) and innovative behavior and suggested that paternalistic leadership influences innovative behavior [6–8]. When leaders with moral leadership styles give employees autonomy and independence, employees become able to influence what happens in their jobs and feel empowered [9]. Moreover, when benevolent leaders support employees [6] and provide them with task related resources [10], it gives employees a sense of power [11]. On the other hand, when authoritarian leaders initiate structures with strict rules and want their employees to obey their instructions completely [12], members of organizations will have less efficacy and feel less empowered [13]. We believe that empowerment influences employee behavior with regards the generation and suggestion of novel ideas. Hence, empowerment can be a crucial factor that explains the link between paternalistic leadership and employee innovative behavior.

Despite the important role of empowerment in mediating the links between paternalistic leadership styles and innovative behavior, very little is known about this dynamic. For example, even though several researchers examined the link between authoritarian [8], benevolent [6], and moral leadership styles [7] and innovative behavior, they did not assess the role of empowerment

in the link between these factors. Previous scholars have investigated the link between paternalistic leadership and empowerment [9,14]. However, innovative behavior was not investigated as the outcome of empowerment. Although the influence of empowerment on innovative behavior has been well documented by several authors [15,16], unfortunately, leadership style as one of the contributing factors to psychological empowerment was overlooked by those authors. Hence, there is very little knowledge on the mediating role of empowerment in explaining the relationships between paternalistic leadership styles and innovative behavior. Investigating the mediating role of empowerment on the relationship between paternalistic leadership and innovative behavior can improve our understanding of the influence of different kinds of paternalistic leadership styles on innovative behavior via psychological empowerment.

With this knowledge, leaders within organizations will be able to manage the form of their leadership styles that impact employee empowerment, which will in turn influence innovative behavior.

Therefore, our study aims to address the existing gaps in the literature through examining the mediating role of empowerment on the relationship between paternalistic leadership (benevolent, moral, and authoritarian) and innovative behavior.

### 1.1. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Empowerment is described as an act of providing decision-making authority to employees in an organization by expansion of their autonomy [17]. The concept of empowerment is interpreted differently in different contexts [18]. Scholars have described two perspectives of empowerment related to the work environment: psychological empowerment, which is referred to as the “process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organizational members through the identification [and removal] of conditions that foster powerlessness” [19]; and structural empowerment [20,21], which is referred to an organization’s ability to offer access to information, resources, opportunity and support in the work environment [20]. Psychological empowerment is a motivational cognition state, which is generated in individuals by the organizational environment, rather than being a reflection of a personality trait [22]. It is a psychological state, which engages an individual in the achievement of their job role [22]. If practice of empowerment is in place, employees feel confident in the independent and successful accomplishment of tasks in a meaningful way, which impacts the outcome of their work [16,22]. Psychological empowerment is reflected in four cognitions: impact, self-determination, competence, and meaning [22]. *Impact* is the degree to which the decision-making process is affected at the workplace [23]. *Self-determination* is a sense of choice and it creates autonomy in initiating and controlling actions [24]. *Competence* refers to an individual’s confidence in the successful performance of the task [25,26]. *Meaning* refers to the consistency between individuals’ values, beliefs, expectations, and their responsibilities in their jobs [27].

According to Sashkin [28], psychological empowerment enhances employee performance. Therefore, our study focuses on physiological empowerment and investigates physiological empowerment as a mechanism that explains the associations between paternalistic leadership styles and innovative behavior.

### 1.2. Paternalistic Leadership

Paternalistic leadership is a leadership style that “combines strong discipline and authority with fatherly benevolence and moral integrity” [10]. Studies across countries view paternalistic leadership styles differently. Studies from Asia argue that paternalism is a father like leadership style that includes authority with consideration and concern [29]. Research from Turkey, India, and Pakistan indicates that paternalism does not imply “authoritarianism” but rather this form of leadership demonstrates care and protection [30]. In Western literature, paternalism is viewed differently because the benevolent aspect of paternalism is underappreciated [29].

Paternalistic leadership consists of three elements: benevolent, moral, and authoritarian leadership styles.

*Benevolent* leadership is explained as a leader's behavior where leaders demonstrate individualized concern for the familial well-being and needs of employees [10]. Besides work-related issues, a benevolent leader shows care for issues surrounding employees' personal and family matters, expresses concern for individuals' comfort, provides support when individuals perform poorly, and supports individuals when they have trouble [31]. As the result of such a leader's behavior, subordinates express gratitude and feel obliged to give back in a similar manner [32].

Benevolent leaders support employees [6] and motivate their social exchange [33,34]. As a result of a leader's support and increased social exchange, employees will gain an enhanced sense of personal power [11], and consequently, their feeling of being able to have an impact will be elevated [16]. Moreover, benevolent leaders provide opportunities for skill development and autonomy, which boosts the self-determination of employees [35]. When employees have autonomy, they experience various courses of events in their workplace [36], and those events could serve as a basis for the development of thoughts and ideas, eventually helping employees for future actions [37]. Thus, when employees have autonomy and are able to learn from their experiences, their sense of competence will be improved [38], which enables them to recognize the best course of action given diverse situations.

In an environment of benevolent leaders, employees are well taken care of in their career development, are given chance to learn from their errors, and are taught how to improve performance [6]. According to May [39], when employees' developmental needs are taken care of, where they can experience a work role fit, they will find meaning in their work.

Therefore, based on the above discussed features of benevolent leaders, which influence all four dimensions of empowerment, we suggest the following hypothesis:

**H1:** Benevolent leadership is positively related to empowerment.

Competition is intensifying among business companies because brand new products of companies are being imitated by other companies, and therefore, the life cycles of new products are becoming shorter [40]. Consequently, companies have to engage actively in innovation to survive in a competitive market. Companies' success in innovation does not only depend on closed innovation but also on open innovation [41]. Thus, the importance of open innovation is widely discussed in previous research [42,43]. We believe that moral leaders play a critical role in fostering both closed innovation and open innovation because of their open-mindedness and unselfishness. *Moral* leadership is described as "a leader's behavior that demonstrates superior personal virtues, self-discipline, and unselfishness" [44]. Moral leadership entails behaviors that set examples to employees, such as 'integrity and fulfilling one's obligations', 'never taking advantage of others' and 'selfless paragon'.

Studies on paternalistic leadership indicate that moral leadership is associated with positive employee attitudes and behavior [45]. Moral leaders show integrity and focus on the collective good rather than self-interest, and they are highly admired, respected, and perceived as ideal leaders [46]. These leaders serve as role models for individuals and exert referent power on them, which are critical ingredients for establishing a more personalized emotional bond between the leader and the follower [47].

Leaders with moral leadership styles do not gain special privileges because of their authority. They treat employees in accordance with their virtue [44] and involve lower ranking employees in decision making processes, where subordinates have fair opportunities to contribute to the organization and achieve their goals, which could be interpreted by employees as having a sense of impact. Moreover, moral leaders respect employees and provide them autonomy for the tasks that they carry out, which in turn contributes to a sense of self-determination [9,48]. In addition, under moral leadership, employees will likely try to enhance their capability; and by using a leader's constructive feedback, they will be able to build self-efficacy and increase competence [9]. Further, a moral leadership style results in employees' identification with the leader [10]; subordinates, by accepting the leader's values, will

learn and imitate these values [49]. According to Avolio [50], when employees accept and imitate integrity, job devotion, and positive behaviors of moral leaders, employees will recognize the meaning of the work that they are doing. Several researchers [51–54] advocate that subordinates working with supervisors, who show integrity, high moral standards and expectations, and optimism are empowered and feel more comfortable to do the jobs required for successful task accomplishment. Hence, we suggest the following hypothesis:

**H2:** Moral leadership is positively related to empowerment.

Authoritarian leadership is defined as “leader’s behavior that asserts absolute authority and control over subordinates and [that] demands unquestionable obedience from subordinates” [44]. An authoritarian leadership style tends to determine what needs to be done, initiate structure, promise rewards for compliance, issue the rules, and threaten with reprimands for noncompliance [12]. Furthermore, an authoritarian leadership style stresses having personal control of most matters [55] and employees depend on the leader for the desired outcome [56]. According to Ford and Fottler [57], having control and impact over organizational issues, reflects impact dimension of empowerment. Therefore, as the result of reduced control, employees feel that they are unable to achieve desired change or have an impact on the work environment under authoritarian leadership [58–60]. Moreover, an authoritarian management style encourages a state of powerlessness by fostering dependency [59]. Powerlessness is described as lack of autonomy [23], or self-determination, which hinders an employee’s sense of having choice in regulating and initiating actions [24]. Moreover, powerlessness decreases a feeling of self-efficacy, which contributes to an individual’s self-competence [19]. Hence, authoritarian leadership influences the self-determination and competence dimensions of empowerment. Further, under an authoritarian leadership style, control over organizational matters is centralized, and the leader makes unilateral decisions [55]. When authoritarian leaders centralize the decision-making process, individuals in organizations are less likely to feel the meaning and purpose of their work [19].

Thus, based on the discussions above we believe that authoritarian leadership style influences all four dimensions of empowerment and propose the following hypothesis:

**H3:** Authoritarian leadership is negatively related to empowerment.

### *1.3. Innovative Behavior and Empowerment*

Innovative behavior refers to the process of an employee’s problem recognition, idea generation, and support building for its implementation [3]. Innovative behavior’s beginning stage is creativity [2]. While creativity is a critical driver for innovative ideas [60], it relates more to the generation of new ideas, whereas innovative behavior includes both the generation and implementation of novel ideas [61,62]. In other words, innovative behavior is a complex multistage work behavior, which consists of generation, promotion, and application of novel opinions intended for improving organizational performance [63,64].

According to Seibert [15], empowerment enhances the ability of individuals to implement their opinions and ideas, resulting in a higher level of innovation at work. Similarly, Amabile [13] suggested that as a result of empowerment, employees will be more creative. Several empirical studies have supported a positive relationship between each dimension of empowerment and innovative behavior. For example, when individuals believe that they have control over organizational matters and are able to achieve desired change, the sense of impact will be increased [58], consequently this ability to impact the workplace will result in the exhibition of innovative behavior [16,65]. Moreover, self-determination theory suggests that autonomy at work is very important for identifying factors that enhance an employee’s creativity [66], because an autonomous workplace environment will consider employees’ perspectives, feelings, and give them choice and information by eliminating pressure [67]. It could be implied that the self-determination dimension of empowerment and innovative behavior are positively related [68]. Further, a feeling of self-efficacy, which is interpreted as competence, leads to employees’

innovativeness [13,69]. When employees believe that they have acquired enough competence [70], they tend to be creative [71], which in turn improves innovative behavior. Further, Redmond [69] proposed that high levels of intrinsic motivation, which represents the meaning dimension of empowerment [72], results in more innovativeness in employees. Similarly, Bass [68] stated that the meaning of work contributes to an employee's innovative actions.

Therefore, based on the discussion above, we conclude that empowerment is considered as one of the contributing factors to innovative behavior and propose the following hypothesis:

**H4:** Empowerment is positively related to innovative behavior.

#### *1.4. Mediating Role of Empowerment*

A number of previous studies reported the direct relationship between paternalistic leadership styles such as benevolent, moral, and authoritarian and employee innovative behavior [6–8]. We believe that this association between paternalistic leadership style and innovative behavior is mediated by empowerment. When supervisors devote their energy to taking care of employees [31] and give employees freedom and opportunity in their jobs [9], employees tend to be empowered by feeling autonomy in performing their jobs and the meaning of their work. Eventually, with this empowerment, employees tend to create new ideas. On the contrary, when members of organizations have to follow supervisors' rules to perform their jobs, employees are less likely to have control over what happens in their unit/organization [58]. Consequently, with this lower level of empowerment, individuals become reluctant to search out new working technologies, methods, product ideas, and techniques. Hence, we believe that a paternalistic leadership style, namely benevolent, moral, and authoritarian, influences employee innovative behavior via empowerment.

**H5:** Empowerment mediates the relationship between benevolent leadership and innovative behavior.

**H6:** Empowerment mediates the relationship between moral leadership and innovative behavior.

**H7:** Empowerment mediates the relationship between authoritarian leadership and innovative behavior.

## **2. Method**

Data were collected from highly skilled employees of private small and medium manufacturing enterprises (SMEs) in Gyeongbuk, Gyeonggi, and Gangwon provinces of the Republic of Korea. In each company, the human resource department helped us in collecting data. The managers of the human resource departments invited employees to participate in a survey and asked them to complete questionnaires. In each organization, the survey was conducted in small group sessions that comprised 30 employees. Researchers elucidated the purpose of the study and explained the anonymity and confidentiality of answers. Moreover, the confidentiality and anonymity of participants' answers was also indicated in the cover letter of the questionnaire. A total of 390 employees participated in the survey. Among the 390 responses, we excluded 51 because of incomplete data and thus had a total of 339 responses for the final analysis. Of the 339 respondents, 63.4 percent were male and 36.6 percent were female. With respect to age, 26 percent were between 25 and 35 years, 33.3 percent were between 36 and 45 years, 28 percent were between 46 and 55 years, and 12.7 percent were between 56 and 65 years old. Regarding the educational background of the employees, 54.6 percent had a bachelor's, 39.8 had a master's, and 5.6 percent had a PhD degree. Concerning work experience, 20.9 percent had less than 1 year, 23 percent had 1–4 years, 28.3 percent had 5–9 years, 18.9 percent had 10–15 years, and 8.8 percent had more than 15 years of work experience.

### *2.1. Measures*

Professional translators translated the questionnaire from English into Korean. Then, to assess the appropriateness and equivalence of scales, bilingual experts reviewed the items until they detected no



further inaccuracies in the translation. Moreover, bilingual experts back translated the measurement items into English to ensure the accuracy of the translation.

*Leadership styles:* The questionnaire that we used to measure benevolent, moral, and authoritarian leadership was taken from the study by Cheng [44]. Benevolent leadership (e.g., “Beyond work relations, my supervisor expresses concern about my daily life”) was assessed using 11 items; moral leadership (e.g., “My supervisor doesn’t take the credit for my achievements and contributions for himself/herself.”) was measured using 6 items and authoritarian leadership (e.g., “My supervisor asks me to obey his/her instructions completely”) was evaluated with 9 items. Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  coefficients for these scales were 0.968, 0.849, and 0.961, respectively.

*Empowerment:* To measure employee empowerment, twelve items were adapted from Spreitzer [16]. Example items from this scale include “My job activities are personally meaningful to me”, “I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work”, and “I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department”. Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  coefficient for this scale was 0.871.

*Innovative Behavior:* Innovative behavior (e.g., “I introduce ideas into the work environment in a systematic way”, “I try to acquire approval for innovative ideas”, and “I transform innovative ideas into useful applications”) was measured using Scott and Bruce’s [3] 9 item scale. The scale’s  $\alpha$  reliability was 0.958. We controlled for respondents’ gender, age, work experience, and education because of the potential influence of these individual characteristics on employee innovative behavior [73,74].

## 2.2. Common Method Bias Test

In this study, the same respondents answered all the questions of the survey, thus we tried to avoid the common method bias issue by assuring the participants’ confidentiality and anonymity and by interspersing all the variables of our work to manage their perception of any connection between variables [75]. To assess the potential common bias issue, we conducted Harman’s one-factor test [75]. According to the principles of this technique, when common method bias effect exists, either single factor will account for the majority of the covariance or the general factor will account for the majority of the covariance among the measures. The findings indicated that five factors were extracted in unrotated factor analysis. The largest factor explained 26.983 percent of the variance. Moreover, we assessed common method bias with a single-factor measurement model in IBM AMOS 21.0 (New York, NY, USA). The results indicated poor model fit: comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.299; Tucker Lewis index (TLI) = 0.267; goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = 0.228; and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.180. All these analyses indicate that in our study common method bias is not likely to be a significant issue.

## 3. Results

We utilized confirmatory factor analysis to assess the measurement model. Model fit was evaluated using ratio of chi square to its degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ), CFI, GFI, TLI, and RMSEA. Values less than 3 for the  $\chi^2/df$  ratio demonstrate good model fit [76]. When CFI, GFI, and TLI values are greater than 0.90 and the RMSEA value is equal or lower than 0.08, the model fit is perceived to be acceptable [77]. CFA analysis indicated a good fit, as judged from the goodness-of-fit indices ( $\chi^2/df = 1.282$ ; CFI = 0.982; GFI = 0.858; TLI = 0.981; RMSEA = 0.029).

To examine convergent validity, we assessed average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) values. All constructs’ AVE and CR values were above the recommended values of 0.50 and 0.70, respectively [78]. To assess discriminant validity, we followed the method suggested by Fornell and Larcker [78] by comparing the AVE values of all constructs with the squared correlations of all factors. The results indicated that AVE values were greater than their squared correlations of all factors.

Constructs with a value above 0.70 Cronbach’s alpha indicate high reliability [79]. In our study, all constructs’ Cronbach’s alphas exceeded 0.70. Moreover, all factor loadings were above 0.50 and significant ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Table 1 demonstrates the standard deviations, the means, the AVEs, and the correlations among the constructs. The results suggest that empowerment is positively correlated with moral ( $r = 0.209$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) leadership style and innovative behavior ( $r = 0.342$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and negatively correlated with authoritarian leadership style ( $r = -0.279$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 1.** Statistics, AVE, and correlations.

	Variables	Mean	SD	AVE	1	2	3	4	5
1	Benevolent Leadership	3.122	1.1820	0.732	1				
2	Moral Leadership	3.378	1.2063	0.764	0.130 *	1			
3	Authoritarian Leadership	3.106	1.2308	0.741	−0.139 *	−0.234 **	1		
4	Empowerment	3.296	1.1765	0.736	0.104	0.209 **	−0.279 **	1	
5	Innovative Behavior	2.855	1.1319	0.716	0.017	0.082	−0.157 **	0.342 **	1

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

### Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Analysis

To assess the proposed hypotheses, we used structural equation modeling (SEM). The findings from SEM analysis demonstrated a good fit as judged from the goodness-of-fit indices ( $\chi^2/df = 1.271$ ;  $CFI = 0.979$ ;  $GFI = 0.849$ ;  $TLI = 0.978$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.029$ ).

Moreover, results from SEM analysis suggest that (Table 2) moral leadership style is positively ( $\beta = 0.139$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and authoritarian leadership style is negatively ( $\beta = -0.231$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) associated with empowerment.

**Table 2.** Standardized structural estimates from the structural model.

Path	Standardized Coefficient	T-value
Direct effects		
Benevolent Leadership→Empowerment	0.044	0.903
Moral Leadership→Empowerment	0.139	2.644 *
Authoritarian Leadership→Empowerment	−0.231	−4.491 **
Empowerment→Innovative Behavior	0.352	5.831 **
Age→Innovative Behavior	−0.061	−0.954
Gender→Innovative Behavior	−0.098	−0.741
Work Experience→Innovative Behavior	−0.024	−0.477
Education→Innovative Behavior	−0.069	−0.657
Indirect effects		
	p-value	Standardized Coefficient
Benevolent Leadership→Empowerment→Innovative Behavior	0.367	0.016
Moral Leadership→Empowerment→Innovative Behavior	0.019	0.049 *
Authoritarian Leadership→Empowerment→Innovative Behavior	−0.002	−0.081 **

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

Hence, H2 and H3 are supported. However, findings indicate that benevolent leadership style is not significantly ( $\beta = 0.044$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) related with empowerment. Thus, H1 is not supported. Further, SEM analysis reveals positive and significant relationship ( $\beta = 0.352$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between empowerment and employee innovative behavior. Therefore, H4 is also supported. To evaluate the mediating role of empowerment, we performed a bootstrapping test [80] by extracting 1000 bootstrapped samples from the dataset based on random sampling with replacement, and 95 percent bias corrected confidence intervals (CI) were calculated. The mediation is assumed when the CI of an indirect effect do not contain zero. The findings from the bootstrapping analysis indicate that empowerment mediates the relationships between moral ( $\beta = 0.049$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ;  $CI_{0.95} = 0.017, 0.086$ ) and authoritarian ( $\beta = -0.081$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ;  $CI_{0.95} = -0.121, -0.045$ ) leadership styles and innovative behavior. However, results demonstrate that empowerment does not explain the associations between benevolent ( $\beta = 0.016$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ;  $CI_{0.95} = -0.015, 0.044$ ) leadership style and innovative behavior. Hence,

H6 and H7 are empirically supported and H5 is not supported. Further, SEM analysis indicates that control variables, such as gender, age, work experience, and education of participants are not significantly associated with innovative behavior.

#### 4. Discussion

In this study we investigated the relationships between paternalistic leadership, namely benevolent, moral, and authoritarian leadership styles, and empowerment, empowerment and innovative behavior, and the mediating role of empowerment on the relationship between paternalistic leadership styles and innovative behavior. The results from empirical analyses suggest the following:

First, we found that moral leadership is positively related with empowerment. In other words, when supervisors do not take advantage of employees for personal gain and employ people according to their virtues, employees are more likely to perceive that they can have significant influence in their unit or organizations. This finding is consistent with the study in [9], which posited that moral leadership is positively associated with empowerment.

Second, the results reveal that authoritarian leadership has a negative relationship with empowerment. That is to say, when supervisors determine all decisions in the company and ask employees to obey his/her instructions completely, members of organization tend to feel that they have less autonomy in their job. This is in accordance with the study of Lei and Kan [14], who indicated that an authoritarian leadership style hinders empowerment.

Third, the findings indicate that benevolent leadership is not significantly related with empowerment. More specifically, leaders' concern about employees' daily lives beyond work relations and employee comfort does not lead employees to feel empowered. The potential explanation for this insignificant relationship can be explained by the following. Employees may perceive their leaders' care beyond work relations as kindness, which is not related to work, and therefore, employees may not relate this kindness to empowerment associated with their job.

Fourth, SEM analysis suggests that empowerment has a positive relationship with innovative behavior. This means, when members of organization feel that the work they do is meaningful to them and perceive that they have impact in their unit or organization, they are more likely to generate and promote new ideas in their unit or organizations. This finding is also in line with previous studies [13,15,16] that reported a positive relationship between empowerment and innovative behavior. Fifth, bootstrapping analysis demonstrates that empowerment mediates the relationships between moral leadership and innovative behavior. Hence, when supervisors do not use their authority to seek special privileges for themselves and employ people according to their virtues, employees perceive their work as meaningful. Eventually, with this feeling and perception, members of organizations are more likely to search out new technologies, working methods, processes, techniques, and/or product ideas. Moreover, we revealed that empowerment explains the associations between authoritarian leadership and innovative behavior. In other words, when a supervisor behaves in a commanding fashion and punishes employees for not following his/her rules to get things done, subordinates feel less control and influence over what happens in their unit or organization. With this limited control and impact, employees become reluctant to create and suggest novel ideas.

##### 4.1. Theoretical Implications

Employee innovative behavior enhances organizational performance [61]. Thus, the importance of innovative behavior in organizations is acknowledged and investigated by a number of researchers [81–85].

Despite the fact that a number of studies have examined factors related to innovative behavior, there was very little knowledge on the role of empowerment in mediating the associations between paternalistic leadership styles and innovative behavior. Hence, in this study, to contribute the literature, we addressed the following gaps:



One group of scholars [6–8] studied the link between paternalistic leadership style and innovative behavior, but the role of empowerment in mediating links among authoritarian, moral, and benevolent leadership styles was not studied. Moreover, even though the association between paternalistic leadership and empowerment was investigated [9,14], innovative behavior was not examined as a consequence of empowerment. Therefore, the mediating role of empowerment on the link between paternalistic leadership and innovative behavior was overlooked. Further, although another group of scholars [86,87] explored the link between empowerment and innovative behavior, they did not include paternalistic leadership in their research model, thus, the mediating role of empowerment on the link between paternalistic leadership and innovative behavior was not studied. Hence, our study addressed the gaps mentioned above by investigating the mediating role of empowerment on the relationship between paternalistic leadership styles (such as benevolent, moral, authoritarian) and innovative behavior. More specifically, we extended the literature by providing empirical evidence about the mediating role of empowerment in the links between moral and authoritarian leadership styles and innovative behavior. Further, findings indicate that empowerment does not explain the associations between benevolent leadership style and innovative behavior. We believe that the findings from our study will enable the management of organizations to understand the types of paternalistic leadership that influence innovative behavior via empowerment. With this understanding, the management of organizations will be able to manage the leadership styles that influence employees' empowerment, which will eventually have an impact on innovative behavior.

#### *4.2. Practical Implications*

The results of our study report several important practical implications. First of all, the results show that an authoritarian leadership style is negatively associated with empowerment. For this purpose, the presence of an authoritarian regime of leadership is undesirable and should be avoided and reduced by careful selection [88]. Moreover, courses and training programs on the improvement of interpersonal relationship skills of leaders are highly recommended [12], as they could help them to be more evaluative and understanding towards subordinates. Furthermore, we suggest that authoritarian leaders put their efforts into creating a harmonious working environment based on equity. In addition, authoritarian leaders are recommended to withhold from unilateral decision making and encourage employee participation to improve their sense of importance [89], which will elevate employees' feelings of impact and eventually lead to innovative behavior. Moreover, our results demonstrated that moral leadership is positively associated with empowerment. Employees will pursue new ideas and innovativeness when leadership is tolerant of mistakes and enforces creativity [90,91]. Since moral leaders take employee feelings and rights into consideration [92], it is recommended that organizations place an emphasis on moral requirements in the selection of leaders alongside other vital qualifications. At the same time, moral leaders are advised to show integrity [93] and use given authority in the best interests of the employees, by treating them fairly and being responsible for them, which will serve as an empowering message for them to engage in extra role behavior and come up with innovative ideas. Further, to enhance moral climate, organizations should arrange training and educational programs [7] and encourage moral behaviors and values. Furthermore, with moral leadership organizations can also foster open innovation, which plays a critical role in servitization [94], and product innovation [41–43].

For organizations that are willing to involve more innovative employees, they should formulate the human resources practices that promote employee empowerment and create a positive environment. The creation of an empowered workplace environment within organizations will enable leaders to foster subordinates' creative behavior.

#### *4.3. Future Research Directions and Limitations*

Our study has several limitations and recommendations for future research. First, we focused on psychological empowerment in measuring the mediating role of empowerment on the relationship between paternalistic leadership styles and innovative behavior. We recommend future studies

examine structural empowerment to understand how the ability of an organization to offer access to information, resources, and support explains the associations between leadership style and innovative behavior. Second, our study only emphasized the role of internal resources in fostering innovative behavior. External resources such as intermediaries also play a crucial role in increasing innovation [95]. Thus, we propose future studies considering the role external resources and intermediaries in enhancing innovative behavior. Third, our study used self-reported data; therefore, when conducting surveys, we suggest future studies use employee–supervisor dyads. Fourth, we collected data only in one country, the Republic of Korea; hence, we suggest future studies collect data from several countries where paternalistic leadership is prevalent [45].

**Author Contributions:** A.T.D. and F.B. (Corresponding author) are from Yeungnam University, Republic of Korea. S.S. (Co-corresponding author) is from Pohang University of Science and Technology (POSTECH), Republic of Korea. They designed the research conceptual model, wrote literature review, collected the survey data, and interpreted the survey results together.

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