

# **LINKING COOPERATIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE, HARMONIOUS PASSION, AND SERVICING EMPOWERMENT WITH INNOVATIVE WORK BEHAVIOUR**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Innovative work behaviour (IWB) forms an essential basis for obtaining competitive advantage and long-term success for the hospitality firms. Nonetheless, empirical research on this potential behaviour has received limited attention in hospitality research. Drawing from self-determination theory (SDT), this study tests a conceptual model that examines the mediating role of harmonious passion between cooperative psychological climate and IWB within the hospitality industry. This study also recognises the importance of servicing empowerment as the boundary condition between harmonious passion and IWB. We further developed a moderated mediation model to test the above said relationships. A total of 257 employees who worked in the four- and five-star hotels in Pakistan participated in the study. Partial least structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyse the data. Results reported significant mediating effect of harmonious passion between cooperative psychological climate and IWB. The relationship between harmonious passion and IWB was strengthened to the extent that servicing empowerment in the hotel firms was high. Furthermore, the indirect effect of cooperative psychological climate on IWB (via harmonious passion) was stronger when the servicing empowerment was high. Practitioners looking to enhance harmonious passion and IWB can do so by creating a cooperative climate in their hotel firms. This study carries value as research on*

*harmonious passion in the organisational context is still unexplored and this study extends the scope of cooperative psychological climate research that this factor has the potential to foster employees' harmonious passion leading them display IWB.*

**Keywords:** cooperative psychological climate, harmonious passion, servicing empowerment, innovative work behaviour, IWB

## INTRODUCTION

Scholars have accentuated the demanding role of service innovation as an essential basis for obtaining competitive advantage for the hospitality industry (Afsar et al., 2019). Essentially, frontline employees play a fundamental role in promoting service innovation in the hotel firms that become the primary source for such organisations to operate strongly in the competitive environment (Lee & Hyun, 2016). Because of the close interaction between the employees and customers, the frontline employees play an important role improving the current status of customers that propel them to be innovative (Slatten & Mehmetoglu, 2015). Hospitality research scholars have regarded frontline employees' innovative work behaviour (IWB) a means to make hotel firms gain superior performance, and is of interest to academicians and practitioners in the hotel firms on account of the contribution of such behaviour in agile responsiveness to changing needs of customers' demands (Slatten, 2014) and intense market competition (Ottenbacher, 2007). Hence, service organisations are spending huge amount of financial resources and their time for the sake of identifying factors that promote frontline employees' IWB (Dhar, 2016).

Reviewing the literature, it is found that researchers have been keen to identify leadership, human resource management (HRM) practices, and other personal factors to promote employee IWB (Chang et al., 2017; Dhar, 2016; Slatten, 2014; Slatten & Mehmetoglu, 2015). Though these factors play critical roles to promote employee IWB, psychological barriers sometimes limit such behaviours due to poor trust and lack of cooperation among managers and co-workers. Thus, creating conditions for creativity and innovation necessitates and demands a cooperative psychological climate (Kozusznik & Polak, 2016). It refers to the employees' individual interpretation and evaluation of their work environment in terms of cooperation among the workers for the purpose of accomplishing organisational outcomes (Fisher, 2014). Scholars have regarded IWB to be a challenging and a complex construct (Yuan & Woodman, 2010), which requires not only generation of ideas, but support from managers and other co-workers (Montani et al., 2017). Ignoring the role of cooperative psychological climate would limit such important outcomes to take place at work. However, the literature is lacking to produce any

empirical evidence that could provide support linking cooperative psychological climate with IWB. To address this limitation, this study aims to examine whether frontline employees' perception of their hotel firms' climate to be cooperative plays a role in promoting their IWB.

Though hotel firms are dependent on the innovative ideas from their frontline employees (Baradarani & Kilic, 2018), motivational forces are necessary to drive the employees to involve in such potential behaviours. One of the motivational forces behind IWB is harmonious passion, defined as a strong inclination towards the work, which the individual likes and considers important by investing time and energy (Liu et al., 2011). It is considered the highest form of motivation that makes employees perform at their best by showing excitement and energy at work (Gaan, 2015). Research has demonstrated clearly that harmoniously passionate employees are more involved in organisational activities, attract more customers, and perform their duties above average levels (Astakhova, 2015). The burgeoning research on this construct in the last decade is seen as a promising solution for service organisations (Chen et al., 2017; Ma et al., 2018). For example, it is a force in employees that pushes them to involve in IWB for the sake of improving customer services (Luu, 2019). Recent research has also clarified the underlying mechanism of harmonious passion between cooperative psychological climate and employees' extra role behaviours (Ho et al., 2018). Therefore, the second objective of this study is to investigate whether harmonious passion influenced by cooperative psychological climate can function as a mechanism that shapes their IWB.

Moreover, recent researchers have called for more research to explore the boundary conditions of the relationships between harmonious passion and employee work outcomes (Hao et al., 2018; Ma et al., 2018). This is because previous studies have shown contradictory results of harmonious passion with employee work performance and discretionary behaviours (Ho et al., 2018; Indriasari & Setyorini, 2018). These inconsistent findings suggest that our understanding of the link between harmonious passion and IWB may produce better results from delineating and testing a moderating variable. To address this issue, we argue that the relationship between harmonious passion and frontline employees' IWB are contingent on servicing empowerment. More specifically, harmoniously passionate employees should be more effective in exhibiting IWB when they feel they are provided with more empowerment to deal with customers' complaints and problems, that is when servicing empowerment in the hotel firms is high. Therefore, one of the objectives of this study is also to examine the moderating role of servicing empowerment on the relationship between harmonious passion and IWB. Further, taken together, this study develops and tests a moderated

mediation model to understand the indirect effect of cooperative psychological climate on IWB via harmonious passion such that servicing empowerment is high (illustrated later in Figure 1).

## **THEORY AND HYPOTHESES**

### **Self-determination Theory: A Focus on Harmonious Passion**

Self-determination theory (SDT) is used as the theoretical focus for this study. SDT is a theory of human motivation and is among the most popular and current theories in psychology applied to predict human behaviours in research (Gulyani & Bhatnagar, 2017; Ho et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2011). According to SDT, human motivation could be of two types, namely autonomous and controlled motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Liu et al., 2011). With autonomous motivation, an individual behaves with a full sense of volition and choice with which he or she without any force involves in the activities. Whereas controlled motivation refers to the motivation under which an individual behaves and involves in an activity not by his or her own choice but pressure from external forces (Deci & Ryan, 2008). In line with the SDT's conception of autonomous and controlled motivation, Vallerand et al. (2003) state that the internalisation process of human motivation brings about two types of passion: harmonious and obsessive passions.

Based on dualistic model of passion, harmonious passion refers to the type of passion that remains under the control of the individual and this type of passion arises from autonomous internalisation of an activity that enables the individual to engage in the activity without any force (Vallerand et al., 2003). With harmonious passion, the person is able enough to self-regulate how much energy and time to spend on the activity, while balancing other activities and commitments in a positive manner. Individuals developing this type of passion enjoy what they are doing, and the same activity becomes a source of joy and fulfilment that does not interfere with other areas of his or her life. Conversely, obsessive passion arises from controlled internalisation of the activity that entails an internal pressure to perform an activity (Vallerand et al., 2003). With obsessive passion, employees experience insecurity and fear, which becomes the basis for the negative behaviours (Salessi et al., 2017). Unlike harmonious passion, any individual who experiences obsessive passion, engages in the activity in a maladaptive way, because the activity may interfere with other areas of his or her life (Vallerand et al., 2003). Such situation creates a feeling of uncontrollable urge to engage in the activity despite suffering from the negative consequences from it. Therefore, this study will focus on harmonious passion for work, because as the core, it is a

construct that is theoretically related to stronger employees' extra role behaviours (Gulyani & Bhatnagar, 2017; Ho et al., 2018) and more importantly, our objective of the study is limited to enhancing employees' IWB by enhancing the positive aspects of harmonious passion.

Further, SDT asserts that social context can play an essential role in either satisfying or even thwarting needs of the individuals (Deci & Ryan, 2014). This theory also postulates that social context that supports and promotes an individual's autonomous and internalised motivation plays a crucial role in promoting harmonious passion (Chen et al., 2017; Vallerand et al., 2003). In short, harmonious passion exhibits the process of autonomous internalisation, whereas obsessive passion on the other hand represents a controlled internalisation of the activity (Vallerand et al., 2003). Therefore, SDT guides us to choose harmonious passion, which can be enhanced by cooperative psychological climate (Ho et al., 2018). Along this line, we argue that perceptions of frontline employees' work climate to be cooperative constitute a favourable work environment, leading them to enhance their harmonious passion and consequently their IWB.

### **Cooperative Psychological Climate and IWB**

Cooperative psychological climate in this study refers to the individuals' perception regarding the work environment of the extent to which the employees (e.g., co-workers, supervisors, and other members) are cooperative with each other by working together and emphasising personal effort for the sake of accomplishing organisational outcomes (Fisher, 2014). Empirical research has provided ample evidence for the positive relationship between psychological climate with individuals' important outcomes and behaviours (Khan et al., 2019; Lee, 2015). In addition, previous studies on psychological climate suggested such climates to be a key factor that influence employees' creativity and IWB at the individual level (Wang & Ma, 2013; Yee et al., 2014).

Although empirically no research has tested the direct relationship between cooperative psychological climate and individual-level innovation, scholars have steadily highlighted the effect of cooperative climate with creativity on team members (Kim & Shin, 2015). For example, in another empirical study, it was found that cooperation among team members enhanced their creativity levels (Drach-Zahavy & Somech, 2001). Findings of these studies verify that positive role of cooperation prevailed in the organisation promoting open communication, that becomes the exchange of various ideas with the members, resulting in new idea generation. Since creative behaviour is a sub part of employee IWB (Yuan & Woodman, 2010), cooperative psychological climate could be a potential factor

enhancing employees' IWB. Building on the findings that organisational climate that is supportive and cooperative fosters employees' creativity and innovation (Bullinger et al., 2010), it is hypothesised that:

- H<sub>1</sub>: Cooperative psychological climate has a positive relationship with frontline employees' IWB.

### **Cooperative Psychological Climate and Harmonious Passion**

Empirical findings show that cooperative psychological climate has been associated with a number of employees' positive motivational states such as affective commitment (Bogaert et al., 2012) and positive emotions (Xanthopoulou et al., 2012). Further, it has been highlighted that employees who perceive the climate of workplace to be cooperative find the work atmosphere to be enjoyable and pleasant (Xanthopoulou et al., 2012). In other words, employees working in an environment where co-workers and other members of the firms share knowledge, work with rather than against each other may feel more involved and like their jobs. In such environment, employees increase the spirit towards their work and decrease the negative effect at workplace (Standage et al., 2005) thereby developing harmonious passion. Recent study has also found significant positive relationship between cooperative psychological climate and harmonious passion (Ho et al., 2018). Consequently, these reasons suggest that frontline employees who perceive their hotel firms' climate to be cooperative will develop harmonious passion. Hence, it is proposed that:

- H<sub>2</sub>: Cooperative psychological climate has a positive relationship with harmonious passion.

### **Harmonious Passion and IWB**

Vallerand et al. (2003) defined harmonious passion as a type of passion for an activity that is in harmony with other aspects of life and this results from the autonomous internalisation of a favourite activity into one's identity. Such type of passion develops in the individuals when they devote time and energy to their activities (Thorgren & Wincent, 2013). Although most research on harmonious passion has been conducted in sports and other activities in the past with positive outcomes, the topic has been generating interest among scholars in the organisational context (Ho et al., 2018; Ma et al., 2018). Hence, it has been further defined as the exacting desire towards the work that employees find important and like (Liu et al., 2011). Empirical evidence has clearly depicted the role of harmonious passion as an important and strong motivational factor

that drives employees' behaviours (Ho et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2011). Scholars of psychology and organisational behaviour research state that harmoniously passionate employees love their jobs and devote much time in their tasks that becomes the basis for higher performance (Vallerand et al., 2003). Apart from routine performance they show at work, these individuals go extra miles to come up with fresh ideas and think out of the box (Schwartz & Pogge, 2000). According to Gulyani and Bhatnagar (2017), individuals who are harmoniously passionate enjoy their work and spend extra time are likely to spend more time dealing with work-related issues and doing things that are not technically required of them and go beyond their job description and challenge the status quo. In the context of frontline employees in hotel firms, scholars have regarded harmonious passion a strength that pushes them to involve in IWB for the sake of meeting customers' demands and expectations (Luu, 2019). Thus, it is proposed that:

H<sub>3</sub>: Harmonious passion is positively related with frontline employees' IWB.

### **Mediating Role of Harmonious Passion**

Researchers have contended that the more employees perceive their workplace environment or climate to be cooperative, the more they will enjoy and gain pleasure towards their work by showing more enthusiasm and lower negative emotions (Xanthopoulou et al., 2012; Standage et al., 2005). As pointed out by Standage et al. (2005), employees' perception of their work environment and climate to be cooperative would positively satisfy their needs' satisfaction, could assist in the escalation of their spirit towards their work, and may lessen their level of negative effect at workplace. Further, Ho et al. (2018) in their recent empirical study asserted that employees' harmonious passion is developed given that they perceive their work environment to encompass cooperation displayed by their managers, co-workers with their instrument, and social support. Moreover, empirical findings have demonstrated the potential role of harmonious passion enhancing employees' creativity and IWB (Liu et al., 2011; Luu, 2019). Taken together, harmonious passion acted as an underlying mechanism in a recent study linking cooperative psychological climate and employees' extra role behaviours (Ho et al., 2018).

Consequently, integrating the positive relationship between cooperative psychological climate and harmonious passion with the positive relationship between harmonious passion and IWB, we conjecture a positive indirect relationship between cooperative psychological climate and IWB via harmonious passion in this study. Therefore, it is predicted that:

H<sub>4</sub>: Harmonious passion mediates the relationship between cooperative psychological climate and IWB.

### **Moderating Role of Servicing Empowerment**

Servicing empowerment in this study refers to giving frontline employees some sort of discretion and power such that they are enabled to provide satisfactory services to their customers by responding to their needs and demands (Chan & Lam, 2011). Research has considered servicing empowerment to be an essential driver for individual customer service performance and innovative outcomes. Afsar et al. (2018) have emphasised that if hotels want to succeed, they need to give autonomy to their frontline employees to try out new ideas. Empowered employees test ideas that are new and they challenge the status quo by exploring new things in life (Mazzei et al., 2016).

Consequently, harmoniously passionate employees gaining servicing empowerment during their work will not have to work with any restrictions to deal with customers' complaints and problems. These employees in turn gain pleasure performing their work, take ownership and pride which will develop sense of their autonomy at work (Deci & Ryan, 2008), resulting in enhancing their harmonious passion. Harmoniously passionate employees gaining freedom at work will involve more in innovative outcomes (Gao & Jiang, 2019). Thus, this study considers servicing empowerment to be an important factor which not only directly influences frontline employees' IWB, but also plays an intervening role in achieving such behaviours from harmoniously passionate employees. When high harmonious passion is coupled with servicing empowerment, the degree of IWB will significantly increase. This study therefore proposes the following last hypothesis:

H<sub>5a</sub>: Servicing empowerment will moderate the relationship between harmonious passion and IWB such that the relationship is stronger when servicing empowerment is high.

Based on the hypotheses, we further propose a moderated mediation model. More specifically, it is suggested that cooperative psychological climate has a positive relationship with frontline employees' IWB and that this relationship is mediated by harmonious passion for work. Moreover, it is further proposed that servicing empowerment moderates the relationship between harmonious passion and IWB. Combined, it is expected that the indirect effect of cooperative psychological climate on IWB via harmonious passion is contingent on servicing empowerment. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:



H<sub>5b</sub>: Servicing empowerment moderates the indirect effect of cooperative psychological climate on frontline employees' IWB via harmonious passion, such that the indirect effect will be stronger when servicing empowerment is high rather than low.

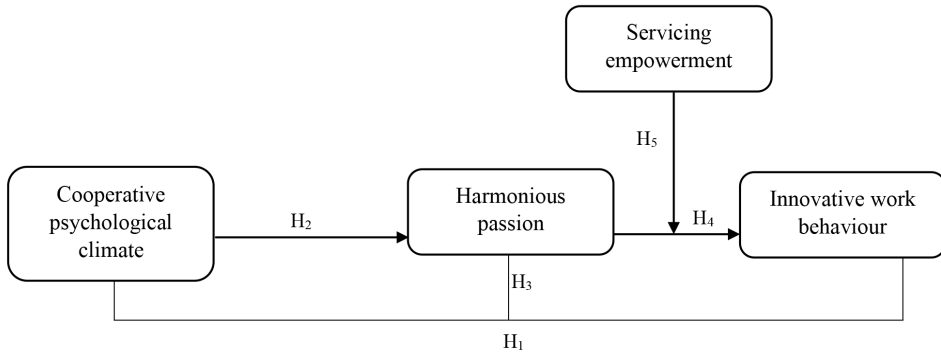


Figure 1. Hypothesised model

## METHODS

### Participants and Procedure

Data were collected from frontline employees who worked in four- and five-star hotels in major cities of Pakistan. The focus of this research on four- and five-star hotels was because of the intensity of these hotels towards in-house innovation (Leonidou et al., 2013). Further, it has been emphasised that employees in four- and five-star hotels are required to satisfy customers' needs and higher expectations than other lower scale hotels (Teng, 2019), thus such context was suitable for the investigation of frontline employees' IWB. The frontline employees were purposively selected by using judgement sampling in this study. This sample occurs when a researcher uses the sample to confirm to some criteria which is assumed to represent the population. Moreover, this sampling technique refers to the choice of subjects who are in the best position to provide the information (Karatepe et al., 2018).

Prior to the survey, we contacted four- and five-star hotels' management and asked them to participate in our survey. Those hotels were selected whose managers were available and agreed to assist us for the data collection. Upon hotel management's agreement, cover letters were sent in those hotels, and later meetings were held to discuss the purpose and objectives of the study with human resources (HR) managers. In the cover letter, we clearly explained the

purpose and benefits of this study and assured the confidentiality of the responses by ensuring that those responses would only be used for research purposes. In similar vein, HR managers were briefed accordingly, and we instructed them on how to complete and fill the questionnaire. Therefore, HR managers and their representatives were instructed to distribute the questionnaires across a broad range of frontline employees who had intense interaction with customers (e.g., front desk agents, reservations representatives, guest relation representatives, wait staff, etc.). Further, they also specified the number of frontline employees working in their hotels and were sent sufficient copies of the questionnaire. A total of 444 questionnaires were distributed, from which only 257 (response rate 57.8%) questionnaires were completely and accurately filled and further used for the data analysis purpose. In this study, most respondents were males (N = 147, 57.19%) as compared to females (N = 110, 42.28%). The majority of frontline employees were between the ages of 26 to 30 (N = 73, 28.40%) years. Regarding the work experience in their hotels, around 33% had experience up to three to five years. In terms of academic qualification, 54% had bachelor's degree.

## **Instruments**

All the instruments for this study were adapted from well-established literature based on the suitability for the study context. The English language of the original scales for all constructs were retained, as English is the medium of instruction for all university education and communication in Pakistan. Given that, respondents had no issue with English language questionnaire in this study. Additionally, past research conducted in the hospitality industry of Pakistan used English language questionnaires (e.g., Afsar et al., 2019; Bibi & Jadoon, 2018; Javed et al., 2017). The scoring of all items was based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

### **Cooperative psychological climate**

This study adapted a 5-item scale developed by Chatman and O'Reilly's (2004) and later applied by Ho et al. (2018). Sample item includes, "Employees of this hotel openly share information with one another".

### **Harmonious passion**

This study used a 7-item scale originally developed by Vallerand et al. (2003), and later applied by Liu et al. (2011) to measure harmonious passion in organisational context. Sample item includes "I am completely taken with this work".

## **Servicing empowerment**

A 5-item scale was adapted from Hayes, (1994). Sample item includes “I do not have to get hotel management’s approval before I handle hotel customers’ problems”.

## **Innovative work behaviour**

IWB was measured by 6-item scale developed by Hu et al. (2009). Sample item includes, “I provide a suitable plan for developing new ideas in this hotel”.

## **ANALYSIS STRATEGY**

For the data analysis in this study, we employed PLS with smart PLS 3.2.7 version and SPSS version 20. Using Smart PLS, two steps were performed, namely measurement model and structural model.

### **Assessment of Measurement Model**

For estimating the measurement model in this study, we followed four steps: internal consistency, indicator reliability, convergent, and discriminant validity suggested by Hair et al. (2019). First, for internal consistency, composite reliability values were above 0.80, which meet the minimal requirement of 0.70 and support internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019). Second, to confirm indicator reliability, the outer loadings of each item in their respective latent variables should be higher than the cut-off value of 0.708 (Hair et al., 2019). However, in this study, all items were retained, as items had loadings above the cut-off significant value shown in Table 1. Third, to establish convergent validity, average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct was assessed with the threshold value of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019). In this study, the AVE values ranged from the highest 0.736 for servicing empowerment to the lowest value of 0.664 for cooperative psychological climate, revealing that convergent validity for this study is supported.

Finally, discriminant validity was assessed via Fornell-Larcker criterion and heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio (Hair et al., 2019). To evaluate Fornell-Larcker criterion, it was found that all the values on the diagonals were greater than the corresponding row and column values displayed in Table 2, suggesting that measures were discriminant. Though Fornell-Larcker is a widely accepted and popular approach, some recent criticism raises some concern that it does not reliably detect the discriminant validity in common situations, thereby an

alternative approach is suggested by Henseler et al. (2015) to be used to assess discriminant validity, the HTMT. Two cut-off values of 0.85 and 0.90 for HTMT ratio were recommend by Henseler et al. (2015). Following the cut-off value of 0.85 to establish discriminant validity, in this study all values of HTMT ratio were below the critical value of 0.85 (displayed in Table 3). Hence, this study confirmed discriminant validity of the measurement model.

Table 1  
*Outer loadings, composite reliability (CR) and AVE*

| Constructs                              | Items                       | Loadings | AVE   | CR    |
|---|-----------------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| Cooperative psychological climate (CPM) | CPM1                        | 0.84     | 0.664 | 0.908 |
|   | CPM2                        | 0.831    |       |       |
|   | CPM3                        | 0.871    |       |       |
|   | CPM4                        | 0.76     |       |       |
|   | CPM5                        | 0.766    |       |       |
|   | Harmonious passion (HP)     |          |       |       |
| Harmonious passion (HP)                 | HP1                         | 0.79     | 0.706 | 0.944 |
|   | HP2                         | 0.862    |       |       |
|   | HP3                         | 0.872    |       |       |
|   | HP4                         | 0.89     |       |       |
|   | HP5                         | 0.884    |       |       |
|   | HP6                         | 0.85     |       |       |
|   | HP7                         | 0.717    |       |       |
| Innovative work behaviour (IWB)         | IWB1                        | 0.847    | 0.720 | 0.939 |
|   | IWB2                        | 0.859    |       |       |
|   | IWB3                        | 0.908    |       |       |
|   | IWB4                        | 0.879    |       |       |
|   | IWB5                        | 0.867    |       |       |
|   | IWB6                        | 0.719    |       |       |
|   | Servicing empowerment (SEM) | SEM1     |       |       |
| SEM2                                    |                             | 0.887    |       |       |
| SEM3                                    |                             | 0.878    |       |       |
| SEM4                                    |                             | 0.875    |       |       |
| SEM5                                    |                             | 0.818    |       |       |

Table 2  
Assessment of discriminant validity using Fornell-Larcker

|     | CPM   | HP          | IWB          | SEM          |
|-----|-------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| CPM | 0.815 |             |              |              |
| HP  | 0.426 | <b>0.84</b> |              |              |
| IWB | 0.324 | 0.4         | <b>0.849</b> |              |
| SEM | 0.335 | 0.485       | 0.335        | <b>0.858</b> |

Table 3  
Assessment of discriminant validity using HTMT

|     | CPM   | HP    | IWB   | SEM |
|-----|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| CPM |       |       |       |     |
| HP  | 0.472 |       |       |     |
| IWB | 0.358 | 0.431 |       |     |
| SEM | 0.374 | 0.526 | 0.356 |     |

### Analysis of the Structural Model

After the successful validation of the measurement model, the next step was to analyse the structural model by reporting the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), path coefficient ( $\beta$ ),  $p$ -values, and  $t$ -values via a bootstrapping procedure with a resample of 5,000 suggested by Hair et al. (2019). Additionally, recent scholars have argued that  $p$ -values are not a good and sufficient criterion for testing the significance of the hypotheses, and they recommended to use both criterion such as  $p$ -values with confidence intervals and effect sizes (Hahn & Ang, 2017). Thus, for testing the hypotheses reliable and appropriate criterions were used shown in Table 4.

To predict the accuracy of the study model, first we assessed the  $R^2$ . The  $R^2$  values of harmonious passion and IWB are 0.181 and 0.207, respectively, which are not strong, yet they exceed the threshold of 0.10 recommended by Falk and Miller (1992). Besides, this study tested the predictive relevance by using blindfolding procedure. As suggested by scholars, the model has predictive relevance when the  $Q^2$  value is greater than 0 for endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2019). The  $Q^2$  values in this study were 0.118 for harmonious passion and 0.135 for service IWB. The  $Q^2$  values were more than 0, suggesting that the model has predictive relevance in this study.

Finally, the path coefficients and t-values were calculated to investigate the direct relationships between cooperative psychological climate, harmonious passion, and service IWB, by bootstrapping (5000 subsamples). First, this study looked at the effect of independent (cooperative psychological climate) on the dependent variable (IWB), indicating that the relationship between these two constructs is significant ( $\beta = 0.17, p < 0.05, f^2 = 0.027$ ). Next, focusing on the influence of cooperative psychological climate on frontline employees' harmonious passion, results show a positive and strong significant relationship ( $\beta = 0.426, p < 0.05, f^2 = 0.221$ ). Also, a significant and positive relationship was found between harmonious passion and IWB ( $\beta = 0.295, p < 0.05, f^2 = 0.056$ ). According to these results, all three  $H_1$ – $H_3$  hypotheses for direct relationships were supported in this study.

For mediating assessment, this study followed Preacher and Hayes (2008)'s method. Under this technique, bootstrapping method is used to assess the significance of mediation relationships (indirect effects). The t-values were recognised significant when they exceeded the critical value of 1.96 in this study. In addition, Preacher and Hayes (2008) suggested that the indirect effects confirmed the existence of mediating effects in the absence of "0" value in between confidence intervals.  $H_4$  was established to test the mediating effect of harmonious passion between cooperative psychological climate and IWB. This hypothesised relationship was found significant ( $\beta = 0.126, p < 0.05, BC_{0.95} LL = 0.073$  and  $UL = 0.190$ ; LL denoting lower level and UL upper level).

Based on the hypothesis  $H_{5a}$ , it was expected that servicing empowerment would moderate the relationship between harmonious passion and IWB. The findings showed that the interaction was found significant ( $\beta = 0.152, p < 0.05$ ). Moreover, we plotted the interaction effect to understand how the moderator changes the relationship between harmonious passion-IWB as stipulated by Dawson (2014). As demonstrated in Figure 2, the positive association between harmonious passion and IWB is obtained by plotting at different levels of servicing empowerment. Specially, it signifies that when servicing empowerment is low, harmonious passion has less effect on IWB. However, when servicing empowerment is high among frontline employees, the relationship between harmonious passion and IWB is strengthened. This illustrates that frontline employees' IWB was highest for those employees who developed high level of harmonious passion while those who were highly empowered. Therefore,  $H_{5a}$  that we proposed was supported in this study.

Finally, with respect to the moderated mediation model ( $H_{5b}$ ), we tested the moderated indirect effects of servicing empowerment using Hayes' (2013)

PROCESS macro of SPSS. Table 5 summarises the results of these calculations. The indirect path from cooperative psychological climate to IWB varied significantly at both the high and low values. When servicing empowerment was high, cooperative psychological climate had an indirect effect on IWB ( $b = 0.197$ , boot SE = 0.046, 95% bias-corrected CI = [0.110, 0.296]) and a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval around the bootstrapped indirect effect, which did not contain zero. When servicing empowerment was low, cooperative psychological climate did not have an indirect effect on IWB ( $b = 0.048$ , boot SE = 0.045, 95% bias-corrected CI = [-0.035, 0.143]). Consequently,  $H_{5b}$  was supported. Moreover, the index for the moderated mediation is also significant displayed in Table 5.

Table 4  
*Hypotheses tests*

| Hypothesis                | Path           | $\beta$ value | S.E.  | t-value | p-value    | Decision  | BC 95% LL | BC 95% UL |
|---------------------------|----------------|---------------|-------|---------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Direct effects</b>     |                |               |       |         |            |           |           |           |
| H <sub>1</sub>            | CPM > IWB      | 0.17          | 0.056 | 7.567   | $p < 0.05$ | Supported | 0.050     | 0.283     |
| H <sub>2</sub>            | CPM > HP       | 0.426         | 0.071 | 2.401   | $p < 0.05$ | Supported | 0.320     | 0.509     |
| H <sub>3</sub>            | HP > IWB       | 0.295         | 0.074 | 4.000   | $p < 0.05$ | Supported | 0.172     | 0.414     |
| <b>Indirect effect</b>    |                |               |       |         |            |           |           |           |
| H <sub>4</sub>            | CPM > HP > IWB | 0.126         | 0.035 | 3.541   | $p < 0.05$ | Supported | 0.073     | 0.190     |
| <b>Interaction effect</b> |                |               |       |         |            |           |           |           |
| H <sub>5</sub>            | SEM × HP > IWB | 0.152         | 0.056 | 2.700   | $p < 0.05$ | Supported | 0.045     | 0.356     |

Table 5  
*Result of conditional indirect effects*

| Path  | Value of moderator | Conditional indirect effects | Boot SE | Boot LLCI | Boot ULCI |
|---|--------------------|------------------------------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| Simple path for high level of servicing empowerment | 4.73               | 0.197                        | 0.479   | 0.110     | 0.296     |
| Simple path for low level of servicing empowerment  | 2.66               | 0.048                        | 0.451   | -0.35     | 0.143     |

(continued on next page)

Table 5: (continued)

| Path                                | Value of moderator | Conditional indirect effects | Boot SE        | Boot LLCI        | Boot ULCI        |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>Index of moderated mediation</b> |                    | <b>Index</b>                 | <b>Boot SE</b> | <b>Boot LLCI</b> | <b>Boot ULCI</b> |
| Servicing empowerment               |                    | 0.067                        | 0.024          | 0.020            | 0.117            |

Note: LLCI = Lower level confidence interval; ULCI = Upper level confidence interval; level of confidence = 95%; number of bootstrap samples = 5000; SE = Standard error.

## DISCUSSION

Changing savvy customers’ demands, rapid progress of information technologies, and intense competition are examples of challenges, which urge hotels to promote service innovation for gaining sustainable competitive advantage. The response to these challenges requires the frontline employees to be innovative. Irrespective that IWB is considered a vital factor in service firms, less is known about how frontline employees’ IWB can be enhanced (Chang et al., 2017). In an attempt to fill this gap, the present study delineated and empirically tested the role of cooperative psychological climate on frontline employees’ IWB with the mediating role of harmonious passion. Further, we sought to examine the moderating role of servicing empowerment on the relationship between harmonious passion and IWB.

On testing  $H_1$ , findings revealed that cooperative psychological climate had a strong relationship with frontline employees’ IWB, which signified that the more frontline employees perceive their work environment to be cooperative, the higher is their tendency towards exhibiting IWB in their hotel firms. Results of this significant relationship echo with the past studies, in which it was shown that employees’ perception of their work climate has strong relationships with their extra role and IWB (Janssen, 2005; Yee et al., 2014; Ho & Astakhova, 2018). The possible reason could be that, when employees perceive their hotel work climate to be cooperative, they are more likely to recognise and value the benefits associated to the support and cooperation they receive. As such, on the basis of norm of reciprocity, these employees would hence feel obliged to repay the cooperative and supportive treatment from their co-workers and supervisors in the shape of putting extra efforts towards benefiting the hotel firms in the shape of IWB.

Second, the results also suggest that cooperative psychological climate is positively related to frontline employees’ harmonious passion. These findings are consistent with a recent study in which significant and positive link was established between



cooperative psychological climate and harmonious passion among employees (Ho & Astakhova, 2018). Findings of this relationship also concur with those of Kataria et al. (2013) and Martin et al. (2005), who suggest that perceptions of work climate play a critical role in shaping employees' motivational states at work (in our study, harmonious passion). Further, findings are in line with the basic premise of SDT, contending that social context remains one of the crucial factors in either satisfying or thwarting individuals' needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000). More specifically, it has been evidenced in research that interpersonal climate plays a significant role in promoting autonomous internalisation or basic needs of employees (e.g., Baard et al., 2004; Deci et al., 1989), and harmonious passion emerges when employees perceive an autonomous internalisation of work (Vallerand et al., 2003). The possible reason of the said relationship could be that frontline employees often work in groups and teams that need cooperation among them to complete their tasks. As such, frontline employees working in an environment where cooperation among members is promoted can work with little or even no constraints that could put pressure on them in terms of performing their tasks and further, they feel free to express their ideas, feel recognised for their contributions, and might understand their work roles in a clearer manner. These perceptions and realisation make their tasks more interesting and challenging, thereby they show more harmonious passion towards their tasks.

On testing  $H_3$ , findings demonstrated a significant and positive relationship between harmonious passion and IWB, which signifies that frontline employees with high harmonious passion exhibit a stronger level of IWB in their hotel firms. This significant relationship accords with the recent study' findings of Luu (2019), stating that frontline employees who develop harmonious passion are more involved in service IWB in their respective hotel firms. The possible reason for this positive relationship is that, when frontline employees develop harmonious passion, they become so connected in their tasks that they experience high level of pleasure performing their jobs. With such kind of love and pleasure, these employees willingly practice and master the work for which they are harmoniously passionate, contributing to high levels of IWB. This justification is supported by the claims and assertions of scholars that harmoniously passionate frontline employees are ready to demonstrate extra performance to meet and exceed customers' expectations (Chen et al., 2017) and are desirous to invest time and energy to come up with diverse and unique ideas for improving the current status of customers (Luu, 2019).

On testing  $H_4$  for the mediating effect, it was observed that harmonious passion functions as a mediator between cooperative psychological climate and IWB. The results lend support to the theoretical underpinning of the conceptual framework

of this study illustrating that frontline employees' perception of their hotel climate to be cooperative enhances their harmonious passion toward their work, thereby they are more likely to exhibit IWB. The findings are in accordance with the recent work of Ho et al. (2018), stating that harmonious passion serves as an important underlying mechanism in the linkage between cooperative psychological climate and employees' extra role behaviours. Specially, in case the employees perceive their organisation climate to be cooperative, they build friendly and good relations with their co-workers (Lashari et al., 2016), exchange information for the sake of meeting organisational goals, and work with rather than against each other. Under such circumstances, they feel that they are being cared by their co-workers and supervisors and their need for relatedness is satisfied, thereby enhancing their motivation and harmonious passion (Ho et al., 2018). Consequently, these harmoniously passionate frontline employees perceiving their hotel climate to be cooperative would show tendency towards exhibiting IWB.

Regarding the fifth hypothesis ( $H_{5a}$ ) for the moderating effect, the findings demonstrated that servicing empowerment acts as a moderator and influences the strength of the relationship between harmonious passion and IWB. The findings revealed that the relationship between harmonious passion and IWB was strengthened when employees experienced greater servicing empowerment. The underlying reason is that, with servicing empowerment, frontline employees experience enhanced zones of autonomy, where they are able to perform their tasks without any restrictions, thereby liberating them to leverage empowerment for their IWB. Employees with empowerment are likely to have a sense of self-confidence to make critical decisions to initiate various solutions to respond to customer requirements (Sok & O'Cass, 2015); they will have a sense of ownership and will go extra miles for benefiting the organisation (He et al., 2010). Further, Gao and Jiang (2019) indicated that employees who are harmoniously passionate at work and gain more freedom to complete their tasks will involve more in IWB. Therefore, it can be understood that, when employees are highly empowered to deal with customers' complaints and requests, with the harmonious passion they develop at work will show more inclination towards involving in IWB for the sake of improving the current status of customers.

Finally, the present study supports the last hypothesis ( $H_{5b}$ ) that the indirect effect of cooperative psychological climate on IWB (via harmonious passion) was positive when servicing empowerment was high rather than low, such that it plays a critical moderating role in this relationship. That is, high servicing empowerment conditions support cooperative psychological climate effect on harmonious passion and in turn affect IWB. In the existing literature, prior empirical studies have supported servicing empowerment as a predictor of frontline employees'

outcomes (e.g., Karatepe, 2013; Karatepe et al., 2018). Based on the present findings, it is also argued that servicing empowerment may serve as an important moderator which accentuates the effect of cooperative psychological climate. To sum up, the underlying mechanism and conditional effect between cooperative psychological climate and IWB provide evidence for enhancing frontline employees IWB in hotel firms.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

The first theoretical contribution of this study comes from investigating cooperative psychological climate as an antecedent to employee' IWB for the first time. Second, this study built and tested a conceptual model that investigated the role of cooperative psychological climate on frontline employees' harmonious passion based on SDT, which adds to the body knowledge on sparse predictors on harmonious passion (Ho et al., 2018). This study goes beyond prior studies that primarily emphasised the role of leadership and HRM practices (Chen et al., 2017; Ma et al., 2018). Moreover, findings support the role of servicing empowerment as a moderator between harmonious passion and service IWB, revealing that empowered frontline employees with harmonious passion invest greater efforts for improving customer services by expressing constructive and innovative ideas at their work. This study therefore adds in the body of knowledge into the heretofore unexplored link between harmonious passion and servicing empowerment in fostering IWB. Finally, an important contribution of our findings is the existence of a moderation role of servicing empowerment in the relationship of cooperative psychological climate and IWB, and the positive relationship between cooperative psychological climate and IWB via harmonious passion is stronger for frontline employees who are more empowered.

From practical perspective, the findings suggest that service firms and hotel management should ensure that recruitment and selection of potential candidates is not only assessed by their qualifications, technical, conceptual, and behavioural skills, but also more important is whether they show tendency and wish to work with others. Other than that, managers need to build and reinforce a cooperative climate in their firms by discussion and training programs that clearly highlight the potential benefits of sharing knowledge, helping, and working with each other rather than against each other.

Further, service firms should strive to build harmonious passion among their employees in the workplace. We suggest that hotel management should recruit and hire those individuals who are keen in problem-solving initiatives and seek

interesting jobs, as such individuals will likely develop harmonious passion for their jobs (Ho & Astakhova, 2018).

Finally, hotel firms should take effective measures towards empowering their employees. We argue that if harmoniously passionate employees are given adequate authority, and are involved in decision making they become more passionate and exhibit novel ideas at work. In contrast, job restrictions and less empowerment limit the effect of frontline employees' harmonious passion on service IWB. Managers therefore should provide an empowering environment that can enable harmoniously passionate employees to involve in more innovative behaviours.

## **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS**

First limitation resides in the implementation of cross-sectional research design which deterred us to form stronger causal inferences. Hence, future research should re-test causality among these constructs in a longitudinal research design. Second, the findings derived from respondents from the hotel firms in four- and five-star hotels of Pakistan limit the generalisation of these findings to other service firms such as airline, banking, and health industry. The current research model should be generalised and replicated in other service firms rather than only hotel firms as in the current study. Finally, although we used harmonious passion as the mediating mechanism explaining the relationship between cooperative psychological climate and IWB, we did not specifically measure obsessive passion. Future research can incorporate obsessive passion as an intervening mechanism between these relationships. Additionally, we recommend that future researchers may consider other potential and possible mediating and moderating factors. For instance, thriving at work, self-concordance and basic needs can be alternative mediating mechanisms, whereas other social exchange factors such as trust in organisation, workplace gossip can attenuate or accentuate the link between harmonious passion and important employee behaviours.

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