

Empowering Leadership and Psychological Capital: Drivers of Teachers' Innovative Behavior among International School Teachers in Beijing City

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Abstract: In the context of globalization and technological advancements, educational institutions face increasing pressure to foster innovation, with teachers' innovative behavior becoming crucial for effective learning environments. This is particularly significant in international schools in Beijing, where teachers navigate multicultural and multilingual classrooms. This study aims to examine the influence of empowering leadership and psychological capital on teachers' innovative behavior in this unique educational setting. Using a quantitative research approach, data were collected from 500 teachers in international schools across Beijing and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to assess both direct and mediated relationships among the variables. The findings reveal that empowering leadership has a significant positive effect on teachers' innovative behavior, both directly and indirectly through psychological capital. These results suggest that psychological capital acts as a mediator, amplifying the impact of empowering leadership on innovation. This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence on how empowering leadership and psychological capital together foster a supportive, innovative teaching culture in cross-cultural educational environments, offering practical insights for school administrators in international settings.

Keywords: Empowering leadership, psychological capital, teachers' innovative behavior, international high schools, Beijing city

1. Introduction

In recent years, educational institutions worldwide have faced increasing demands to foster innovative practices, particularly in the context of rapid globalization and technological advancements (Mohamed Hashim et al. 2022). As schools attempt to adapt to new educational paradigms, the need for teachers to demonstrate innovative behavior has become a focal point of academic and professional interest (Szempruch et al. 2024). Innovative behavior among teachers is critical for enhancing student engagement, fostering critical thinking, and developing curricula that respond to diverse and evolving educational needs (Suyuti, 2024). For international schools in Beijing, China, these challenges are further magnified due to the unique multicultural and multilingual environment in which they operate. In these schools, teachers often cater to a diverse group of students with varying cultural backgrounds, requiring a more dynamic and adaptive approach to teaching and learning (Wang et al. 2024). Therefore, cultivating a work environment that encourages teachers to innovate is essential for improving educational outcomes and maintaining competitive standards in an increasingly globalized educational landscape.

Leadership styles play a pivotal role in shaping teacher behavior, with empowering leadership emerging as a key factor that influences innovative behavior in organizational settings (Khan et al. 2020). Empowering leadership is characterized by behaviors that delegate authority, encourage autonomy, and provide support, all of which can significantly impact an individual's willingness to engage in innovative practices (Ye et al. 2022). By fostering a sense of ownership and autonomy, empowering leadership can enable teachers to explore creative teaching methods, experiment with new approaches, and challenge traditional practices that may hinder student engagement and learning outcomes (Pineda-Baez et al. 2020). In the context of Beijing's international schools, where educational practices often blend Western and Eastern pedagogical philosophies, empowering leadership could serve as a catalyst for teachers to develop and implement innovative instructional strategies that meet the diverse needs of students.

In addition to leadership style, teachers' psychological capital, comprising self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience, has been identified as another crucial factor influencing innovative behavior (Salamah et al. 2024). Psychological capital represents an individual's positive psychological state and has been linked to various positive work outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance (Nguyen et al. 2020). For teachers, possessing high levels of PsyCap can foster a proactive approach to problem-solving, resilience in the face of challenges, and a readiness to embrace novel teaching methods (Flanagan & Amanda Grace, 2024). This is relevant in international schools, where teachers are often required to navigate complex cross-cultural dynamics and adapt their teaching methods to meet the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds. As such, PsyCap can be viewed as an internal resource that empowers teachers to engage in innovative behavior, contributing to both personal and institutional growth (Huang et al. 2021).

Despite the recognized importance of empowering leadership and PsyCap in fostering innovative behavior, limited research has explored their combined effects in the educational sector, particularly among teachers in international schools. Most studies on leadership styles and psychological factors influencing innovative behavior have been conducted in corporate settings, with relatively few examining their applicability within the unique cultural and organizational context of international schools in China. Consequently, there is a pressing need to examine how empowering leadership and PsyCap together influence innovative behavior among teachers in this setting, providing insights that could inform educational leadership practices and support teacher development in international schools.

The capacity for teachers to engage in innovative behavior is essential for driving educational progress and meeting the needs of diverse student populations (Johari et al. 2021). However, fostering such behavior in international schools is particularly challenging due to the cross-cultural dynamics and the need for adaptability in teaching practices. Despite the known benefits of empowering leadership in promoting autonomy and creativity in organizational settings, there is limited empirical evidence on its impact on teachers' innovative behavior within the educational sector, especially in the unique context of international schools in Beijing. Additionally, while psychological capital has been linked to positive outcomes in various professional settings, its role in supporting teachers' willingness and ability to innovate remains underexplored in educational research. Without a clear understanding of these dynamics, school administrators may struggle to create an environment that fully leverages teachers' potential for innovation, potentially limiting the school's effectiveness in delivering high-quality education (Brigola & Tiffini, 2023).

This problem is further compounded by the limited focus on international schools in China, where teachers face unique cultural, organizational, and pedagogical challenges that may not be present in domestic or other international educational contexts. As international schools in Beijing continue to expand and attract students from various cultural backgrounds, the demand for teaching staff who can adapt and innovate has become more pronounced. The absence of studies that examine the combined influence of empowering leadership and PsyCap on teachers' innovative behavior in this specific context creates a gap in the literature, leaving educational leaders with limited guidance on how to foster a supportive environment that promotes innovation. Addressing this issue is critical, as it holds implications for teacher development, student outcomes, and the overall effectiveness of international schools in Beijing.

The existing literature has focused on the impact of leadership styles and psychological factors on employee innovation in corporate settings, with limited research examining their applicability in educational institutions, particularly in international schools. Furthermore, while empowering leadership and psychological capital have each been shown to positively influence innovative behavior independently, there is a lack of studies investigating their combined effect on teachers' innovative behavior in the educational context. This research gap highlights the need for studies that explore how empowering leadership and PsyCap interact to influence teachers' innovative behavior, especially within the cross-cultural and dynamic environment of Beijing's international schools.

The study aims to bridge this gap by examining the influence of empowering leadership and psychological capital on teachers' innovative behavior in international schools in Beijing, China. By focusing on this unique educational context, the study seeks to provide insights that can inform leadership practices and teacher development strategies within international schools. Additionally, the study aims to contribute to the broader literature on innovation in education, offering empirical evidence on how specific leadership and psychological factors can drive positive behavioral outcomes among teachers in multicultural and multilingual settings.

2. Literature review

2.1 Studies on the Relationship Between Empowering Leadership and Teachers' Innovative Behavior

In recent years, a growing body of research has explored the role of empowering leadership in fostering innovative behavior among teachers, highlighting a positive relationship between the two.

Mokhlis et al. (2024) conducted a study examining the effects of empowering leadership on teachers' willingness and ability to engage in creative, novel practices within educational settings. The study found that empowering leadership practices significantly influenced teachers' innovative behavior by fostering a sense of autonomy, self-efficacy, and ownership over their work. Teachers who felt empowered by their leaders were more likely to experiment with new

teaching methods, create unique solutions to classroom challenges, and propose novel educational ideas. This study underscores the importance of empowerment as a driving force for innovation, suggesting that when teachers perceive their leaders as supportive and encouraging of autonomy, they feel more confident in taking creative risks and exploring new pedagogical approaches.

Dağlı et al. (2021) explored the impact of empowering leadership on teachers' innovative behavior through a longitudinal study that tracked teachers' behavior over an academic year. The findings indicated a strong, positive correlation between empowering leadership practices and increased levels of innovation among teachers. The study proposed that empowering leadership creates an environment where teachers feel valued and trusted, which in turn encourages them to think outside traditional frameworks and explore alternative approaches to teaching. This study found that empowering leadership leads to increased intrinsic motivation among teachers, which is a key driver of innovation in educational practices. The study highlights how empowering leadership not only enhances teachers' commitment to their roles but also fosters a culture of continuous improvement and innovation in teaching methods and practices.

Supriyanto et al. (2023) focused on how empowering leadership contributes to teachers' innovative behavior by enhancing their psychological empowerment. According to the study, teachers who experience high levels of psychological empowerment, characterized by a sense of competence, meaningfulness, and impact, are more likely to engage in innovative behaviors in the classroom. The study revealed that empowering leadership helps cultivate these feelings of psychological empowerment by providing teachers with greater decision-making authority, encouraging self-initiative, and recognizing their contributions. The study concluded that this empowerment promotes a mindset of innovation among teachers, as they feel more motivated and capable of implementing creative teaching techniques and adapting to the evolving needs of their students. This research emphasizes that empowering leadership is not merely about delegating authority but is also about creating an environment where teachers feel genuinely empowered to innovate in their daily practices.

These studies demonstrate a consistent positive influence of empowering leadership on teachers' innovative behavior. By fostering an environment of autonomy, trust, and psychological empowerment, empowering leadership appears to encourage teachers to adopt innovative approaches and take creative risks, ultimately contributing to a more dynamic and effective educational system.

2.2 Studies on the Relationship Between Empowering Leadership and Psychological Capital

Empowering leadership has garnered attention in recent years for its potential to foster psychological capital among employees, which includes dimensions like self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience.

Haq et al. (2021) highlight the direct positive impact of empowering leadership on employees' psychological capital. In this study, empowering leadership is characterized by practices that grant employees autonomy, encourage self-initiation, and promote participatory decision-making. According to the study, when leaders empower their employees, they create an environment in which employees feel trusted and capable of making decisions. This sense of empowerment directly contributes to higher self-efficacy, as employees perceive that their abilities are recognized and valued. Moreover, the study suggests that empowering leadership instills optimism, as employees develop a positive outlook towards their roles and believe in their capacity to overcome challenges. By promoting these empowering behaviors, leaders effectively enhance all aspects of psychological capital, ultimately contributing to a more resilient and optimistic workforce.

Mustikarini et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between empowering leadership and psychological capital, specifically exploring how empowering leadership practices affect employees' psychological resources. The study found that leaders who delegate authority and encourage their employees to take ownership of their tasks have a significant positive effect on psychological capital. The study explains that empowering leadership enables employees to feel more in control of their work environment, which enhances their hope and resilience. When employees are given more control over their work and decisions, they experience a greater sense of hope as they feel capable of influencing their future outcomes. This empowerment also fosters resilience, as employees are more likely to bounce back from setbacks due to the confidence they gain from their leader's trust. The study concludes that empowering leadership not only encourages employees to take initiative but also strengthens their psychological capital by reinforcing their sense of hope and resilience.

Burhan et al. (2024) provide further evidence of the positive effects of empowering leadership on psychological capital by examining how empowerment influences employees' attitudes towards their work and their mental well-being. This research found that empowering leadership significantly enhances employees' psychological capital by fostering a positive, supportive environment that emphasizes growth and development. The study argues that when leaders provide their employees with autonomy and opportunities to develop new skills, employees experience an increase in self-efficacy and optimism. By empowering employees to engage in problem-solving and decision-making, leaders reinforce the belief that their employees are capable and competent, thereby boosting their psychological capital. Additionally, the study suggests that empowering leadership encourages a positive outlook on future challenges, as employees feel prepared and optimistic about their ability to handle adversity. This study emphasizes that empowering leadership is crucial in cultivating psychological capital, as it creates a nurturing atmosphere that promotes self-belief, hope, and resilience.

In summary, these studies underline the positive influence of empowering leadership on psychological capital.

Through practices that encourage autonomy, participatory decision-making, and personal growth, empowering leadership strengthens employees' psychological resources, ultimately contributing to a more resilient and motivated workforce. These findings underscore the importance of adopting empowering leadership practices to enhance employees' psychological well-being and productivity.

2.3 Studies on the Relationship Between Psychological Capital and Teachers' Innovative Behavior

The positive impact of psychological capital on teachers' innovative behavior has been explored in numerous studies, highlighting how dimensions like self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience play a significant role in fostering creativity and adaptability among educators.

Sadat et al. (2024) conducted a study examining how psychological capital influences the innovative practices of teachers in a sample of primary and secondary schools. The findings indicated that teachers with higher levels of psychological capital were more likely to engage in innovative teaching behaviors, such as developing novel instructional strategies, incorporating technology in the classroom, and adapting their methods to meet diverse student needs. The study argued that psychological capital, specifically self-efficacy and optimism, provides teachers with the confidence and positive outlook required to experiment with new ideas. Teachers with strong self-belief were more likely to take risks in their teaching methods, even in the face of potential failure. This study emphasizes the critical role of psychological capital in nurturing a mindset conducive to innovation, suggesting that cultivating psychological resources within teachers could directly enhance their capacity to innovate in educational settings.

Karimi et al. (2023) focused on the connection between psychological capital and innovative behavior among teachers, emphasizing the mediating role of resilience. In their research involving middle school teachers, they found that psychological capital positively influenced teachers' willingness to implement new ideas and approaches in their classrooms. The study argued that resilience, as a component of psychological capital, enabled teachers to cope with setbacks and challenges associated with innovation, such as time constraints, limited resources, and potential resistance from students or colleagues. Resilient teachers were more persistent in pursuing innovative practices, even when initial attempts were unsuccessful. According to the study, resilience provided teachers with a stable foundation to manage the uncertainties of innovation, allowing them to bounce back from failures and refine their methods rather than abandoning them. This study highlights how psychological capital, particularly resilience, strengthens teachers' perseverance in adopting and sustaining innovative behaviors, contributing to a more dynamic and adaptable educational environment.

Youn & Jia Xin (2024) investigated the influence of psychological capital on teachers' innovative behavior across various school levels. The study found that teachers with higher psychological capital were significantly more likely to demonstrate creative problem-solving skills and introduce novel instructional techniques tailored to their students' needs. The study highlighted that hope, another key component of psychological capital, played an instrumental role in fostering innovation among teachers. Teachers with a high level of hope were characterized by a strong sense of goal orientation and a proactive approach to overcoming obstacles. This hope-driven mindset encouraged teachers to set ambitious goals for their teaching practices and persistently seek out new strategies to achieve them. Furthermore, the study revealed that teachers with elevated hope levels were more adept at identifying alternative pathways to accomplish their instructional objectives, particularly when confronted with challenges. The research underscores the importance of psychological capital, especially hope, in empowering teachers to embrace change and pursue creative solutions, ultimately enhancing their innovative behaviors in the classroom.

Each of these studies highlights the integral role of psychological capital in promoting teachers' innovative behavior, reinforcing the notion that psychological resources such as self-efficacy, resilience, and hope are crucial for cultivating a proactive and creative teaching environment. These findings suggest that fostering psychological capital in teachers could be an effective strategy for educational institutions aiming to encourage innovation and adaptability among their staff. By enhancing psychological capital, schools and educational leaders can potentially inspire teachers to explore new methods, adapt to changing educational demands, and contribute to a more engaging and progressive learning environment for students.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research method to examine the influence of empowering leadership and psychological capital on teachers' innovative behavior in international schools in Beijing, China. The quantitative approach is appropriate for this research because it allows for the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data, providing a clear and objective framework to quantify relationships among the variables of interest. By using quantitative methods, the study can draw generalizable conclusions regarding the impact of empowering leadership and psychological capital on teachers' innovative behaviors, supporting the development of evidence-based strategies for enhancing teacher innovation. The structured nature of quantitative research enables researchers to rigorously test hypotheses and establish correlations, making it particularly suited for studies aiming to validate theoretical constructs and measure the strength of relationships between variables (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, quantitative methods facilitate statistical analysis, allowing for robust testing of the proposed model and enabling the identification of potential mediating effects between

empowering leadership, psychological capital, and innovative behavior among teachers.

The decision to use a quantitative approach is grounded in the rationale that quantitative research can provide a broad overview of trends and patterns within a large sample. In this context, quantitative data collection methods, such as structured surveys, allow for the efficient collection of data from a large group of teachers across multiple international schools, ensuring that the findings are representative of the broader population. Given that the study focuses on a sizable sample of teachers in Beijing's international schools, the quantitative method is ideal for capturing a wide range of responses and enabling statistical generalization. Additionally, quantitative research allows for the use of sophisticated statistical techniques, such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which can simultaneously test multiple relationships between variables and provide insights into the direct and indirect effects of empowering leadership and psychological capital on innovative behavior. This methodological choice aligns with the study's aim to establish empirically supported relationships, adding rigor and validity to the findings.

The target population for this study comprises teachers working in 131 international schools located in Beijing, China as of 2024. According to data from these schools, the total number of teachers across all institutions is approximately 5,238. To ensure that the sample size is sufficient for statistical analysis and that the findings are generalizable, the study selects a random sample of 500 teachers from the population pool of 5,238. Random sampling is chosen to minimize bias and enhance the representativeness of the sample, as it allows each teacher within the population an equal chance of being selected. A sample size of 500 is statistically robust for analyzing relationships through SEM, as it meets the recommended minimum for such analyses and provides adequate power to detect significant effects. By selecting a sample of 500 teachers, the study seeks to capture a diverse range of experiences and perspectives from teachers across different international schools, strengthening the reliability and validity of the results. The study distributed questionnaires on WJX (a widely-used online questionnaire design and distribution website and platform popular in China) and collected 492 questionnaires in 131 international schools located in Beijing, China for a month from November 3 to December 3, 2024. After sorting out and checked the collected questionnaires, the study finally collected 488 valid questionnaires for the subsequent analysis process for checking and verifying the proposed research hypotheses.

For data collection, the study utilizes a Likert-type scale with 9-point items, which have been adapted and designed from validated instruments developed by previous scholars in the fields of empowering leadership, psychological capital, and innovative behavior. The use of a 9-point Likert scale provides a greater range of responses compared to traditional 5-point or 7-point scales, allowing for more nuanced measurement of participants' attitudes and perceptions. This scale enables respondents to express varying degrees of agreement or disagreement with statements regarding empowering leadership, psychological capital, and their own innovative behavior, facilitating a more precise assessment of these constructs. By adapting established survey items, the study leverages the reliability and validity of existing measures, ensuring that the constructs are accurately represented and that the data collected will be suitable for analysis through SEM.

In terms of data analysis methods, the study employs both descriptive statistics and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) path analysis to examine the relationships between the variables. Descriptive statistics will be used initially to summarize the basic features of the data, providing insights into the demographic characteristics of the sample and the overall distribution of responses across the constructs. This preliminary analysis will offer a general overview of trends in empowering leadership, psychological capital, and innovative behavior among teachers in Beijing's international schools. Following this, SEM path analysis will be conducted to test the hypothesized relationships between empowering leadership, psychological capital, and innovative behavior. SEM is a comprehensive statistical technique that enables the simultaneous testing of multiple relationships, making it ideal for complex models that involve both direct and indirect effects. By using SEM, the study can examine the structural relationships between empowering leadership, psychological capital, and innovative behavior in a single analytical framework, allowing for a more accurate understanding of how these variables interact.

The combination of quantitative methods, a large random sample, validated Likert-scale items, and sophisticated data analysis techniques provides a rigorous approach to investigating the influence of empowering leadership and psychological capital on innovative behavior among teachers. This methodology is designed to yield robust, generalizable insights that can inform leadership practices and teacher development strategies in international schools, within the multicultural and dynamic context of Beijing's international educational landscape.

The study investigates the influence of empowering leadership and psychological capital on teachers' innovative behavior among international school teachers in Beijing city, China according to the following Fig. 1 the research process.

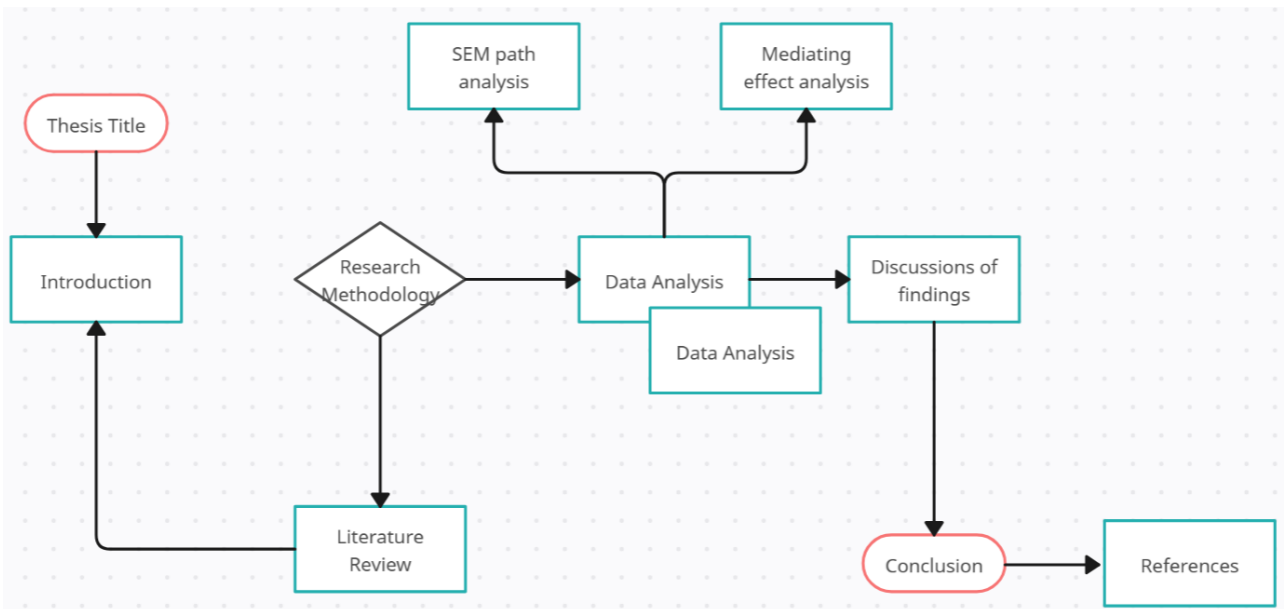


Figure 1. Research process

4. Data analysis

The study applied Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to investigate the influence of empowering leadership on teachers' innovative behavior as well as analyze the mediating effect of professional development. This analytical phase was conducted using AMOS software, version 28.0. The detailed results of SEM path analysis are shown in Fig. 2.

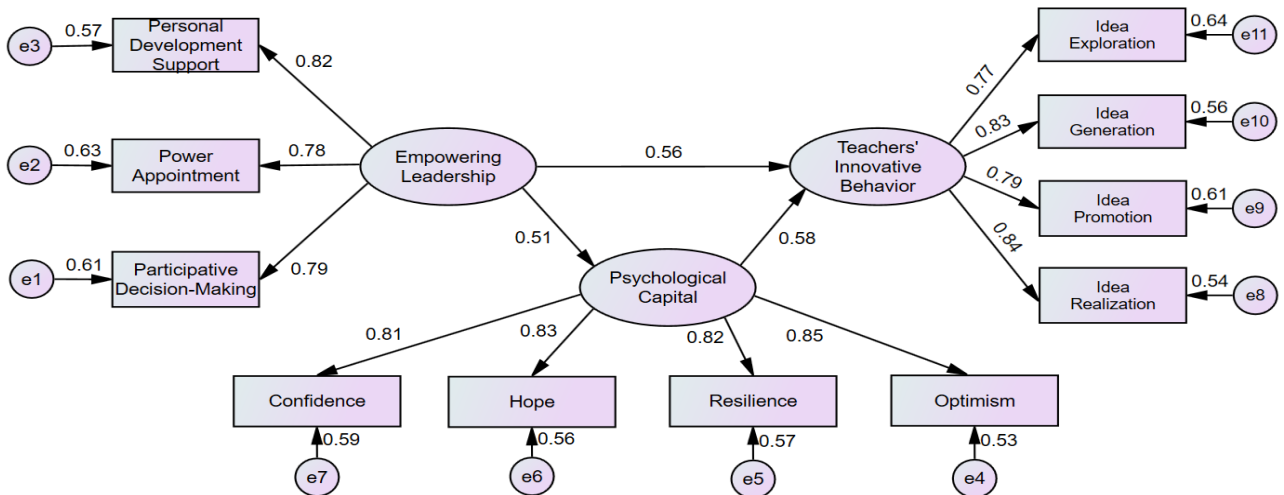


Figure 2. SEM path analysis of research conceptual framework

According to the data presented in Fig. 3., the standardized path coefficient that connects empowering leadership to teachers' innovative behavior is quantified at 0.563, accompanied by a p-value of 0.000. This statistically significant result strongly supports the idea that empowering leadership exerts a considerable positive influence on teachers' propensity to engage in innovative behaviors in their professional activities. Such findings highlight the critical role that leadership styles play in fostering an environment conducive to innovation among educators.

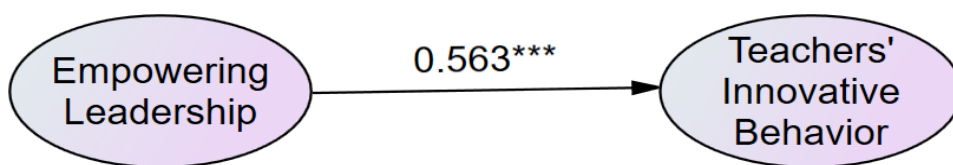


Figure 3. Analysis results of empowering leadership and teachers’ innovative behavior

According to the data depicted in Fig. 4., the standardized path coefficient connecting empowering leadership to psychological capital stands at 0.511, with an accompanying p-value of 0.000. This statistically significant result strongly supports the premise that empowering leadership profoundly influences the enhancement of psychological capital among employees. These findings underscore the essential role that empowering leadership plays in fostering a work environment conducive to developing positive psychological attributes such as resilience, optimism, hope, and self-efficacy. The substantial influence of such leadership practices promotes not only a more dynamic and supportive workplace but also contributes to the overall well-being and productivity of individuals.

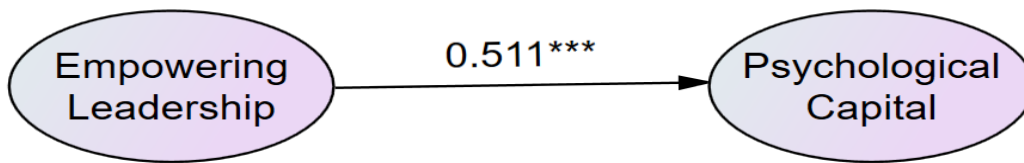


Figure 4. Analysis results of empowering leadership and psychological capital

According to the findings illustrated in Fig. 5, the standardized path coefficient that connects psychological capital to teachers’ innovative behavior is reported as 0.581, accompanied by a statistically significant p-value of 0.000. These results indicate that psychological capital, a composite of hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy, has a considerable and positive impact on the innovative behaviors exhibited by teachers. The data highlights the vital role psychological capital plays in enhancing teachers' willingness and capacity to implement innovative and creative teaching methods. This suggests that teachers with higher levels of psychological capital are more likely to embrace change, experiment with new ideas, and persist in overcoming challenges associated with innovative educational practices.

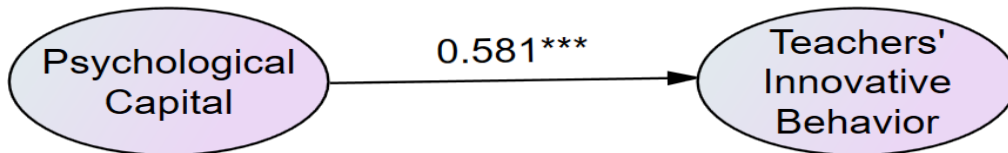


Figure 5. Analysis results of psychological capital and teachers’ innovative behavior

Apart from checking the direct relationship among latent variables of the study, the study also checks the mediating effect of psychological capital between empowering leadership and teachers’ innovative behavior. To evaluate the mediation effect, a Bootstrap method with 5,000 resamples was utilized. Detailed findings on the mediating effect of psychological capital are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Mediating effect analysis results of psychological capital

Standard effect	Path	Effect coefficient	95% confidence interval		S.E.	P-value
			Lower	Upper		
Total effect	Empowering leadership---> Teachers’ innovative behavior	0.860	0.809	0.911	0.026	***
Direct effect	Empowering leadership---> Teachers’ innovative behavior	0.563	0.520	0.606	0.022	***
Indirect effect	Empowering leadership--->Psychological capital--->Teachers’ innovative behavior	0.297	0.258	0.336	0.020	***

Based on data in the Table 1, the total effect coefficient is 0.860 ($p < 0.001$), indicating a strong, positive relationship between empowering leadership and teachers' innovative behavior. This suggests that empowering leadership has a significant impact on encouraging teachers to engage in innovative practices.

The direct effect coefficient is 0.563 ($p < 0.001$). This value represents the effect of empowering leadership on innovative behavior without accounting for the mediating role of psychological capital. The positive, statistically significant direct effect shows that empowering leadership independently promotes innovative behavior in teachers.

However, this effect is smaller than the total effect, suggesting that psychological capital may also play a role in enhancing this relationship.

The indirect effect coefficient is 0.297 ($p < 0.001$), indicating that a portion of the relationship between empowering leadership and teachers' innovative behavior is mediated by psychological capital. Since the indirect effect is statistically significant, it suggests that empowering leadership fosters psychological capital (self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism) in teachers, which, in turn, enhances their tendency to engage in innovative behavior.

The significant indirect effect (0.297) highlights the importance of psychological capital as a mediator. This implies that empowering leadership could be even more effective in fostering innovation if it also focuses on enhancing teachers' psychological capital.

In summary, the data in Table 1 confirms that psychological capital mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and teachers' innovative behavior. The significant indirect effect suggests that empowering leadership contributes to innovation both directly and by building psychological resources in teachers. Thus, enhancing psychological capital is a crucial pathway through which empowering leadership can further bolster innovative behaviors among educators.

5. Discussions of findings

The findings highlight the significant role of empowering leadership and psychological capital in fostering innovative behavior among teachers in international schools in Beijing. These results align with existing literature, suggesting that empowering leadership and psychological capital are not only relevant in corporate environments but are also crucial in educational contexts where adaptability and creativity are essential.

The study demonstrates a strong, positive relationship between empowering leadership and teachers' innovative behavior, with a standardized path coefficient of 0.563 and a p-value of 0.000. This statistically significant result indicates that empowering leadership plays a direct role in promoting innovative practices among teachers, supporting findings by Gkorezis & Panagiotis, (2016), who found that teachers feeling empowered by their leaders were more willing to explore new teaching methods and develop unique solutions to classroom challenges. Empowering leadership, characterized by delegation of authority, encouragement of autonomy, and provision of support, creates an environment where teachers feel trusted and valued, which fosters their intrinsic motivation to innovate. In the unique cross-cultural context of Beijing's international schools, empowering leadership could be particularly impactful by enabling teachers to merge diverse pedagogical approaches and respond to the needs of multicultural student populations.

In addition to its direct impact on innovative behavior, empowering leadership also has a strong, positive effect on psychological capital, with a path coefficient of 0.511 ($p = 0.000$). This finding confirms that empowering leadership significantly contributes to developing teachers' psychological resources, including self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience. The result echoes the findings of Gyu Park et al. (2017), who emphasized that empowering leadership enhances psychological capital by creating an environment that promotes growth, autonomy, and self-belief. Teachers who feel empowered are more likely to experience higher levels of self-efficacy, which increases their confidence in implementing new teaching methods and managing classroom challenges. This finding is particularly relevant for international school teachers who face unique challenges associated with cross-cultural teaching environments. By cultivating psychological capital, empowering leadership enables these teachers to navigate the complexities of a diverse student body and adapt their teaching strategies to meet varied learning needs.

The study further reveals that psychological capital itself has a strong, positive impact on teachers' innovative behavior, with a path coefficient of 0.581 ($p = 0.000$). This finding supports previous research, such as Baskaran & Rajarathinam (2017), which highlighted the role of psychological capital in fostering creativity and adaptability among educators. Specifically, the components of psychological capital, including self-efficacy, resilience, optimism, and hope, contribute to a mindset that is conducive to innovation. Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to take creative risks in their instructional approaches, while those with resilience are better equipped to overcome obstacles that may arise when implementing new methods. Additionally, hope and optimism drive teachers to pursue ambitious teaching goals and maintain a positive outlook, which sustains their motivation to innovate. This finding is especially relevant in international schools, where the capacity to adapt and innovate is critical due to the diverse learning needs and backgrounds of students.

Moreover, the mediating analysis reveals that psychological capital mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and innovative behavior, with an indirect effect coefficient of 0.297 ($p = 0.000$). This result underscores the importance of psychological capital as an intermediary that amplifies the impact of empowering leadership on innovative behavior. The significant mediating effect suggests that while empowering leadership directly encourages innovation, its effect is strengthened when it simultaneously enhances teachers' psychological capital. This finding aligns with the work of Zhu et al. (2019), who argued that empowering leadership fosters psychological capital, which in turn enables individuals to engage more readily in innovative behaviors. In the context of international schools, building teachers' psychological resources not only supports their innovative capacity but also helps them manage the stress and challenges of working in a multicultural environment.

In summary, the study confirms that empowering leadership is a powerful driver of innovative behavior among teachers, both directly and through the development of psychological capital. These findings highlight the need for school

administrators in international schools to adopt empowering leadership practices that support teacher autonomy and decision-making. Additionally, enhancing teachers' psychological capital could serve as a strategic pathway to foster innovation, enabling teachers to confidently explore new pedagogical approaches and address the complex needs of a diverse student body. This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence of the combined effects of empowering leadership and psychological capital on teachers' innovative behavior within the unique, cross-cultural context of international schools in Beijing.

6. Conclusion

This study highlights the critical role of empowering leadership and psychological capital in fostering innovative behavior among teachers in international schools in Beijing. By demonstrating both direct and mediated effects, the findings underscore that empowering leadership encourages teachers to engage in creative and adaptive instructional practices that meet the diverse needs of multicultural student populations. Additionally, psychological capital emerges as a crucial mediator that amplifies the impact of empowering leadership on teachers' innovation. Teachers with higher psychological capital are better equipped to take risks, persist through challenges, and maintain a positive outlook, all of which enhance their willingness to innovate. The study's results suggest that school administrators in international settings should prioritize leadership approaches that not only empower teachers but also invest in building their psychological resources, thus creating an environment that supports both personal and institutional growth. This research contributes valuable insights to the literature on educational leadership by revealing how the combined influence of empowering leadership and psychological capital can cultivate a proactive, innovative teaching culture within the unique cross-cultural context of international schools in Beijing.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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