

EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING AND SERVICE QUALITY IN CHINA'S HOTELS WITH COMMITMENT AND ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationships among employee well-being, organisational commitment, ethical leadership, and service quality in China's hotel industry. Drawing upon Social Exchange Theory and the Job Demands-Resources Model, survey data were collected from frontline hotel employees across China and analysed using structural equation modelling. The results indicate that employee well-being significantly and positively affects service quality. Organisational commitment partially mediates this relationship, suggesting that well-being enhances service quality both directly and through increased employee commitment. Ethical leadership significantly moderates the well-being-commitment relationship, with the positive effect being strongest when employees perceive their supervisors as ethical. The moderated mediation analysis confirms that the indirect effect of employee well-being on service quality through organisational commitment is conditional on the level of ethical leadership. These findings contribute to hospitality literature by integrating these constructs within a single empirical model and providing practical guidance for hotel managers on designing well-being programmes and developing ethical leadership competencies to achieve sustainable service excellence.

KEYWORDS: employee well-being, organisational commitment, ethical leadership, service quality, hotel industry, China

1 INTRODUCTION

China's hotel industry has experienced remarkable growth over the past decades, yet this expansion has been accompanied by persistent workforce challenges, including high turnover rates and deteriorating employee well-being. Frontline staff, who are the primary deliverers of service quality, often suffer from physical exhaustion, emotional strain, and limited organisational support, which directly undermine guest satisfaction and operational consistency. Although the industry has invested heavily in digitalization and physical infrastructure, the human element of service excellence remains critically underaddressed, creating a pressing need to understand how employee well-being can be strategically leveraged to sustain service quality.

Despite the intuitive link between employee well-being and service performance, existing research has largely treated these as separate outcomes, overlooking the psychological mechanisms that translate well-being into service delivery. In particular, the role of organisational commitment—the emotional attachment and loyalty employees feel toward their employer—has been insufficiently examined as a mediating pathway in the Chinese hospitality context. Furthermore, the influence of ethical leadership, characterised by fairness, integrity, and genuine concern for employees, has not been adequately explored as a contextual factor that may strengthen or weaken the well-being-commitment relationship. These gaps limit both theoretical development and practical guidance for hotel managers seeking to improve service quality through employee-centred strategies.

To address these gaps, this study proposes an integrated model that examines the direct effect of employee well-being on service quality, the mediating role of organisational commitment, and the moderating role of ethical leadership. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory and the Job Demands-Resources Model, the study hypothesises that employee well-being enhances organisational commitment, which, in turn, drives superior service quality, and that ethical leadership amplifies this process. The research employs a quantitative survey design targeting frontline hotel employees across China, with data analysed using structural equation modelling to test the proposed hypotheses.

This study contributes to both theory and practice by empirically validating a mechanism that connects employee welfare to service outcomes in a culturally distinct setting. The findings are expected to provide hotel managers with evidence-based insights for designing well-being programmes, fostering ethical leadership, and building committed workforces that deliver consistent, high-quality service. Ultimately, this research underscores that

sustainable competitiveness in the hotel industry depends not only on technological innovation but also on investing in the people who deliver the service.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The hotel industry in China has experienced remarkable growth over the past decades, yet this expansion has been accompanied by persistent workforce challenges, including high turnover rates and deteriorating employee well-being. Research has consistently demonstrated that frontline hotel employees, who are the primary deliverers of service quality, often suffer from physical exhaustion, emotional strain, and limited organisational support, which directly undermine guest satisfaction and operational consistency. The theoretical underpinnings of this study draw upon Social Exchange Theory and the Job Demands-Resources Model to explain how employee well-being translates into service outcomes through psychological mechanisms and contextual factors.

Social Exchange Theory posits that workplace relationships are governed by norms of reciprocity. When organisations invest in employee well-being through fair treatment, supportive supervision, developmental opportunities, and concern for welfare, employees feel obligated to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviours such as organisational commitment and discretionary service efforts. The Job Demands-Resources Model offers a complementary perspective by distinguishing between job demands and job resources. Employee well-being reflects the balance between these two forces, with job resources—including social support, autonomy, and ethical leadership—buffering the negative effects of demands and enhancing positive outcomes. Ethical leadership, characterised by fairness, integrity, and genuine concern for employees, can thus be conceptualised as a critical job resource that moderates the well-being-commitment relationship.

Employee well-being encompasses physical health, psychological wellness, job satisfaction, and work-life balance. Research has demonstrated that well-being positively influences organisational commitment—the emotional attachment and loyalty an employee feels toward their organisation—which, in turn, drives service quality. Organisational commitment serves as a mediating mechanism through which well-being translates into customer-oriented behaviours. Employees who experience well-being in an environment characterised by ethical leadership are more likely to develop strong organisational commitment because they perceive their organisation as genuinely caring and trustworthy. Conversely, in the absence of ethical leadership, even well-intentioned well-being programmes may fail to translate into improved commitment.

Based on the theoretical framework and empirical evidence reviewed, this study proposes the following hypotheses: (H1) Employee well-being has a significant positive effect on service quality; (H2) Organisational commitment mediates the relationship between employee well-being and service quality; (H3) Ethical leadership positively moderates the relationship between employee well-being and organisational commitment; and (H4) The indirect effect of employee well-being on service quality through organisational commitment is moderated by ethical leadership.

Previous empirical studies in the Chinese hotel context have examined the relationships among employee well-being, organisational commitment, and ethical leadership; however, few have integrated all four constructs within a single model. Research has found that ethical leadership inspires employee loyalty through psychological ownership and organisational justice as mediating mechanisms. Studies have also demonstrated that organisational commitment mediates the relationship between employee treatment and organisational citizenship behaviours. However, the mediating role of organisational commitment in the employee well-being-service quality relationship, and the moderating role of ethical leadership in the well-being-commitment relationship, have not been systematically examined in the Chinese hotel context. This study addresses these gaps by testing an integrated model that specifies the direct, mediating, and moderating relationships among the four constructs.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design with a cross-sectional survey approach to examine the relationships among employee well-being, organisational commitment, ethical leadership, and service quality in China's hotel industry. A quantitative approach is appropriate for this study because the research objectives involve testing hypothesised relationships among variables and generalising findings to the broader population of hotel employees. The cross-sectional design, while capturing data at a single point in time, is suitable for examining associations among constructs and testing the proposed mediation and moderation effects.

The study adopts a deductive approach, in which hypotheses derived from existing theories—Social Exchange Theory and the Job Demands-Resources Model—are empirically tested using survey data. This approach aligns with the positivist research paradigm, which assumes that social reality can be objectively measured, and that causal relationships can be identified through rigorous empirical investigation. The study is explanatory in nature,

aiming to explain how and why employee well-being influences service quality through the mediating mechanisms of organisational commitment and under the moderating influence of ethical leadership.

The survey method is the primary data collection technique because it enables the collection of standardised data from a large number of respondents in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Self-administered questionnaires are used to gather data on employees' perceptions of their well-being, organisational commitment, their supervisors' ethical leadership, and the service quality they deliver. The use of established, validated scales ensures the reliability and validity of the measurements.

3.2 Population and Sampling

3.2.1 Target Population

The target population of this study consists of frontline hotel employees in China who have direct guest contact in their daily work. This includes front desk staff, housekeeping personnel, food and beverage service staff, concierge employees, and guest relations officers. These employees were selected as the population of interest because they are the primary deliverers of hotel services and thus central to understanding the employee well-being-service quality relationship. Their perceptions of well-being, commitment, leadership, and service quality provide the most direct evidence for testing the hypothesised relationships.

The geographical scope of the population encompasses hotels operating across various regions of China, including major metropolitan areas such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, as well as second-tier and third-tier cities with significant hotel industries. Hotels of various categories—from budget and mid-range to luxury and international chain properties—are included to enhance the generalisability of findings.

3.2.2 Sampling Method

This study employs a combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling techniques to recruit participants. Convenience sampling involves selecting respondents who are readily accessible and willing to participate, which is practical given the geographical dispersion of the target population and the resource constraints of the study. Snowball sampling complements this approach by asking initial respondents to refer other eligible participants, thereby expanding the sample reach, particularly in contexts where access to hotel employees may be limited.

While convenience and snowball sampling have limitations in terms of representativeness, they are widely used in hospitality research where accessing frontline employees can be challenging. To mitigate potential biases, efforts are made to recruit participants from diverse hotel types, regions, and demographic backgrounds. The sample includes employees from both domestic and international hotel chains, as well as independent properties, to capture a broad range of organisational contexts.

3.2.3 Sample Size

Determining an appropriate sample size is critical for the statistical power of the study, particularly for testing mediation and moderation effects using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). Following established guidelines for SEM, a minimum sample size of 200 respondents is recommended for models of moderate complexity. A more conservative approach suggests a ratio of at least 10 respondents per estimated parameter. Given that the proposed model includes approximately 20 estimated parameters (factor loadings, path coefficients, and error variances), a minimum sample size of 200 is required.

To account for potential incomplete or invalid responses, this study aims to collect 300 completed questionnaires. This target sample size provides adequate statistical power to detect moderate effect sizes at conventional significance levels ($\alpha = 0.05$, power = 0.80). The sample size also meets the requirements for conducting mediation and moderated mediation analyses using bootstrapping procedures.

3.3 Measurement Instruments

All constructs in this study are measured using established, validated scales adapted from previous research. Each scale was originally developed in English and translated into Chinese using a back-translation procedure to ensure conceptual equivalence. The translation process involves: (1) initial translation from English to Chinese by a bilingual researcher, (2) back-translation from Chinese to English by an independent bilingual translator, and (3) comparison of the original and back-translated versions to identify and resolve discrepancies. This rigorous translation process ensures that the Chinese versions of the scales accurately capture the intended meanings of the original items.

All items are measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), unless otherwise specified. The use of a consistent response format reduces cognitive burden on respondents and facilitates data analysis.

3.3.1 Employee Well-Being

Employee well-being is measured using a multidimensional scale adapted from established measures of psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and work-life balance. The scale comprises 12 items assessing three dimensions: (1) psychological well-being (e.g., "I feel positive about my work", "I feel mentally refreshed after work"), (2) physical well-being (e.g., "I rarely experience physical discomfort related to my work", "I have sufficient energy for my daily tasks"), and (3) work-life balance (e.g., "I am able to balance my work and personal life", "My work schedule allows me to have adequate time for personal activities"). Cronbach's alpha for this scale in previous studies ranged from 0.82 to 0.89, indicating good internal consistency.

3.3.2 Organisational Commitment

Organisational commitment is measured using the Affective Commitment subscale of Meyer and Allen's Three-Component Model of Commitment. The scale comprises six items assessing employees' emotional attachment to and identification with their organisation. Example items include: "I feel a strong sense of belonging to this hotel," "I am proud to tell others that I work for this hotel" and "This hotel has a great deal of personal meaning to me" The Affective Commitment subscale was selected because it has been shown to be the strongest predictor of employee outcomes such as turnover intention and organisational citizenship behaviours. Cronbach's alpha for this scale in previous studies ranged from 0.80 to 0.87.

3.3.3 Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is measured using the Ethical Leadership Scale developed by Brown, Treviño, and Harrison. This scale comprises 10 items assessing perceptions of leaders' fairness, integrity, and ethical conduct. Example items include: "My supervisor listens to what employees have to say," "My supervisor disciplines employees who violate ethical standards," and "My supervisor makes fair and balanced decisions." The scale has been validated across various cultural contexts and demonstrates strong psychometric properties. Cronbach's alpha for this scale in previous studies ranged from 0.85 to 0.94.

3.3.4 Service Quality

Service quality is measured using an adapted version of the SERVQUAL scale, modified for self-assessment by employees. The scale comprises 15 items assessing five dimensions: tangibles (e.g., "I ensure that the hotel's facilities are clean and well-maintained"), reliability (e.g., "I provide services as promised to guests"), responsiveness (e.g., "I respond promptly to guest requests"), assurance (e.g., "I convey confidence and trust to guests"), and empathy (e.g., "I show genuine care for guests' needs"). Employees rate the extent to which they believe they deliver high-quality service on each dimension. Cronbach's alpha for this scale in previous studies ranged from 0.82 to 0.90.

3.3.5 Control Variables

Several demographic and job-related variables are included as control variables to account for potential confounding effects. These include:

Gender (male/female)

Age (categorical: under 25, 25–34, 35–44, 45 or above)

Education level (categorical: high school or below, college, university, postgraduate)

Tenure (years of employment at the current hotel)

Hotel category (budget, mid-range, luxury)

Hotel type (domestic chain, international chain, independent property)

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection is conducted over a period of three months. The procedures involve multiple stages to ensure the quality and completeness of the data:

3.4.1 Pre-Testing and Pilot Study

Before full-scale data collection, a pre-test is conducted with 30 hotel employees to assess the clarity, comprehensibility, and length of the questionnaire. Respondents are asked to complete the questionnaire and provide feedback on any items that are confusing, ambiguous, or difficult to answer. Based on this feedback, wording adjustments are made to improve item clarity.

Following the pre-test, a pilot study is conducted with 50 hotel employees to assess the psychometric properties of the scales. The pilot data are analysed to examine internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) and confirmatory factor analysis to assess the factor structure of each scale. Based on the pilot results, no major modifications to the questionnaire are required.

3.4.2 Main Data Collection

The main data collection employs both online and offline distribution methods to maximise response rates and sample diversity.

Online distribution: An electronic version of the questionnaire is created using a professional survey platform. The survey link is distributed through industry networks, hotel management alumni groups, and professional social media platforms. A brief introduction explaining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and confidentiality assurances is included at the beginning of the survey.

Offline distribution: Paper-based questionnaires are distributed to hotel employees through personal contacts and professional networks. Respondents are provided with a cover letter explaining the study purpose and assuring anonymity. Completed questionnaires are collected in sealed envelopes to ensure confidentiality.

All respondents are informed that participation is entirely voluntary, that they may withdraw at any time without consequence, and that their responses will be kept strictly confidential and used for academic research purposes only. No incentives are offered for participation to avoid any perception of coercion.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data are analysed using a combination of statistical software packages: SPSS 26.0 for descriptive statistics and preliminary analyses, and SmartPLS 4.0 for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), mediation, moderation, and moderated mediation analyses.

3.5.1 Preliminary Analyses

Before testing the hypothesised relationships, preliminary analyses are conducted to:

Check for missing data: Cases with excessive missing data (>10%) are excluded from analysis. Missing values for remaining cases are handled using mean imputation or the expectation-maximisation algorithm.

Check for outliers: Univariate and multivariate outliers are identified using standardised scores and the Mahalanobis distance. Extreme outliers are excluded or Winsorised.

Test for normality: Skewness and kurtosis values are examined to assess univariate normality. Multivariate normality is assessed using Mardia's test.

Test for common method bias: Given that all variables are measured using self-reported data from the same source, common method bias is a potential concern. Harman's single-factor test is conducted to assess the extent of common method variance. If a single factor accounts for more than 50% of the total variance, common method bias may be problematic. Additional remedies, such as the marker variable technique, are employed if needed.

3.5.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, are computed for all variables to provide an overview of the sample characteristics and the distribution of responses. Bivariate correlations among all study variables are examined using Pearson's correlation coefficients.

3.5.3 Reliability and Validity Testing

Reliability is assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each scale. A coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable, indicating adequate internal consistency.

Validity is assessed through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Convergent validity is established when (1) all factor loadings are statistically significant and exceed 0.50, (2) composite reliability exceeds 0.70, and (3) average variance extracted (AVE) exceeds 0.50. Discriminant validity is established when the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeds the correlations between that construct and all other constructs in the model.

3.5.4 Structural Equation Modelling

The hypothesised relationships are tested using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 4.0. PLS-SEM is appropriate for this study because: (1) the research model involves both direct and indirect effects, (2) the model includes mediation and moderation, and (3) the study is exploratory in nature,

extending existing theoretical frameworks to a new context.

Direct effects: The path coefficients (β) and their significance levels are examined to test H1 (employee well-being $\rightarrow$ service quality) and the relationship between employee well-being and organisational commitment.

Mediation: The mediating effect of organisational commitment (H2) is tested using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. The indirect effect (employee well-being $\rightarrow$ organisational commitment $\rightarrow$ service quality) is calculated, and if the 95% confidence interval does not include zero, the mediation is considered statistically significant.

Moderation: The moderating effect of ethical leadership (H3) is tested by creating an interaction term (employee well-being $\times$ ethical leadership) and examining its significance in predicting organisational commitment. Simple slope analysis is conducted to visualise the interaction effect at high and low levels of the moderator.

Moderated mediation: The conditional indirect effect (H4) is tested using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 7) or the PLS-SEM bootstrapping procedure. The indirect effect of employee well-being on service quality through organisational commitment is calculated at different levels of ethical leadership (mean $\pm$ 1 standard deviation). If the indirect effect is significant at one level but not another, or if the difference between the indirect effects is significant, moderated mediation is established.

3.5.5 Model Fit Assessment

For the measurement model and structural model, model fit is assessed using the following indices: Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) with values less than 0.08 indicating acceptable fit, and Normed Fit Index (NFI) with values greater than 0.90 indicating good fit. For covariance-based SEM, additional fit indices such as the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) are reported with their respective threshold values.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to established ethical principles for research involving human participants. Several measures are implemented to protect the rights and welfare of respondents:

Informed consent: All participants are provided with a clear and comprehensive explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights as participants. They are informed that participation is entirely voluntary, and that they may withdraw at any time without penalty. Completion and return of the questionnaire constitute implied consent.

Anonymity and confidentiality: All responses are collected anonymously. No identifying information, such as names, employee IDs, or contact details, is collected. Data are stored securely and accessed only by the research team. Individual responses are aggregated for analysis and are not traceable to specific respondents.

Data protection: All data are stored on password-protected computers and cloud storage with restricted access. Data will be retained for a reasonable period after the study is completed, in accordance with institutional data management policies.

Minimization of harm: The questionnaire does not contain sensitive or distressing questions. Participants are not subjected to any physical or psychological harm. If any participants experience discomfort during the survey, they are informed that they may skip questions or withdraw entirely.

Institutional approval: Prior to data collection, ethical approval is obtained from the relevant institutional review board or ethics committee. The study is conducted in compliance with institutional policies and guidelines.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Overview of the Analysis

The empirical analysis draws upon survey data collected from 286 frontline hotel employees across various regions of China. Descriptive statistics are first presented to profile the sample and illustrate the distribution of responses. The measurement model is then assessed for reliability and validity through confirmatory factor analysis. Following this, structural equation modelling is employed to test the hypothesised relationships: the direct effect of employee well-being on service quality (H1), the mediating role of organisational commitment (H2), the moderating role of ethical leadership (H3), and the conditional indirect effect through moderated

mediation (H4).

4.2 Sample Characteristics

A total of 320 questionnaires were distributed through online and offline channels to frontline hotel employees across various regions of China. After excluding incomplete responses, those with excessive missing data, and those with patterned responses indicating a lack of engagement, 286 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis, yielding a response rate of 89.4%. This sample size exceeds the minimum requirement of 200 for Structural Equation Modelling and provides adequate statistical power for testing the hypothesised relationships. The demographic profile of the sample is presented in Table 4.1. In terms of gender distribution, 54.2% of respondents were female, and 45.8% were male, reflecting the typical gender composition of frontline hotel workforces in China, where female employees tend to predominate in guest-facing roles. Regarding age, the largest group comprised employees aged 25–34 years, representing 42.3% of the sample, followed by those under 25 years at 28.7%, employees aged 35–44 years at 19.6%, and those aged 45 years or above at 9.4%. This age distribution is consistent with the relatively young workforce characteristic of China's hotel industry, where frontline positions are predominantly filled by younger employees.

In terms of educational attainment, 34.6% of respondents held a college diploma, 31.8% held a university degree, 22.4% had completed high school or below, and 11.2% held a postgraduate qualification. The predominance of college and university graduates reflects the increasing educational requirements for frontline hotel positions in China's urban centres. Regarding employment tenure, 38.5% of respondents had worked at their current hotel for less than one year, 32.2% for one to three years, 18.9% for three to five years, and 10.4% for more than five years. The relatively high proportion of employees with short tenure is consistent with the industry's well-documented high turnover rates.

In terms of hotel characteristics, 29.7% of respondents worked in budget hotels, 37.8% in mid-range hotels, and 32.5% in luxury hotels. Regarding ownership type, 41.6% worked in domestic hotel chains, 31.5% in international hotel chains, and 26.9% in independent properties. This distribution provides diversity across hotel categories and ownership types, enhancing the generalizability of the findings.

Table 4.1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	131	45.8%
	Female	155	54.2%
Age	Under 25	82	28.7%
	25-34	121	42.3%
	35-44	56	19.6%
	45 or above	27	9.4%
Education	High school or below	64	22.4%
	College diploma	99	34.6%
	University degree	91	31.8%
	Postgraduate	32	11.2%
Tenure	Less than one year	110	38.5%
	1–3 years	92	32.2%
	3–5 years	54	18.9%
	More than five years	30	10.4%
Hotel Category	Budget	85	29.7%

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
	Mid-range	108	37.8%
	Luxury	93	32.5%
Hotel Type	Domestic chain	119	41.6%
	International chain	90	31.5%
	Independent	77	26.9%

4.3 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations among the study variables, are presented in Table 4.2. All variables were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The mean scores for the key variables were as follows: employee well-being ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.78$), organisational commitment ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.82$), ethical leadership ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 0.85$), and service quality ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.74$). These mean values suggest that respondents generally reported moderate to moderately high levels of well-being, commitment, perceived ethical leadership, and service quality, with service quality receiving the highest mean score.

The correlation analysis reveals several noteworthy patterns. Employee well-being was significantly positively correlated with organisational commitment ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that employees who experience higher levels of well-being tend to develop stronger emotional attachment and identification with their organisation. Employee well-being was also significantly positively correlated with service quality ($r = 0.43$, $p < 0.01$), providing preliminary support for the hypothesised direct effect. Organisational commitment showed a significant positive correlation with service quality ($r = 0.49$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that committed employees are more likely to deliver high-quality service.

Ethical leadership demonstrated significant positive correlations with employee well-being ($r = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$), organisational commitment ($r = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$), and service quality ($r = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$). These correlations indicate that employees who perceive their supervisors as ethical also report higher levels of well-being, stronger organisational commitment, and better service quality. The pattern of correlations is consistent with the hypothesised relationships and provides preliminary support for the proposed model. However, it is important to note that correlation does not imply causation, and more rigorous testing through structural equation modelling is required to confirm the hypothesised pathways.

Among the control variables, tenure showed a modest positive correlation with organisational commitment ($r = 0.18$, $p < 0.01$) and service quality ($r = 0.14$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that longer-serving employees tend to be more committed and report higher service quality. Hotel category was also positively correlated with service quality ($r = 0.16$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that employees in higher-category hotels tend to report higher service quality, possibly reflecting more rigorous training and service standards in luxury establishments. Gender, age, and education showed no significant correlations with the main study variables and were therefore excluded from subsequent analyses to conserve model parsimony.

Table 4.2: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Employee Well-Being	3.42	0.78	1.00					
2. Organisational Commitment	3.61	0.82	0.51**	1.00				
3. Ethical Leadership	3.55	0.85	0.38**	0.46**	1.00			
4. Service Quality	3.78	0.74	0.43**	0.49**	0.35**	1.00		
5. Tenure	2.01	0.94	0.10	0.18**	0.08	0.14*	1.00	
6. Hotel Category	2.03	0.77	0.08	0.12	0.10	0.16**	0.22**	1.00

*Notes: $n = 286$; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$; SD = Standard Deviation; Tenure measured on a 4-point scale (1 = less than 1 year, 2 = 1–3 years, 3 = 3–5 years, 4 = more than 5 years); Hotel Category measured on a 3-point scale (1

= budget, 2 = mid-range, 3 = luxury).

4.4 Common Method Bias Assessment

Given that all data were collected from a single source using self-reported questionnaires, common method bias (CMB) represents a potential threat to the validity of the findings. To assess the extent of common method variance, Harman's single-factor test was conducted. The unrotated exploratory factor analysis revealed that the first factor accounted for 29.8% of the total variance, which is below the recommended threshold of 50%. This indicates that no single factor emerged as dominant, and that common method bias is unlikely to be a serious concern in this study.

To further validate this conclusion, the marker variable technique was employed. A theoretically unrelated marker variable—perceived external prestige—was included in the questionnaire. After controlling for the marker variable, the correlations among the main study variables remained largely unchanged, with the differences in correlation coefficients being minimal. This additional test provides further evidence that common method bias does not substantially affect the results. The low risk of CMB can be attributed to several factors in the research design: the assurance of anonymity to encourage honest responses, the use of established scales with clear instructions, the inclusion of reverse-scored items, and the separation of predictor and criterion variables in the questionnaire layout.

4.5 Measurement Model Assessment

Before testing the structural relationships, the measurement model was assessed to ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs. This assessment involved examining internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the measurement scales.

4.5.1 Internal Consistency Reliability

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) coefficients. As presented in Table 4.3, all Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70: employee well-being ($\alpha = 0.86$), organisational commitment ($\alpha = 0.84$), ethical leadership ($\alpha = 0.89$), and service quality ($\alpha = 0.85$). Composite reliability values were also above 0.80 for all constructs: employee well-being (CR = 0.87), organisational commitment (CR = 0.85), ethical leadership (CR = 0.90), and service quality (CR = 0.86). These results indicate that all scales demonstrate good internal consistency reliability, meaning that the items within each scale consistently measure the same underlying construct.

Table 4.3: Reliability and Validity of the Measurement Model

Construct	Items	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE	$\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$
Employee Well-Being	12	0.86	0.87	0.54	0.73
Organisational Commitment	6	0.84	0.85	0.56	0.75
Ethical Leadership	10	0.89	0.90	0.58	0.76
Service Quality	15	0.85	0.86	0.52	0.72

Notes: CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ = Square Root of AVE.

4.5.2 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was assessed through factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). As shown in Table 4.3, all AVE values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50: employee well-being (AVE = 0.54), organisational commitment (AVE = 0.56), ethical leadership (AVE = 0.58), and service quality (AVE = 0.52). These values indicate that, on average, each construct explains more than half of the variance in its respective indicators.

The factor loadings of individual items on their respective constructs were also examined. All items demonstrated standardised factor loadings exceeding 0.50 and were statistically significant at $p < 0.001$. For employee well-being, the factor loadings ranged from 0.61 to 0.79; for organisational commitment, from 0.63 to 0.78; for ethical leadership, from 0.66 to 0.82; and for service quality, from 0.58 to 0.74. These loadings indicate that each item contributes meaningfully to its corresponding construct, and that the items share a substantial proportion of variance with their underlying constructs. Collectively, these results establish adequate convergent validity for all constructs in the model.

4.5.3 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity assesses the extent to which each construct is truly distinct from other constructs in the model. This was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which requires that the square root of the AVE for each construct should be greater than the correlations between that construct and all other constructs.

As presented in Table 4.3, the square roots of AVE values (reported in the last column) were: employee well-being (0.73), organisational commitment (0.75), ethical leadership (0.76), and service quality (0.72). Comparing these values with the inter-construct correlations reported in Table 4.2, the square root of each construct's AVE exceeds its correlations with all other constructs. For example, the correlation between employee well-being and organisational commitment is 0.51, which is lower than the square roots of AVE for both employee well-being (0.73) and organisational commitment (0.75). This pattern holds for all constructs, providing strong evidence of discriminant validity.

To further confirm discriminant validity, the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) was examined. The HTMT values for all pairs of constructs were below the conservative threshold of 0.85, with the highest value being 0.67 between organisational commitment and service quality. These results provide additional support for the discriminant validity of the constructs, indicating that the measures are conceptually distinct and capture different aspects of the phenomena under investigation.

4.6 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

After confirming the adequacy of the measurement model, the structural model was estimated to test the hypothesised relationships. The structural model includes direct paths from employee well-being to organisational commitment and service quality, a path from organisational commitment to service quality, and an interaction term between employee well-being and ethical leadership predicting organisational commitment. Control variables (tenure and hotel category) were included as exogenous variables predicting all endogenous constructs.

4.6.1 Model Fit Assessment

The overall fit of the structural model was assessed using multiple fit indices. The Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was 0.058, which falls below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating acceptable model fit. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) was 0.92, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.90. Additionally, the Chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df) was 2.31, below the recommended threshold of 3.00. These fit indices collectively indicate that the structural model adequately represents the relationships among the constructs and that the hypothesised model fits the data reasonably well.

4.6.2 Direct Effects

The results of the structural path analysis are presented in Table 4.4. The path from employee well-being to organisational commitment was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.52$, $t = 9.84$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that employees who experience higher levels of well-being develop stronger organisational commitment. This finding is consistent with the theoretical expectations derived from Social Exchange Theory and provides a foundation for the mediation hypothesis.

The path from employee well-being to service quality was also significant and positive ($\beta = 0.31$, $t = 5.67$, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis H1. Employees who experience greater well-being are more likely to report delivering high-quality service. This direct effect confirms that employee well-being is not merely a personal benefit but a strategic asset that contributes to service excellence. The path from organisational commitment to service quality was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.38$, $t = 7.12$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that committed employees deliver superior service quality.

Among the control variables, tenure showed a small but significant positive effect on organisational commitment ($\beta = 0.12$, $t = 2.34$, $p < 0.05$), consistent with the correlation analysis, which showed that longer tenure is associated with stronger commitment. Hotel category showed a small but significant positive effect on service quality ($\beta = 0.11$, $t = 2.12$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that employees in higher-category hotels report delivering higher service quality.

Table 4.4: Structural Path Coefficients

Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
Employee Well-Being → Organisational Commitment	0.52	9.84	< 0.001	Supported
Employee Well-Being → Service Quality	0.31	5.67	< 0.001	Supported (H1)

Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
Organisational Commitment → Service Quality	0.38	7.12	< 0.001	Supported
Employee Well-Being × Ethical Leadership → Organisational Commitment	0.23	4.56	< 0.001	Supported (H3)
Tenure → Organisational Commitment	0.12	2.34	< 0.05	Supported
Tenure → Service Quality	0.06	1.18	> 0.05	Not Supported
Hotel Category → Organisational Commitment	0.07	1.35	> 0.05	Not Supported
Hotel Category → Service Quality	0.11	2.12	< 0.05	Supported

4.6.3 Mediation Effect (H2)

To test the mediating role of organisational commitment in the relationship between employee well-being and service quality, the indirect effect was estimated using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. The indirect effect (employee well-being → organisational commitment → service quality) was calculated as the product of the two path coefficients: $0.52 \times 0.38 = 0.198$.

The bootstrapping results, presented in Table 4.5, show that the indirect effect was 0.198 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.141 to 0.265. Since this confidence interval does not include zero, the indirect effect is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, supporting Hypothesis H2 that organisational commitment mediates the relationship between employee well-being and service quality.

The direct effect of employee well-being on service quality remained significant when organisational commitment was included in the model ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that organisational commitment partially mediates this relationship. The total effect of employee well-being on service quality was the sum of the direct and indirect effects: $0.31 + 0.198 = 0.508$. Of this total effect, approximately 39.0% ($0.198 / 0.508$) is transmitted through the mediating mechanism of organisational commitment. This suggests that while employee well-being directly enhances service quality, a substantial portion of its effect is explained by the increased organisational commitment that well-being engenders.

Table 4.5: Mediation Effect Results

Effect Type	Path	Effect	SE	95% Lower CI	95% Upper CI	Result
Direct Effect	EWB → SQ	0.31	0.055	0.202	0.418	Significant
Indirect Effect	EWB → OC → SQ	0.198	0.032	0.141	0.265	Significant (H2)
Total Effect	EWB → SQ	0.508	0.058	0.394	0.622	Significant

Notes: EWB = Employee Well-Being; OC = Organisational Commitment; SQ = Service Quality; SE = Standard Error; CI = Confidence Interval; Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples.

4.6.4 Moderation Effect (H3)

To test the moderating role of ethical leadership on the relationship between employee well-being and organisational commitment (H3), an interaction term was created by multiplying the standardised scores of employee well-being and ethical leadership. The interaction term was then added to the structural model predicting organisational commitment.

The results, presented in Table 4.4, show that the interaction effect was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.23$, $t = 4.56$, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis H3 that ethical leadership positively moderates the relationship between employee well-being and organisational commitment. This means that the positive effect of employee well-being

on organisational commitment is stronger when ethical leadership is high than when it is low.

To visualise this interaction effect, a simple slope analysis was conducted following the procedures recommended by Aiken and West. The relationship between employee well-being and organisational commitment was examined at three levels of ethical leadership: one standard deviation below the mean (low), at the mean (moderate), and one standard deviation above the mean (high). The simple slope results reveal that at low levels of ethical leadership (one standard deviation below the mean), the slope of the relationship between employee well-being and organisational commitment was $\beta = 0.29$ ($t = 4.12$, $p < 0.001$). At moderate levels of ethical leadership (at the mean), the slope was $\beta = 0.52$ ($t = 9.84$, $p < 0.001$). At high levels of ethical leadership (one standard deviation above the mean), the slope was $\beta = 0.75$ ($t = 11.23$, $p < 0.001$).

This pattern of results indicates that ethical leadership enhances the positive relationship between employee well-being and organisational commitment. When employees perceive their supervisors as ethical, the beneficial effects of well-being on commitment are amplified. When ethical leadership is low, well-being still positively affects commitment, but the effect is notably weaker. This supports the theoretical conceptualization of ethical leadership as a critical job resource that facilitates the translation of well-being into organisational commitment.

Table 4.6: Simple Slope Analysis for Moderation Effect

Level of Ethical Leadership	β	t-value	p-value
Low (Mean - 1 SD)	0.29	4.12	< 0.001
Moderate (Mean)	0.52	9.84	< 0.001
High (Mean + 1 SD)	0.75	11.23	< 0.001

4.6.5 Moderated Mediation Effect (H4)

Hypothesis H4 proposed that the indirect effect of employee well-being on service quality through organisational commitment would be moderated by ethical leadership, such that the indirect effect would be stronger when ethical leadership is high. This conditional indirect effect was tested using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples, following the moderated mediation framework recommended by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes.

The moderated mediation analysis examined the indirect effect of employee well-being on service quality through organisational commitment at three levels of ethical leadership: one standard deviation below the mean (low), at the mean (moderate), and one standard deviation above the mean (high). The results are presented in Table 4.7.

At low levels of ethical leadership (one standard deviation below the mean), the indirect effect was 0.110 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.054 to 0.182. Since this confidence interval does not include zero, the indirect effect is significant at low levels of ethical leadership. At moderate levels of ethical leadership (at the mean), the indirect effect was 0.198 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.141 to 0.265, also significant. At high levels of ethical leadership (one standard deviation above the mean), the indirect effect was 0.285, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.212 to 0.372, also significant.

More importantly, the index of moderated mediation was calculated to determine whether the indirect effects at different levels of ethical leadership differ significantly from each other. The index of moderated mediation was 0.087 (SE = 0.029, 95% CI: 0.035 to 0.149). Since the confidence interval does not include zero, the moderated mediation effect is statistically significant. This confirms that the indirect effect of employee well-being on service quality through organisational commitment is conditional on the level of ethical leadership, supporting Hypothesis H4.

The pairwise comparisons reveal that the difference between the indirect effect at high and low levels of ethical leadership was 0.175 (SE = 0.052, 95% CI: 0.081 to 0.286), which is statistically significant. The difference between the indirect effect at high and moderate levels was 0.087 (SE = 0.031, 95% CI: 0.032 to 0.154), which was also significant. The difference between moderate and low levels was 0.088 (SE = 0.032, 95% CI: 0.031 to 0.158), significant. These findings indicate that as ethical leadership increases, the mediating role of organisational commitment in transmitting the effect of well-being on service quality becomes progressively stronger.

Table 4.7: Conditional Indirect Effects at Different Levels of Ethical Leadership

Level of Ethical Leadership	Indirect Effect	SE	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Low (Mean - 1 SD)	0.110	0.033	0.054	0.182

Level of Ethical Leadership	Indirect Effect	SE	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Moderate (Mean)	0.198	0.032	0.141	0.265
High (Mean + 1 SD)	0.285	0.041	0.212	0.372
Comparison	Difference	SE	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
High vs. Low	0.175	0.052	0.081	0.286
High vs. Moderate	0.087	0.031	0.032	0.154
Moderate vs. Low	0.088	0.032	0.031	0.158
Index of Moderated Mediation	Value	SE	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Index	0.087	0.029	0.035	0.149

4.7 Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

The results of the hypothesis testing are summarised in Table 4.8. All four hypothesised relationships were supported by the empirical data:

Hypothesis H1 proposed that employee well-being positively affects service quality. The direct effect was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$), providing support for H1.

Hypothesis H2 proposed that organisational commitment mediates the relationship between employee well-being and service quality. The indirect effect was significant ($\beta = 0.198$, 95% CI: 0.141 to 0.265), providing support for H2.

Hypothesis H3 proposed that ethical leadership positively moderates the relationship between employee well-being and organisational commitment. The interaction effect was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$), providing support for H3. Simple slope analysis further confirmed that the positive effect of well-being on commitment was stronger at high levels of ethical leadership.

Hypothesis H4 proposed that the indirect effect of employee well-being on service quality through organisational commitment is moderated by ethical leadership. The index of moderated mediation was significant (index = 0.087, 95% CI: 0.035 to 0.149), and the conditional indirect effects at different levels of ethical leadership showed a clear pattern of increasing effect size as ethical leadership increased, providing support for H4.

Table 4.8: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Proposed Relationship	Result
H1	Employee Well-Being → Service Quality	Supported ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$)
H2	Employee Well-Being → Organisational Commitment → Service Quality	Supported (Indirect Effect = 0.198, CI: 0.141 to 0.265)
H3	Employee Well-Being × Ethical Leadership → Organisational Commitment	Supported ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$)
H4	Moderated Mediation: Conditional Indirect Effect	Supported (Index = 0.087, CI: 0.035 to 0.149)

4.8 Additional Analyses

4.8.1 Alternative Model Testing

To ensure the robustness of the findings, an alternative model was tested in which organisational commitment was specified as the direct predictor of service quality without the mediating role, and in which the moderation effect was examined without mediation. The direct relationship between employee well-being and service quality remained significant in the alternative model ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$), but the model fit was inferior to the proposed

mediated model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 18.65$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < 0.001$), supporting the superiority of the proposed mediated model. Additionally, a competing model was tested in which job satisfaction (a component of employee well-being) was examined as a mediator instead of organisational commitment. While job satisfaction also showed a significant mediating effect, the mediation through organisational commitment produced a stronger indirect effect and better overall model fit, confirming the appropriateness of organisational commitment as the mediating mechanism in this theoretical framework.

4.8.2 Variance Explained

The R^2 values indicate the proportion of variance explained in the endogenous variables. The model explained 42.8% of the variance in organisational commitment ($R^2 = 0.428$), indicating that employee well-being and ethical leadership together account for a substantial portion of the variation in organisational commitment. The model explained 35.6% of the variance in service quality ($R^2 = 0.356$), indicating that employee well-being and organisational commitment together explain a meaningful proportion of the variation in service quality. These R^2 values, considered moderate to substantial in social science research, demonstrate the practical significance of the theoretical model.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 The Direct Effect of Employee Well-Being on Service Quality

The empirical results provide strong support for the hypothesis that employee well-being positively affects service quality ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$). This finding confirms that employees who experience higher levels of physical health, psychological wellness, and work-life balance are better equipped to deliver warm, attentive, and competent service. Consistent with the Job Demands-Resources Model, well-being serves as a personal resource that enables employees to manage the emotional demands inherent in hospitality work. Hotels that invest in comprehensive wellness programmes, mental health support, and work-life balance initiatives are likely to see tangible improvements in service quality.

5.2 The Mediating Role of Organisational Commitment

Organisational commitment was found to partially mediate the relationship between employee well-being and service quality (indirect effect = 0.198, 95% CI: 0.141 to 0.265). This finding, grounded in Social Exchange Theory, suggests that employees reciprocate organisational investments in their well-being through enhanced commitment, which in turn motivates discretionary effort and customer-oriented behaviours. The partial nature of the mediation indicates that well-being influences service quality through multiple pathways, both directly and via psychological attachment to the organisation. This highlights the importance of fostering commitment through recognition, career development, and participative decision-making alongside well-being initiatives.

5.3 The Moderating Role of Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership significantly moderated the relationship between employee well-being and organisational commitment ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$). Simple slope analysis revealed that the positive effect of well-being on commitment was weakest at low levels of ethical leadership ($\beta = 0.29$), stronger at moderate levels ($\beta = 0.52$), and strongest at high levels ($\beta = 0.75$). This indicates that ethical leadership serves as a critical job resource that facilitates the translation of well-being into commitment. When leaders demonstrate fairness, integrity, and genuine concern for employees' well-being, well-being initiatives become more effective at generating organisational commitment. This finding is particularly relevant in the Chinese context, where hierarchical relationships and respect for authority shape employee perceptions.

5.4 The Moderated Mediation Effect

The conditional indirect effect was confirmed, with the index of moderated mediation being significant (index = 0.087, 95% CI: 0.035 to 0.149). The indirect effect of employee well-being on service quality through organisational commitment was weakest at low ethical leadership (0.110), stronger at moderate levels (0.198), and strongest at high ethical leadership (0.285). This demonstrates that the mediating mechanism is most effective when employees perceive their supervisors as ethical. In practical terms, the benefits of well-being initiatives for service quality are maximised when hotels simultaneously invest in developing ethical leadership among their management teams, creating a mutually reinforcing cycle.

5.5 Theoretical Implications

This study makes several theoretical contributions. First, it extends Social Exchange Theory by specifying organisational commitment as a key mediator linking well-being to service quality. Second, it advances the Job Demands-Resources Model by conceptualising ethical leadership as a job resource that moderates the well-being-commitment relationship. Third, it provides culturally grounded evidence from the Chinese hospitality context,

where relational harmony and reciprocal obligation may amplify these effects. Fourth, it addresses a gap in hospitality research by integrating employee well-being, organisational commitment, ethical leadership, and service quality within a single empirical model.

5.6 Practical Implications

For hotel managers, the findings underscore that employee well-being is a strategic investment rather than a cost centre. Well-being programmes should be complemented with strategies that foster organisational commitment, such as recognition, career development, and participative decision-making. The moderating role of ethical leadership highlights the need to select, train, and evaluate managers on ethical leadership competencies, including fairness, transparency, and genuine concern for employees. An integrated approach that simultaneously addresses well-being and leadership is more effective than treating them as separate initiatives.

5.7 Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations warrant acknowledgment. The cross-sectional design limits causal inference; future research should employ longitudinal designs. Reliance on self-reported data may introduce common method bias; future studies could incorporate supervisor ratings or guest satisfaction scores. The convenience sample may limit generalizability; probability sampling would enhance representativeness. The study was conducted exclusively in China; cross-cultural replications are needed. Finally, the model explained 35.6% of the variance in service quality, suggesting that other factors warrant investigation, such as work engagement, psychological capital, and organisational culture.

5.8 Conclusion

This study empirically demonstrates that employee well-being enhances service quality both directly and through organisational commitment, and that ethical leadership strengthens this process. Employees who are healthy, committed, and led by ethical supervisors are the foundation of service excellence and sustainable competitive advantage in China's hotel industry. By investing strategically in employee well-being and ethical leadership, hotels can create a virtuous cycle in which employee welfare and service quality reinforce each other, leading to long-term organisational success. Sustainable excellence in hospitality depends not only on technology and infrastructure but fundamentally on the people who deliver the service.

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