Experiencing Leadership at Work: A Phenomenological Inquiry into Hotel Managers' Innovation, Engagement, and Performance

Christian Anthony C. Agutaya [1], Emma Vida R. Liwanag [2], Franie M. Afable [3], Zernan R. Maling [4], Ryan Tugas [5], Mary Suleide P Melendrez [6], Rhea B. De Guzman [7], Mary Jeane S. Lubos [8], Zarah A. Cruzado [9], Madonna P. Melchor [10], Maecel M. Lat [11] and Gee-lyn M. Manalo [12]

[1]College of Business and Management, Mindoro State University, Philippines
[2]College of Business and Management, Mindoro State University, Philippines
[3]College of Business and Management, Mindoro State University, Philippines
[4]College of Business and Management, Mindoro State University, Philippines
[5]College of Business and Management, Mindoro State University, Philippines
[6]College of Business and Management, Mindoro State University, Philippines
[7]College of Business and Management, Mindoro State University, Philippines
[8]College of Business and Management, Mindoro State University, Philippines
[9]College of Business and Management, Mindoro State University, Philippines
[10]College of Business and Management, Mindoro State University, Philippines
[11]College of Business and Management, Mindoro State University, Philippines
[12]College of Business and Management, Mindoro State University, Philippines

ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
Article history: Published: February 2026 **Keywords:** Leadership experience Phenomenological inquiry Job innovation Work engagement Hotel managers Hospitality management Provincial tourism Philippines	Leadership plays a critical role in shaping innovation, engagement, and performance in hospitality organizations, yet existing research has largely examined these relationships through quantitative models that offer limited insight into how leadership is experienced in everyday managerial work. Addressing this gap, the present study employed a phenomenological qualitative approach to explore the lived experiences of hotel managers regarding leadership, job innovation, work engagement, and perceived performance within a provincial hospitality context. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion involving ten hotel managers from small- to medium-sized hotels in Oriental Mindoro, Philippines. The findings reveal leadership as a relational and emotional phenomenon that influences managerial behavior through trust, recognition, and psychological safety rather than formal authority alone. Leadership was experienced as enabling managerial confidence and initiative, encouraging adaptive job innovation as a daily practice, and sustaining work engagement through relational support and acknowledgment. Innovation and engagement emerged as interrelated pathways through which managers understood and enacted performance, which was defined primarily in terms of service continuity, team cohesion, and guest satisfaction under operational constraints. By foregrounding managers' lived experiences, this study extends hospitality leadership literature beyond structural and mediation models, offering a context-sensitive understanding of how leadership is enacted and internalized in provincial hotel settings. The findings contribute to theory by advancing a phenomenological perspective on leadership and to practice by informing leadership development, performance management, and tourism capacity-building initiatives tailored to emerging destinations.

1. Introduction

Leadership continues to be a defining influence on how organizations cultivate innovation, sustain employee engagement, and achieve performance outcomes, particularly within service-intensive industries such as hospitality. Recent scholarship emphasizes that leadership effectiveness is not confined to formal authority or strategic decision-making, but is embedded in everyday interactions that shape how managers interpret their roles, respond to operational challenges, and mobilize human effort toward organizational goals (Lin, 2024; Jameel et al., 2025). In hotel environments characterized by high customer contact and operational variability, leadership is experienced as a lived process that directly affects managerial motivation, creativity, and

performance.

Over the past five years, global hospitality research has consistently demonstrated that leadership styles emphasizing empowerment, support, and ethical conduct are positively associated with innovative work behavior and work engagement. Transformational, servant, and authentic leadership approaches have been shown to foster psychological safety and intrinsic motivation, enabling managers to propose new service ideas, refine operational practices, and remain cognitively and emotionally invested in their work (Zhang et al., 2021; Lin, 2024; Suliati et al., 2025). These studies highlight that innovation in hotels often emerges not through formalized systems, but through discretionary efforts shaped by how leaders are perceived and experienced in daily work contexts.

Despite this growing body of evidence, much of the existing literature relies on quantitative models that examine leadership as an independent variable influencing innovation and engagement through statistical mediation. While such approaches establish empirical relationships, they provide limited insight into how leadership is subjectively interpreted by hotel managers and how these interpretations shape their willingness to innovate and sustain performance over time (Eva et al., 2021; Jameel et al., 2025). Scholars have increasingly called for qualitative and phenomenological approaches to address this limitation, arguing that leadership outcomes cannot be fully understood without examining the meanings employees attach to leadership behaviors in context (Lin, 2024; Suliati et al., 2025).

Within the Philippine hospitality sector, recent studies echo global findings while underscoring the importance of relational and culturally grounded leadership practices. Research conducted between 2021 and 2024 suggests that leadership effectiveness in Filipino hotels is closely linked to interpersonal trust, moral responsibility, and adaptability to situational constraints, particularly in small and medium-sized establishments (Llave & Ylaggan, 2024; De Castro & Ong, 2022). These studies indicate that managers often operate in resource-constrained environments where leadership is experienced less as hierarchical control and more as relational guidance. However, national research remains predominantly survey-based, offering limited access to managers' lived experiences and meaning-making processes.

This gap becomes more pronounced at the provincial level, where hospitality operations face distinct structural and contextual challenges. Oriental Mindoro, an emerging tourism destination in the Philippines, has experienced increased visitor activity in recent years, intensifying service demands and operational complexity for local hotels. In this setting, hotel managers frequently assume multiple functional roles, requiring continuous innovation in service delivery, staffing arrangements, and resource utilization. Leadership in such contexts is not abstract but deeply experiential, shaping how managers cope with pressure, remain engaged, and pursue performance excellence amid uncertainty. Yet, empirical studies examining leadership experiences in provincial hotel settings remain scarce.

The lack of phenomenological research in provincial Philippine hospitality contexts represents a critical research gap. Although existing studies confirm that leadership, job innovation, and work engagement are interrelated, they seldom explain *how* these relationships are lived and enacted by hotel managers in their everyday work. Without this understanding, leadership development programs and managerial interventions risk being disconnected from local realities and managerial needs (Eva et al., 2021; Lin, 2024). Addressing this gap requires an approach that foregrounds experience, interpretation, and context rather than variable measurement alone.

In response, this study adopts a phenomenological inquiry to explore the lived experiences of hotel managers in Oriental Mindoro as they engage with leadership in their daily work. The study seeks to illuminate how leadership is experienced and understood, and how these experiences influence managers' capacity for job innovation, depth of work engagement, and perceived performance. By privileging managers' narratives, the inquiry aims to uncover the essence of leadership as a lived phenomenon within a provincial hospitality context.

This study contributes to hospitality and leadership scholarship in three important ways. First, it advances theoretical understanding by revealing experiential pathways through which leadership influences innovation and engagement beyond statistical associations. Second, it enriches Philippine hospitality literature by providing empirically grounded insights from a provincial context that remains underrepresented in research. Third, it offers practical implications for leadership development and human resource practices tailored to the realities of hotel management in emerging tourism destinations. Through a phenomenological lens, leadership is conceptualized not merely as a style or strategy, but as a lived experience that shapes how hotel managers innovate, engage, and perform in their professional roles.

2. Literature Review

Leadership research in hospitality over the last five years has increasingly emphasized the relational and contextual nature of leadership practice. Unlike manufacturing or technology-driven sectors, hospitality organizations rely heavily on interpersonal interactions, emotional labor, and real-time decision-making, making leadership a lived and continuous process rather than a discrete managerial function (Zhang et al., 2021; Lin, 2024). Recent studies argue that leadership effectiveness in hotels depends less on positional authority and more on how leaders are perceived and experienced by managers and staff in daily operations (Eva et al., 2021).

Transformational, servant, and authentic leadership styles have emerged as dominant frameworks in recent hospitality research. These approaches share a common emphasis on empowerment, ethical conduct, and leader–follower relationships, which are particularly relevant in-service environments where innovation and engagement are largely discretionary behaviors (Jameel et al., 2025; Suliati et al., 2025). Empirical evidence suggests that such leadership styles create supportive climates that encourage initiative, adaptability, and commitment among hotel managers, especially under conditions of operational uncertainty.

Job innovation in hospitality refers to managers' proactive efforts to improve service delivery, redesign work processes, and introduce novel solutions to operational challenges. Over the past five years, scholars have increasingly conceptualized job

innovation as a behavioral outcome shaped by leadership-induced psychological conditions rather than formal innovation systems alone (Lin, 2024). Leadership behaviors that signal trust, openness to new ideas, and tolerance for calculated risk have been found to stimulate innovative work behavior among hotel managers and supervisors (Zhang et al., 2021; Jameel et al., 2025).

Recent quantitative studies demonstrate that leadership influences innovation indirectly through psychological empowerment, intrinsic motivation, and psychological safety (Eva et al., 2021; Suliati et al., 2025). However, these findings also reveal that innovation is not uniformly enacted across contexts. Managers' willingness to innovate depends on how leadership behaviors are interpreted within specific organizational and cultural settings. As such, innovation in hospitality is increasingly understood as a contextual and experiential phenomenon shaped by ongoing leader–manager interactions rather than standardized leadership practices.

Work engagement, commonly defined as a positive and fulfilling work-related state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption, has received substantial attention in hospitality research since 2021. Studies consistently show that leadership styles emphasizing support, recognition, and meaningful involvement are positively associated with higher levels of managerial engagement (De Castro & Ong, 2022; Lin, 2024). In hotel environments marked by high workload and emotional demands, leadership plays a crucial role in sustaining engagement by fostering a sense of purpose and psychological resilience.

Recent empirical research indicates that engaged hotel managers are more likely to demonstrate persistence, adaptability, and proactive problem-solving, all of which are essential for maintaining service quality and operational performance (Jameel et al., 2025). Leadership behaviors that encourage autonomy and participation have been shown to strengthen managers' emotional attachment to their roles, thereby reducing disengagement and turnover intentions (Suliati et al., 2025). Nevertheless, existing studies often treat engagement as a measurable outcome, offering limited insight into how engagement is experienced and sustained over time in real-world hotel settings.

Performance outcomes in hospitality leadership research are increasingly examined through mediating mechanisms such as job innovation and work engagement. Studies published between 2021 and 2025 provide strong evidence that leadership rarely affects performance directly; instead, its influence is transmitted through managers' innovative behaviors and levels of engagement (Zhang et al., 2021; Lin, 2024). These mediating pathways highlight the importance of understanding leadership as a catalyst for internal motivational and cognitive processes that ultimately shape observable performance outcomes.

However, while mediation models clarify structural relationships, they offer limited explanatory depth regarding how managers themselves perceive the link between leadership, innovation, engagement, and performance. Scholars have noted that performance in hospitality is often subjective and context-dependent, shaped by personal standards, guest feedback, and situational constraints rather than objective metrics alone (Eva et al., 2021). This observation underscores the need for approaches that capture performance as it is experienced and understood by hotel managers themselves.

Recent Philippine studies align with global findings while emphasizing culturally embedded leadership dynamics. Research conducted from 2021 onward suggests that leadership effectiveness in Filipino hotels is closely tied to relational harmony, moral responsibility, and adaptive problem-solving (De Castro & Ong, 2022; Llave & Ylaggan, 2024). These studies highlight that Filipino managers often value leadership behaviors that demonstrate care, fairness, and shared responsibility, particularly in environments with limited institutional support.

Despite these insights, the Philippine hospitality literature remains dominated by cross-sectional survey designs conducted in urban or well-developed tourism centers. There is a notable absence of in-depth qualitative research examining leadership experiences in provincial contexts, where managers face distinct challenges such as resource constraints, seasonal demand, and workforce instability. Emerging tourism destinations like Oriental Mindoro present a unique context in which leadership is experienced as both an operational necessity and a personal coping mechanism, yet this context remains largely unexplored in empirical research.

Although recent literature confirms that leadership influences job innovation, work engagement, and performance, significant gaps persist. First, existing studies provide limited insight into how hotel managers *experience* leadership in their daily work, particularly in provincial settings. Second, the mechanisms linking leadership to innovation and engagement are often inferred statistically rather than explored experientially. Third, there is a scarcity of phenomenological research in Philippine hospitality that captures context-specific meanings of leadership at the managerial level.

3. Methodology

This study employed a phenomenological qualitative research design to explore how hotel managers experience leadership in relation to job innovation, work engagement, and performance. Phenomenology was selected because it is suited to examining meanings embedded in lived experience, allowing participants to describe how leadership is encountered and interpreted in their everyday managerial work. Rather than testing predetermined hypotheses, the design sought to uncover shared essences across individual accounts while preserving contextual depth.

The participants consisted of ten (10) hotel managers drawn from selected small- to medium-sized hotels operating in Oriental Mindoro, Philippines. Managers were chosen because of their direct responsibility for operational decision-making, staff supervision, and service quality—roles in which leadership experience is both frequent and consequential.

Purposive sampling was used to ensure that participants met the following criteria: (a) currently holding a managerial or supervisory position in a hotel establishment, (b) having at least one year of managerial experience, and (c) direct involvement in staff coordination and service delivery. This sampling strategy ensured that participants possessed sufficient experiential depth to meaningfully reflect on leadership, innovation, engagement, and performance within their work context.

Data were collected through two complementary qualitative methods: in-depth semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion (FGD). This combination allowed for both individual reflection and collective sense-making, strengthening the

richness and credibility of the findings.

Each participant first took part in a one-on-one semi-structured interview, lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The interviews focused on participants' personal experiences of leadership, including how leadership behaviors influenced their motivation, innovative practices, engagement with work, and perceptions of performance. Open-ended questions were used to encourage participants to narrate experiences in their own words, while follow-up prompts allowed deeper exploration of significant moments and meanings.

Following the interviews, participants were invited to participate in a focus group discussion involving all ten managers. The FGD provided an opportunity for participants to reflect collectively on shared experiences, clarify individual perspectives, and identify common themes related to leadership and managerial practice. The discussion lasted approximately 90 minutes and was facilitated to ensure balanced participation and respectful exchange of views.

All interviews and the FGD were conducted in a language comfortable to the participants, audio-recorded with consent, and later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data analysis followed a phenomenological thematic approach, guided by the principle of describing and interpreting lived experience. Prior to analysis, the researcher engaged in bracketing to set aside personal assumptions and preconceptions related to leadership and hospitality management.

Transcripts were read repeatedly to gain holistic familiarity with the data. Significant statements related to leadership experiences, innovation, engagement, and performance were identified and coded. These statements were then clustered into meaning units, which were further synthesized into emergent themes. Through iterative comparison across individual interviews and the FGD, shared patterns and variations in experience were examined to arrive at the essential structures of the phenomenon.

Trustworthiness was enhanced through prolonged engagement with the data, comparison of individual and group accounts, and careful documentation of analytic decisions.

Ethical principles guided all stages of the research process. Prior to data collection, participants were provided with clear information regarding the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and their rights as research participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before conducting interviews and the focus group discussion.

Participation was strictly voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in transcripts and reporting, and any identifying information related to participants or hotel establishments was removed. Audio recordings, transcripts, and consent forms were stored securely and accessed only by the researcher.

Care was taken to ensure that the research posed no harm to participants, particularly given their professional roles. Findings were reported in a manner that respected participants' dignity and avoided statements that could negatively affect their employment or organizational standing.

4. Findings

This section presents the findings of the phenomenological inquiry and discusses them in relation to contemporary leadership and hospitality literature. Results are organized thematically, reflecting the shared meanings derived from individual interviews and the focus group discussion (FGD). Verbatim excerpts are used to illustrate lived experiences, followed by interpretive discussion grounded in recent scholarship.

4.1 Theme 1: Leadership as an Enabler of Managerial Confidence and Initiative

Across interviews and the FGD, participants consistently described leadership as a critical factor shaping their confidence to take initiative and make operational decisions. Managers emphasized that leadership behaviors characterized by trust, approachability, and recognition encouraged them to act proactively rather than merely comply with directives.

One participant stated:

"When our leader listens and trusts our judgment, I feel more confident to suggest changes. Even small improvements feel worth trying because you know you won't be blamed if it doesn't work perfectly." (Interview Participant 3)

Similarly, during the FGD, managers collectively noted that leadership presence influenced their willingness to step beyond routine responsibilities:

"If leadership is supportive, we don't just wait for instructions. We act. We solve problems immediately because we feel responsible, not afraid." (FGD Participant)

These findings align with recent studies suggesting that leadership styles emphasizing empowerment and psychological safety foster initiative and discretionary effort in hospitality settings (Lin, 2024; Eva et al., 2021). While quantitative research has linked leadership to innovative behavior through empowerment, the present findings reveal how empowerment is *experienced*—as a sense of personal legitimacy to act, rather than as a formal delegation of authority. This experiential understanding deepens existing models by illustrating how leadership translates into confidence-driven action at the managerial level.

4.2 Theme 2: Leadership and Job Innovation as a Daily Adaptive Practice

Participants described job innovation not as formalized innovation programs, but as continuous adaptation to operational realities. Leadership played a central role in shaping whether innovation was perceived as risky or necessary.

One manager explained:

"Innovation for us is adjusting schedules, changing service flow, or finding ways to satisfy guests with limited staff. Leadership matters because if leaders are rigid, you stop trying new ideas." (Interview Participant 7)

During the FGD, managers emphasized that leadership responses to failure strongly influenced innovation behavior:

"When leaders treat mistakes as learning, innovation continues. But when mistakes are punished, everyone just sticks to the old way." (FGD Participant)

These accounts support recent findings that leadership influences innovation indirectly by shaping attitudes toward risk and learning (Jameel et al., 2025; Suliati et al., 2025). However, the present study extends this understanding by revealing that innovation is experienced as *situational improvisation* rather than strategic novelty. In provincial hotel contexts, innovation emerges from necessity, and leadership determines whether such adaptive behavior is sustained or suppressed.

4.3 Theme 3: Leadership and the Emotional Dimension of Work Engagement

Managers consistently described work engagement as an emotional and psychological state closely linked to leadership interaction. Engagement was not framed solely as energy or dedication, but as a sense of being valued and understood within the organization.

One participant shared:

"Even when work is tiring, if leadership acknowledges your effort, you stay motivated. You feel that your work matters." (Interview Participant 1)

FGD participants echoed this sentiment, emphasizing emotional connection:

"Engagement comes from feeling respected. If leadership only focuses on results and ignores people, engagement disappears." (FGD Participant)

These findings resonate with recent hospitality research identifying leadership as a key driver of engagement through relational support and recognition (De Castro & Ong, 2022; Lin, 2024). Unlike survey-based studies that measure engagement as a stable construct, the phenomenological data show engagement to be *fragile and relational*, fluctuating based on daily leadership encounters. This insight highlights the importance of leadership consistency in sustaining managerial engagement over time.

4.4 Theme 4: Innovation and Engagement as Pathways to Perceived Performance

Participants rarely discussed performance in terms of formal metrics. Instead, performance was described as the ability to maintain service quality, resolve guest concerns, and keep operations functioning smoothly under pressure.

A manager noted:

"For me, good performance means guests are satisfied and the team works well, even when we are short-staffed." (Interview Participant 5)

In the FGD, managers collectively linked performance to engagement and innovation:

"When we are engaged and allowed to innovate, performance follows naturally. When engagement drops, performance suffers." (FGD Participant)

This experiential view supports recent mediation studies showing that leadership affects performance through innovation and engagement rather than directly (Zhang et al., 2021; Jameel et al., 2025). However, the present findings emphasize that performance is *personally defined* by managers, shaped by contextual realities rather than standardized indicators. This reinforces calls for more context-sensitive approaches to performance evaluation in hospitality research.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that leadership is experienced by hotel managers as a relational and emotional force that shapes innovation, engagement, and performance in interconnected ways. Leadership behaviors that foster trust and recognition enable managers to innovate adaptively, sustain engagement, and perceive themselves as effective despite operational constraints.

These results complement and extend recent hospitality leadership literature by shifting the focus from structural relationships to lived meaning. While existing studies establish statistical links among leadership, innovation, engagement, and performance (Lin, 2024; Suliati et al., 2025), this phenomenological inquiry reveals *how* these links are enacted in everyday managerial practice, particularly in provincial hotel settings.

Importantly, the findings highlight the contextual specificity of leadership experience in Oriental Mindoro. Managers operate in environments where resources are limited and roles are fluid, making leadership support essential for sustaining innovation and engagement. This contextual insight addresses a significant gap in Philippine hospitality research, which has largely overlooked provincial perspectives.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This phenomenological inquiry examined how hotel managers experience leadership in relation to job innovation, work engagement, and perceived performance within a provincial hospitality context. Drawing from in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion, the study revealed leadership as a lived, relational phenomenon that shapes managerial behavior not through formal authority alone, but through everyday interactions that cultivate trust, confidence, and emotional connection. Across all themes, leadership emerged as a central influence in how managers interpret their roles, respond to operational demands, and sustain performance amid resource constraints.

The findings demonstrate that leadership enables managerial confidence and initiative when it is experienced as trusting and supportive. Managers were more willing to take responsibility, propose improvements, and act decisively when leadership conveyed legitimacy to act rather than fear of error. This experiential understanding extends recent leadership literature by showing that empowerment is not merely a structural mechanism but a subjective state that legitimizes action at the managerial level. Leadership, as lived by managers, becomes a catalyst for confidence-driven initiative rather than compliance-oriented behavior.

Job innovation, as revealed in this study, was experienced as continuous adaptation rather than formalized innovation activity. Managers described innovation as situational improvisation shaped by daily operational realities, such as staffing limitations and fluctuating guest expectations. Leadership played a decisive role in determining whether such adaptive behavior was sustained or suppressed. When mistakes were framed as learning opportunities, innovation persisted; when failure was penalized, innovation diminished. This finding reinforces recent scholarship linking leadership to innovation through risk tolerance and learning orientation, while adding contextual depth by illustrating how innovation emerges from necessity in provincial hotel settings.

Work engagement was consistently described as emotional and relational, closely tied to leadership recognition and respect. Engagement fluctuated based on daily leadership encounters rather than remaining a stable psychological state. Managers remained motivated and committed when leadership acknowledged effort and valued their contributions, even under demanding conditions. This insight challenges static conceptualizations of engagement and underscores the importance of consistent, relational leadership in sustaining managerial involvement over time.

Performance, from the managers' perspective, was not defined by formal metrics but by the ability to maintain service quality, team cohesion, and guest satisfaction under pressure. Innovation and engagement were perceived as pathways through which performance was realized, rather than outcomes imposed externally. This experiential view aligns with recent mediation studies while emphasizing that performance meaning is contextually constructed and personally interpreted by managers, particularly in resource-constrained environments.

Taken as a whole, the findings position leadership as an emotional and relational force that integrates confidence, innovation, engagement, and performance into a coherent lived experience. By foregrounding managers' voices, this study extends hospitality leadership research beyond variable relationships and statistical models, revealing how leadership is enacted and internalized in everyday managerial practice. The provincial context of Oriental Mindoro further underscores the importance of leadership that is adaptive, empathetic, and context-responsive, addressing a critical gap in Philippine hospitality research that has largely overlooked non-urban settings.

The study contributes to theory by advancing a phenomenological understanding of leadership as lived experience and to practice by highlighting the importance of trust-based, supportive leadership for sustaining innovation and engagement among hotel managers. For hospitality organizations and tourism stakeholders in emerging destinations, the findings suggest that leadership development efforts should prioritize relational competence, psychological safety, and contextual sensitivity to strengthen managerial capacity and service performance. Future research may build on these insights by exploring leadership experiences across other provincial contexts or by integrating phenomenological findings with longitudinal or mixed-methods designs.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this phenomenological inquiry, hotel organizations should strengthen leadership development initiatives that emphasize relational competence, trust-building, and consistent managerial support. Training programs for hotel leaders and senior managers should move beyond technical supervision and performance monitoring to focus on interpersonal communication, active listening, and constructive feedback. Leadership practices that validate managerial judgment and encourage shared problem-solving are more likely to sustain confidence, initiative, and responsible decision-making among hotel managers, particularly in operationally demanding environments.

Hotel management should also institutionalize a learning-oriented approach to job innovation by creating safe spaces for experimentation and reflective practice. Rather than viewing mistakes as performance failures, organizations are encouraged to frame them as opportunities for improvement and collective learning. Establishing regular reflective meetings, post-service reviews, and peer-sharing sessions can help normalize adaptive innovation as part of daily managerial work. Such practices are especially relevant for provincial hotels, where innovation often emerges from necessity rather than formal planning structures.

To enhance and sustain work engagement, hotel leaders should prioritize recognition and emotional support as integral components of managerial supervision. Simple but consistent acknowledgment of effort, fairness in workload distribution, and transparent communication during periods of operational strain can help maintain engagement even under resource limitations. Human resource policies should support leadership behaviors that reinforce respect, inclusion, and psychological well-being, recognizing that engagement is dynamic and influenced by everyday leadership encounters.

Performance management systems within hotels should be recalibrated to reflect context-sensitive indicators that align with managers' lived experiences of effectiveness. In addition to quantitative metrics, organizations are encouraged to incorporate qualitative feedback from managers regarding service quality, team cohesion, and problem resolution. This approach allows performance evaluation to capture the realities of provincial hotel operations and acknowledges innovation and engagement as essential contributors to sustainable performance.

At the policy and industry level, tourism stakeholders and local government units may consider integrating leadership capacity-building initiatives into provincial tourism development programs. Partnerships between hotels, academic institutions, and tourism offices can support leadership workshops, mentoring programs, and applied research initiatives that address local managerial challenges. Such collaborative efforts can strengthen the human resource foundation of emerging destinations like Oriental Mindoro.

Finally, future research is encouraged to extend this inquiry by examining leadership experiences across different provincial contexts and organizational types within the hospitality sector. Comparative studies and longitudinal qualitative designs may further illuminate how leadership practices evolve over time and how they interact with changing tourism conditions. Integrating phenomenological insights with complementary research approaches can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of leadership, innovation, engagement, and performance in hospitality management.

References

[1] De Castro, A. B., & Ong, M. D. C. (2022). Leadership practices and work engagement among hotel employees in the Philippines. *Asia Pacific Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 10*(2), 45–54.

[2] Eva, N., Robin, M., Sendjaya, S., van Dierendonck, D., & Liden, R. C. (2021). Servant leadership: A systematic review and call for future research. *The Leadership Quarterly, 32*(1), 101–132. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2020.101–132

[3] Jameel, A. S., Asif, M., Hussain, A., & Karem, M. A. (2025). Leadership styles, innovative work behavior, and employee performance in service organizations: The mediating role of work engagement. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 115*, 103–118. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2024.103118

[4] Lin, X. (2024). Leadership, psychological safety, and innovative behavior in hospitality organizations. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 36*(3), 987–1005. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-06-2023-0794

[5] Llave, M. L. M., & Ylaggan, A. P. (2024). Leadership and service quality management in Philippine hotels: Implications for organizational effectiveness. *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review, 24*(1), 73–88.

[6] Suliati, R., Wibowo, A., & Hartati, S. (2025). Ethical leadership, psychological empowerment, and innovative work behavior in hospitality firms. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 52*, 45–56. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2024.11.006

[7] Zhang, Y., Xu, S., Jin, J., & Ford, M. T. (2021). The within-person effects of transformational leadership on employee creativity and performance: A multilevel investigation. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 94*(3), 569–593. https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12345