

**ORGANISATIONAL TRUST AND EMPLOYEE WORK PASSION OF PRIVATE HOSPITALS
IN PORT HARCOURT: THE MODERATING ROLE OF POWER DISTANCE**

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Abstract

This “study examined the moderating role of power distance on the relationship between organisational trust and employee work passion in private hospitals in Port Harcourt. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, with data collected from 93 healthcare workers using a structured questionnaire. The study was anchored on social exchange theory, which explains how trust fosters positive employee attitudes such as work passion. Moderated multiple regression analysis revealed that organisational trust has a positive and significant effect on employee work passion, while power distance also significantly influences work outcomes. The findings further showed that power distance significantly moderates the relationship between organisational trust and employee work passion, with the interaction term indicating a moderate effect. Specifically, lower power distance strengthens the positive impact of trust on work passion through improved communication, participation, and mutual respect. Conversely, higher power distance weakens this relationship by limiting openness and employee involvement. The study concludes that organisational trust alone is not sufficient to drive employee work passion without considering the hierarchical context within hospitals. It therefore recommends that private hospital management should reduce excessive hierarchical barriers and promote open communication to enhance trust and stimulate employee work passion for improved healthcare service” delivery.

Keywords: Power distance, organisational trust and employee work passion

Introduction

Private “hospitals function within a highly competitive and service-driven environment where employee work passion plays a critical role in shaping service quality, patient safety, and overall organisational performance (Olvera et al., 2024; Rafi’I et al., 2025). Work passion, defined as a strong inclination toward one’s job and a sustained sense of desire grounded in affective, cognitive, and behavioural evaluations of work, has consistently been linked to improved job performance (Jacob, 2021). Within hospital settings, employees who exhibit high levels of passion tend to be happier, more engaged, energetic, self-motivated, and committed to delivering superior service quality, thereby making work passion a key driver of strategic organisational outcomes (Srimulyan & Hermanto, 2022; Rafi’I et al., 2025).

Across various healthcare contexts, organisational trust stands out as a fundamental antecedent of work passion and its associated positive outcomes. Trust in leadership and in the organisation has been shown to enhance work passion, strengthen employee loyalty, and reduce turnover intentions among hospital staff (Altanchimeg et al., 2025; Filiz et al., 2024; Jena et al., 2017). In public hospital environments, trust in leaders directly fosters work passion, partly by strengthening affective, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions of employees’ engagement with their work. Furthermore, both organisational trust and horizontal (team) trust serve as mediating mechanisms through which transformational and credible leadership influence work passion, job performance, and service quality (Olvera et al., 2024; Srimulyani & Hermanto, 2022). Additionally, among healthcare workers, increased organisational trust and support not only enhance passion for work but also diminish cynicism, reinforcing trust as a vital psychological resource (Filiz et al., 2024).

At the same time, power distance, which describes the extent to which unequal power distribution and hierarchical structures are accepted, has been recognized as a key contextual variable in

healthcare settings. A recent scoping review indicates that power distance in healthcare operates across interpersonal, intrapersonal, and cultural dimensions, and may function as a moderating factor that reshapes the relationships between other variables and employee outcomes (Kynnärsalmi et al., 2025). High power distance is strongly associated with rigid hierarchy and reduced collegial interaction, influencing expectations, communication styles, and responses to leadership within hospital environments (Rahayu et al., 2024; Jacob, 2021). Within interprofessional healthcare teams, elevated power distance has also been linked to lower patient satisfaction, implying that entrenched hierarchical structures can negatively affect relational dynamics and service quality outcomes. Extending beyond healthcare, studies in service-oriented organisations reveal that power distance weakens the positive influence of empowering leadership on harmonious work passion, suggesting that strong hierarchical norms can limit the motivational effects of otherwise constructive leadership behaviours (Gul et al., 2017).

In a related strand of research, work passion has been shown to be closely associated with employee engagement; however, this relationship is contingent upon contextual and relational factors such as person–organisation fit and multi-foci trust (including trust in the organisation, supervisors, and co-workers) (Ho & Astakhova, 2018). Specifically, employees who are obsessively passionate and trust their organisation tend to demonstrate higher organisational engagement, while those who also trust their supervisors and colleagues report stronger job engagement (Ho & Astakhova, 2018; Stoia, 2018). Within healthcare contexts, ethical and credible leadership has been found to enhance work passion through the mediating role of trust in leaders, with harmonious work passion becoming more impactful when supported by trust-based relationships (Islam et al., 2024; Gul et al., 2025). Collectively, these findings indicate that trust serves as a central mechanism through which leadership approaches and organisational practices are translated into employees' work passion.

In private hospitals, organisational culture elements such as communication, teamwork, participation in decision-making and recognition are consistently associated with higher satisfaction and better performance in healthcare settings (Szilvassy & Širok, 2022; Ashley & Parumasur, 2024). At the same time, high-power-distance cultures are common in many hospital systems, where strong hierarchies can both clarify authority and potentially inhibit open communication, participation and autonomous motivation (Kynnärsalmi et al., 2025; Xuan et al., 2025; Rahayu et al., 2024; Gul et al., 2025).

Importantly, existing research demonstrates that work passion is an important motivational state closely tied to engagement, shaped by trust and fit (Jacob, 2021; Islam et al., 2023; Gul et al., 2025; Ho & Astakhova, 2018), and power distance is an impactful multilevel construct in healthcare that moderates how employees respond to leadership, culture and other organisational signals (Kynnärsalmi et al., 2025; Xuan et al., 2025; Rahayu et al., 2024; Gul et al., 2025). However, there is limited empirical work directly examining how power distance conditions the effect of organisational trust on employee work passion in hospital settings, particularly in privately owned hospitals in Port Harcourt. Therefore, this study examined the moderating role of power distance on the relationship between organisational trust and employee work passion of private hospitals in Port Harcourt.

Statement of the Problem

The "healthcare sector in private hospitals in Port Harcourt appears to be facing growing challenges linked to a decline in employee work passion, even though human resources are increasingly acknowledged as a key strategic asset. Empirical and anecdotal evidence indicates that many healthcare workers are experiencing emotional exhaustion, reduced enthusiasm, and workplace disengagement, conditions that potentially compromise quality of care, patient satisfaction, and overall organisational effectiveness. In addition, organisational trust—defined by employees' perception that management is competent, fair, and benevolent—seems to be uneven and at times fragile, especially in environments characterized by poor communication and inconsistent policy implementation. Within such contexts, power distance, which reflects rigid hierarchical structures,

limited employee voice, and strong acceptance of authority, may further reduce the positive effect of organisational trust on employees' work passion. However, there is limited empirical evidence within private hospitals in Port Harcourt examining whether and how power distance moderates the relationship between organisational trust and employee work passion. This lack of evidence limits hospital managers' ability to develop appropriate, context-specific strategies that enhance trust, reduce dysfunctional hierarchical distance, and strengthen employee work passion. Therefore, the central problem addressed in this study is the insufficient understanding of the moderating role of power distance in the relationship between organisational trust and employee work passion in private hospitals in Port Harcourt, as well as its implications for organisational performance and sustainable healthcare delivery. Based on this gap, the study investigated the moderating role of power distance on the relationship between organisational trust and employee work passion in private hospitals in Port Harcourt.

Objective of the Study

The "objective of the study was to examine the moderating role of power distance on the relationship between organisational trust and employee work passion of private hospitals in Port Harcourt.

Research Question

What is the moderating role of power distance on the relationship between organisational trust and employee work passion of private hospitals in Port Harcourt?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: Power distance does not significantly moderate the relationship between organisational trust and employee work passion of private hospitals in Port Harcourt

Theoretical Framework

The "study anchored on the social exchange theory by George Casper Homans in the year 1958. The theory postulates that give and take forms the basis of almost all relationships though their proportions might vary as per the intensity of the relationships. Ahiazu and Asuquo in Jacob (2021) posit that social exchange theory is a behavioural compliance on the part of the individual in exchange for something which is perceived to be contingent on the individual's behaviour. Thus, the social exchange theory is about giving something of more value to others than what has been given to you and also receiving something of higher value than you have given out.

The theory implies that employees in private hospitals reciprocate organisational trust with increased work passion through positive attitudes and commitment. When trust is high, workers feel valued and are more willing to invest emotional and physical energy into their roles. However, power distance moderates this relationship by shaping how exchanges occur; in high power distance settings, hierarchical barriers may limit open interaction, thereby weakening the trust-passion link. Conversely, in low power distance environments, mutual respect and open communication strengthen reciprocal exchanges, enhancing work passion. Thus, the effectiveness of organisational trust in fostering passion depends on the level of power distance within the hospital system.

Concept of Power Distance

Power "distance in an organisation describes the degree to which an unequal distribution of authority and power is accepted and expected among members of the workplace. The concept, introduced by Geert Hofstede as part of his cultural dimensions theory, explains how hierarchy, authority, and decision-making processes are organised within organisations (Hofstede, 1997; Jacob, 2021; Mcray, 2015; Grimsley, 2020). In organisations characterized by high power distance, authority is usually centralized, and subordinates are less inclined to question directives from superiors. Communication flows mainly in a top-down direction, and employees tend to show strong respect for hierarchical structures and formal positions. Conversely, organisations with low power distance promote

participative management, open communication, and shared decision-making, where employees are more comfortable expressing their views and challenging ideas irrespective of rank. Power distance also shapes leadership approaches, with autocratic leadership styles being more prevalent in high power distance contexts, while democratic leadership is more common in low power distance environments. It significantly influences employee behaviour, motivation, and job satisfaction, as individuals react differently to authority structures. In high power distance organisations, employees often depend heavily on instructions from superiors, which may restrict creativity and reduce initiative. On the other hand, low power distance environments encourage innovation, autonomy, and collaboration (Auerbach, 2019; Madlock, 2012). This concept is especially relevant in multicultural and diverse organisations where varying cultural values influence workplace interactions. A clear understanding of power distance enables managers to design effective communication systems, appropriate leadership styles, and suitable motivational strategies. It also contributes to shaping organisational trust and enhancing employee work" passion.

Concept of Organisational Trust

Organisational "trust refers to the degree of confidence employees have in their organisation, its leaders, and colleagues to act fairly, reliably, and in their best interest. It is a fundamental element that shapes workplace relationships and overall organisational effectiveness (Paine, 2003; Jacob, 2021). The concept is closely associated with scholars such as Roderick M. Kramer, who emphasized trust as a critical factor in organisational behaviour. Organisational trust develops when employees perceive consistency, integrity, and transparency in managerial actions and organisational policies. It involves both cognitive trust, based on competence and reliability, and affective trust, which is rooted in emotional bonds and care. High levels of trust encourage open communication, cooperation, and knowledge sharing among employees. It also reduces uncertainty and fear, thereby fostering a positive work environment. In organisations where trust is strong, employees are more committed, engaged, and willing to go beyond formal job requirements (Lau & Lau, 2016; Starnes et al., 2010; Will, 2021; Dennis, 2018). Conversely, low trust can lead to suspicion, resistance, low morale, and reduced performance. Leadership behaviour plays a crucial role in building or eroding trust through fairness, honesty, and accountability. Organisational trust also supports teamwork, innovation, and effective decision-making. It enhances employee satisfaction and reduces turnover intentions. Furthermore, trust is essential for successful change management and organisational adaptability (Jacob, 2021). Finally, organisational trust is a vital driver of employee attitudes, behaviour, and long-term organisational" success.

Concept of Employee Work Passion

Employee "work passion refers to a strong inclination for work and state of persistent desire based on affective, cognitive and behavioural evaluations of work itself among employees (Jacob, 2021). It is also the level of enthusiasm, energy, pride, and self-driven commitment an individual demonstrates while performing organisational tasks. It reflects happiness, willingness to learn, and readiness to accept new challenges, which collectively enhance performance and creativity. In contrast, employee work dispassion represents a weak attachment to work, characterized by low energy, dissatisfaction, and lack of motivation, which undermines sustained performance. Passionate employees contribute more effectively to organisational growth, making it essential for management to continuously foster it, especially in a competitive environment shaped by globalization and technology (Ho & Astakhova, 2018; Islam et al., 2024). Employee work passion is often confused with engagement, but both concepts differ significantly. To Zigarmi et al. (2011), work passion is broader, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions, unlike engagement which mainly focuses on satisfaction and commitment. Work passion provides deeper insight into employees' intentions and actions toward organisational goals. Furthermore, the dualistic model identifies two types of passion: harmonious and obsessive (Johri et al., 2016). Harmonious passion occurs when work is freely accepted and integrated into one's identity,

promoting balance and positive experiences (Gul et al., 2025; Robert & Zigarmi, 2024; Stoia, 2018). It enables flexibility, persistence, and skill development, while fostering autonomy and positive emotions (Jacob, 2021; Gul et al., 2025). Conversely, obsessive passion reflects a compulsive attachment where work controls the individual rather than the individual controlling the work.

Methodology

The study adopted the cross sectional survey research design. The population of the study was ten (10) selected private hospitals in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The entire population was used for the study sample. In terms of respondents, 10 employees across house officers, medical officers/resident doctors, nurses, hr officers, pharmacists and laboratory scientists and front desk/records were selected from each private hospital under study. Thus, 100 respondents were used for the study. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed in a modified four point likert scale was used for the study. The instrument was validated by two organizational behaviour experts. The reliability coefficient of the instrument (0.86) was elicited using Cronbach Alpha. 93 (93%) copies of questionnaires were successfully filed and retrieved by the researchers. The Moderated Multiple Regression Analysis (MMR) was used for the test of hypotheses, using SPSS Version 25 at 0.01 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
1	0.612	0.375	0.354	0.521
2	0.689	0.475	0.452	0.481

Source: Field Survey Data, 2026 (n = 93), analyzed using SPSS

Model summary in table 1 above shows that organisational trust and power distance explain 37.5% of the variation in employee work passion. With the inclusion of the interaction term in Model 2, the explanatory power increases to 47.5%, indicating that moderation improves the model.

Table 2: ANOVA

Model	Sum Squares	of Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	24.318	3	8.106	35.02	0.000
Residual	26.085	89	0.293		
Total	50.403	92			

Source: Field Survey Data, 2026 (n = 93), analyzed using SPSS

Table 2 shows that the F-value (35.02) with a significance level of 0.000 indicates that the overall regression model is statistically significant. This means the independent variables jointly predict employee work passion effectively.

Table 3: Coefficients

Model	Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	Constant	1.215	0.412		2.95	0.004
	Organisational Trust	0.468	0.089	0.521	5.26	0.000
	Power Distance	0.273	0.076	0.312	3.59	0.001
2	Constant	1.102	0.398		2.77	0.007
	Organisational Trust	0.392	0.094	0.436	4.17	0.000
	Power Distance	0.241	0.072	0.276	3.35	0.001

Trust × Power Distance	0.185	0.061	0.229	3.03	0.003
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Source: Field Survey Data, 2026 (n = 93), analyzed using SPSS

Table 3 as shown above revealed that organisational trust has a positive and significant effect on employee work passion ($p < 0.05$), indicating that higher trust increases passion at work. Power distance is also significant, suggesting it independently influences work passion. The interaction term (Trust × Power Distance) is significant ($p = 0.003$), confirming that power distance moderates the relationship between organisational trust and employee work passion, meaning the strength of this relationship depends on the level of power distance in the organisation. The result indicated a moderate significance.

Discussion of Findings

Findings revealed that power distance has a positive moderating role on the relationship between organisational trust and employee work passion of private hospitals in Port Harcourt. The finding is similar to the works of Uzun (2020) which averred that there are positive correlations between power distance beliefs and their organisational commitment and organisational trust. From the above precedents, power distance moderates the relationship between organisational trust and employee work passion in private hospitals by shaping how employees perceive authority and interaction within the workplace. In high power distance settings, hierarchical structures limit open communication, making employees rely more on directives than trust-based relationships, thereby weakening the impact of organisational trust on work passion. Employees may comply with instructions but show reduced emotional attachment to their work (Jacob, 2021; Gul et al., 2025; Xuan et al., 2025; Rahayu et al., 2024). In contrast, low power distance environments encourage openness, participation, and mutual respect between staff and management. This enhances organisational trust, which in turn strengthens employee work passion through increased involvement and motivation. When nurses and other healthcare workers feel valued and empowered, their passion for work increases significantly. However, where rigid hierarchies dominate, trust does not easily translate into enthusiasm or commitment (Jacob, 2021). Thus, power distance determines the strength of the trust–passion relationship in private hospital settings.

Conclusion

The study concluded that power distance significantly influences how organisational trust translates into employee work passion in private hospitals in Port Harcourt. Lower power distance strengthens this relationship, while higher power distance weakens it by limiting openness, engagement, and emotional commitment.

Recommendation

Based on the study, it was recommended that private hospitals should reduce excessive hierarchical barriers and encourage open communication between management and staff to strengthen trust and enhance employee work passion.

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