

Charismatic Leadership and Followers' Risk-taking Behavior

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Abstract: This study builds on social learning theory to unfold the impact of charismatic leadership on follower risk-taking behavior via followers' sense of empowerment as the mediator in how these dynamics lead crew members to take risks in Pakistan's IT sector. Charismatic leadership is fundamental in stimulating followers' sense of psychological empowerment, which stimulates their risk-taking tendency in their actions, such as taking up challenges and being creative. Followers' proactive personality is the moderating factor on this path, which reinforces the impact of empowerment on risk-taking behavior. This study used a survey-based approach to obtain data from a sample of 170 employees working in the IT sector. The results show that the level of charismatic leadership significantly fosters followers' risk-taking behavior, and psychological empowerment is established as a full mediator between the aforementioned relationship. Employee proactive personality holds the second stage of moderation for the conceptualized model. The research points to the decisive function of charismatic leadership in increasing the followers' risk-taking behavior by mentally empowering them, which is highly salient for those who possess a high proactive dispositional tendency.

Keywords: charismatic leaders; risk-taking behavior; psychological empowerment; proactive personality

1. Introduction

In the fast-moving universe of modern business, organizational success may be a question of finding a suitable leader who can inspire and empower a team to make daring leaps forward. Charismatic leadership that possesses the power of vision, emotional resonance, and motivational appeal has come forward as a dominant factor in the determination of organizational, individual outcomes. The conception of the word charisma has long been used to denote the leader's extraordinary characteristics (Baetz 1978). In the past, the Charisma quality was mostly viewed in political, religious, and social leaders (A. Conger and Kanungo 1988). At present, organizational researchers widely agree that charismatic leadership styles are also prevalent in organizations (Engelbert et al. 2025; M. Bass 1988), albeit disagreement exists on theoretical underpinnings (Crant and Bateman 2000). Charismatic leadership is the leader's unique ability to eloquently inspire vision and exceptional behaviors that lead organizations to collective goals (A. Conger and Kanungo 1988). Despite researchers extensively portraying the positive consequences of charismatic leadership for followers i.e., fostering the followers' goal-directed energy (Yan et al. 2025), job performance (Tahir et al. 2025), and mitigating the negative employee behaviors, such as employee turnover (McClean and Christopher 2019) and organizational deviance (E. Brown and Trevino 2006), their remains an underexplored area to understand its impacts on followers proactive risk-taking behavior. Theoretically and practically, it is critical to understand the relationship between charismatic leadership and followers' risk-taking behavior.

This study conceptualized that psychological empowerment (Spreitzer 1995) is an important psychological pathway among the aforementioned relationships. According to (Spreitzer 1995), the meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact are the core dimensions of psychological empowerment. These qualities are very similar to charismatic leadership. (A. Conger et al. 2000) have proved the positive association between charismatic leadership and followers' feelings of empowerment. The charismatic leaders put an energizing impact on followers by sending information about their own self-efficacy, through various means such as giving autonomy from bureaucratic restrictions, articulating confidence in followers' accomplishment, and setting very meaningful and inspirational goals (A. Conger and Kanungo 1988). Based on the Social learning theory (Bandura 1977), this study proposes that followers observe, imitate their leaders' actions and attitudes, particularly when they are inspired by their leaders' charismatic style, and eventually gain confidence in their abilities to overcome the challenging situation, an idealized vision that provokes them to take risks taking behave for the greater good.

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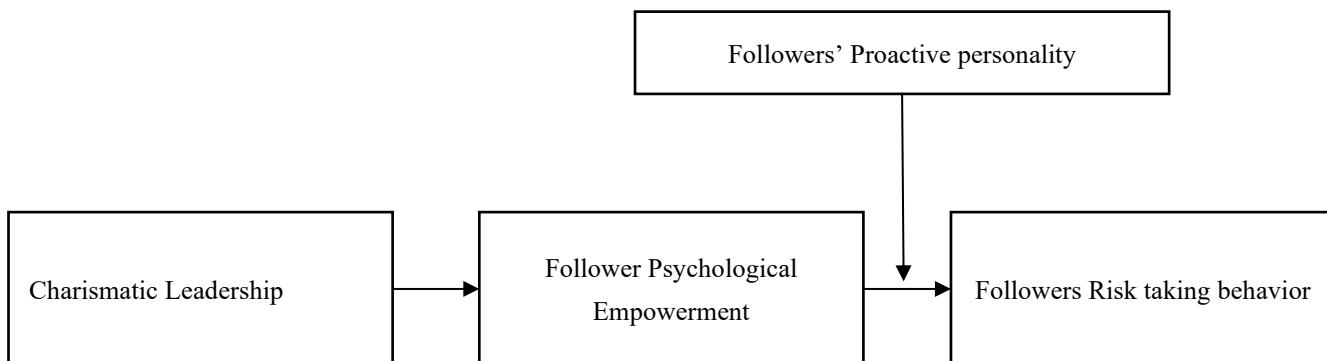
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The psychological empowerment and proactive personality are interrelated. Overall, these conceptual relationships will be more salient if the follower possesses a strong (vs weak) proactive personality. This research will endeavor to investigate how charismatic leadership promotes employee empowerment and its effect on employee risk-taking behavior in the IT industry in Pakistan. Examined is the role of psychological empowerment as a critical bridge, where charismatic leaders instill and encourage employees to feel empowered by enabling them to feel more capable and able to act on their own (risk taking behavior). In addition, the study examines moderating role of proactive personality for the relationship between psychological empowerment and drive towards risk-taking aptitude.

Charismatic leaders are important in the IT sector of Pakistan, where innovation and flexibility are needed, because they tend to generate risk-taking behavior among company employees. With the help of trust, igniting inspiration and motivation, this leadership style encourages employees to step out of their comfort zones and take calculated risks towards organizational growth. While much of the leadership research has focused on styles like transformational or transactional leadership, the specific pathway through which charismatic leadership encourages risk-taking behavior via employee empowerment in the context of followers' proactive personality remains underexplored. Understanding this mechanism is vital for industries like IT, where the ability to innovate and adapt to change can determine success.

2. Theoretical Model

The model for the theoretical underpinnings of this study demonstrates the route along which charismatic leadership promotes employee risk-taking behavior. Charismatic leadership is the independent variable affecting followers' sense of psychological empowerment. As a mediator, followers' sense of psychological empowerment drives them to take risks because it increases the employees' autonomy, confidence, and responsibility. Proactive personality also moderates the relationship between followers' sense of psychological empowerment and their risk-taking behavior, enhancing the probability of the employee's exercising initiative and taking on challenges. The model is represented as follows:



This model provides a framework for understanding how charismatic leadership drives risk-taking behavior, focusing on the employees' psychological mechanisms involved. Among employees, high (vs low) on proactive tendency in the IT sector of Pakistan.

2.1 Model and Hypotheses

Charismatic leadership has a great impact on psychological empowerment as it brings the context of trust, inspiration, and motivation. (A. Conger et al. 2000) research shows that confidence in the employees' abilities displayed by the charismatic leaders over and over will lead them to encourage their employees to take ownership of their tasks. Just like that, (Shamir and Jane 1999) mention that charismatic leaders motivate employees due to a compelling vision, making them feel that they should perform better than the typical level. Such inspiration leads to one's sense of meaning and autonomy, which are the psychological empowerment elements. This is also supported by research (Cicero and Antonio 2007), which states that when under charismatic leaders, Employees state higher levels of confidence and self-determination because of the motivational support they receive. These findings suggest that charismatic leadership plays a pivotal role in empowering employees psychologically; hence, propose that:

2.2 Charismatic Leadership and Followers' Psychological Empowerment

Direct contributions of psychological empowerment to risk-taking behaviors are: increased autonomy, confidence, and responsibility among employees. According to (Spreitzer 1995), empowered employees, who feel autonomous and confident, are more likely to be involved in innovative acts of taking calculated risks. (W. Thomas and A. Velthouse 1990) point out that a feeling of responsibility (based on empowerment) encourages workers to take bold decisions, for example, to experiment with new methods of solving problems. Employees who reported greater levels of psychological empowerment (Rowden 2000) were more willing to take risks like suggest unconventional ideas, since they felt supported and that they could. This evidence supports the notion that empowerment fosters a risk-taking mindset. Therefore, suggest that.

H1: Charismatic leadership positively influences followers' psychological empowerment.

2.3 Mediating Role of Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment is established as a key psychological mechanism, as reported extensively in past research. For example, psychological empowerment used as a mediator for the relationship of structured empowerment and burnout among nurses in China (Meng et al. 2016), for agile practices and agile outcomes (Malik et al. 2021), for ethical relationship and OCB's association (Sarwar et al. 2023), for High performance work system and job engagement (Arefin et al. 2019) and between Transformational

leaders and emotional labor (Cheng et al. 2023) etc. Based on the social cognitive theory, we conceptualized that followers observe their leaders' confidence, strategic vision, and risk-taking behaviors and attitudes, which influence on followers' perception of their leaders. The charismatic style of leaders endorses followers' sense of meaning, capability, and self-determination, and instills in their followers that they have control over their work environment. Eventually, the followers' state of empowerment led them to be more receptive to risk-taking behavior as observed by followers to their charismatic leaders' courageous approach. By combining Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2, proposed that.

H2: Followers psychological empowerment positively predicts their involvement in risk-taking behaviors

2.4 Mediating Role of Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment is established as a key psychological mechanism, as reported extensively in past research. For example, psychological empowerment used as a mediator for the relationship of structured empowerment and burnout among nurses in China (Meng et al. 2016), for agile practices and agile outcomes (Malik et al. 2021), for ethical relationship and OCB's association (Sarwar et al. 2023), for High performance work system and job engagement (Arefin et al. 2019) and between Transformational leaders and emotional labor (Cheng et al. 2023) etc. Based on the social cognitive theory, we conceptualized that followers observe their leaders' confidence, strategic vision, and risk-taking behaviors and attitudes, which influence on followers' perception of their leaders. The charismatic style of leaders endorses followers' sense of meaning, capability, and self-determination, and instills in their followers that they have control over their work environment. Eventually, the followers' state of empowerment led them to be more receptive to risk-taking behavior as observed by followers to their charismatic leaders' courageous approach. By combining Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2, we proposed that.

H3: Psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between charismatic leadership and followers' risk-taking behavior.

2.5 Moderating Role of the Follower's Proactive Personality

This study introduced the followers' proactive personality as a second-stage moderator between the relationship of followers' psychological empowerment and their engagement in risk-taking behavior. Proactive personality is defined by (Bateman and J. Michael 1993) as a predisposition to action, to exploit opportunity, a tendency toward risk taking. Proactivity (Bateman and J. Michael 1993) is a key characteristic of charismatic leadership (Crant and Thomas 2000). According to (Seibert et al. 2001), empowering proactive individuals made them more prone to perform risk-taking activities, such as introducing new changes, or experimenting with new strategy, since they are confident of tackling challenges. A proactive individual search for potential opportunities, demonstrates a desire to attain those opportunities, takes necessary initiative, and creates a desire for change to challenge the status quo (Crant and Thomas 2000). As psychological empowerment and individual proactivity disposition share similar potential that drives followers to act for change. Accordingly, the follower's psychological empowerment has a stronger influence on the risk-taking aptitude of highly proactive followers than the risk-taking aptitude of less proactive followers. Additionally, there was a study done by (Jung and Bruce 1999), which points out that more proactive employees are in a position to use their feeling of autonomy and responsibility to take bold actions thus increasing the effects of empowerment to risk-taking. These insights indicate that proactive personality strengthens the link between empowerment and risk-taking.

This study postulates that followers' proactive personality acts interactively with followers' psychological empowerment and amplifies the relationship between followers' psychological empowerment and their risk-taking behavior by fueling the "can-do" mindset among their followers. In which followers take initiative for change, anticipate the future demands, take full accountable for implementing the change process to solve problems. So, we suggest that.

H4: The relationship between followers' psychological empowerment and followers' risk-taking behavior is moderated by followers' high (vs low) proactivity.

3. Methods

The research was carried out within the IT area of Pakistan, targeting workers from medium-sized and large enterprises with the use of such companies. A sample of 170 participants was drawn, comprising employees at different levels; team members, supervisors and mid-level managers who directly interact with the leaders demonstrating charismatic traits. The data comprised of both genders and different age groups represented within the sample were diverse.

Ethical considerations were given priority during research. All participants gave informed consent after a clear explanation of the study purpose to report their response on a structured questionnaire. and that their answers would be confidential. Participation was voluntary, and employees were informed that there would be no consequences for withdrawing at any time they wished. The study followed ethical procedures of research carried out on human beings, promising fairness, respect and openness in all dealings. Participants were emailed a structured questionnaire electronically. From 250 distributed questionnaires, 170 questionnaires were received back complete information accumulated a 68% response rate. This study has used SPSS 25 for regression analysis of direct relationship and PROCESS macro model 14 and model 4 (F. Hayes et al. 2017) in SPSS statistical analysis for mediation and moderated mediated path analysis.

3.1 Measures

To research the linkages between charismatic leadership, psychological empowerment, risk-taking behavior, and proactive personality, a structured questionnaire was used as the primary research tool. The questionnaire was adapted from previous studies and keyed on an IT context, and was measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree).

3.2 Cultural and Institutional Influences on Leadership

Charismatic leadership behavior was measured on a 20-item scale proposed by (A. Conger and Kanungo 1992). The following items assess charismatic leadership, i.e., " My leaders ...use non-traditional means to achieve organizational goals; ...Influences others by developing mutual liking and respect". The Cronbach Alpha reliability for the charismatic leadership is 86.

3.3 Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment was measured by adapting the 12 item-scale given by (Spreitzer 1995). The alpha reliability of this scale was .89. This scale is focused on meaning, self-determination, impact and competence. The sample item of this scale is "I am confident about my ability to do my job".

3.4 Risk-Taking Behavior

The risk-taking behavior was measured on 8 items-scale proposed by (Dewett 2003). The sample item is "I will take a risk and try something new if I have an idea that might improve my work, regardless of how I might be evaluated". The alpha reliability was 0.85.

3.5 Proactive Personality

Proactive personality was measured on 17 item-scale provided by (Bateman and J. Michael 1993). The sample item is "I excel at identifying opportunities; I am constantly looking the opportunities for the new ways to improve my life". The alpha reliability was 0.86.

4. Results

This study investigates the charismatic leadership influences employee (followers) risk-taking behavior through psychological empowerment, with proactive personality as a moderator. Responses were initially scrubbed, and incomplete entries were excluded to ensure the analysis was made using completed questionnaires. The descriptive statistics were used to summarise participants' perceptions (such as the number of employees who felt empowered by the belief and motivation of the leader). The results are based on data collected from 170 employees of the IT industry of Pakistan, on the relations between charismatic leadership, psychological empowerment, risk-taking behavior, and the moderating function of the proactive personality.

The demographic data represents the gender divide between male and female employees(43% males; 57% females), as well, with average age being thirty- four years (range 25-45 years, mean= 34 years) and average tenure being three point five years (range 1 to 8 years; mean= 3.5 years), demonstrating a range of early stage to tenured professionals (Team members=50%, supervisors=30%, mid-level managers=20%). Such diversity guarantees that the findings represent differences in experiences with charismatic leadership and the effect on empowerment and risk-taking behavior. The participants represented diverse genders, ages, and organizational tenures. Thus, a wide variety of viewpoints were represented. Control variables (age, rank, tenure, age) have been tested through ANOVA, but this study did not find a significant impact for psychological empowerment and risk-taking behavior.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The correlation analysis studies the relationships between the major variables of the present study: charismatic leadership (CL), psychological empowerment (PE), proactive personality (PP), and risk-taking behavior (RTB). Values of the correlations were estimated using Pearson's correlation coefficient ($r=-1$ to 1). The correlation Table 1 shows ideal positive relationships between the variables. There is a very high correlation of charismatic leadership with psychological empowerment ($r = 0.78$, $p=0.01$), and Risk-taking behavior ($r = 0.72$, $p=0.01$) which means that leaders who can motivate, capture trust are very good at enhancing workers' autonomy and self-assurance. Psychological empowerment has a high correlation with risk-taking behavior ($r = 0.76$, $p = 0.01$) in favor of the theory that empowered employees are more likely to be risk takers. Further on, proactive personality is highly correlated with two indicators, psychological empowerment ($r = 0.72$, $p=0.01$) and risk-taking behavior ($r = 0.80$, $p=0.01$).

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Informants.

	mean	s.d	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. CL	3.80	0.70		(0.86)				
2. PE	3.90	0.51	0.78**		(0.89)			
3. RTB	2.38	0.70	0.72**	0.76**		(0.85)		
4. PP	2.70	1.12	0.40**	0.72**	0.80**		(0.86)	

n = 170 * $P < 0.1$; ** $P < 0.01$; CL=Charismatic leadership; PE= Psychological empowerment; RTB= Risk taking behavior; PP= proactive personality

4.2 Regression Analysis

To test direct hypotheses between the relationship of charismatic leadership, psychological empowerment, and risk-taking behavior, regression analysis was applied. The analysis comprises direct effects in Table 1.

Table 2. Main Effects.

Path	Psychological Empowerment				Risk-taking Behavior			
	B	St error	T value	p	β	St error	T value	p
Charismatic Leadership	0.65 R2=0.343	0.08	8.13	0.001	0.48 R2=42	0.06	8.10	0.001
Psychological empowerment					0.58 R2=33	0.07	8.29	0.001

The results of the regressions confirm the study's direct hypotheses. Charismatic leadership has positive effects ($\text{Beta} = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$) on the psychological empowerment, postulating that a charismatic leader forms employees psychologically empowered (H1). The second direct hypothesis (H2), which is verified ($\text{Beta} = 0.58$, $p = 0.001$), suggests that psychological empowerment is a strong factor able to predict risk-taking behavior, i.e., people who have greater autonomy, confidence and responsibility are more likely to take risks.

The mediating effect of psychological empowerment is calculated (Preacher and Hayes 2008). Process macro model 4 (5000 bootstrapped, 95% CI), also verified (H3). If the CI of the indirect effect excludes zero, then the mediation effect is established with a 95% confidence interval. Table 2 indicates significant indirect effects of charismatic leadership on follower risk-taking behavior through psychological empowerment ($\beta = 0.33$, $p = .001$; CI at 95% = [0.01–0.07]).

Table 3. Mediating Testing.

Indirect effects	R ²	Boot Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Charismatic leadership → Psychological empowerment → Risk-taking Behavior	0.48	0.33	0.049	0.01	0.07

B = Unstandardized coefficients; No of bootstrap samples = 5000; CI = 95% of confidence interval

The moderating role proactive personality for the relationship of psychological empowerment and risk-taking behavior is also validated (H4). Table 4 have elaborated the interactive effect of psychological empowerment and proactive personality was significant (Beta estimates = 0.363**, $p = 0.001$) which supported the moderating effect.

Table 4. Mediation Results.

Path	Estimates	R ²	LLCI	ULCI	Moderation
Psychological empowerment *proactive personality → Risk taking behavior	0.363**	.46	0.08	0.44	Supported

5. Discussion

This study investigates how charismatic leadership leads to employee risk-taking behaviors via psychologically empowering the employees (as a mediated mechanism) particularly for those who have high proactive dispositional characteristics (moderator) in the IT sector of Pakistan's service industry. Results describe connections between charismatic leadership, risk taking behavior, psychological empowerment and moderating function of proactive personality, which indicate the implication, and the relationship to the existing literature.

The research established that charismatic leadership highly boosts on psychological empowerment among employees, by trust, inspiration, motivation. Hypothesis (H1) is validated as indicated in regression analysis Table 2 i.e., leaders who possess charismatic qualities such as establishing trust due to employees' confidence, exciting them with a powerful vision, and encouraging them with a hospitable communication empower employees to feel better autonomous and capable. This accords with (A. Conger et al. 2000) finding which indicates that charismatic leaders create a feeling of trust and inspiration, so that employees could feel as though they own their roles. Similarly, (Shamir et al. 1999) had remarked that charismatic leaders motivate the employees by developing a common vision to them, enables them to do things on their own accord and to feel that they have a meaning. In such an IT industry where innovation is rapid, essential, this empowering employee is essential in seeking to have the employees' step outside their comfort zones, and contribute creatively.

This study also supported the Hypothesis (H2) that psychological empowerment promotes risk taking behavior, enhancing autonomy, confidence, and responsibility. The regression results showed significant relationship (indicated in Table 2) of whom reported a relationship between their autonomy and confidence made them more inclined to take calculated risks including suggesting new ideas and experimenting with innovative solutions. This is in line with (Spreitzer 1995) idea that empowered employees, who perceive to be autonomous and confident, tend to take risk-taking behaviors. (W. Thomas and A. Velthouse 1990) also support this view by saying that a sense of responsibility moves employees to make bold decisions. They draw attention to the transformative role of empowerment in terms of developing innovation.

The interactive effects of proactive personality on the relationship between employee psychological empowerment and their tendency towards risk-taking behaviors were established (H4). This propagates the tendency among empowered employees to take initiative. Embrace challenges along with their proactive personality. This aligns with (Bateman and Crant's 1993) proactive personality assumption, which is predisposition to act that adds to risk taking tendencies. (Seibert et al. 2001) also found that proactive practitioners, when empowered industries configure are likely to take risks, such as starting change. In this study, proactive which the employees of the IT industry used their empowerment to take bold steps, such as volunteering for demanding assignments and showing the way, link between proactive personality to strengthen, empowerment and risk-taking behavior. Theoretically, this research enriches the study of leadership with depth in that it explores the relationship between charismatic leadership and workers' risks taken, where on there is a synthesis of knowledge from both psychology and organizational behavior. It champions empowerment and proactive personality in this dynamic and yet provides a different lens for looking at how charisma generates practical actions for organizations.

The pace of innovation and risk-taking has been a factor often denied by many IT organizations in Pakistan due to low employee confidence and initiative. Despite the evident influence of leadership on success, several IT-based organizations in Pakistan continue to have a hard time instilling a culture of innovation and risk-taking amongst their employees. Charismatic leadership, which is notorious for its ability to inspire and motivate, has not been adequately researched as regards how it promotes risk-taking through psychological empowerment and proactive personality. This research fills this gap by investigating how the

process of empowering employees to take risks can be facilitated by charismatic leaders and how proactive personalities interactively act within this process. In practice, the findings offer IT leaders and HR managers tactics on how to leverage charismatic leadership to empower employees, promote risk taking and particularly for those workers who are proactive. With disruption and pressures of competition in the industry being ever constant, mastery of learning how to create a mindset of taking risks through leadership becomes more fundamental with each day.

This study has several limitations, such as cross cross-sectional research design and a second limitation is that data is self-reported for employee psychological empowerment, proactive personality, and risk-taking behaviors, while charismatic leadership is rated by followers, i.e., employees (research participants). So, this limitation suggests that in the future, researchers should focus on peer-rated participants' proactive personality and their risk-taking behavior rather than self-rated to minimize the chances of common method bias (Podsakoff et al. 2024).

This study utilizes the individual proactive personality as a moderator for the underlying relationship, but there are many more pronounced contextual variables at the organizational level, such as workplace incivility (Anderson and Pearson et al. 1999; Yaqoob et al. 2025), cultural collectivism (Hofstede 2011; Yaqoob 2023). As the dependence on Artificial intelligence has extensively reached at peak, after the COVID- 19 Pandemic that cause high impact on technology and innovation that entirely changed the global outlook bring the change in the following sectors i.e., science and technology (Saqib et al. 2024), travel and tourism (Javed et al. 2024), banking sector (Shah et al. 2024), marketing sector etc. So, it is critical to investigate the impact of AI on employee proactive and prosocial job behavior.

6. Conclusions

The present research demonstrates the way charismatic leadership encourages employee risk behavior in the IT sector of Pakistan. This, in turn, denotes that charismatic leadership creates trust, inspiration, and motivation, and participants feel better autonomy and confidence due to the leader being charismatic. Such empowerment is directly followed by risky behavior when they feel autonomous and confident. Moreover, individual dispositional characteristics, such as proactive personality, reinforce the relationship between employee psychological empowerment and their risk-taking initiative, placing the importance of employee personal disposition for working in the challenging and turbulent environment of the IT sector.

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