

Examining the Impact of Servant Leadership on Perceived Customer-Related Performance: Exploring the Mediating Role of Trust Climate in the Hospitality Industry of Pakistan

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Abstract

This study delves into the influence of servant leadership on customer-related performance within Pakistan's hospitality industry, with a specific focus on the mediating role played by trust climate. The fundamental idea underlying this study is that servant leadership plays a critical role in influencing the proactive customer service performance (PCSP) of hospitality employees by nurturing an environment of trust. Servant leadership recognized its capacity to cultivate a trust climate through its altruistic behaviors and genuine concern for team members. This study also investigates trust climate as a contextual factor that mediates the relationship between servant leadership and PCSP. This research bridges a gap in the existing literature by delving into the mediating function of trust in the performance relationship. The results underscore that servant leadership exerts a positive influence on trust climate, which, in turn, significantly affects PCSP.

Keywords: Servant Leadership, Perceived Customer-Related Performance, Trust Climate, Hospitality Industry

Introduction

Pakistan's hotel industry is one that is fast developing and has a significant economic impact (Akbar, 2020). It is a significant contributor to the economy of the country and consists of hotels, restaurants, resorts, and multiple tourism-related businesses. There are several potential for tourist expansion in Pakistan due to its rich cultural heritage, various landscapes, and historical places (Ali et al., 2019). The hotel industry not only generates income and job possibilities, but it also significantly influences Pakistan's image as a developing tourist destination. Despite obstacles including security concerns (Baqai et al., 2018) and the need for infrastructure development, Pakistan's hospitality sector is consistently expanding. Overall; the hospitality industry in Pakistan is poised for growth, making significant strides in contributing to the country's economic development and tourism promotion (Peng et al., 2023).

In today's dynamic landscape, where customer preferences continually evolve, merely adhering to predefined job descriptions and service protocols (Frese & Fay, 2001; Parker et al., 2010). Hence, hospitality employees must transcend formalized roles and engage in proactive customer service, characterized as 'self-initiated, long-term-oriented, and persistent the service behavior' (Rank et al., 2007, p. 366) (Rank et al., 2007).

Servant leadership (SL), a distinctive leadership approach that places a strong emphasis on leaders facilitating the development and success of their team members (Ehrhart, 2004), holds particular significance within the hospitality industry (Brownell, 2010; Zou et al., 2015; Ling et al., 2016). This prominence arises from the alignment of servant leadership principles with the fundamental goal of delivering exceptional service in the hospitality sector. Some hospitality organizations, such as the Ritz Hotel, have adopted SL as a guiding philosophy in their operations (Brownell, 2010; Ling et al., 2016).

Because of its importance to the hospitality industry, servant leadership has been connected in a growing body of study to a range of work-related attitudes and behaviors among employees in the industry. Bouzari & Karatepe (2017), Hsiao et al. (2015), Ling et al. (2017), work engagement (2017), customer-focused organizational citizenship behavior (Wu et al., 2013), helping behavior (Zou et al., 2015), psychological well-being (2017), and service quality (Koyuncu et al., 2014; Ling et al., 2016) are a few of

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these. Servant leadership, which is predicated on advancing the interests of others and a commitment to putting others' needs first, inspires employees to really desire to serve others (Ehrhart, 2004). Therefore, we propose that this leadership style has a significant effect on enhancing proactive customer service performance (PCSP) among hospitality staff, which is consistent with the demands of a service environment that is changing quickly.

Servant leadership, characterized by its emphasis on leaders' selflessness and commitment to serving the needs of others (Greenleaf, 1977), has been recognized as a significant driver in fostering a trust climate within organizations. According to research (Eisenbeiss et al., 2008; Walumbwa et al., 2010), servant leaders foster a climate of psychological safety and mutual trust via their selfless actions and sincere care for their team members (Halvorsen et al., 2023).

Servant leaders foster a culture where staff members feel valued and respected by engaging in active listening, empathy, and support behaviors, eventually fostering the growth of trust among team members. According to Dirks and Ferrin (2002) and Mayer et al. (1995), this environment of trust may have a significant influence on a number of organizational outcomes, such as worker productivity, job satisfaction, and creativity. As a result, servant leadership and a climate of trust foster an environment that is favorable for healthy organizational dynamics and improved employee wellbeing.

The importance of trust climate as a contextual element influencing the link between customer performance and trust is examined in this study. An understudied aspect of trust research in performance was uncovered by a recent review (Mitchell & Ziguers, 2009) that highlighted the contextual function of trust in influencing processes, emerging states, and customer outcomes. This necessitates a closer examination of trust as a dynamic process. Interestingly, there is a vacuum in the literature as no previous research has investigated the contextual role of trust in the performance connection in depth. Therefore, this study aims to fill this void and establish trust as a pivotal mediator. In doing so, we contribute to the broader body of research on trust within organizations by empirically testing the theoretical proposition put forth by Dirks and Ferrin (2001) suggesting that trust functions as a mediator between determinants and performance, rather than solely as an antecedent.

This study looks at the relationship between perceived customer service performance (PCSP) and servant leadership and looks for potential mediating elements. Under challenging circumstances, people attempt to minimise resource loss by applying the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory. The COR hypothesis (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll, 2001) states that the value of resources is susceptible to individual variability and is greatly impacted by people's innate characteristics. In this context, employees who possess harmonious passion for their job can be highly motivated to employ productive coping strategies, such as demonstrating genuine concern for customers and allocating significant resources to meet customer expectations. This customer-oriented approach aligns with their initiative behaviors geared towards satisfying customer needs. Consequently, we posit that servant leadership fosters a trust climate among hospitality employees, which, in turn, may further enhance their engagement in Customer Service Performance (PCSP).

This research introduces the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, a framework proposed by scholars like Halbesleben et al. (2014) and Hobfoll (2001). This theory suggests that individuals strive to safeguard their resources - encompassing not just physical assets but also time, energy, social support, and personal skills - particularly in challenging circumstances. The COR Theory posits that the significance of these resources varies individually and is heavily influenced by innate characteristics. This implies that personal traits and differences significantly shape how people perceive and manage their resources when faced with difficulties. Regarding the study on servant leadership and PCSP, the COR Theory offers insights into how leaders' strategies affect resource conservation within their teams. It proposes that servant leadership, which emphasizes supporting and empowering others, could positively influence how individuals perceive and use their resources, thereby potentially affecting customer service performance. Ultimately, this study aims to explore whether the principles of servant leadership, by fostering an environment that preserves resources, contribute to enhanced PCSP through mechanisms outlined by the

COR Theory. Essentially, it seeks to uncover how leadership styles influence resource management and, consequently, how this management influences perceived customer service performance.

Thus, we examine whether trust climate can strengthen the link between servant leadership and Customer Service Performance (PCSP). Our model is presented in Figure 1.

Literature Review

Servant leadership, as conceptualized by Greenleaf (1977) and expounded upon by subsequent scholars, emphasizes the importance of integrity and a commitment to fostering the growth and development of others (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018). One of the core tenets of servant leadership, underscored by researchers, is its inherent focus on the holistic development of subordinates, transcending self-interest (Dierendonck, 2011; Ehrhart, 2004). Notably, servant leadership stands apart from other leadership styles in three distinct ways. Firstly, unlike transformational or empowering leadership, which inspire followers to excel for organizational goals, servant leaders prioritize the development and well-being of their followers (Stone et al., 2004; Dierendonck, 2011). Secondly, servant leadership places a greater emphasis on affording autonomy to followers, rather than solely focusing on ethical and moral components—attributes central to ethical, moral, and authentic leadership (Ehrhart, 2004). Thirdly, servant leadership encompasses all the characteristics outlined by Dierendonck (2011), setting it apart as a more comprehensive leadership style (Dierendonck, 2011). Given the relevance of SL principles to the hospitality sector (Brownell, 2010), numerous empirical studies within hospitality management have explored this leadership approach. For example, Wu et al. (2013), drawing data from Chinese hospitality organizations, demonstrated that SL can enhance customer-oriented Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) among hospitality employees by fostering positive leader-member exchanges.

Furthermore, by improving leader-member and team-member interchange, servant leadership can motivate workers in the hospitality sector to serve others, per a research by Zou et al. (2015). Despite these hopeful results, there is currently a dearth of research on the impact of servant leadership on proactive service behaviour among hospitality personnel—a critical component for the success of hospitality organisations (Chen et al., 2017). By examining the relationship between servant leadership and PCSP (perceived customer service performance), this study closes this knowledge gap.

The PCSP (perceived customer service performance) includes three essential characteristics. First of all, it entails pro-active measures throughout the provision of services, when service personnel take the initiative to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to improve client satisfaction (Raub and Liao, 2012). PCSP includes actions taken on one's own initiative with the goal of surpassing client expectations. Second, PCSP is characterized by proactive and anticipatory behaviours, where service staff anticipates client demands and forges strong bonds with coworkers to address upcoming service issues (Raub and Liao, 2012; Zhu et al., 2017). These actions are focused on achieving sustained service excellence. Thirdly, PCSP calls for a persistent dedication to keeping track of and guaranteeing client happiness (Raub and Liao, 2012).

According to this study, servant leadership is crucial in encouraging PCSP among hospitality staff. Primarily, servant leaders act as examples for those who follow them (Wu et al., 2013). Hospitality staff members frequently demonstrate a high level of PCSP through mirroring the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of their servant leaders. Second, servant leaders foster positive feelings like excitement, pleasure, and joy via their acceptance, respect, and support (Ehrhart, 2004; Ling et al., 2016). Because PCSP is a self-initiated behavior that requires additional emotional investment to surpass customer expectations (Lyu et al., 2016), servant leaders' positive emotions help to inspire staff members in the hospitality industry to participate in PCSP. Finally, employees' confidence in their capacities to perform their jobs is increased by servant leaders' acceptance, respect, and support (Dierendonck, 2011). Employees in the hotel industry are encouraged to adopt a more expanded perspective of their employment, which includes engaging in proactive customer service behaviors like PCSP, as a result of this greater confidence.

H1. Servant leadership is positively associated with hospitality employees' PCSP.

According to Halbesleben et al. (2014), the Conservation of Resources (COR) hypothesis occupies a major place in the literature on organizational behavior. The theory's central idea is that people actively want to acquire and improve their valued resources, which include all of the things that enable them to fulfil their most basic requirements (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001). When people feel that their available resources have increased, a trust atmosphere develops (Hobfoll, 1989). In addition, those who have more resources are less likely to experience resource depletion and are more likely to spend more in order to achieve greater profits (Hobfoll, 2001).

According to Ehrhart (2004), servant leadership is based on the idea that the welfare of followers should come first and acts as a powerful catalyst for giving employees access to crucial resources for both their professional and personal growth. Trust, learning opportunities, a positive work atmosphere, and respect are a few examples of these resources (Ehrhart, 2004; Dierendonck, 2011; Chiniara and Bentein, 2016). With such resources at their disposal, hospitality staff members may feel more trusted at work, which would encourage a predisposition for their jobs and a propensity to reinvest resources to generate cycles of profit throughout client encounters. We thus propose that servant leaders will encourage hospitality staff to put more faith in both their leaders and customer-centricity, leading to proactive Customer Service Performance (PCSP).

Furthermore, servant leaders are known for fostering a work environment that is supportive and encourages open expression of followers' needs, along with active participation in making the decision (Dierendonck, 2011). This autonomy support empowers the employees of hospitality industry, granting them the freedom to recognize the significance of their roles and make informed choices regarding their level of engagement with their work. The crucial role of autonomy support in internalizing an activity has been repeatedly demonstrated, nurturing personal motivation to pursue job-related tasks (Mageau et al., 2009). Consequently, under the guidance of servant leaders, followers perceive their work as being within their control, giving rise to the cultivation of a trust climate within the organization.

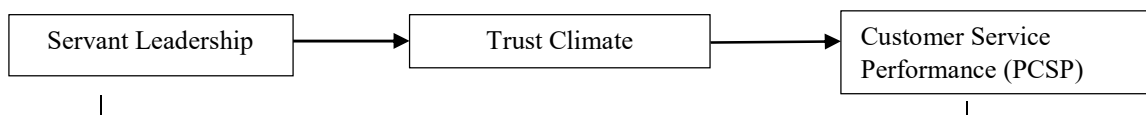
Moreover, servant leaders play a pivotal role in helping their followers establish a strong sense of identification with their work, a fundamental element in the transformation of a mere job into a passionate pursuit (Vallerand et al., 2007). Servant leaders put their followers' welfare first, emphasizing the inherent value of each follower and treating them with respect and trust because they are motivated by a strong sense of altruism (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Dierendonck, 2011). They also acknowledge and value their contributions to the group. This favorable treatment encourages not just confidence in the leader but also a strong bond with work activities and an identity that is firmly established in these activities. According to Mageau et al. (2009), people who consider a particular activity to be a part of their identity are more likely to hold that activity in high esteem and, as a result, help to foster an environment of trust.

H2. Servant leadership is positively associated with trust climate.

People have an innate need to acquire and accumulate important resources, according to the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001). After acquiring these first resources, people are more likely to continue investing in them in order to reap more rewards (Hobfoll, 2001; Hobfoll & Ford, 2007). Within this framework, servant leadership plays a pivotal role as an organizational catalyst, endowing hospitality employees with a rich pool of resources, including heightened levels of trust (Ehrhart, 2004). In this context, hospitality employees establish a profound sense of trust both with their leaders and in their roles, thereby fostering an environment that facilitates Proactive Customer Service Performance (PCSP). Consequently, servant leadership is posited to exert its influence on PCSP through a sequential mediating pathway, mediated by trust climate.

H3. Trust Climate mediators between servant leadership and PCSP.

Theoretical Model



Research Design

The research methodology adopted for this paper is quantitative-method. We used random sampling technique to collect the data. This questionnaire aims to gauge perceptions concerning servant leadership behaviors, trust climate, and perceived customer-related performance.

Data collection

The study participants comprised service employees working in hotels located in Lahore, Pakistan. To gather the sample, we obtained a list of hotels from the Punjab Food Authority and initiated contact with the human resource managers of these establishments. During these interactions, we specified our requirement for frontline service employees to participate in our research. It was paramount to convey to participants that their responses would be employed solely for research purposes, and we assured them of the confidentiality of their data. Subsequently, we distributed the questionnaires to the employees in accordance with the schedule provided by the HR managers. To accommodate electronic submissions, we also employed Google Forms. Information gathered from diverse sources and thoughtfully structured in an Excel format. This excel file is used for subsequent analysis utilizing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS SEM).

A total of 210 responses were collected, with two responses being deemed incomplete and therefore not included in the final sample size, which comprised 208 participants. The servant leadership scale, composed of 14 items, adopted from Ehrhart (2004). Crocker et al.'s (2003) seven-item scale was used to assess Proactive Customer Service Performance (PCSP), and trust climate was gauged using a four-item scale adapted from Jarvepaa and Leidner (1999).

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender	208	1	2	1.53	.500
Age	208	1	2	1.18	.383
Education	208	1	4	1.42	.751
Nature of employment	208	1	3	1.44	.740
Length of service	208	1	4	1.54	.707
Valid N (listwise)	208				

Results

The present study uses a two-stage analysis using an Assessment Model and a Measurement Model, using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS SEM) (Hair et al., 2012; Henseler et al., 2009). There is a close relationship between the items/variables and the corresponding indicators and the measurement model. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is used to examine both discriminant and convergent validity, which together provide the measurement model's validity (Henseler et al., 2009). Reliability is measured using composite reliability, which is thought to be better than Cronbach Alpha (Starkweather, 2012). Measures of discriminant and convergent validity are used to assess construct validity.

According to Hair et al. (2014), each item is evaluated for composite reliability, with a threshold of 0.50 serving as the lowest allowable item loading. Every item's factor loading is shown in Table 1, and all values are higher than the 0.50 cutoff, suggesting the existence of composite reliability in the data. If an item's loading is less than 0.50, it is eliminated and the analysis is redone to evaluate the loadings. The factor loadings and the model are shown in Figure 1. The consistency of the items is also seen in Table 1, where all variables have values more than 0.7, showing a high degree of consistency between the items.

In accordance with Bagozzi et al. (1991)'s guidelines, the research assesses discriminant and convergent validity, two crucial aspects of construct validity. To confirm convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is used; a convergent validity demonstration requires an AVE value more than 0.50 (Fernandes, 2012; Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2011; Hair et al., 2014). The AVE values, which are

0.594, 0.672, and 0.729 as shown in Table 1, all satisfy the predetermined requirement and support the study's convergent validity.

Figure 1 Measurement Model

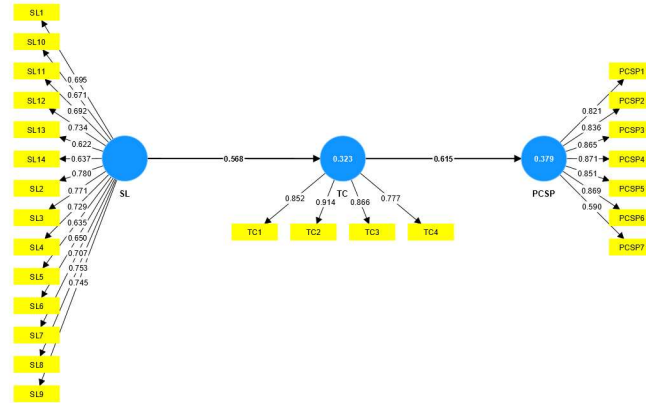


Table 1 Reliability & Convergent Validity

Construct	Variable Item	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Servant Leadership	SL1	0.695	0.921	0.924	0.932	0.594
	SL2	0.78				
	SL3	0.771				
	SL4	0.729				
	SL5	0.635				
	SL6	0.65				
	SL7	0.707				
	SL8	0.753				
	SL9	0.745				
	SL10	0.671				
	SL11	0.692				
	SL12	0.734				
	SL13	0.622				
	SL14	0.637				
Perceive Customer Service Performance	PCSP1	0.821	0.921	0.944	0.934	0.672
	PCSP2	0.836				
	PCSP3	0.865				
	PCSP4	0.871				
	PCSP5	0.851				
	PCSP6	0.869				
	PCSP7	0.59				
Trust Climate	TC1	0.852	0.874	0.878	0.915	0.729
	TC2	0.914				
	TC3	0.866				
	TC4	0.777				

Discriminant validity, according to Hair et al. (2010), is the degree to which one variable varies from other variables. We use a test described by Henseler et al. (2015), called the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), to evaluate its validity. Table 2 displays the outcomes of the HTMT test.

The values of the HTMT Ratio are shown in Table 2, following the recommendations of Kline (2011) and Clark & Watson (1995). According to Gold et al. (2001), these recommendations state that the HTMT ratio should be less than 0.85 (HTMT < 0.85) or, alternatively, lower than 0.90 (HTMT < 0.90). That being said, our analysis shows that every result in Table 2 is higher than 0.90, which deviates from Gold et al. (2001)'s suggested cutoff point.

Table 2 Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	PCSP	SL	TC
PCSP			
SL	0.613		
TC	0.607	0.626	

The values of the variables are examined in our study in order to determine whether Multicollinearity is present. Any variable that has a value more than five is said to exhibit Multicollinearity. But as Table 3 shows, none of the values are more than 5, indicating that Multicollinearity does not exist in our data.

Table 3 Multicollinearity VIF

	PCSP	SL	TC
PCSP			
SL		1	
TC		1	

Figure 2 Structural Model

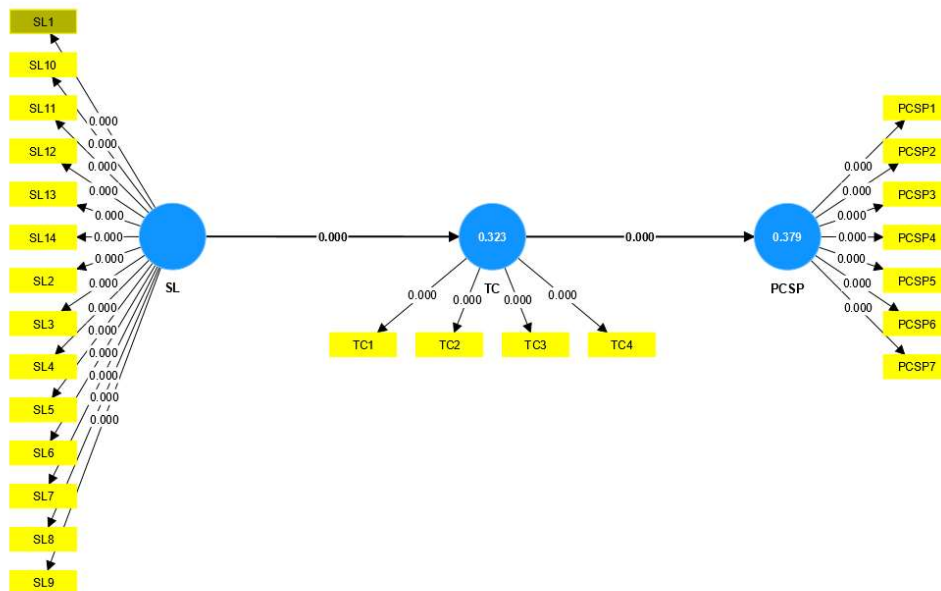


Table 4 Path Analysis

Hypothesis	Relation	Beta	SD	T value	P values	LL	UL	Decision
H1	SL -> TC	0.568	0.056	10.159	0	0.457	0.682	Supported
H2	TC -> PCSP	0.615	0.029	20.886	0	0.56	0.674	Supported
H3	SL -> PCSP	0.349	0.042	8.299	0	0.278	0.436	Supported

This section illustrates the relationships between the study variables. Table 4 provides an overview of the proposed relationships among the variables and presents the results of path analysis using SEM PLS. The findings reveal a significant relationship between Servant Leadership (SL) and Trust Climate (TC) ($\beta = -0.568$, $t = 10.159$; $LL = 0.457$, $UL = 0.682$), thus confirming the support for H1. Similarly, Trust Climate is also significantly associated with Perceived Customer Service Performance (PCSP) ($\beta = 0.615$, $t = 20.886$; $LL = 0.56$, $UL = 0.674$), indicating the support for H2.

Furthermore, the mediation role of Trust Climate (TC) between SL and PCSP ($\beta = 0.349$, $t = 8.299$; $LL = 0.278$, $UL = 0.436$) is also substantiated, covering all relevant parameters. Therefore, we can conclude that all of our hypotheses are supported. Figure 2 provides an overview of the structural model assessment.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Henseler et al. (2009) emphasised the use of the R-squared (R^2) statistic to measure the percentage of variance in a variable that can be explained by a group of other variables. This measure is essential for evaluating a model's ability to anticipate outcomes. According to Hair et al. (2014) and Henseler et al. (2009), R^2 shows how much a variable varies as a result of the effect of the other factors. Scholars interpret R^2 numbers differently. Chin (1998a) and Cohen (1988), for example, have proposed that R^2 values of 0.02, 0.13, and 0.26 indicate weak, moderate, and high correlations, respectively (Götz et al., 2010).

Furthermore, it is important to remember that the coefficient of determination (R^2) provides a different method for assessing the model's quality in structural equation modelling (SEM). For this assessment, a number of criteria are used, and guidelines from scholars like Chin (1998a) and Cohen (1988) are used. Based on these standards, Chin (2010) states that an R^2 value of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 denotes a weak, moderate, and strong association, respectively.

The R^2 values for each variable are shown in Table 5. The constructs "Servant Leadership" and "Trust Climate," taken together, explain 61.5% of the variation in "Perceived Customer Service Performance" (PCSP), according to Table 5.

Table 5 R-square of Constructs

Construct	R^2	Effect
Perceived Customer Service Performance (PCSP)	0.615	Strong

Discussion and conclusions

The influence of servant leadership on the PCSP of hospitality staff is examined in this study. According to survey findings, servant leadership has a beneficial impact on the PCSP of workers in the hospitality industry. Furthermore, using the COR theory, this study discovers that the atmosphere of trust successively mediates this link. Particularly, servant leadership gives employees in the hotel industry a wealth of useful materials and so activates their faith in their jobs and leaders, which in turn inspires workers to create a strong, trusted workplace culture and eventually participate in PCSP.

The study's findings offer valuable insights into the dynamics of servant leadership in the context of the hospitality industry in Pakistan. Servant leadership, marked by its focus on the development and well-being of employees, plays a crucial role in fostering a trust climate within organizations. This trust climate, characterized by high levels of trust, autonomy, and employee identification with their roles, serves as the bridge connecting servant leadership to enhanced customer-related performance (PCSP). These results align with existing research emphasizing the significance of servant leadership in service-oriented industries (Wu et al., 2013; Zou et al., 2015), but our study adds a unique perspective by examining the mediating role of trust climate.

In conclusion, our study highlights the need for hospitality organizations in Pakistan to consider and promote servant leadership as a fundamental aspect of their leadership culture. The positive impact of servant leadership on trust climate and, subsequently, PCSP underscores its potential to enhance not only customer satisfaction but also employee engagement and retention. As the hospitality industry continues to evolve and competitiveness grows, this research underscores the strategic value of adopting servant

leadership principles. Cultivating servant leaders within organizations can set a precedent for excellence in customer service and contribute to the industry's overall success in Pakistan.

The research findings underscore a strong correlation among servant leadership, trust climate, and perceived customer-related performance in Pakistan's hospitality sector. Quantitative analysis substantiated a positive association between servant leadership behaviors and employee trust, subsequently impacting customer-related performance positively. Mediation analyses affirmed the crucial role of trust climate, serving as a mediator between servant leadership and improved customer outcomes. Qualitative evidence further emphasized specific servant leadership traits crucial for cultivating a trusting workplace environment, resonating with both managers and customers. Despite acknowledging limitations like self-reported data and industry specificity, the study highlights servant leadership's significance in building trust, ultimately enhancing customer-related performance and offering practical implications for the industry.

Theoretical implications

There are two important theoretical ramifications of this finding. First off, by expanding its focus from individual service results to proactive trust climate behavior, it broadens the current terrain in the literature on servant leadership. Prior studies on the effects of servant leadership in the hotel sector focused mostly on its impact on assisting behaviors (Zou et al., 2015), customer-oriented citizenship behaviors (Wu et al., 2013), and traditional staff performance indicators (Ling et al., 2016). Our emphasis on PCSP adds to the literature on servant leadership while revealing an emotional factor that motivates front-line service staff to work hard.

Secondly, our study advances the field by highlighting the pivotal role of trust climate as a sequential mediator in the dynamic process of servant leadership. Our findings underscore the following key points:

- Servant leadership serves as a substantial catalyst within the workplace, endowing employees with valuable resources, thereby amplifying trust climate.
- High levels of trust climate correlate with increased PCSP, as individuals are motivated to seek further resource gains.
- Trust climate essentially characterizes the mechanism through which servant leaders facilitate resource provisioning to their subordinates.

These discoveries contribute not only to an enriched understanding of previous research but also establish a novel dimension in the literature by illuminating an essential boundary condition within the servant leadership paradigm.

Practical implications

In a landscape marked by ever-evolving customer preferences, the significance of employees' proactive service behaviors in shaping customer perceptions of service quality has gained prominence. According to Raub and Liao (2012), these actions have a significant impact on the long-term performance of organizations in addition to the trust climate. In the context of the hotel sector, which is essentially characterized as a "people" company (Hinkin, 2006; Lyu et al., 2016), this is especially relevant. Numerous studies have been conducted to identify the important factors that influence workers' propensity to engage in proactive customer service behaviours at work in response to this dynamic environment (Raub & Liao, 2012; Chen et al., 2017).

This study underscores the role of servant leadership in nurturing employees' trust in their leaders and their roles, which, in turn, strengthens overall trust climate. This bolstered trust climate serves as a catalyst for heightened engagement in Perceived Customer Service Performance (PCSP).

Furthermore, organizations are encouraged to proactively cultivate employees' trust climate. Fostering trust in leaders and in the workplace can be achieved by creating conducive working conditions that convey a sense of value and appreciation to employees, thereby heightening their job satisfaction and engagement (Ho et al., 2011). Additionally, providing employees with constructive feedback to assist them

in their goal attainment can serve as a motivational force, empowering them to whole-heartedly commit to their roles within the organization.

Limitations and future research

The results show that servant leadership may greatly enhance PCSP in hospitality workers. Future study can also apply our findings to other industries and examine the impacts of servant leadership on other types of proactive behaviors at work. However, other styles of leadership may also have an impact on hospitality employees' PCSP.

With an emphasis on the mediating function of trust climate, this study examines the influence of servant leadership on perceived customer-related performance in the Pakistani hotel sector. It also identifies numerous important research gaps. First off, the study's context-specific findings can make them less generalizable to other fields or cultural contexts, which emphasize the necessity of cross-cultural research. Second, the use of subjective criteria might result in response bias, highlighting the necessity of using objective performance indicators to support conclusions. Cross-sectional data's limitations can be overcome by using longitudinal or experimental methods to demonstrate causal correlations. Additionally, boundary conditions and cross-industry and cross-regional comparison studies may be explored in future study.

The intricate relationship among servant leadership, resource preservation, and PCSP offers a compelling prospect for reshaping forthcoming organizational methodologies. The findings of this study could potentially lead to the enhancement of leadership training programs, integrating the tenets of servant leadership. By accentuating empowerment, assistance, and fostering an environment that values resource preservation, organizations might not only improve their customer service performance but also positively impact team synergy and employee welfare. Moreover, this study could act as a catalyst for further investigations into the specific mechanisms through which servant leadership influences resource management and subsequently shapes customer service outcomes. Subsequent research endeavors might explore various industry settings or adopt longitudinal approaches to capture the sustained effects of implementing servant leadership principles on both resource conservation and customer service performance.

Recommendations

Drawing insights from this study, organizations might contemplate embedding servant leadership practices within their leadership development frameworks. This could encompass training leaders to prioritize their team members' growth and needs, nurturing a culture that esteems resource preservation, and establishing supportive structures that encourage proficient resource management among employees. Additionally, companies could benefit from conducting periodic evaluations to gauge the efficacy of implementing servant leadership principles on resource utilization and customer service outcomes. These assessments could pinpoint areas for refinement and allow for the adjustment of leadership strategies to align with the overarching objective of optimizing resource conservation for elevated customer service performance. Moreover, fostering transparent communication channels and actively seeking feedback from both employees and customers could aid in refining and sustaining servant leadership practices within the organizational ethos.

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