The effect of paradoxical leadership on extra-role service in the hospitality industry

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to examine the influence of paradoxical leadership (PLSH) on the extra-role service behavior of frontline employees. It analyzes not only direct but also indirect influence through mechanisms that improve the learning (self-improvement) and communication (voice) capabilities of hospitality employees.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were gathered through structured questionnaires administered to a sample of frontline employees from Spanish hotels. A structural equations model was used to evaluate the theoretical model proposed.

Findings – The results show both a direct positive effect of PLSH on extra-role service and a mediating effect of employees' improvement-oriented behaviors on this relationship. These results support the idea that employees under paradoxical leaders seek both self-improvement and organizational improvement through their voice to provide guests with excellent service.

Research limitations/implications – The findings extend understanding of PLSH's effects on the hospitality industry through its impact on extra-role service, an essential element of hotel success.

Originality/value – This study addresses the lack of research on hospitality leadership by analyzing the effects of PLSH on employees' communication and learning behaviors, as well as on their extra-role service. The authors argue that some behaviors that help hotels compete (e.g. extra-role service) can have paradoxical implications for employees.

Keywords Observational learning, Voice, Paradoxical leadership, Advice seeking, Extra-role service, Self-improvement, Hotel

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

In hospitality, customer service quality marks the difference between one organization and another in a very competitive environment. Employee behaviors that add extra value to the guest's experience give hotels a valuable tool through which to distinguish themselves and improve their profitability (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2019; Kim and Qu, 2020; Zhu *et al.*, 2019). Such behaviors are pure gold for the hospitality organization. The management literature identifies them as extra-role service, a term that encompasses all proactive behaviors deployed by frontline employees to satisfy guests' demands and provide additional performance beyond the limits of their formal role (Garg and Dhar, 2016).

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Surprisingly, although hospitality organizations rely on extra-role service to strengthen their competitiveness and profitability, these discretionary behaviors are outside the role required of the employee (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997; Kim and Qu, 2020). They may, thus, present employees with paradoxes. For example, some researchers find that extra-role service can generate conflicts among team members (Bolino *et al.*, 2003). Some studies in the hospitality environment observe that guests are increasingly demanding and self-centered (IGH, 2017). These characteristics require employees to manage contradictory – even opposing – expectations (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2019; She *et al.*, 2020). Under these conditions, if extra-role service is discretionary rather than required and if deploying behaviors beyond the employee's formal duties can become problematic, what prevents employees from adhering strictly to their in-role tasks? One answer could be a paradoxical leadership (PLSH) style.

Previous studies have analyzed how different leadership styles (transformational, authentic, servant, etc.) encourage the development of extra-role service in the hospitality context (Chon and Zoltan, 2019; Gui *et al.*, 2020; Wang and Xie, 2020), but these studies do not consider the paradoxical nature of extra-role service. PLSH has been described as a leadership style that can "respond to new and seemingly contradictory inquiries that managers must currently face" (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2019, p. 404). To date, research on the effects of PLSH in the hospitality context has received limited attention. The existing literature argues that PLSH effectively promotes psychological empowerment and job engagement in hotel employees (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2019). More recently, She *et al.* (2020) have shown that PLSH can stimulate in-role service behavior in hotel employees through employee-leader identification. Our study seeks to fill this knowledge gap by analyzing the role of PLSH in the employee's intention to engage in extra-role service. We propose that effective handling of these contradictions can play a central role in employees' decisions to initiate extra-role service. Based on social learning theory (SLT) (Bandura, 1997), we propose that PLSH can help hospitality organizations to create the best conditions for frontline employees to succeed when facing the contradictions of extra-role service, as PLSH shows employees the skills needed to manage the contradictory situations that can arise from behaving outside their formal role.

Further, the very nature of hospitality work subjects employees to the constant tension of adapting to new and different roles at work. Each guest's personal characteristics and needs require frontline employees to reinvent themselves in every service interaction (Elche *et al.*, 2020; Karatepe *et al.*, 2020). This unpredictability makes it difficult for the hospitality sector to standardize employee-guest interactions. The responsibility for handling daily contingencies, thus, falls to the employee, who must resolve–even anticipate–unforeseen situations by exercising autonomy (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2019). Given this unique aspect of hospitality service, some authors argue a need to identify mechanisms to improve frontline employees' communication and learning capabilities to facilitate their adaptation to a continuously changing service context (Francis and Baum, 2018). Our study addresses this need by analyzing the indirect influence of PLSH through behavior that encourages frontline employees' learning and communication. We link PLSH to self-improvement behavior (observational learning and seeking advice) and to organizational-improvement behavior related to the theory of employee voice (Morrison, 2011). We propose that PLSH promotes the development of work models that challenge frontline employees to explore new ways of doing their work through learning and communication. Such proactive improvement behavior is reflected in the frontline employee's intention to go the extra mile, providing distinctive service to the guest.

Overcoming the current challenges in the hospitality industry requires going beyond the traditional leadership styles prevalent today. We must explore new styles to help employees manage the contradictions inherent in their service. To address this knowledge gap, this study seeks to answer two questions: Can PLSH provide tools to help employees manage the contradictions of hospitality service? And will PLSH help to improve employees' learning and communication capabilities to enable them to adapt to the demands of extra-role service? With these questions in mind, we define two study goals:

(1) to examine whether PLSH in the hospitality industry contributes to the development of extra-role service in frontline employees' guest service; and

(2) to explore whether employees' orientation to continuous improvement – manifested through behavior such as seeking advice, observational learning and employee voice – acts as a mediator in this relationship.

In examining these relationships, our study makes three main contributions. First, it addresses the need to identify leadership styles that help hospitality organizations to adapt to current demands (Guchait *et al.*, 2020) by demonstrating PLSH's ability to influence extra-role service. Our research, thus, extends the scant body of literature on PLSH in the hospitality sector (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2019; She *et al.*, 2020). Second, our study contributes to understanding extra-role service in frontline hospitality employees, arguing that PLSH can facilitate extra-role service by showing an effective way to manage contradictory situations associated with this behavior (Bolino *et al.*, 2003). This argument develops an approach neglected to date in hospitality research. Third, this study identifies the mechanisms that facilitate employees' adaptation to changing situations during guest service interactions (Francis and Baum, 2018). Our model can explain how PLSH influences the emergence of learning behaviors such as seeking advice and observational learning and communicative behaviors such as employee voice. It also explains how these improved behaviors can mediate between PLSH and extra-role guest service. This novel focus provides a broad research framework within which future studies can advance understanding of the mechanisms underlying extra-role service.

The next section presents the theoretical framework. Subsequent sections contrast our hypotheses and discuss the main results obtained. Finally, we highlight the theoretical and practical implications of our findings and describe the study's limitations and future lines of research.

Literature review and hypothesis development

Paradoxical leadership

Drawing on the organizational theory of paradox, Zhang *et al.* (2015) conceptualize PLSH as ambidextrous or balanced leadership capable of integrating into a single behavior two coexisting and apparently opposing but interrelated behaviors that respond to the paradoxical demands of managing people in organizations. The paradoxical leader (PL) treats followers uniformly but also considers their individual characteristics (Lewis *et al.*, 2014). From this perspective, PLs adopt balanced behavior that constantly integrates simultaneous responses to the two extremes of the paradoxes inherent in people management. Five dimensions define such leaders' actions:

(1) being both self- and other-centered;

(2) simultaneously maintaining closeness and distance;

(3) keeping control, while allowing followers autonomy;

(4) treating everyone uniformly while allowing individualization; and
(5) enforcing work requirements while permitting flexibility (Zhang *et al.*, 2015).

Work in the tourism sector often presents human teams with unpredictable and contradictory situations. They must make rapid and innovative decisions to guarantee high-quality customer service (Karatepe *et al.*, 2020; Ruiz-Palomino *et al.*, 2019). Hospitality work, thus, constantly involves resolving paradoxes. Some paradoxes involve autonomy vs control: The organization expects supervisors to control frontline employees' actions, but employees need greater autonomy to satisfy guests' demands. Other paradoxes of standardization vs personalization arise because the organization requires standardized employee behavior policies, while simultaneously expecting employee behavior to fit the demands of each customer. As contradictory as these goals might seem, both must be met to guarantee the organization's competitiveness. The paradoxes inherent in the hospitality industry lead frontline employees to ambiguous or changing role performance (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2019). In such a work context, a leader must be able to show frontline employees exactly what to do (decreasing the negative effects of role ambiguity), while at the same time making them feel that they can make their own decisions to adapt to the guest's specific demands (personalizing service to guarantee the guest's satisfaction). By fostering clarity of goals and autonomy simultaneously in followers (Fürstenberg *et al.*, 2021), PLSH responds uniquely to the needs of frontline hotel employees by helping them to be what they are expected to be (both controlled and autonomous) to deliver the service required (both standardized and personalized).

SLT (Bandura, 1997) helps to clarify the process by which PLs model behavior for their employees. SLT assumes that followers perceive the leader as a role model, and thus adopt the leader's behavior as their own through imitation. Based on SLT, PLs who respond simultaneously to the two extremes of the paradox show followers how to adapt to guests' changing expectations, developing both personal and organizational learning and improvement processes that help them to face the contradictory challenges of hotel service (Zhang *et al.*, 2015). PLSH, thus, merits study in this context.

Extra-role service

One particularity that distinguishes the hospitality industry from other sectors is the significant role of frontline personnel in ensuring that hotels function well, as interaction between customers and employees is key to guaranteeing good service delivery (Chon and Zoltan, 2019; Kim and Qu, 2020). This situation captures the distinctive character of hotels as organizations in which employees' behavior becomes a central tool for achieving goals. One of the most appreciated skills of service personnel in the hospitality sector is, thus, their capacity to respond to unexpected contingencies that arise during interaction with the customer without needing to appeal to the supervisor (Zhu *et al.*, 2019). The hospitality management literature recognizes this set of skills as extra-role service (Garg and Dhar, 2016; Kim and Qu, 2020).

Extra-role service is generally defined as "discretionary behaviors of contact employees in serving customers that extend beyond formal role requirements" (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997, p. 41). This term includes all proactive behaviors deployed by frontline employees to satisfy the demands of guests and perform additional actions beyond the limits of their formal role (Garg and Dhar, 2016). Researchers commonly find that extra-role service produces beneficial results for organizations (Podsakoff *et al.* (2009) for more detail). Some authors find, however, that this situation can confront employees with contradictory paths. First, researchers note that customers' needs – which often require hotel employees to make

an extra-role effort – can be sharply contradictory (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2019; She *et al.*, 2020). In their recent report "The age of I" (IGH, 2017) on current trends in the hotel guest, the hotel group IHG identified four paradoxes defining the desires of today's guests – and thus hotel service. Guests want both to feel unique and to connect to a brand. They want service to be both luxurious and affordable. They seek both their own interest and the common good. They wish both to control service and to have service controlled to their liking. To please such guests, frontline hotel employees must resolve tremendous paradoxes. Second, some researchers show that extra-role service can produce contradictory responses from both supervisors and colleagues in the work environment (Bolino *et al.*, 2003). When employees depart from their formal role to engage in non-required behavior, their co-workers may perceive this behavior as competition and reject them. Employees who prefer to adhere strictly to their formal role may feel that co-workers who perform extra-role service make them look bad, leading to conflict. Employees unable to manage the paradox that exactly the same extra-role service is desired by the organization and guest but rejected by some team members may be tempted to take the easy path, adhering strictly to their in-role tasks to avoid conflicts. PLs are in a unique position to help employees' handle this paradox.

Based on SLT (Bandura, 1997), the leader who manages paradoxes constructively acts as a role model, showing employees how to face tensions and contradictions effectively. The literature on leadership demonstrates that the leader's behavior and attitudes serve as an example and role model for followers. In a hospitality context, Huertas-Valdivia *et al.* (2019) have shown that PLs can inspire employees to overcome stressful work conditions, achieving greater engagement and creativity in service. She *et al.* (2020) demonstrate that PLSH can, under certain conditions of identification, promote in-role service behavior toward a complex and changing guest. Drawing on this argumentation, we propose that the PL can act as a model at the individual level to increase employees' ability to manage potentially contradictory situations associated with extra-role behavior, thereby stimulating employees' participation in extra-role service. Based on the foregoing, we propose:

H1. PLSH is positively related to employees' extra-role service.

Employees' self-improvement

Research on individuals' motivation for self-improvement has identified different learning-oriented behaviors such as seeking advice and observation. Çelen *et al.* (2010) show that learning occurs when individuals observe (observational learning) or interact with others (seeking advice). Both types of action result in self-improvement. Observational learning enables employees to strengthen their performance by assimilating or imitating work activities that they have seen others in their environments perform (Lee and Duffy, 2019). For example, employees who observe co-workers successfully fulfill a customer's expectations and who wish to improve their own actions will learn and adapt their behavior in similar situations to improve themselves. Co-workers' advice can also be a useful resource for employees' improvement (Çelen *et al.*, 2010). Employees seek advice to obtain information with which to solve work problems or identify relevant resources that would otherwise remain hidden to them (Cross *et al.*, 2001). Both observational learning and advice-seeking give workers tools and resources to improve themselves. The literature shows that the leader's role is crucial to developing behavior that results in individual learning (Vera and Crossan, 2004).

Despite the minimal research on PSHL and based on the role modeling proposed by SLT (Bandura, 1997), we can trace a conceptual line from PLSH to employees' self-improvement.

For Zhang *et al.* (2015), PLs act as models, showing their followers "how to be open, learning-oriented and flexible to work proficiently, adaptively and proactively" (p. 544). PLSH grants followers the discretion to act autonomously in performing their tasks, while simultaneously maintaining decision-making control (Lewis *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, while PLs establish high standards of quality at work, they understand that employees can make mistakes (Zhang *et al.*, 2015). This combination should help to maintain employees' interest in self-improvement without fear of negative consequences. Further, followers experience higher levels of psychological empowerment under PLSH due to the leader's skill in integrating behaviors such as closeness and distance or uniformity and individualization. Such empowerment grants employees freedom to apply new ways of handling workplace contingencies (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2019).

Based on the foregoing, we propose that integrating the paradoxes that arise in people management gives workers (at the individual level) freedom to engage proactively in self-improvement situations and motivates them to do so. We expect PLSH through role modeling to challenge followers to explore new and improved ways of performing tasks, increasing workers' interest in participating in self-improvement processes such as advice seeking or observational learning. Based on these arguments, we propose:

H2a. PLSH is positively related to employees' self-improvement.

Some researchers, in turn, suggest that employees with a wider or deeper knowledge of their work role feel more motivated to make extra effort to benefit the organization (Rich *et al.*, 2010). Learning-oriented employee behaviors such as observation and seeking advice, contribute to a better knowledge of one's role, motivating employees to make additional efforts to improve the guest's situation. Without such learning, employees in situations where they perceive themselves as inferior to others may be reluctant to initiate behavior beyond that strictly assigned to their role (Bakker and Leiter, 2010). Self-improvement can be an effective mechanism to reduce the perception of inferiority and place the employee in a good position to perform extra-role service. Along similar lines, recent research by Zhu *et al.* (2019) reveals that a knowledge-based mental framework enables hospitality employees to help customers more proactively. The foregoing arguments suggest that employees' self-improvement, revealed through observational learning or seeking advice, helps to shape extra-role service.

Based on the foregoing, we propose that workers who perceive that they have sufficient information and personal resources (whether obtained through observational learning or seeking advice) will feel prepared to go beyond the limits of their formal role. Such learning will give employees a perception of self-efficacy, motivating them to take the step from "I could do it" to "I will do it," stimulating the development of extra-role service. According to the foregoing, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H2b. Employees' self-improvement is positively related to extra-role service.

Finally, we propose that self-improvement mediates the main relationship. Analyzing this effect advances understanding of the influence of PLSH on extra-role service and identification of the learning mechanisms that help frontline employees to adapt to a changing service context like that of hospitality (Francis and Baum, 2018). Prior studies show us that improvement-oriented employee behavior – such as self-improvement – can mediate the relationship between leadership style and different forms of improved employee performance such as extra-role service. For example, research shows that employees' beliefs about self-efficacy of their skills and capabilities mediate the relationship between

leadership style and better employee performance (Dvir *et al.*, 2002). More recently, hospitality-sector research has confirmed that frontline employees' orientation to improvement and learning mediates the relationship between leadership style and positive results linked to knowledge management (Shamim *et al.*, 2017).

From this line of argument, we can infer that improved employee behavior such as self-improvement has a mediating effect on the relationship between PLSH and better employee performance, measured in terms of extra-role service. As proposed in *H2a* and *H2b*, followers of PLs influence employees' self-improvement through role modeling. Self-improvement is, in turn, positively related to extra-role service. We, therefore, expect self-improvement to give employees sufficient knowledge and experience to enable PLs to show employees how to handle the paradoxes of extra-role service. Employees will become competent and adaptive, viewing paradoxical situations not as occasional exceptions but as an inherent characteristic of hospitality service. As we expect PLSH to have a positive indirect effect on extra-role service through self-improvement, we propose:

H2c. Employees' self-improvement mediates the direct relationship between PLSH and extra-role service.

Employee voice

We conceptualize employee voice behavior as the "discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns or opinions about work-related issues with the intent to improve organizational or unit functioning" (Morrison, 2011, p. 375). The notion of voice is, thus, grounded in a premise: Employees speak when driven by a source of dissatisfaction or an opportunity to optimize organizational well-being. The opportunity to speak always includes the choice to remain silent. The literature indicates that employees facing this choice often choose silence for fear of negative consequences, rejecting the possibility of improvement that voice presents (Detert and Burris, 2007). Understanding what drives employees to voice to the leader can help to promote changes in organizational functioning, as employee voice is positively related to improvement in processes, innovation and productivity (Ruiz-Palomino *et al.*, 2019).

Some researchers find that perceived leadership style is a key input in employees' decision to voice. For example, Detert and Burris (2007) find that open management leadership, which is oriented to change, is consistently related to voice. Their results are less consistent for transformational leadership style, however, suggesting that some behavior included in this construct sends confusing signals to employees about whether it is advisable to speak. In the interest of understanding how leaders can jeopardize voice, other authors affirm that subordinates tend to remain silent when they perceive their leaders as ambiguous or indeterminate. Detert and Burris (2007), for example, indicate that adaptive or contingent leadership style creates an uncertain environment that inhibits employee voice.

PLSH is the opposite of the adaptive or contingent leadership style. Zhang *et al.* (2015) show that PLs go beyond contingent adaptation, constantly exhibiting a stable set of behaviors. Such leaders eliminate adaptive or contingent responses that may confuse employees as to whether their voice will be well received. PLs, adopt a "both/and" strategy (Lewis *et al.*, 2014; Zhang *et al.*, 2015), assuming that the extremes of the paradox form part of a whole and responding with stable and consistent behavior that employees can easily predict. By eliminating adaptive or contingent behavior, PLSH eliminates the uncertainty that could inhibit employee voice behaviors by making the leader's actions predictable for followers.

From SLT, we know that role modeling encourages frontline employees to take the leader's behavior as a guide for their own. Stable behavior from the leader could, thus, result in stable employee voice behavior. When leaders depart from adaptive or contingent behavior by acting predictably to their employees, they give employees security that their voices are welcome. From the individual's perspective, therefore, we propose that the specially balanced and stable nature of PLSH encourages a work context that drives employees to voice to the leader. We expect the PL's stable behavior beyond situational adaptations to stimulate a stable routine of voice in subordinates. In other words, employees will feel safer and be more willing to voice to improve organizational functioning. Based on this reasoning, we propose:

H3a. PLSH is positively related to employee voice.

In analyzing the relationship between employee voice and extra-role service, the literature identifies both behaviors as stemming from proactive attitude. For Parker and Collins (2010), each of these behaviors impacts the organization positively at different levels. Voice impacts the organization's internal environment, becoming a proactive workplace behavior. In contrast, employees' actions that respond or adapt to the environment (such as extra-role service) can be considered as proactive strategic behavior. Both behaviors share the same motivation: to initiate a change. That is, the employee seeks to generate positive change and acts proactively to achieve it. For Pinder (1984) because motivation determines the direction and intensity of behavior, the same motivation will guide both behaviors in the same direction. As voice and extra-role service share a common proactive motivation, we also expect them to share direction and intensity. For example, employees committed to voicing to improve the organization through constructive suggestions are also likely to undertake actions that improve customer service by going beyond their role.

Based on the foregoing, we expect the common motivation of these two behaviors to establish a positive relationship between them. As both behaviors are driven by a proactive attitude toward change, employees involved in proactive behavior that seeks internal improvement in the organization (such as employee voice) will also be willing to develop proactive behavior (such as extra-role service) to improve the organization relative to its environment. When employees choose to participate by improving the organization internally through their voice, their proactive intention to generate positive change will not be limited to change within the organization. Such motivation should extend to extra-role service that seeks the competitive improvement of the organization, that is, to external improvement. The foregoing arguments lead us to propose:

H3b. Employee voice is positively related to extra-role service.

Finally, to advance understanding of PLSH's effect on extra-role service, we propose that voice mediates the main relationship. Further, identifying mechanisms that improve frontline employees' communication helps employees to face the uncertainty involved in hotel service interactions (Francis and Baum, 2018). Prior studies demonstrate that the mechanism of employee voice combines elements of the organizational context such as leadership style, with proactive or creative employee behavior such as extra-role service. Along these lines, Chen and Hou (2016) have shown that voice acts as a mediator in the process by which the leader influences employees' creative behavior. When they express opinions and ideas, employees stimulate their own creativity and that of the group. Frazier and Bowler (2015) also affirm that voice can mediate the relationship between perceived supervisory style and employees' level of performance, as employee participation through

suggestions leads to better conflict resolution and work processes, creating the context in which the supervisor can influence employees' proactive performance. The foregoing suggests that voice mediates the relationship between PLSH and extra-role service.

Based on these arguments, we can infer that employee voice will mediate the relationship between PLSH and extra-role service. As proposed in *H3a* and *H3b*, followers of PLs may be willing to participate more through their voice and greater participation is positively related to extra-role service behavior. We expect the opinions and ideas employees express (voice) to function as a mechanism through which PLSH contributes to resolving the paradoxes or conflicts associated with extra role-service. We, thus, argue that PLSH's stimulation of employee voice (such as suggestions or ideas for optimal guest service) contributes to resolving paradoxes or conflicts associated with extra-role service, facilitating the latter's emergence. Based on this expectation, we propose:

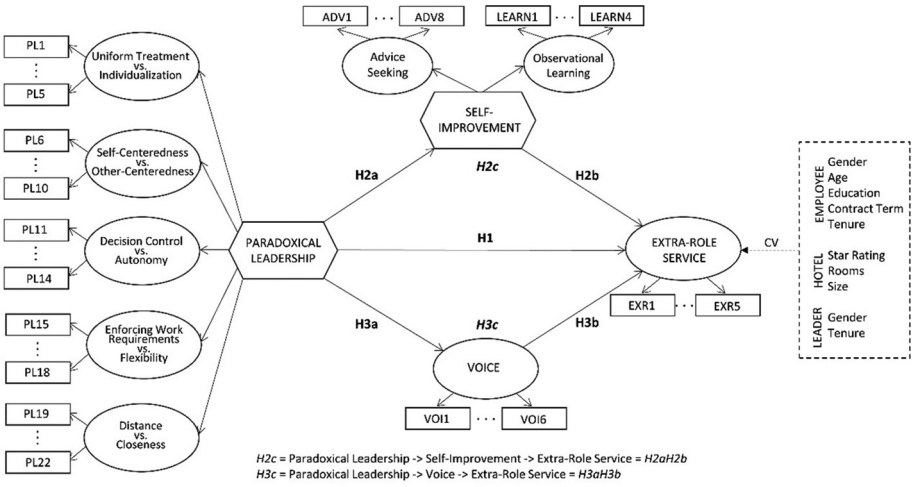
H3c. Employee voice mediates the direct relationship between PLSH and extra-role service.

Figure 1 represents the research model developed.

Materials and methods

Sample and procedure

This study analyzes a convenience sample of employees in direct and frequent contact with guests (front desk, reservations and concierge staff) in hotels located in Spain. The field study was performed from December 20, 2019 to February 20, 2020. The research team visited 81 hotels and invited 400 employees to participate voluntarily in the study – the number needed to yield a sample with sufficient statistical power, based on suggestions in the literature that paper-and-pencil questionnaires obtain a response rate of around 50% (Nutly, 2008). At each visit, we delivered the questionnaire personally to employees interested in participating in the study and collected their responses to guarantee confidentiality. We obtained 311 complete responses to the survey, giving a response rate of



Notes: Italics used for mediation hypotheses; CV=control variables

Figure 1.
Research mode

77.8%. Incomplete surveys were discarded. Table 1 summarizes the sociodemographic profile of the participants.

The World Tourism Organization ranks Spain as the second-highest country worldwide in the number of tourists received (WTO, 2019). Spain's tourism sector made the largest contribution to the nation's GDP in 2019 (15%), using approximately 14% of the working population, according to the National Statistics Institute (INE). The Spanish hospitality sector is significant not only in business volume and number of visitors; Spanish cities host mixed tourism that includes both travelers seeking leisure and rest and travelers seeking "cultural tourism" (Elche *et al.*, 2020). Further, Spanish hotels receive a high number of international guests (Aguilar-Quintana *et al.*, 2021) of very diverse cultural origins. These guests' different expectations and cultures place frontline employees in Spanish hotels in contradictory or paradoxical service situations that demand behavior beyond their formal role to satisfy the customer.

The sample was selected through convenience sampling using criteria applied in prior research on the tourism sector (Elche *et al.*, 2020; Garg and Dhar, 2016; Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2018, 2019; Zhao and Guo, 2019). First, the participants were chosen for their accessibility and availability during the visit (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2019). These circumstances also determined the geographic scope of the sample, which spanned a manageable number of cities chosen for their importance to the Spanish hospitality sector. Second, as the dependent variable in our study is extra-role service, our sample was limited to employees in direct contact with customers (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2019). Finally, we chose nonmanagerial employees to guarantee that the respondents spent the maximum time possible interacting with guests (Karatepe and Karadas, 2015). The sample's distribution is quite similar to that of the 2019 Spanish hospitality industry's workforce in terms of employees' education level and contract type. According to the INE's 2019 Economically Active Population Survey, salaried workers in tourist lodging services who held a secondary school degree or higher represented 91.4% of the total workforce, a figure very close to 92.9% in our sample. Workers who held indefinite contracts with the company represented

Respondent demographics	Frequency(%)	Hotel characteristics	Frequency(%)
Gender		*Hotel star rating*	
Female	149(47.9)	Two-star	30(9.6)
Male	162(52.1)	Three-star	101(32.5)
		Four-star	169(54.3)
Education		Five-star	11(3.6)
Compulsory	22(7.1)		
Noncompulsory and higher	289(92.9)	*Average no. rooms*	
		78	
Age			
<30	142(45.6)	*Hotel size (no. employees)*	
31–40	110(35.5)	<20	206(66.2)
41–50	44(14.1)	21–40	43(13.8)
>51	15(4.8)	41–60	45(14.5)
		>61	17(5.5)
Contract term			
Indefinite	222(71.4)	*Average organizational tenure*	
Fixed-term	89(28.6)	5 years	

Note: $n = 311$

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample

68.9% (71% in our sample). To confirm whether the participants' responses differed significantly based on sample characteristics, we performed an ANOVA on the population means and Levene's test. Based on various sample characteristics such as hotel category, type of contract, length of workday and gender, the results showed no statistically significant differences in participants' responses on items related to the dependent study variable.

As the data were self-reported and gathered simultaneously, we took measures to eliminate common method bias (CMB) (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). First, to avoid influencing the responses' meaning, the questionnaire items did not identify the names or dimensions of the study variables (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2018). Second, to create psychological separation, the variables were presented in different sections with separate and different instructions (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2019). Third, to avoid social desirability bias, the questionnaire was delivered with an envelope, guaranteeing privacy and anonymity of the responses returned. Finally, written instructions clarified that there were no wrong or right answers (Karatepe *et al.*, 2020). Fourth, we used several methods to verify that our work was free of CMB. We applied Harman's single-factor test and studied measurement model fit through the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and the correlations among variables (Gutierrez-Gutierrez *et al.*, 2018; Volberda *et al.*, 2012). We also used the correlation marker technique (Lindell and Whitney, 2001). None of these tests suggested a problem with CMB.

Instruments

We designed the questionnaire for this exploratory study by adapting different scales developed in the management literature. These scales had previously been subjected to validation processes that included checking the items' reliability and validity. All variables were measured using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = completely disagree to 7 = completely agree). We used the original items, making minor adaptations to the language so that items referred to the hospitality environment and self-report questionnaire. The items and main descriptive statistics are available on request.

Paradoxical leadership. We adapted the 22-item scale developed by Zhang *et al.* (2015) to measure PLSH using an individual-level approach. This scale has been used previously at the individual level in the hospitality sector (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2019). Sample items include "My supervisor uses a fair approach to treat all subordinates uniformly but also treats them as individuals" and "My supervisor controls important work issues but allows subordinates to handle details."

Self-improvement. We adapted four items used by Lee and Duffy (2019) to measure observational learning in the workplace as an instrument of self-improvement. Sample items include "I try to learn from co-workers' behavior" and "I carefully observe co-workers' behavior." We also adapted the eight-item scale developed by Major and Kozlowski (1997) to measure advice seeking. Sample items include "I initiate conversations with my co-workers or supervisor for advice about specific work tasks."

Voice. We adapted the six-item scale developed by Van Dyne and LePine (1998), used recently by Garg and Dhar (2016). Sample items include "I voice my ideas for new projects or changes in procedures."

Extra-role service. We used 5 items included in the scale developed by Bettencourt and Brown (1997) and used previously in the hospitality industry context (Garg and Dhar, 2016). Sample items include "In my work, I [. . .] help customers with problems beyond what is expected or required" and "[. . .] often go above and beyond the call of duty when serving customers."

Control variables. We used control variables related to employees' characteristics – gender (male; female), age (number of years), education (compulsory; non-compulsory), contract term (indefinite; fixed-term) and tenure (no. months); hotels' characteristics – star rating (no. stars), number of rooms and hotel size (no. employees); and leaders' characteristics – gender (male; female) and tenure (no. months). Prior studies in hospitality have controlled for these variables to dismiss alternate explanations for the behavior of the dependent variable (Elche *et al.*, 2020; Jaiswal and Dhar, 2015). Stronger orientation to care, accumulated knowledge and greater stability in the organization may give participating subjects access to the personal and organizational resources needed to perform extra-role service successfully. Further, larger hotels may have more means of control, while hotels with higher star ratings may focus more on employees' extra-role behavior as a distinctive element of service. Finally, the leader's gender and tenure may influence employees' extra-role behavior due to the leader's orientation to care and greater knowledge of the organization and its processes.

Analytic strategy

The theoretical model proposed was examined through structural equation modeling. PLS-SEM is a robust method for estimating data with both normal and extremely non-normal distribution (Hair *et al.*, 2019b). As our study used a data set with non-normal distribution, PLS-SEM is preferable to other multivariate techniques (Hair *et al.*, 2019a). Further, as a variance-based method, PLS-SEM is the best method when the model analyzed is complex – that is, when it includes mediating composites and second-order constructs (Hair *et al.*, 2019a). PLS-SEM can obtain robust results for our study's complex multiple measurement models with second-order constructs (PLSH and self-improvement). Finally, PLS-SEM can handle models that include constructs formed with either one or several indicators without causing problems of identification (Hair *et al.*, 2019a). It can also handle metric data from interval scales, ordinal data with equidistant point values and data with binary coding. Our study's variety of measures and configurations for the constructs required adding control variables to the model, further supporting the choice of PLS-SEM.

All latent variables in our study represent constructs related to employee behavior. These constructs symbolize theoretical concepts in behavioral research that cannot be observed directly (Hair *et al.*, 2019b). The existing literature proposes that such behavioral or attitudinal concepts are better measured through reflective models (Henseler, 2017). Further, as both PLSH and self-improvement represent second-order constructs, we evaluated the measurement model in two additional stages (Hair *et al.*, 2019b), using SmartPLS v3.2.9 in two stages:

(1) evaluation of the measurement model's reliability and validity; and

(2) testing of the relationships hypothesized among constructs.

Results

Evaluation of the measurement model

We initially evaluated whether the lower-order components satisfied the criteria established in the literature. We assessed an item's individual reliability by examining its loading or simple correlation with each construct, requiring a value above 0.707 (Hair *et al.*, 2019a). As this parameter was fulfilled for all cases except LP7, LP7 was eliminated. Construct reliability was validated using three criteria:

(1) Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7;

(2) composite reliability above 0.7; and

(3) values for Dijkstra-Henseler's statistic above 0.7.

These parameters were fulfilled, ensuring a high correlation among the composites (Hair *et al.*, 2019a). The average variance extracted took values above 0.5 for each construct, ensuring convergent validity (Hair *et al.*, 2019a). Finally, all latent variables achieved discriminant validity, taking values below 0.90 for the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) matrix (Hair *et al.*, 2019b).

After confirming the first stage, we proceeded to the second, which used the points obtained for the latent variables of the first-order constructs as estimators of the latent variables in the second-order model (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2019). We reevaluated the qualities of our reflective model, this time including the higher-order components. This analysis ensured the reliability and validity of the measurement elements, which fulfilled the same criteria observed in the first stage. Table 2 summarizes the results obtained for the reliability and validity statistics for the first- and second-order reflective latent variables. Table 3 summarizes the results of discriminant validity assessment using the HTMT criterion including the first- and second-order variables.

Evaluation of the structural model

We assessed the structural model using a set of criteria that established the absence of collinearity as an initial premise, analyzed the statistical relevance and significance of the path coefficients and effect size (f^2) for the hypothesized relationships, assessed the coefficient of determination (R^2), tested overall model fit and finally evaluated the model's predictive relevance through the Q^2 statistics (Hair *et al.*, 2019a).

First, we assessed the possibility of collinearity among the predictive constructs. Variance inflation factors (VIFs) should ideally be below 3 (Hair *et al.*, 2019b). We confirmed this premise for all cases, dismissing concerns about collinearity among the antecedent variables (Table 4). Figure 2 presents the results for the hypothesized model relationships. Table 4 displays the values derived from the full evaluation of the structural model. To confirm that the values obtained for the path coefficients were always consistent, we performed a *bootstrapping* test (one-tailed, 5,000 subsamples). The value zero did not appear in any of the confidence intervals, confirming the statistical significance of the coefficients.

Analysis of the structural relationships supported all hypotheses. First, PLSH was positively related to employee extra-role service ($\beta = 0.162$, $p < 0.05$, $f^2 = 0.02$), providing support for *H1*. PLSH was also positively related to employees' self-improvement ($\beta = 0.571$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.483$), indicating solid support for *H2a*. Similarly, the results for *H2b* confirmed a positive and significant relationship of self-improvement to extra-role service ($\beta = 0.166$, $p < 0.05$, $f^2 = 0.021$). We obtained a substantial positive relationship of PLSH to employee voice ($\beta = 0.511$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.353$), strongly supporting *H3a*. The results for *H3b* confirm a positive and significant relationship of voice to extra-role service ($\beta = 0.249$, $p < 0.01$, $f^2 = 0.050$). Finally, none of the control variables was significantly related to employees' extra-role service. The control variables were added to the model, simultaneously and as single-item latent variables, to control for their influence on the endogenous variable. Table 4 presents the values obtained from the analysis of these relationships.

Table 4 also displays the values obtained for the coefficient of determination R^2. Interpretation of the coefficient depends on the model's complexity and the nature of the study variables. Values above 0.20 show that the model has the reasonable explanatory capability for the variables analyzing behavior (Hair *et al.*, 2019a). Finally, following Cohen

First- or second-order construct		Factor loading	CR[a]	AVE[b]	α[c]
Paradoxical leadership			*0.947*	*0.782*	*0.93*
(UI)Treating_uniformly/individualization		0.847	0.937	0.749	0.916
	PLSH 1	0.848			
	PLSH2	0.905			
	PLSH3	0.857			
	PLSH4	0.875			
	PLSH5	0.841			
(SO)Self-centeredness/other-centeredness		0.883	0.917	0.734	0.878
	PLSH6	0.787			
	PLSH8	0.876			
	PLSH9	0.923			
	PLSH10	0.835			
(CA)Decision_control/autonomy		0.901	0.929	0.767	0.899
	PLSH11	0.865			
	PLSH12	0.885			
	PLSH13	0.881			
	PLSH14	0.871			
(RF)Enforcing_work/flexibility		0.901	0.900	0.692	0.851
	PLSH15	0.849			
	PLSH16	0.774			
	PLSH17	0.866			
	PLSH18	0.835			
(DC)Distance/closeness		0.887	0.929	0.767	0.898
	PLSH19	0.893			
	PLSH20	0.785			
	PLSH21	0.937			
	PLSH22	0.881			
Self-improvement			*0.894*	*0.809*	*0.764*
Advice_seeking		0.904	0.949	0.698	0.938
	ADV1	0.808			
	ADV2	0.888			
	ADV3	0.838			
	ADV4	0.839			
	ADV5	0.847			
	ADV6	0.863			
	ADV7	0.849			
	ADV8	0.745			
Observational_learning		0.895	0.904	0.702	0.858
	LEARN1	0.800			
	LEARN2	0.860			
	LEARN3	0.878			
	LEARN4	0.812			
Voice			0.926	0.677	0.904
	VOI1	0.776			
	VOI2	0.844			
	VOI3	0.819			
	VOI4	0.791			
	VOI5	0.871			
	VOI6	0.834			
Extra-role service			0.933	0.736	0.910
	EXR1	0.872			
	EXR2	0.891			
	EXR3	0.879			
	EXR4	0.869			
	EXR5	0.772			

Table 2. Reliability and validity for first- and second-order variables

Notes: Italics used for second-order constructs; [a]Composite reliability; [b]Average variance extracted; [c]Cronbach's alpha

Table 3.
Discriminant validity using HTMT criterion

Variable	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*	*14*	*15*	*16*	*17*	*18*	*19*	*20*	21
1. Advice Seeking																					
2. Employee_Age(CV)	*0.117*																				
3. (CA)Decision control/autonomy	*0.514*	*0.044*																			
4. Employee_Contract_Term(CV)	*0.181*	*0.430*	*0.125*																		
5. (DC)Distance/closeness	*0.516*	*0.038*	*0.857*	*0.088*																	
6. Employee_Education(CV)	*0.072*	*0.183*	*0.043*	*0.007*	*0.061*																
7. Extra-role service	*0.404*	*0.031*	*0.396*	*0.056*	*0.286*	*0.092*															
8. Employee_Gender(CV)	*0.197*	*0.281*	*0.053*	*0.140*	*0.089*	*0.060*	*0.070*														
9. Leader_Gender(CV)	*0.059*	*0.097*	*0.103*	*0.107*	*0.082*	*0.073*	*0.074*	*0.092*													
10. Leader_Tenure(CV)	*0.063*	*0.532*	*0.045*	*0.400*	*0.050*	*0.081*	*0.082*	*0.112*	*0.118*												
11. Hotel_Size(CV)	*0.091*	*0.083*	*0.050*	*0.036*	*0.128*	*0.064*	*0.031*	*0.028*	*0.316*	*0.108*											
12. Hotel_Rooms(CV)	*0.156*	*0.029*	*0.098*	*0.026*	*0.201*	*0.008*	*0.044*	*0.093*	*0.271*	*0.083*	*0.793*										
13. Observational_Learning	*0.684*	*0.085*	*0.531*	*0.122*	*0.556*	*0.033*	*0.375*	*0.156*	*0.099*	*0.068*	*0.129*	*0.202*									
14. (RF)Enforcing work/flexibility	*0.460*	*0.050*	*0.887*	*0.060*	*0.896*	*0.070*	*0.368*	*0.056*	*0.060*	*0.062*	*0.087*	*0.124*	*0.527*								
15. (SO)Self-centeredness/other-centeredness	*0.466*	*0.047*	*0.833*	*0.102*	*0.783*	*0.028*	*0.465*	*0.023*	*0.139*	*0.046*	*0.121*	*0.187*	*0.440*	*0.824*							
16. Hotel_Stars(CV)	*0.055*	*0.147*	*0.074*	*0.029*	*0.106*	*0.184*	*0.062*	*0.100*	*0.194*	*0.106*	*0.351*	*0.297*	*0.104*	*0.063*	*0.031*						
17. Employee_Tenure(CV)	*0.039*	*0.623*	*0.016*	*0.400*	*0.030*	*0.200*	*0.070*	*0.156*	*0.001*	*0.664*	*0.157*	*0.099*	*0.059*	*0.048*	*0.025*	*0.177*					
18. (UI)Treating uniformly/individualization	*0.491*	*0.044*	*0.736*	*0.090*	*0.725*	*0.034*	*0.355*	*0.063*	*0.090*	*0.033*	*0.101*	*0.124*	*0.522*	*0.783*	*0.803*	*0.021*	*0.053*				
19. Paradoxical_Leadership		*0.028*		*0.100*		*0.037*	*0.416*	*0.050*	*0.105*	*0.043*	*0.105*	*0.164*				*0.053*	*0.036*				
20. Self-improvement		*0.086*		*0.184*		*0.050*	*0.472*	*0.212*	*0.088*	*0.038*	*0.134*	*0.216*				*0.297*	*0.099*		*0.677*		
21. Voice	0.508	0.147	0.554	0.059	0.461	0.045	0.464	0.097	0.079	0.204	0.064	0.099	0.563	0.500	0.483	0.028	0.147	0.491	0.553	0.099	

Notes: Italics used for second-order construct values. CV = control variables; significant values based on *bootstrapping* test (5,000 subsamples)

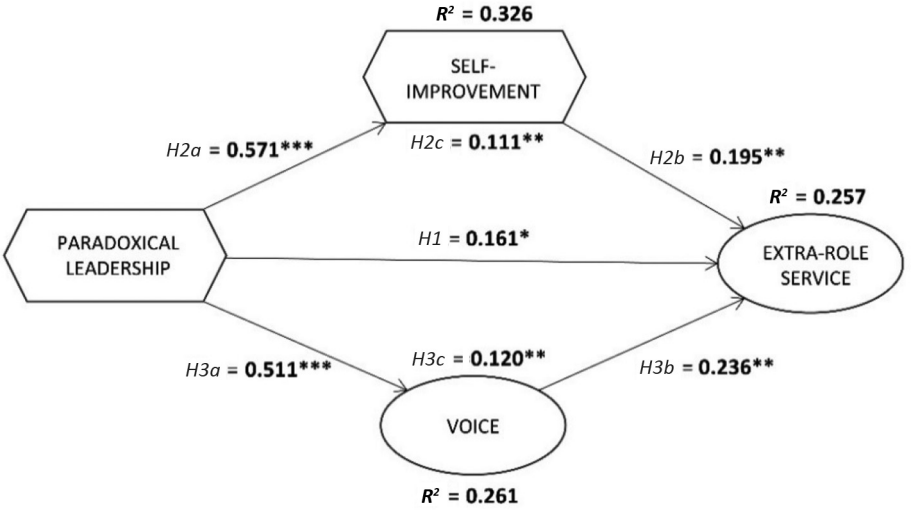


Figure 2.
Evaluation of the structural model

Notes: *p <0.05, **p <0.01, ***p <0.001

(1992), we classified our results for effect size as follows: no effect ($f^2 < 0.02$), weak ($f^2 > 0.02$), medium ($f^2 > 0.15$), strong effect ($f^2 > 0.35$).

We evaluated the SRMR to approximate the fit of the data to the proposed theoretical model (Hair *et al.*, 2019b). From a conservative perspective, values below 0.08 indicate a good fit (Hair *et al.*, 2019a). For our data, both the saturated and the estimated model obtained values below this cutoff, indicating a good fit. Finally, we followed a *blindfolding* procedure to assess the value of Stone-Geiser's Q^2. This procedure isolated part of the sample to confirm the capability of the rest to reproduce its values correctly, yielding values of 0.167 and 0.255 for Q^2. Values of Q^2 greater than 0 indicate that the model has sufficient capability to reproduce the isolated part of the sample (Hair *et al.*, 2019b). Table 4 summarizes the results for evaluation of the structural model, including analysis of the direct relationships, control variables and results for the endogenous variables and model fit.

Multiple mediation analysis

We analyzed the mediation effects following the procedure in Hair *et al.* (2019a) for multiple mediation models. To determine the effects, we used a *bootstrapping* test (one-tailed, 5,000 subsamples). Both the direct ($\beta = 0.162$, $p < 0.023$) and the indirect relationship ($\beta = 0.222$, $p < 0.001$) were significant and positive. These results confirm that the variables self-improvement and employee voice exerted a complementary partial mediating effect on our model, supporting *H2c* and *H3c*. To complement these analyzes, we performed a VAF test to confirm our conclusion about the partial effects of mediations *H2c* and *H3c*. Following Hair *et al.* (2019a), VAF values between 20% and 80% indicate partial mediation. Table 5 summarizes the results of our analysis of the multiple mediation effects.

To compare the two mediation effects included in the model, we estimated whether a statistically significant difference exists between *H2c* and *H3c* by calculating the percentile and bias-corrected confidence interval (Carrion *et al.*, 2017). As we did not propose a hypothesis about these results, we performed a two-tailed test. The results showed no

Table 4. Evaluation of the structural model

Relationship	VIF	Path coefficient[a]	*t*- values	Confidence interval[b]		f^2	R^2
H1:PLSH->extra-role	1.704	0.161(0.025)	1.955	[0.033, 0.304]Sig	0.020	Weak effect	
H2a:PLSH->self-improvement	1.000	0.571(0.000)	10.311	[0.479, 0.661]Sig.	0.483	Strong effect	
H3a:PLSH->voice	1.000	0.511(0.000)	8.991	[0.416, 0.604]Sig	0.353	Strong effect	
H2a:Self-improvement->extra-role	1.911	0.195(0.008)	2.422	[0.058, 0.323]Sig	0.027	Weak effect	
H3b:Voice->extra-role	1.696	0.236(0.003)	2.765	[0.097, 0.375]Sig	0.044	Weak effect	
Control variable							
Employee_Age->extra-role	1.964	−0.015(0.424)	0.192	[−0.153, 0.107]N.Sig.	0.000	No effect	
Employee_Contract_Term->extra-role	1.416	0.010(0.438)	0.156	[−0.093, 0.108]N.Sig.	0.000	No effect	
Employee_Education->extra-role	1.107	−0.074(0.073)	1.453	[−0.154, 0.012]N.Sig.	0.007	No effect	
Employee_Gender ->extra-role	1.182	0.015(0.391)	0.276	[−0.077, 0.103]N.Sig.	0.000	No effect	
Leader_Gender->extra-role	1.209	0.034(0.275)	0.599	[−0.061, 0.125]N.Sig.	0.001	No effect	
Leader_Tenure->extra-role	2.244	0.036(0.331)	0.438	[−0.093, 0.174]N.Sig.	0.001	No effect	
Hotel_Size->extra-role	3.121	−0.021(0.387)	0.288	[−0.139, 0.098]N.Sig.	0.000	No effect	
Hotel_Rooms->extra-role	2.860	−0.07(0.181)	0.910	[−0.196, 0.057]N.Sig.	0.002	No effect	
Hotel_Star_Rating->extra-role	1.332	0.079(0.106)	1.249	[−0.020, 0.190]N.Sig.	0.006	No effect	
Employee_Tenure->extra-role	2.548	−0.012(0.441)	0.147	[−0.145, 0.118]N.Sig.	0.000	No effect	
Endogenous variable							
Extra-role							0.257
Self-improvement							0.326
Voice							0.261
Overall fit							
SRMR saturated model	0.036						
SRMR estimated model	0.059						

Notes: PLSH = paradoxical leadership; [a] = *p*-values are presented in parentheses; [b] = one-tailed test based on 5,000 subsamples; Sig. = significant direct effect; N. Sig. = non-significant direct effect

Relationship	Path Coefficient[a]	Confidence Interval[b]	*t*-value	VAF (%)	Conclusion
Direct effects					
H1:PLSH → extra-role service	0.161(0.025)	[0.033, 0.304]	1.955		
Specific indirect effects					
H2c:PLSH → self-improvement → extra-role service	0.111(0.008)	[0.037, 0.189]	2.407	28.34	CPM
H3c: PLSH → voice → extra-role service	0.120(0.003)	[0.053, 0.196]	2.732	30.69	CPM
Total indirect effects	0.231(0.000)	[0.128, 0.346]	3.491		
Total effects	0.392(0.000)	[0.308, 0.488]	7.071	59.03	

Table 5.
Mediation analysis

Notes: [a]*p*-values are presented in parentheses; bone-tailed test; VAF = variance accounted for; PLSH = paradoxical leadership; CPM = complementary partial mediation

differences between the effects of *H2c* and *H3c* ($\beta = -0.010^{sig.}$; CI = 0.095–0.113; CI^{BC} = 0.099–0.117).

Discussion and conclusions

Conclusions

This exploratory study produced some significant findings. Our results show a positive effect of PLSH on extra-role service in frontline employees. The reason may be that PLs show employees how to handle the contradictions associated with extra-role service. This effect is also partially mediated by the employee's self-improvement and organizational-improvement behavior (voice). Our findings provide academics and professionals with empirical evidence of PLSH's contributions to the hospitality industry by encouraging employees' orientation to continuous improvement. This behavior is valuable for addressing the need to foster the extra-role service essential for hotel success.

Theoretical implications

The study's results have various theoretical implications. First, we obtain empirical evidence that PLSH provides advantages in hospitality management, encouraging extra-role service. Prior research has demonstrated that more traditional leadership styles foster extra-role service (Gui *et al.*, 2020), but only a few studies have analyzed PLSH in the hospitality environment. This lack of research is surprising, given that PLSH can help to solve current problems. Hospitality work involves service interactions that are hard to predict and require increasingly adaptive leadership and employees. Our study incorporates the study of a little-studied leadership style into hospitality research and extends prior studies by demonstrating PLSH's positive influence on hospitality service. Our results also extend and confirm the findings of Huertas-Valdivia *et al.* (2019), who demonstrate PLSH's capability to foster flexibility in employees' actions, achieving autonomous and creative service behavior. Their study did not, however, include any variable linked expressly to service. Our findings on the effects of PLSH on hotel employees confirm that PLSH creates an environment that encourages frontline employees to fulfill guests' expectations by committing to extra-role service. She *et al.* (2020) linked PLSH to employee service performance through employee-leader identification, but their study did not resolve the question of whether PLSH directly influences employee service performance, as the authors

only analyzed its indirect influence. We extend and confirm their research by explicitly confirming the direct and indirect effects of PLSH on extra-role service.

Second, our study contributes to identifying PLSH as an instrument to show employees how to manage the paradoxical effects of extra-role service. The literature shows that employees who engage in extra-role service may obtain either favorable (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2009) or unfavorable results (Bolino *et al.*, 2003). Hospitality research has generally analyzed the influence of different leadership styles without considering the negative effects of extra-role service on the employee. Although we do not discuss the positive results of extra-role service here, our study extends hospitality research by including the possible negative consequences of extra-role service in our attempt to identify PLSH as a stimulator of such behavior. This perspective aligns with the results of some researchers who recommend considering the personal cost to employees of engaging in extra-role behavior (Bolino *et al.*, 2003). Our study complements these authors' perspectives by providing a more complete, balanced view of this phenomenon. In light of our results, PLSH emerges as a leadership style that shows hotel employees an effective way to face the paradoxes associated with extra-role service by considering these paradoxes not as mutually exclusive options that require employees to choose between A and B but as parts of a whole.

Third, our research develops an innovative approach to constructing a framework that identifies employee behaviors inclined to continuous improvement. Our framework combines learning and self-improvement behaviors (Çelen *et al.*, 2010) with communication behaviors from the theoretical development of employee voice (Morrison, 2011). Our study, thus, extends the results of Zhang *et al.* (2015) in finding that PLSH increases followers' motivation to improve themselves and the organization. We also find a significant relationship between PLSH, employees' learning and communication capacities and extra-role service. This finding confirms and extends prior studies (Rich *et al.*, 2010) arguing that workers with greater knowledge of their job requirements are more motivated to exert additional effort beyond their prescribed role. Further, we extend Pinder (1984) by obtaining evidence from a new context, the hospitality industry. This evidence confirms that frontline employees' proactive orientation acts as a common motivator guiding their voice and extra-role service in the same direction.

Finally, our study extends PLSH research in a Western context. The concept of PLSH was developed in an Asian context and its effects may differ in other cultures. Although Zhang *et al.* (2015) proposed that "holistic thinking and integrative complexity are universal" and, thus that Western leaders could be as holistic, integrative and effective in managing paradoxes as their Asian counterparts (p. 560), the authors' assertion required confirmation. Our study adds to the very few studies that have extended PLSH to a more general context (Fürstenberg *et al.*, 2021; Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2019). We decontextualize PLSH from the Asian culture in which it originated to test its effectiveness by integrating the paradoxes inherent in people management in hospitality service and facilitating positive results. In so doing, we consolidate the idea that PLSH is effective in cultural contexts different from Asian ones.

Practical implications

A hotel's success goes hand in hand with its employees' ability to go beyond their formal roles to attend to guests in a memorable way. Hospitality managers should, therefore, foster work environments that nurture the development of extra-role service. Our study found that PLSH has direct and indirect positive effects on extra-role service. We, therefore, recommend that hospitality managers who select or train leaders – especially leaders who work with frontline employees – work to ensure that these leaders possess the characteristics of PLSH.

For Zhang *et al.* (2015), PLSH responds to contradictory situations with stable, non-polarized behavior that avoids improvisation. For example, the PL provides a uniform treatment of all followers while simultaneously attending to each individual, enforces work requirements but is perceived by employees as flexible and maintains decision control while permitting employees autonomy. During recruitment and selection processes for supervisors or other staff responsible for frontline personnel, hotels' HR departments should include tests to detect PLSH skills. These departments could begin by adapting the tool developed by Zhang *et al.* (2015). Candidates with high scores on this scale should give hospitality organizations advantages by helping frontline employees to combat the paradoxes presented by increasingly complex, demanding guest service.

Further, our results show that self-improvement and employee voice act as mediators in the main relationship. Hotels can, thus, use PLSH to improve employees' intention to become involved in continuous improvement processes through voice and self-improvement. This finding identifies an opportunity for development in both the organization and employees. Another result is that organizations can stimulate the development of extra-role service through orientation to improvement. Our study suggests that PLSH influences some employee behavior oriented to self-improvement (such as observational learning and seeking advice), as well as voice-oriented to improving the organization. These results support the idea that employees who seek to improve themselves and the organization also provide better service. We, therefore, recommend that managers establish mentoring or training programs that assume the presence of a PL. As PLSH style can be learned (She *et al.*, 2020), senior leaders who possess the capabilities to manage service paradoxes can serve as examples to shape new leaders' leadership styles. A mentoring program with periodic meetings could train frontline supervisors to understand and face the paradoxes of hotel service. Further, HR departments can plan training programs based on role-play or simulation of paradoxical service situations to help supervisors and frontline employees assimilate and integrate the paradoxical thinking and behavior described by Zhang *et al.* (2015). Such programs can make both groups more adaptable to today's complex and competitive reality, particularly to the contingencies derived from people management, a priority in the industry (Guchait *et al.*, 2020).

Limitations and future research

Our findings should be interpreted based on the following limitations, which present opportunities for future study.

First, we tested our theoretical model using a convenience sample. Although this method is accepted in the tourism literature due to the sector's characteristics (Elche *et al.*, 2020; Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2018), generalizing from our findings to the entire population may be limited by uncertainty about the representativeness of our sample. Future research could extend these results by analyzing samples representative of the population to permit generalization.

Second, we present a cross-sectional study that analyzes employees' perceptions at a specific moment in time, like a snapshot. This method limits the interpretation of the results, as perceptions can change over time (Hsiao *et al.*, 2015). Future research could contrast our results through longitudinal studies to determine the variables' behavior over time and establish causal relationships.

Third, our study adopted an individual focus in its analysis of the effects of PLSH. A group- or multilevel analysis of the variable PLSH could give rise to interesting conclusions. Researchers might also investigate the effect of PLSH on group voice or group improvement behavior and evaluate whether the impact of PLSH differs based on the level of analysis.

Finally, interpretation of our findings is limited by our use of self-report data, which are susceptible to CMB. As our study variables focus on employees' perceptions of leadership styles or of their own behavior, the self-report questionnaire is a valid measure (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2019). Further, we followed Podsakoff *et al.* (2003) in designing the questionnaire to incorporate a set of preventive measures explained in Section 4.1 to minimize this effect. Testing confirms that CMB is not a problem in the study. Future research could include multiple sources for obtaining data such as leaders' perceptions of their leadership style or of employees' behavior.

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