Success is Achieved Through Action: Exploring a Mediation Path between Leadership and Creativity in the Hospitality Industry

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Abstract
In the competitive hospitality and tourism industry, creativity of hotel's frontline employees is becoming increasingly important. This study applies the conservation of resources theory to analyze the mechanisms that influence the creativity of frontline staff. Data was collected from 430 frontline employees in two-waves working in 35 three star hotels. This study discovered that the organizational virtuousness of frontline staff serves as a mediator in the relationship between resonant leaders and creativity. The findings of this research have significant theoretical and practical implications, especially for hospitality management. They offer strategies for enhancing the positive effects of resonant leader on the creativity of hotels frontline staff.
Keywords: Resonant leader, organizational virtuousness, creativity, hospitality and tourism sector

INTRODUCTION

Today, the hospitality industry faces the challenge of adapting to growing global issues and evolving customer needs (AlEssa and Durugbo, 2022). Consequently, researchers have concentrated on innovative activities within the industry (Lin, 2023) to create typologies (refer to the systematic review by Lelo de Larrea et al., 2021). These typologies aim to help hospitality businesses address these challenges and gain a competitive edge over their rivals. Creativity, which refers to the process of generating, proposing, and implementing innovative and practical ideas to enhance work operations, is a crucial factor in determining an organization's competitive advantage (Shin et al., 2017; Asif et al., 2023). Creativity is an individual action that contributes to the organization's goals, allowing employees to share and apply their exceptional ideas (Putra and Mardikaningsih, 2022). Scholars typically examine creativity within the context of important organizational norms that promote. Creativity is crucial for an organization's sustainability and is seen as a key element of success (Janssen et al, 2004). Employees' creativity can help organizations reach their full potential (Korzilius et al., 2017; Khan & Wali, 2020; Ouyang et al., 2021; Asim et al., 2021). Creative employees are not only essential but also strive to address new client challenges, especially those working on the front lines in the hospitality industry.

Research in the hotel industry has identified several strategies for developing the frontline workers creativity. For instance, Zhang and Bartol (2010); Kim and Beehr (2023) recommend that employees should be empowered and encouraged to experiment. Additionally, Jyoti and Dev (2015) suggest encouraging proactive risk engagement can lead to creative insights that works to create a new and improve decision making. Despite this, hospitality industry must allocate unambiguous time and possessions to promote creative initiatives among employees (Bavik, 2020; Elahi et al., 2021; Senturk, 2023). Since leaders are responsible for nurturing human bond within the organization, this research emphasizes the consequences of their contribution in the development of frontline employees' creativity in the hospitality and tourism industry (Yu et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2020). Previous research in the field of hospitality sector has primarily focused on established leadership styles, such as, authentic leadership (Grošelj et al., 2020), ethical leadership (Hoang et al., 2023), and servant leadership (Al-Azab and Al-Romeedy, 2024; Ishaque & Audi, 2024). However, there remains a need to improve and comprehend the roles of leaders, which could provide new imminent into multifaceted circumstances (Ali et al., 2020; Maheshwari and Kha, 2023). In light of this context, the endeavor of this research is to scrutinize how resonant leaders convey positive sentiments to their frontline employees, which enhances creativity. Scholars argue that further investigation into the effects of resonant leader is important.

Resonant leadership is a novel leadership approach for dealing with ambiguous situations. Resonant leaders align with those around them, understanding and corresponding what actions to take and why (Yasir et al., 2021; Tabche et al., 2024). Considering the existing challenges and based on conservation of resources

(COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989), this study aims to explore how a resonant leader influences the creativity of frontline staff in the hospitality industry. This study examines the mediating effects of organizational virtuousness between resonant leader and frontline employees' creativity. Our research findings can benefit CEOs, managers, and human resources professionals across various sectors, particularly in the hotel industry. This study empowers them to implement and promote strategies that maximize the positive influence of leader in order to foster a positive work environment (Rafique et al., 2020; Hoang et al., 2023).

This present paper is prearranged as follows. Initially, we present assumptions based on key philosophical perspectives and a review of the literature. Up next, we outline our methodology and then provide an overview of our findings. Ultimately, we present our consequences, limitations, and research guidance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The goal of this study is to test the research model illustrated in Figure 1, as outlined in this section.

Figure 1: Research Model

The immediate influence of resonant leader on frontline employees creativity

In line with COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002) building strong relationships with employees through creativity, coaching, and mentoring is the essence of resonant leadership (Zhao et al., 2023). This connection between leaders and frontline employees highlights the interpersonal aspects of resonant leadership and creativity, transforming the workplace into an environment characterized by reciprocal trust, respect, and a sense of emotional and physical safety (Abid et al., 2021; Gaan et al., 2023; Tabche et al., 2024). Resonant leaders cultivate the emotional flexibility of those they lead by effectively managing their own emotions as well as those of their frontline employees (Gaan and Shin, 2022). According to Tabche et al. (2024), three fundamental characteristics of resonant leadership are compassion, an optimistic outlook, and a visionary approach. These leaders connect with frontline employees who demonstrate flexibility and exude positive, contagious emotions (Gaan et al., 2023). Many perspectives on flexibility highlight it as a skill that individuals inherently possess in modern organizations (Tabche et al., 2024). Resonant leadership is a positive, emotionally intelligent, and relational leadership style that is associated with favorable job outcomes (Qaiser et al., 2021; Gaan and Shin, 2022). According to Gaan et al. (2023), a leader's primary responsibility lies within the relational and emotional aspects of leadership. The concept of resonance refers to a leader's ability to inspire their followers to achieve optimal results by fostering positive feelings (Ramaswamy et al., 2023). To attain desired outcomes, resonance requires a blend of emotional, financial, environmental, social, and cultural intelligence (Gaan and Shin, 2022). Tabche et al. (2024) define resonant leadership as leaders with strong emotional intelligence, sensitivity to others' emotions, empathy, and self-control. According to Ali and Kashif (2020), this behaviour fosters trust and commitment among followers. As a result, there is a lot of interest in understanding creativity as a key component in enabling organizational success (AlEssa and Durugbo, 2022). Khan et al. (2020); Kmieciak (2020) define creativity as the intentional creation and application of novel ideas or innovations (such as new practices or goods) in the workplace to improve performance at the individual, team, or organizational levels. This definition highlights the links between creativity and other concepts in the literature, such as employee creativity, creative job performance, and on-the-job creativity (Asif et al., 2017; Tabche et al., 2024). The complicated term "creativity" refers to a variety of behavioral actions, such as idea generation, promotion, execution, and research (Utomo et al., 2023). Researchers have classified creativity as either one-dimensional or multidimensional construct (Khan et al., 2020; Kmieciak, 2020).

H$_1$: Resonant leader is positively associated with hotels front-line employees' creativity

Frontline employees creativity mediates the relationship between resonant leader, and organizational virtuousness

Using COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002), we propose that presenting resonant leaders in a hospitality industry can significantly impact employees' creative behaviour. Han and Bai (2020), state that the presence of resonant leaders within an organization is likely to foster creativity among frontline employees. This occurs because resonant leaders empower their teams and promote open communication, enabling employees to access valuable resources from both leaders and peers. Consequently, employees experience increase trust level and are more inclined to participate in creative activities.

Resonant leaders are more likely to inspire virtuous organizations by demonstrating exemplary behavior and adhering to recognizable moral principles. Developing rules to manage others is secondary to self-cultivation and the strict regulation of one's own behavior. By fostering a moral climate that encourages organizational members to be more virtue-driven and act accordingly, a resonant leader can inspire those around them (Nikandrou and Tsachouridi, 2015). Businesses are expected to thrive and be profitable while being guided by the principle of justice rather than simply the pursuit of profit. Virtue is seen as a genuine desire to contribute to the greater good, rather than just the capability to perform good deeds (Zafar et al., 2022; Goyal et al., 2024). For resonant leaders, wealth is not an end goal; rather, it is an unforeseen result of their dedication to improving society and ensuring a brighter future. Although virtue ethics emphasizes "internal goods" and serves as an internal motivator for decent behavior, the moral landscape is complex, and no single approach can effectively address all moral challenges. Organizational virtue focuses on education and role modeling (Hydari et al., 2019; Arshad et al., 2024). Behavior requires both internal and external regulation, whether in business or other contexts. Effective leaders in an organization understand their responsibilities, adjust their actions throughout the management process, and change their mindset and attitude to foster suitable behavior in their environment (Ramaswamy et al., 2023). Therefore, hypothesis, which has been proposed:

H₂: Resonant leader is favorably related to organizational virtuousness.

H₃: Organizational virtuousness is favorably related to creativity.

H₄: Organizational virtuousness establishes a positive association between resonant leader and creativity.

METHODOLOGY

Data collection and sampling technique

We used purposive sampling strategy (Saunders et al., 2012), hence, we contacted almost 40 three star hotels according to the list supplied by the Pakistan Hotel Association. Out of these, 35 hotels agreed to participate in the study. The frontline employees were clearly informed about the goal of this research, and they were given assurance of their privacy. They consented to cooperate on the basis that only their ultimate outcomes would be utilized for research purposes. To minimize potential bias, we conducted a two phase questionnaire targeting hotel's frontline staff (Podsakoff et al., 2012). During phase one (T1), we gathered data on demographics, and resonant leader. After four weeks (T2), we gathered information about organization virtuousness and creativity.

In the first phase (T1) we sent 600 questionnaires via social media i.e., LinkedIn, WhatsApp group, Facebook and E-mails etc. Out of which 576 questionnaires returned (almost 96%). Again in phase two (T2) we distributed 576 questionnaires to those who took part and completed the questionnaire in (T1). Almost 81.5% responded (n=486), but we had to abandon 56 questionnaire due to a insignificant amount of missing data or responses that are overly simplistic, we encountered challenges in analyzing the information. We kept 430 responses (almost 88%) appropriate questionnaires after removing those with high missing data or inconsistent replies.

Measures

We employed a five-point Likert scale to assess all major variables, with responses varying from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Resonant leader: was assessed using 10 item scale by Bawafaa et al. (2015). The sample questions used were "My supervisor looks for feedback on ideas and initiatives even when it is difficult to hear".

Organizational virtuousness: was assessed using 15 item scale by Cameron et al. (2004). The sample questions used were "In this organization, a sense of profound purpose is associated with what we do".

Creativity: was assessed using 6 item scale by Hsiao et al. (2011). The sample questions used were "I search out new technologies, processes, techniques, and/or product ideas".

RESULTS

Analysis of sample description

The ages of a textile manager range from 20-30 years (n=60, 13.9%), some are from the age group ranging from 31-40 years (n=100, 23.3%), majority are from 41-50 years (n=193, 44.8%) and some are above 50 years (n=77, 17.9%). Having bachelor degree (n=90, 20.9%), MBA degree (n=160, 37.2%), MPhil degree (n=70, 16.2%). Designation which the textile manager secured were within the organization were deputy manager (n=50, 11.6%), assistant manager (n=99, 23%), marketing manager (n=80, 18.6%), marketing executive (n=96, 22.3%) and general manager (n= 65, 15.1%). Experiences range from 0-5 years (n=90, 20.9%), 6-10 years (n=48, 11.1%), 11-15 years (n=92, 21.3%) and 16-20 years (n=200, 46.5%).

Table 1: Factor loading, reliability, and validity

Variables	Indicator	Factor Loadings		AVE	Composite Reliability	Square root of AVE
Resonant Leader	RL1	0.7022		0.629	0.946	0.972
	RL2	0.7001				
	RL3	0.5962				
	RL4	0.8777				
	RL5	0.7269				
	RL6	0.8455				
	RL7	0.9326				
	RL8	0.8465				
	RL9	0.8649				
	RL10	0.7805				
Organizational Virtuousness	OV1		0.7289	0.530	0.944	0.971
	OV2		0.7436			
	OV3		0.6435			
	OV4		0.7273			
	OV5		0.7189			
	OV6		0.7625			
	OV7		0.7432			
	OV8		0.6785			
	OV9		0.5224			
	OV10		0.7324			
	OV11		0.7497			
	OV12		0.7798			
	OV13		0.6871			
	OV14		0.7290			
	OV15		0.9147			
Creativity	CR1		0.7444	0.580	0.892	0.944
	CR2		0.7418			
	CR3		0.7425			
	CR4		0.7349			
	CR5		0.8365			
	CR6		0.7643			

RL: Resonant leader// OV: Organizational virtuousness// CR: Creativity// AVE: Average variance extracted HTMT (table 2) assesses discriminant validity variables (Henseler et al., 2014). Voorhees et al. (2016) report instances of substitute approaches being used. Construct parameters of 0.85 and 0.90 were originally

suggested in the literature for HTMT to construct discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2014). The results in table 2 illustrate discriminant validity because none of the HTMT coefficients exceed the cautious limit of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2016). In conclusion, the model has no validity or reliability concerns.

Practical results

Tenenhaus et al. (2005) define composite reliability as Dillon-Goldstein's rho, factor reliability, Joreskog's rho, or McDonald's (ω).Composite dependability should range from 0.6 to 0.7 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Table 1 shows that composite validity is copious met (AVE ≥ 0.5, CR values > 0.7 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), and item factor loadings ≥ 0.5). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) measures the degree of consistency among constructs. Typically, a minimum AVE value of 0.5 is recommended, although values as low as 0.4 may be acceptable in some cases (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Table 1 shows that all the AVE values fall within the acceptable range. The variance values are above 50%, which indicates that the model structures adequately represent the AVE. Additionally table 1 also demonstrate that the analysis met the discriminant validity standards, as the square root value of AVE exceeds the correlations of variables (Zait and Bertea, 2011).

Table 2: Discriminant validity: Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT)

Construct	1	2	3
RL			
OV	0.2294		
CR	0.2644	0.5129	

RL: Resonant leader// OV: Organizational virtuousness// CR: Creativity

According to the Fornell and Larcker (1981), AVE values should exceed correlation values when compared to other constructs. Kawecki and Ebert (2004), stated that, discriminant validity is considered adequate at 0.5. Asymmetric values are significantly higher than non-diagonal values, indicating discriminant validity. According to Alarcón and Sánchez (2015), latent conceptions are distinct and non-overlapping. Table 3 shows that all values are within range.

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	1	2	3
RL	0.6296		
OV	0.0558	0.5305	
CR	0.0717	0.2677	0.5800

RL: Resonant leader// OV: Organizational virtuousness// CR: Creativity

Figure 1 represents the graphical representation of a research model. It is also demonstrating the path coefficient, which states that it is significant.

Table 4 displays the results of our direct hypothesis-testing analyses. The positive connection between RL -> OV is deemed momentous (β= 0.236, p<0.05), supporting hypothesis 1. Similarly, the relationship between RL -> CR is also statistically significant (β=0.154, p<0.05), supporting hypothesis 2. On the other hand, OV -> CR is also significant proving hypothesis 3(β=0.480, p<0.05).

Results shown in table 5 states that organizational virtuousness mediates the association between resonant leader and creativity in the textile sector, proving hypothesis 4 (β=0.113, p<0.05).

DISCUSSION

This study examines the impact of a recently recognized leadership style known as resonant leader on the creativity of front-line workers in the hospitality industry. Grounded in the conservation of resources (COR) theory, this research analyzes the resource caravan principle, which illustrates how resonant leaders influence the creativity of front-line staff. Additionally, this study proposes an innovative approach to enhance organizational virtuousness and boost the creativity of front-line workers in hospitality by promoting a leadership style that focuses on positive workplace outcomes.
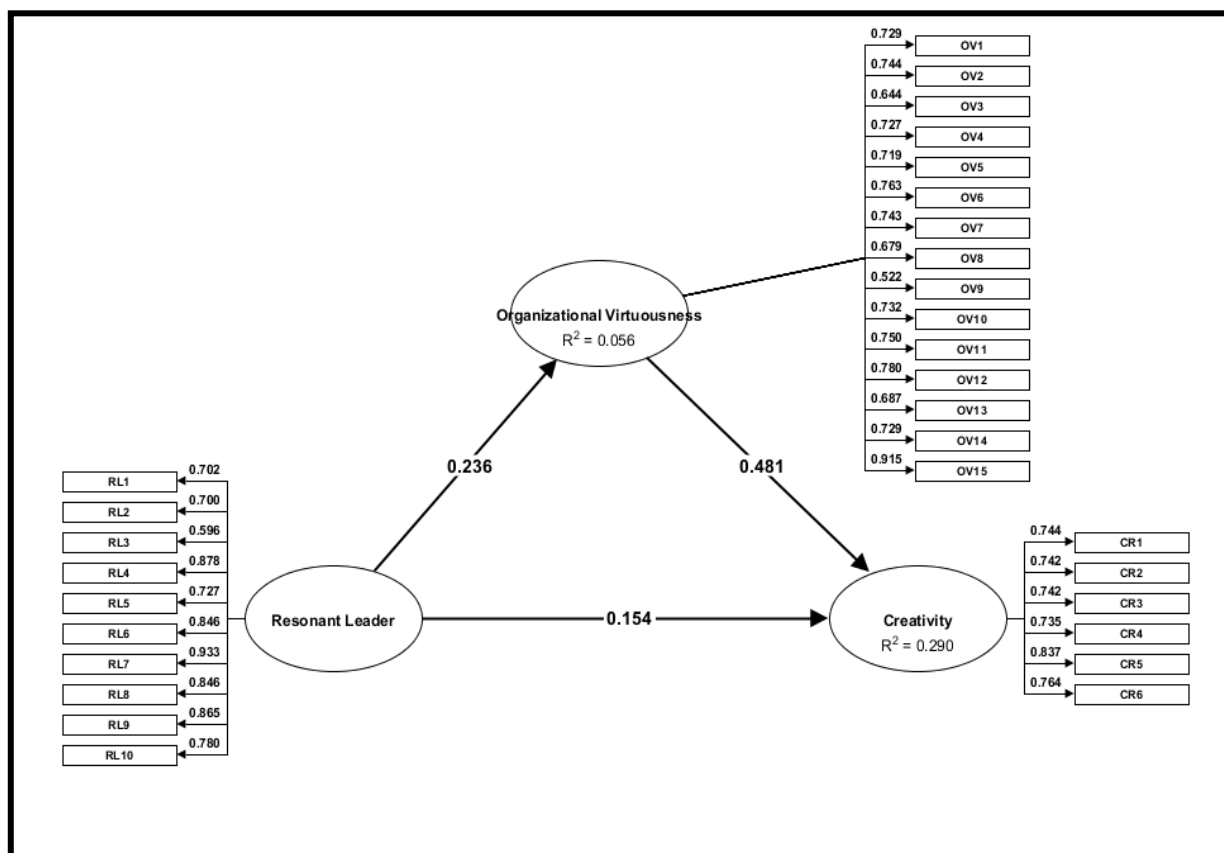
Figure 1: Graphical representation of the model

Table 4: Direct effect: P-values and T-values

| Effect | β value | Standard bootstrap results | | | | | Percentile bootstrap quantiles | | | |
		Mean value	Standard error	t-value	p-value (2-sided)	p-value (1-sided)	0.5%	2.5%	97.5%	99.5%
RL -> OV	0.236	0.240	0.051	4.612	0.000	0.000	0.117	0.135	0.336	0.368
RL -> CR	0.154	0.155	0.053	2.904	0.003	0.001	0.011	0.050	0.255	0.280
OV -> CR	0.480	0.480	0.052	9.245	0.000	0.000	0.353	0.375	0.587	0.611

Significance at 10% (1.645)*
Significance at 5% (1.96) **
Significance at 1% (2.576) ***
RL: Resonant leader// OV: Organizational virtuousness// CR: Creativity

In accordance with COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002), the study's findings indicate that resonant leaders foster a positive relationship with frontline hotel employees' creativity proving hypothesis 1. This is an original detection, representing a significant contribution to the existing literature. Furthermore, this study reinforces the importance of an affirmative leadership style in promoting employee creativity (Hoang et al., 2021). Hence, the findings reveal a positive relationship between resonant leadership and organizational virtuousness, thereby confirming hypothesis 2 and the latter is positively connected to frontline employee's creativity, which confirms hypothesis 3. This verdict is another novel finding, as this link has not been

studied before. This study builds on the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002) and the literature on resonant leadership (Boğan et al., 2024; Zhen et al., 2024). As a result, it provides the first empirical evidence that a specific leadership style can enhance employees' creativity and support work environment. This is a significant outcome, as organizations, much like leaders, grant employees the autonomy to make important decisions in their work (Guchait et al., 2023).

Table 5: Mediation of frontline employees

Effect	β value	Standard bootstrap results					Percentile bootstrap quantiles			
		Mean value	Standard error	t-value	p-value (2-sided)	p-value (1-sided)	0.5%	2.5%	97.5%	99.5%
RL -> OV -> CR	0.113	0.115	0.028	4.017	0.000	0.000	0.052	0.063	0.173	0.200

RL: Resonant leader// OV: Organizational virtuousness// CR: Creativity

The findings in this study demonstrated that the connection between resonant leader and creativity is mediated by organizational virtuousness confirming hypothesis 4. This is another novel finding and a contribution. This link has not been studied in the previous literature. When an organization cares for their employees and gives them, the freedom to work and above all, positive leadership also enhances employees thinking.

It is essential for stakeholders to understand how an individual's personality influences creativity in tourism, hospitality, and other industries. Employees need to recognize the role of organizational virtuousness in enhancing the impact of a resonant leader on creativity. Leaders should encourage their frontline employees to seek support in both their professional and personal lives, as this is particularly important for their emotional well-being. Managerial approaches that foster a caring, dynamic, and stimulating workplace promote positive attitudes towards the organization and its clients. Additionally, leaders should equip their employees with the necessary assistance and resources to help them succeed in their roles.

Leaders should offer sufficient social support and counseling services to their employees. It is essential that employees feel their leaders and the organization genuinely cares about their mental and physical well-being. Furthermore, leaders are legally required to maintain a safe work environment. Organizations benefit from creating a culture that promotes positive sentiment (Judeh et al., 2022). Hospitality industry professionals recommend that leaders who demonstrate empathy and offer support can motivate their employees, enhancing productivity, creativity, and teamwork (Ali and Kashif, 2020). This encouragement helps employees persevere through personal and professional challenges (Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2022).

This study has several limitations. First, the data was obtained through self-reports, which may lead to biased results (Doty and Glick, 1998). Second, this research is based on purposive sampling, which restricts our ability to establish causal relationships. Additionally, this study focuses exclusively on frontline personnel in the hotel industry, meaning the findings may not be applicable to other industries or countries. Future research should explore additional factors and determinants that influence creativity. This study also suggests examining the impact of various resources, such as social support, psychological and physical health, and emotional intelligence, on employees' ability to handle organizational expectations.

In conclusion, the topic of leadership on creativity merits further exploration in future research, especially if we aim to encourage sustained innovation in the hospitality industry. This area of study also involves uncovering industry-specific trends that can enhance our understanding of the creative process. Our findings indicate that employees who are passionate and thoughtful tend to report higher creativity levels. Moreover, frontline employees feel more expressively devoted and engaged in their work, which positively influences their creativity. Leaders who prioritize employees' attitudes and behaviors can cultivate a greater competitive advantage and contribute to organizational success.

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