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# Test of a mediation model of psychological capital among hotel salespeople

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper aims to propose and test a research model that examines psychological capital as a mediator of the effect of servant leadership on lateness attitude, intention to remain with the organization, service–sales ambidexterity and service-oriented organizational citizenship behaviors.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Data were gathered from hotel salespeople using a three-wave design with a two-week time lag between each wave in Iran. In total, 26 supervisors assessed salespeople's service-oriented organizational citizenship behaviors. Structural equation modeling was used in the assessment of the direct and mediating effects.

**Findings** – The findings reveal that psychological capital functions as a full mediator of the influence of servant leadership on the aforementioned outcomes. Specifically, servant leadership fosters salespeople's psychological capital. Such employees in turn display reduced lateness attitude and express an increased intent to remain with the organization. They also have favorable perceptions of service–sales ambidexterity and exhibit service-oriented organizational citizenship behaviors at elevated levels.

**Practical implications** – Top management of hotels should be committed to the philosophy of servant leadership because salespeople under the umbrella of this leadership style are high on psychological capital. Under these circumstances, such employees can exhibit service–sales ambidexterity by contributing to delivery of exceptional service and enhancing customer satisfaction. They can also contribute to the organization's competitive advantage via service-oriented organizational citizenship behaviors.

**Originality/value** – This study makes a significant contribution to the extant hospitality research by testing psychological capital as a mediator between servant leadership and the previously mentioned consequences.

**Keywords** Psychological capital, Servant leadership, Hotel salespeople, Lateness attitude, Service-oriented organizational citizenship behaviours, Service-sales ambidexterity, Intention to remain with the organization

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Psychological capital (PsyCap) is a relatively emerging personality variable in positive organizational behavior and refers to “[...] investment/development of who you are” (Luthans *et al.*, 2005, p. 253). Self-efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism are the indicators representing PsyCap (Luthans *et al.*, 2007). Self-efficacious individuals possess confidence to succeed in challenging service encounters (Karatepe and Karadas, 2014). Hopeful individuals set specific goals and determine pathways to accomplish them (Avey *et al.*, 2010). Individuals with optimism make attributions about current and future success, while

This work was from the first author's doctoral dissertation and its data came from part of a larger project.



the ones with resilience can adapt to challenging conditions and prosper, even when they are beset with negative events at work (Avey *et al.*, 2010; Karatepe and Karadas, 2015).

These personality variables apply to today's competitive work environment and lead to improved performance and better customer service (Luthans *et al.*, 2008). To be capable of retaining current and new employees high on PsyCap, management needs to offer a resourceful environment where employees can take advantage of a number of human resource practices (e.g. work–life balance) (Deery and Jago, 2015). Servant leadership which is directly associated with the mission of hospitality companies (Brownell, 2010) is an integral part of a resourceful environment that consists of such human resource practices. It encourages and motivates employees to performance better in the workplace (Koyuncu *et al.*, 2014). Simply stated, serving the needs of employees should be the leader's top priority (Jaramillo *et al.*, 2009a). A work environment that stimulates servant leadership boosts employees' PsyCap (Karatepe and Talebzadeh, 2016). Such employees are also likely to report diminished lateness attitude and higher intentions to remain with the organization as well as reduced service–sales ambidexterity and service-oriented organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) at elevated levels.

Lateness attitude refers to an individual's intention to be late for work (Foust *et al.*, 2006). Being late for work gives rise to undesirable outcomes for organizations. For example, it demoralizes other individuals in the same organization and influences their motivation deleteriously. It has been estimated that tardiness costs US businesses more than \$3bn each year (DeLonzor, 2005). High employee turnover still remains a significant problem in various service industries, including the hospitality industry (Jaramillo *et al.*, 2009b; Jung *et al.*, 2015). Specifically, recruiting, interviewing and hiring a new salesperson costs a company between \$75,000 and \$300,000 (Knox, 2013). It also erodes employee morale and hinders productivity (Berry *et al.*, 2012; Milman and Dickson, 2014). Having an understanding of the factors influencing salespeople's lateness attitude as well as intention to remain with the organization is significant.

Service–sales ambidexterity is defined as “[...] the simultaneous pursuit of service and sales goals [...]” in a single organization (Yu *et al.*, 2012, p. 2). In a resourceful environment, it is important to have employees who are motivated and contribute to the organizational service–sales ambidexterity. Service-oriented OCBs that focus on loyalty, participation and service delivery (Bettencourt *et al.*, 2001) enable employees to manage customer needs and requests successfully and exceed customer expectations. In short, all of these critical outcomes apply to today's competitive hospitality industry (Karatepe and Kaviti, 2016; Tang and Tsaor, 2016).

### *Purpose*

Grounded in this backdrop, our study aims to test a mediation model of PsyCap among hotel salespeople. Specifically, our study examines:

- servant leadership as an antecedent to PsyCap;
- lateness attitude, intention to remain with the organization, service–sales ambidexterity and service-oriented OCBs as the consequences of PsyCap; and
- PsyCap as a mediator in the aforesaid relationships.

### *Relevance and significance of the study*

To date, only a handful of empirical studies have centered on PsyCap in the extant hospitality research. For example, a study by Karatepe and Karadas (2014) found that

PsyCap mitigated conflicts in the work–family nexus as well as absence and quitting intentions among hotel employees. [Mathe-Soulek et al.'s \(2014\)](#) investigation in the quick service restaurant industry revealed that service quality and customer satisfaction functioned as full mediators between collective PsyCap and unit revenues. In [Mathe-Soulek and Scott-Halsell's \(2012\)](#) study, it was shown that perceived external prestige depicted a positive association with restaurant employees' PsyCap. [Hsiao et al.'s \(2015\)](#) research indicated that PsyCap partially mediated the relationship between servant leadership and service-oriented OCBs. They also found that service-oriented OCBs fully mediated the influence of PsyCap on customer value co-creation.

The findings of another study demonstrated that job satisfaction partially mediated the effects of the components of PsyCap on OCBs among hotel employees ([Jung and Yoon, 2015](#)). Similarly, [Paek et al. \(2015\)](#) documented that work engagement acted as a partial mediator between the indicators of PsyCap and job satisfaction and organizational commitment. [Karatepe and Karadas \(2015\)](#) reported that the indicators of PsyCap jointly exerted positive impacts on hotel employees' work and nonwork satisfaction outcomes only via work engagement. [Min et al. \(2015\)](#) documented that PsyCap reduced the impacts of hindrance and challenge stressors on hotel employees' burnout. They further reported that challenge stressors increased work engagement for employees high on PsyCap.

Our study attempts to fill various research gaps and in so doing contribute to understanding about PsyCap as a mediator of the influence of servant leadership on the aforementioned outcomes. First, empirical research about PsyCap in the extant hospitality knowledge ([Karatepe and Karadas, 2015](#)) as well as its left side in the current literature is in its infancy stage ([Avey, 2014](#)). Informed by this gap, our study tests servant leadership as an antecedent to salespeople's self-efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism as the indicators of PsyCap. Servant leadership was first proposed by [Greenleaf \(1970\)](#) in the current literature. [Greenleaf \(1977\)](#) states, "The servant leader is servant first. It begins with a natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (p. 27). Top priority for servant leaders is to focus on serving the needs of their followers. It seems that there is practical use of servant leadership among few hotel companies ([Ling et al., 2017](#)). However, empirical research regarding servant leadership and its association with PsyCap is scarce ([Karatepe and Talebzadeh, 2016](#)).

Second, empirical research appertaining to the outcomes of PsyCap in the extant hospitality knowledge is sparse ([Paek et al., 2015](#)). Our study uses lateness attitude, intention to remain with the organization, service–sales ambidexterity and service-oriented OCBs as the outcomes of PsyCap. The extant literature also highlights the void regarding the impacts of self-efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism simultaneously on the abovementioned outcomes ([Newman et al., 2014](#)). Lateness attitude and turnover lead to huge costs for the organization, and high sales force turnover is an endemic problem in a number of service industries ([Bande et al., 2015](#); [Berry et al., 2012](#)). With this stated, investigating the factors that mitigate employees'/salespeople's lateness attitude and intentions to remain with the organization is relevant and significant ([Bande et al., 2015](#); [Karatepe and Kaviti, 2016](#)).

Service–sales ambidexterity and service-oriented OCBs are also among the critical outcomes of PsyCap. Broadly speaking, employees are expected to pursue service and sales goals simultaneously ([Yu et al., 2012](#)). They meet and exceed customer expectations by willingly going the extra mile ([Jung and Yoon, 2015](#)). Therefore, it is important to seek the factors fostering employees' service–sales ambidexterity and service-oriented OCBs ([Hsiao et al., 2015](#); [Úbeda-García et al., 2016](#)).

Third, although it seems that servant leadership is an important and effective leadership style for the hospitality industry (Brownell, 2010; Huang *et al.*, 2016), empirical research about the underlying process through which servant leadership influences customer-contact employees' attitudes and behaviors is scarce (Ling *et al.*, 2017). Chiniara and Bentein (2016) also underscore such a void in the general leadership-related studies. Accordingly, our study links servant leadership to the previously mentioned affective and performance outcomes through PsyCap.

## Hypotheses and research model

### *Hypotheses*

An observation made in the literature highlights limited empirical evidence regarding the antecedents of PsyCap. Broadly speaking, it was found that there was a positive association between transformational leadership and PsyCap (McMurray *et al.*, 2010). Rego *et al.* (2012) reported PsyCap as a partial mediator between authentic leadership and creativity. Avey's (2014) study showed that both ethical and empowering leadership styles bolstered PsyCap.

Despite these findings, empirical research pertaining to the influence of servant leadership on PsyCap is still meager (Hsiao *et al.*, 2015). This is surprising because servant leaders believe in the capability of their employees to fulfill the requirements of the job (Koyuncu *et al.*, 2014). Servant leadership gives freedom and discretion to employees and motivates them to present divergent views (Liden *et al.*, 2008). Further, servant leadership contributes to the creation of strong interpersonal relationships between leaders and their followers (Hsiao *et al.*, 2015). It seems that servant leaders try to establish a resourceful environment where they have good relationships with subordinates, delegate authority to subordinates, help subordinates thrive, display ethical behaviors, possess conceptual skills, consider the needs of subordinates first and create value for individuals who are not members of the organization (Ehrhart, 2004).

Self-determination theory (SDT) is used to develop the hypothesis about the influence of servant leadership on PsyCap (Ryan and Deci, 2000). According to SDT, individuals have the tendency to satisfy their basic needs. These needs are competence, autonomy and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Competence refers to "people's inherent desire to be effective in dealing with the environment", while autonomy refers to "people's universal urge to be causal agents, to experience volition, to act in accord with their integrated sense of self" (Deci and Vansteenkiste, 2004, p. 25). Relatedness refers to "the universal propensity to interact with, be connected to, and experience caring for other people" (Deci and Vansteenkiste, 2004, p. 25).

Consistent with Chiniara and Bentein's (2016) work, we propose that servant leaders' focus on employees' development will engender the satisfaction of the need for competence, autonomy and relatedness. Satisfaction of these needs will lead to an increase in employees' hope to seek various ways to attain their goals. Satisfaction of these needs will also enable employees to be self-efficacious, have a positive future outlook and confidence about the future and possess the capacity to bounce back from failures. In short, servant leadership enables employees to possess the skills and abilities to influence the environment, have important responsibilities and freedom to manage the challenging situations and display connections to the organization or the group, as well as a sense of belongingness (Chiniara and Bentein, 2016; Van Dierendonck, 2011). This activates employees' PsyCap in the form of self-efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism.

When servant leadership fosters salespeople's psychological needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness, their PsyCap will increase. Specifically, salespeople are high on PsyCap when they have the ability to influence the work environment and have freedom to

state their opinions and make decisions about the job. Salespeople who have positive connections to leaders and coworkers have PsyCap at elevated levels. Such employees have competence and confidence in their abilities to succeed at challenging tasks (Avey, 2014) and can identify possible routes to achieve their goals and even find alternative routes if their initial strategies do not pay dividends (Yavas *et al.*, 2013). They also expect good things to take place in the workplace and have the capacity to bounce back from adverse conditions (Avey *et al.*, 2011). Accordingly, we postulate that:

*H1.* Servant leadership exerts a positive impact on salespeople's PsyCap.

The extant literature reveals that there are studies testing the influence of PsyCap on various outcomes such as absence intentions, job performance, OCBs, creative performance and quitting intentions. For instance, Clapp-Smith *et al.* (2009) demonstrated that PsyCap influenced unit sales performance only through trust in management. Avey *et al.*'s (2011) research documented that PsyCap activated OCBs and weakened cynicism, intentions to quit and counterproductive workplace behaviors. Rego *et al.* (2012) documented that PsyCap boosted creativity. Schulz *et al.*'s (2014) study revealed that job satisfaction and organizational commitment fully mediated the effect of PsyCap on quitting intentions. Further, Karatepe and Karadas (2014) found that PsyCap mitigated quitting and absence intentions.

In our study, the relationship between the four indicators of PsyCap and the four critical outcomes is developed based on conservation of resources (COR) theory. According to COR theory, self-efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism are personal resources individuals can take advantage of (Alarcon *et al.*, 2013; Hobfoll, 1989). Conceptualization of positive psychological capacities as personal resources from which one can draw appears to be an important addition to the mechanism by which these positive capacities influence one's job outcomes (Avey *et al.*, 2010). Similarly, Alarcon *et al.* (2013) also discuss that personal resources should contribute to individuals' well-being because such individuals have a reservoir of resources from which to draw. Empirically, employees' perceptions of PsyCap or their personal resources exerted a positive influence on their well-being (Avey *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, we postulate that employees who can avail themselves of the aforesaid personal resources are likely to display reduced lateness attitude and intentions to resign as well as service-sales ambidexterity and service-oriented OCBs at higher levels.

Salespeople who are high on PsyCap are capable of availing themselves of current personal resources to overcome problems associated with their boundary-spanning positions. They exhibit low levels of lateness attitude and express an increased intent to remain with the organization. These employees perceive that the organization is service-sales ambidextrous. If this is the case, they are able to explore new sales opportunities, actively target new market segments and elevate the level of service delivered to customers. Salespeople are also ready to display service-oriented OCBs that consist of loyalty, participation and service delivery. Specifically, salespeople represent the organization to customers and other stakeholders and boost the organizational image (Bettencourt *et al.*, 2001). This refers to the loyalty service-oriented OCBs. Salespeople have boundary-spanning roles and directly serve customers; *ergo*, they are capable of collecting information and feedback from customers and sharing them with management for service improvement (Bettencourt *et al.*, 2001; Jaramillo *et al.*, 2009a). This highlights employees' participation service-oriented OCBs. They play a vital role in delivering quality services to customers and fulfilling customer expectations (Bettencourt *et al.*, 2001). This is related to employees' service delivery service-oriented OCBs.

In short, the present study posits that salespeople high on PsyCap have reduced lateness attitude, display higher intentions to remain with the organization, exhibit favorable

perceptions of service-sales ambidexterity and demonstrate elevated levels of service-oriented OCBs. Based on this, we postulate that:

- H2.* PsyCap exerts a negative impact on salespeople's perceptions of (a) lateness attitude and a positive impact on salespeople's perceptions of (b) intentions to remain with the organization, (c) service-sales ambidexterity and (d) service-oriented OCBs.

The aforementioned relationships implicitly refer to the mediating role of PsyCap. However, evidence pertaining to PsyCap as a mediator between servant leadership and the previously stated consequences is sparse. An observation made in the literature highlights several empirical studies reporting that PsyCap mediates the influence of leadership/organizational climate on job outcomes. For instance, [Luthans \*et al.\*'s \(2008\)](#) study reported PsyCap as a full mediator of the effect of supportive climate on job performance. It was found that PsyCap partially mediated the effect of authentic leadership on job performance ([Rego \*et al.\*, 2012](#)).

We use leader-member exchange (LMX) theory to link servant leadership to employees' job outcomes via PsyCap ([Van Dierendonck, 2011](#)). The LMX theory is used in various studies that have centered on leadership styles and followers' affective and performance outcomes ([Van Dierendonck, 2011](#); [Wu \*et al.\*, 2013](#)). It is also used to understand the quality of the relationship between servant leaders and their followers ([Van Dierendonck, 2011](#)). Though it seems that there are similarities between servant leadership and LMX, LMX "[. . .] is silent with respect to the provision of personal healing, the development of followers into servant leaders, and the encouragement of service to the community" ([Liden \*et al.\*, 2008](#), p. 163).

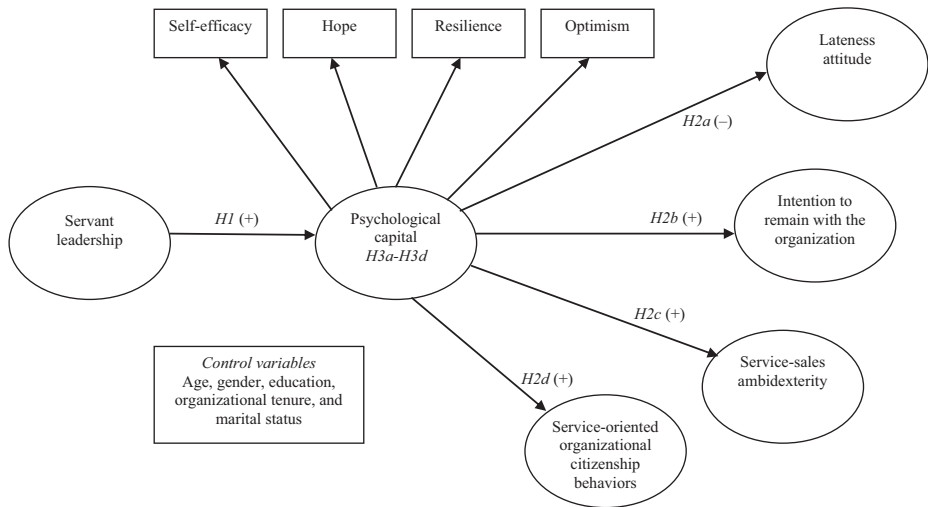
As proposed by LMX theory, there are relationships of differential qualities (i.e. from high quality to low quality) between leaders and their followers ([Liden \*et al.\*, 2008](#)). The relationships of differential qualities are based on criteria such as mutual trust, communication, respect and social support ([Van Dierendonck, 2011](#); [Wang, 2016](#); [Wu \*et al.\*, 2013](#)). High-quality relationships based on the abovementioned criteria enable servant leaders to create an environment that activates the followers' PsyCap in the form of self-efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism. Under these circumstances, these employees will reciprocate with reduced lateness attitude, higher intention to remain with the organization and elevated levels of service-oriented OCBs. They will also reciprocate by displaying favorable perceptions of service-sales ambidexterity. In short, salespeople are self-efficacious, hopeful, resilient and optimistic when they have high-quality relationships with their leaders. Salespeople high on PsyCap in turn do not have intentions to be late for work. They also report a heightened intent to be one of the members of the organization, try to seek creative ways to increase number of sales, enhance the level of service quality and often go out the way to help customers and exceed their expectations. Accordingly, we postulate that:

- H3.* PsyCap functions as a full mediator of the impact of servant leadership on (a) lateness attitude, (b) intention to remain with the organization, (c) service-sales ambidexterity and (d) service-oriented OCBs.

### *Research model*

The hypothesized relationships which are developed through SDT, COR and LMX theories and empirical evidence are presented in the research model in [Figure 1](#). The control variables such as age and education are included in the model to understand whether they lead to statistical confounds.





**Figure 1.**  
Research model

## Method

### *Sample and procedure*

Data were gathered from a judgmental sample of salespeople in the four- and five-star hotels in Tehran, the capital city of Iran. These full-time salespeople had frequent contact with customers and were responsible for organizing and selling promotional activities for rooms, conference centers and/or restaurants. There are at least two reasons for collecting data in Tehran, Iran. First, Iran is a developing country with its natural and cultural heritage sites in the Middle East. Tehran has two international airports, possesses more than 60 hotels and hosts a number of national and international activities such as exhibitions and international fairs (Sohrabi *et al.*, 2012). Having an understanding of managerial practices, as well as the factors influencing employee outcomes in the Iranian hotel industry, is relevant and significant. Second, Iran is still an underrepresented country in the extant hospitality research.

Information obtained from Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicraft and Tourism Organization at the time of this study demonstrated that there were 10 four- and 5 five-star hotels in Tehran. In the initial phase of the empirical study, one of the members of the research team contacted management of the aforementioned hotels through a letter that explained the objectives of the study and requested permission for collecting data from salespeople. Among 15 hotels, management of 7 four-star and 5 five-star hotels participated in the study and permitted the researcher to directly contact salespeople for the distribution of the questionnaires.

If not controlled, method bias can "[...] inflate, deflate, or have no effect on estimates of the relationship between two constructs" (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012, p. 542). With this stated, the authors followed the procedural remedies suggested by Podsakoff *et al.* (2012). First, they introduced a time delay (i.e. two weeks apart in three waves) between the predictor (i.e. servant leadership), mediating (i.e. PsyCap) and criterion (lateness attitude) variables. Second, service-oriented OCBs were assessed by the immediate supervisors of salespeople.

This study used several response-enhancing techniques (e.g. receiving strong management support and cooperation, giving assurance of anonymity and confidentiality, using envelopes and special boxes to collect the questionnaires) (Anseel *et al.*, 2010). In total,

210 Time 1 questionnaires were distributed to salespeople; 194 questionnaires were returned. Then, 194 Time 2 questionnaires were distributed to the same salespeople. The researcher was able to receive 190 Time 2 questionnaires. Further, 190 Time 3 questionnaires were distributed to the same salespeople; 187 Time 3 questionnaires were received, providing a response rate of 89.1 percent. The researcher was also capable of obtaining 187 questionnaires concerning salespeople's service-oriented OCBs assessed by 26 supervisors. The questionnaires were matched with each other via identification numbers. [Table I](#) shows respondents' profile.

*Measurement*

Servant leadership (Time 1 questionnaire) was measured with a six-item scale taken from [Lytle et al. \(1998\)](#). PsyCap (Time 2 questionnaire) was operationalized with items taken from the PsyCap questionnaire. The questionnaire included 24 items ([Luthans et al., 2007](#)). Each of the self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism components was measured with six items. Three items came from [Foust et al.'s \(2006\)](#) study to operationalize lateness attitude (Time 3 questionnaire). Four items taken from [Kehoe and Wright \(2013\)](#) were used to measure intention to remain with the organization (Time 3 questionnaire). Service-sales ambidexterity (Time 3 questionnaire) was measured using ten items from [Yu et al. \(2012\)](#). A 16-item scale received

Demographic variables	Frequency	(%)
<i>Age (years)</i>		
18-27	3	1.6
28-37	56	30.0
38-47	73	39.0
48-57	55	29.4
Total	187	100.0
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	113	60.4
Female	74	39.6
Total	187	100.0
<i>Education</i>		
Secondary and high school	1	0.5
Two-year college degree	35	18.7
Four-year college degree	107	57.2
Graduate degree	44	23.6
Total	187	100.0
<i>Organizational tenure</i>		
Less than 1 year	8	4.3
1-5	17	9.0
6-10	49	26.2
11-15	74	39.6
16-20	39	20.9
Total	187	100.0
<i>Marital status</i>		
Single or divorced	30	16.0
Married	157	84.0
Total	187	100.0

**Table I.**  
Respondents' profile  
(*n* = 187)

from Bettencourt *et al.* (2001) was used to measure service-oriented OCBs (the supervisor questionnaire). Items about respondents' profile were included in the Time 1 questionnaire.

Ratings for servant leadership, intention to remain with the organization and service–sales ambidexterity contained a five-point scale ranging from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*). Rating for PsyCap included a six-point scale. The scale ranged from 6 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*). The three-item lateness attitude scale contained a seven-point scale ranging from 7 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*). A five-point scale, anchored by 5 (*extremely characteristic of him or her*) and 1 (*not at all characteristic of him or her*) was used for items in service-oriented OCBs.

The employee and supervisor questionnaires were prepared on the basis of the back-translation method. The Time 1, Time 2 and Time 3 questionnaires were subjected to three different pilot tests. Each of these questionnaires was tested with three different pilot samples of ten salespeople. The supervisor questionnaire was also tested with a pilot sample of 10 supervisors. Respondents in these pilot studies did not demonstrate any problems concerning the understandability of items. In light of this, no changes were made in the questionnaires.

## Results

### *Measurement model results*

All measures were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis via LISREL 8.30 (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1996). Several items were dropped due to non-significant *t* values and correlation measurement errors. These items are shown in Table II. As presented in Table II, the nine-factor measurement model fit the data well:  $\chi^2 = 1406.97$ ;  $df = 1,044$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 1.35$ ; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.94; incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.94; parsimony normed fit index (PNFI) = 0.76; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.043; standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.050. Only one item had a standardized loading below 0.70. The rest of the loadings ranged from 0.71 to 0.92. All loadings were significant. The average variance extracted (AVE) was greater than 0.50. Specifically, the AVE for servant leadership, self-efficacy, hope, resilience, optimism, lateness attitude, intention to remain with the organization, service–sales ambidexterity and service-oriented OCBs was 0.65, 0.77, 0.75, 0.76, 0.75, 0.64, 0.52, 0.70, and 0.61, respectively. In short, convergent validity was achieved (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Discriminant validity was assessed through the method of Fornell and Larcker (1981). The AVE by each latent variable was greater than the shared variance for the variable with every other variable. As a result, discriminant validity was achieved. All composite reliabilities exceeded 0.60 and all coefficient alphas were greater than 0.70. That is, composite reliabilities were as follows: servant leadership 0.92, self-efficacy 0.94, hope 0.94, resilience 0.91, optimism 0.95, lateness attitude 0.84, intention to remain with the organization 0.68, service–sales ambidexterity 0.95 and service-oriented OCBs 0.94. Coefficient alphas were as follows: servant leadership 0.91, self-efficacy 0.94, hope 0.94, resilience 0.91, optimism 0.95, lateness attitude 0.84, intention to remain with the organization 0.68, service–sales ambidexterity 0.95 and service-oriented OCBs 0.94. Although the coefficient alpha for intention to remain with the organization was slightly below 0.70, the findings collectively demonstrated that the measures were reliable (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). Summary statistics and correlations are reported in Table III.

### *Model test results*

Normality of data was assessed through skewness. The skewness values for servant leadership, self-efficacy, hope, resilience, optimism, lateness attitude, intention to remain

Scale items	Standardized loading	t-value	AVE	CR	$\alpha$
<i>Servant leadership</i>			0.65	0.92	0.91
Management constantly communicates the importance of service	0.77	12.08			
Management regularly spends time “on the floor” with frontline employees	0.74	11.45			
Management is constantly measuring service quality	0.81	12.97			
Management shows that they care about service by constantly giving of themselves	0.82	13.30			
Management provides resources, not just “lip service”, to enhance employee ability to provide excellent service	0.84	13.78			
Managers give personal input and leadership into creating quality service	0.84	13.85			
<i>Self-efficacy</i>			0.77	0.94	0.94
I feel confident analyzing a long-term problem to find a solution	0.83	13.89			
Item #2	0.92	16.29			
Item #3	0.87	14.76			
Item #4	—*	—*			
Item #5	0.84	14.15			
Item #6	0.92	16.28			
<i>Hope</i>			0.75	0.94	0.94
If I should find myself in a jam at work, I could think of many ways to get out of it	0.86	14.62			
Item #8	0.84	14.11			
Item #9	0.90	15.66			
Item #10	0.84	14.09			
Item #11	—*	—*			
Item #12	0.88	15.00			
<i>Resilience</i>			0.76	0.91	0.91
When I have a setback at work, I have trouble recovering from moving on (—)	—*	—*			
Item #14	0.83	13.54			
Item #15	0.89	15.03			
Item #16	—*	—*			
Item #17	0.90	15.27			
Item #18	—*	—*			
<i>Optimism</i>			0.75	0.95	0.95
When things are uncertain for me at work, I usually expect the best	0.86	14.58			
Item #20 (—)	0.86	14.67			
Item #21	0.90	15.62			
Item #22	0.87	14.73			
Item #23 (—)	0.84	14.12			
Item #24	0.87	14.89			

(continued)

**Table II.**  
Confirmatory factor  
analysis results

Scale items	Standardized loading	t-value	AVE	CR	$\alpha$
<i>Lateness attitude</i>			0.64	0.84	0.84
Tardiness to work should be acceptable as long as the work gets finished	0.75	11.14			
Occasional tardiness for work should be acceptable	0.87	13.56			
I find it acceptable to be ten minutes late to work	0.78	11.84			
<i>Intention to remain with the organization</i>			0.52	0.68	0.67
I would turn down a job with more pay in order to stay with this organization	—*	—*			
I plan to spend my career at this organization	0.79	7.20			
I intend to stay at this organization for at least the next 12 months	—*	—*			
I do not plan to look for a job outside of this company in the next 6 months	0.64	6.51			
<i>Service-sales ambidexterity</i>			0.70	0.95	0.95
Our hotel increases the level of service quality delivered to customers	—*	—*			
Our hotel constantly surveys existing customers' satisfaction	0.88	15.30			
Our hotel fine-tunes what it offers to keep customers satisfied	0.82	13.57			
Our hotel continuously improves the reliability of services delivered to customers	0.83	13.90			
Our hotel creates new ways of expanding client portfolios	0.84	14.16			
Our hotel looks for creative ways to increase number of sales	0.71	10.92			
Our hotel explores the sales potential of market segments	0.82	13.44			
Our hotel actively targets new customer groups	—*	—*			
Our hotel penetrates more deeply into the existing customer base	0.91	15.93			
Our hotel bases its success on the exploration of sales opportunities	0.87	14.77			
<i>Service-oriented organizational citizenship behaviors</i>			0.61	0.94	0.94
This employee tells outsiders this is a good place to work	0.76	12.00			
This employee says good things about the hotel to others	0.78	12.41			
This employee generates favorable goodwill for the hotel	0.77	12.16			
This employee encourages friends and family to use the hotel's products and services	—*	—*			
This employee actively promotes the hotel's products and services	0.75	11.80			
This employee follows customer-service guidelines with extreme care	0.82	13.48			
This employee conscientiously follows guidelines for customer promotions	—*	—*			
This employee follows up in a timely manner to customer requests and problems	0.80	12.99			
This employee performs duties with unusually few mistakes	—*	—*			
This employee always has a positive attitude at work	0.86	14.48			
Regardless of circumstances, this employee is exceptionally courteous and respectful to customers	—*	—*			

Table II.

(continued)

Scale items	Standardized loading	t-value	AVE	CR	$\alpha$
This employee encourages coworkers to contribute ideas and suggestions for service improvement	0.71	11.02			
This employee contributes many ideas for customer promotions and communications	0.78	12.60			
This employee makes constructive suggestions for service improvement	—*	—*			
This employee frequently presents to others creative solutions to customer problems	0.78	12.48			
This employee takes home brochures to read up on products and services	—*	—*			

**Notes:** All loadings are significant at the 0.01 level; AVE = Average variance extracted; CR = Composite reliability;  $\alpha$  = Coefficient alpha; \*Dropped during CFA; (—) Reverse-scored item; Items for PsyCap are copyrighted; Only one item for each indicator is given

Table II.

with the organization, service-sales ambidexterity and service-oriented OCBs was  $-0.624$ ,  $-0.936$ ,  $-1.02$ ,  $-0.953$ ,  $-0.930$ ,  $-0.948$ ,  $0.524$ ,  $-0.154$  and  $0.772$ , respectively. These values fell between  $-2.00$  and  $+2.00$ . Therefore, it seemed that normality of data was achieved (Lee and Yom, 2013). In addition, 10 to 20 respondents per parameter seem to lead to adequate sample size (Kline, 2005). Our study had a sample size of 187 respondents. It appeared that it met the abovementioned criterion for structural equation modeling.

Instead of using partial least squares (PLS) technique, we used LISREL for testing the study relationships. This is because of the fact that PLS does not seem to be a “silver bullet” for overcoming the problems of small sample sizes and non-normality (Goodhue *et al.*, 2012). Utilizing a reasonable sample size, LISREL possesses greater accuracy because PLS does not appear to “[...] compensate for measurement error in its path estimates” (Goodhue *et al.*, 2012, p. 999). In short, we used structural equation modeling through LISREL 8.30 to assess the relationships, as the study sample size seemed to be sufficient and normality of data was achieved.

Comparing the hypothesized (fully) mediated model ( $\chi^2 = 796.11$  df = 626) with the partially mediated model ( $\chi^2 = 792.25$  df = 622) resulted in a non-significant difference fit ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 3.86$ , df = 4,  $p > 0.05$ ). When the direct paths from servant leadership to lateness attitude, intention to remain with the organization, service-sales ambidexterity and service-oriented OCBs in addition to the indirect paths shown in Figure 2 were freed, the findings pertaining to the direct effects were not significant. It appeared that the hypothesized model showed a better fit than the partially mediated model. The hypothesized model fit the data well based on the following fit statistics:  $\chi^2 = 796.11$ , df = 626;  $\chi^2/\text{df} = 1.27$ ; CFI = 0.93; IFI = 0.94; PNFI = 0.72; RMSEA = 0.038; SRMR = 0.061.

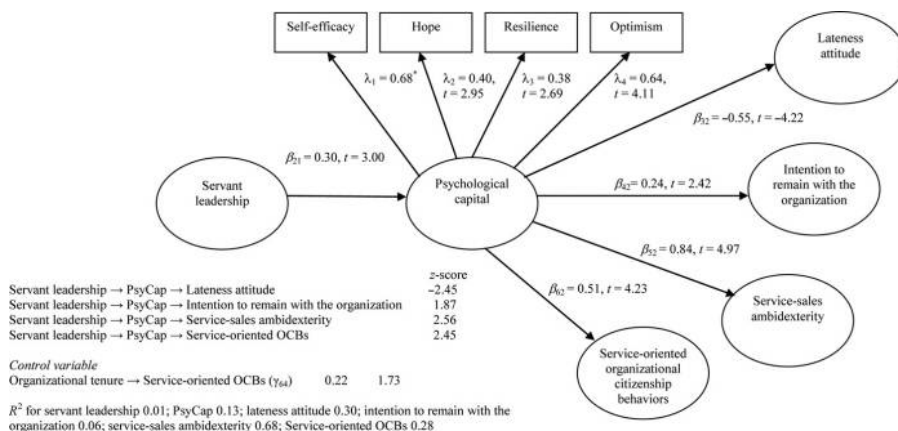
As presented in Figure 2, servant leadership has a positive effect on PsyCap ( $\beta_{21} = 0.30$ ,  $t = 3.00$ ). Hence, the empirical data support *H1*. PsyCap depicts a negative relationship with lateness attitude ( $\beta_{32} = -0.55$ ,  $t = -4.22$ ), while it exerts a positive effect on intention to remain with the organization ( $\beta_{42} = 0.24$ ,  $t = 2.42$ ), service-sales ambidexterity ( $\beta_{52} = 0.84$ ,  $t = 4.97$ ) and service-oriented OCBs ( $\beta_{62} = 0.51$ ,  $t = 4.23$ ). Therefore, *H2a*, *H2b*, *H2c* and *H2d* are supported.

The Sobel test results in Figure 2 show that the indirect influence of servant leadership on lateness attitude ( $z = -2.45$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), intention to remain with the organization ( $z = 1.87$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), service-sales ambidexterity ( $z = 2.56$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and service-oriented OCBs ( $z = 2.45$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) through PsyCap is significant. Therefore, *H3a*, *3b*, *3c* and *H3d* are supported. As reported

**Table III.**  
Summary statistics  
and correlations

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Age	–										
2. Gender	–0.165*	–									
3. Education	0.171**	–0.111	–								
4. Organizational tenure	0.782**	–0.148*	0.266**	–							
5. Marital status	0.340**	–0.034	0.156*	0.267**	–						
6. Servant leadership	–0.908	–0.090	–0.004	–0.005	0.011	–					
7. Psychological capital	–0.118	–0.012	–0.029	–0.117	–0.047	0.193**	–				
8. Lateness attitude	0.077	0.043	0.004	0.082	0.027	–0.123*	–0.249**	–			
9. Intention to remain with the organization	–0.009	0.067	0.002	–0.014	–0.044	–0.033	0.161*	–0.103	–		
10. Service-sales ambidexterity	–0.048	0.059	–0.069	–0.067	0.015	0.253**	0.450**	–0.427**	0.147*	–	
11. Service-oriented organizational citizenship behaviors	0.048	–0.098	0.067	0.105	–0.040	0.099	0.408**	–0.206**	–0.067	0.343**	–
Mean	2.96	0.40	4.04	3.64	0.84	3.47	4.17	5.00	2.39	3.01	2.53
Standard deviation	0.81	0.49	0.67	1.05	0.37	1.09	0.88	1.49	0.95	1.14	1.00

**Notes:** Composite scores for the study constructs were computed; Age and education were measured in four categories, while organizational tenure was measured via a five category; Gender was coded as a binary variable (0 = male and 1 = female); Marital status was also coded as a binary variable (0 = single or divorced and 1 = married); \*,  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*,  $p < 0.01$  (one-tailed test)



**Notes:** PsyCap = Psychological capital; OCBs = Organizational citizenship behaviors. *t*-values: one-tailed test  $t > 1.65, p < 0.05$ ; and  $t > 2.33, p < 0.01$ . *t*-Values are shown in parentheses except for the loading of self-efficacy that was initially fixed to 1.00 to set the metric for the underlying PsyCap variable

**Figure 2.**  
Hypothesized model  
results

in Figure 2, only organizational tenure is significantly related to one of the constructs. That is, organizational tenure has a positive impact on service-oriented OCBs ( $\gamma_{64} = 0.22, t = 1.73$ ). This result indicates that salespeople with longer tenure display service-oriented OCBs at elevated levels. The results regarding the hypothesized relationships remain intact with or without the control variables. In closing, the control variables explain 1 per cent of the variance in servant leadership, while the control variables and servant leadership explain 13 per cent of the variance in PsyCap. In addition, the results explain 30 per cent of the variance in lateness attitude, 6 per cent in intention to remain with the organization, 68 per cent in service-sales ambidexterity and 28 per cent in service-oriented OCBs.

## Discussion and conclusions

### Conclusions

As is evident from the results reported in the preceding section, the research model is viable. As per direct effects, servant leadership positively influences PsyCap. Consistent with SDT (Ryan and Deci, 2000), servant leaders who satisfy the psychological needs (i.e. competence, autonomy, relatedness) of salespeople enhance salespeople's PsyCap. Salespeople are more self-efficacious, hopeful, resilient and optimistic in an environment where they respect and admire their servant leaders. This is due to the fact that servant leaders put their followers first and focus on serving the needs of their followers.

The results further suggest that PsyCap boosts salespeople's intention to remain with the organization and service-oriented OCBs and leads to favorable perceptions of service-sales ambidexterity, while it mitigates their intentions to be late for work. In agreement with COR theory, salespeople who have an accumulation of personal resources (e.g. self-efficacy) display desirable outcomes (Alarcon et al., 2013). Such employees express an increased intent to stay in the organization and exhibit lower intentions to be late for work. They have favorable perceptions of the organization's service-sales ambidexterity. That is, they are interested in



seeking the sales potential of market segments and creative ways to increase number of sales and focusing on surveying current customer satisfaction. Salespeople high on PsyCap also exhibit high levels of service-oriented OCBs. Simply put, they are ready to demonstrate extra-role performance in challenging service encounters to meet and exceed customer expectations.

As per mediating effects, the results suggest that PsyCap functions as a full mediator between servant leadership and the previously stated outcomes. This is consistent with the LMX theory (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Specifically, servant leadership activates salespeople's PsyCap. Salespeople working under the umbrella of servant leadership believe that they are capable of carrying out tasks due to competence and confidence in their skills and abilities (Avey, 2014) and ascertain potential ways to accomplish their goals and even seek alternative ways if their initial strategies are not useful (Yavas *et al.*, 2013). They are optimistic about succeeding now and in the future (Luthans *et al.*, 2007) and have the capacity to bounce back from adversity (Avey *et al.*, 2011). These salespeople in turn show reduced proclivity to be late for work and express an increased intent to remain with the organization. Such salespeople also have favorable perceptions of service-sales ambidexterity and display higher levels of service-oriented OCBs.

#### *Theoretical implications*

What is reported in our study adds to the extant hospitality research in various ways. More concretely, the first strength of our study is related to the antecedents of PsyCap (Avey, 2014). Our study enhances current knowledge by investigating the influence of servant leadership on the indicators of PsyCap. The second strength refers to the examination of the critical outcomes of PsyCap. These outcomes are salespeople's lateness attitude, intention to remain with the organization, service-sales ambidexterity and service-oriented OCBs. The research void regarding the effects of the indicators of PsyCap simultaneously on these outcomes among salespeople is also evident in the relevant studies (Newman *et al.*, 2014). Uncovering the factors influencing salespeople's lateness attitude, intention to remain with the organization, service-sales ambidexterity and service-oriented OCBs is relevant and significant.

The third strength refers to the underlying mechanism through which servant leadership is linked to the aforementioned consequences (Ling *et al.*, 2017). Such gap is also observed in the general leadership-related studies (Chiniara and Bentein, 2016). Overall, our study enhances the current knowledge base by gauging the interrelationships of servant leadership, PsyCap and the four critical outcomes mentioned above through data gathered from hotel salespeople through a three-wave design with a two-week time lag between each wave and their immediate supervisors in Iran.

#### *Practical implications*

There are a number of useful managerial implications emerging from the results of our study. First, the results clearly suggest that there is a need for establishing and maintaining an environment that fosters servant leadership. Servant leaders are important sources of a positive environment where salespeople feel a sense of belongingness and have intentions to stay in the organization. Salespeople working under the umbrella of servant leadership will feel efficacious and optimistic about their future and will be hopeful and resilient. Therefore, management of hotels should be committed to the philosophy of servant leadership and ensure that all supervisors in the sales work environment are servant leaders. This managerial implication pertaining to servant leadership for business practice has also been adopted by leading hospitality and airline companies such as Starbucks and Southwest Airlines. That is, such companies have attempted to obtain guidance from the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership (Parris and Peachey, 2013).

Second, management should ensure that servant leadership contributes to the organizational service–sales ambidexterity. The simultaneous pursuit of service and sales goals should send powerful signals to salespeople that the organization invests in delivery of superior service and customer satisfaction. When self-efficacious, hopeful, resilient and optimistic salespeople have favorable perceptions of service–sales ambidexterity, they are motivated to contribute to delivery of superior service and satisfy customers.

Lastly, providing salespeople high on PsyCap with continuous training programs that underscore the need for meeting and customer expectations is likely to pay dividends. In these training programs, salespeople should understand the critical role of service-oriented OCBs in challenging service encounters. When they go the extra mile to serve customers, they are likely to cultivate the organization's competitive advantage through their distinctive capabilities.

### *Limitations and future research*

This study is not without limitations but these limitations provide directions for future research. First, this study tested the influence of servant leadership on PsyCap due to limited empirical research about the left side of PsyCap (Avey, 2014). In future studies, testing high-performance work practices (e.g. selective staffing) as the potential antecedents would add to our knowledge about the antecedents of PsyCap.

Second, this study linked servant leadership to lateness attitude, intention to remain with the organization, service–sales ambidexterity and service-oriented OCBs via PsyCap. Using creative performance, service recovery performance and customer service behaviors as behavioral outcomes in future studies would shed further light on the understanding of the outcomes of servant leadership (Koyuncu *et al.*, 2014; Liden *et al.*, 2014). On a closing note, conducting empirical studies on the antecedents and consequences of PsyCap based on data derived from cross-national samples (e.g. Iran, the USA, China) is needed to broaden the database and make further generalizations.

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