

**INFLUENCE OF MANAGERIAL COACHING ON SERVICE-ORIENTED CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOURS:  
 THE MEDIATING ROLE OF SERVICE QUALITY  
 COMMITMENT IN THE MALAYSIAN HOTEL INDUSTRY  
 DURING THE PANDEMIC OUTBREAK**

Yip YEN-SAN <sup>1</sup>

*Faculty of Business and Finance,  
 University Tunku Abdul Rahman,  
 Perak Malaysia  
 ORCID: 0000-0001-7772-6182*

I-Chi CHEN

*Faculty of Business and Finance,  
 University Tunku Abdul Rahman,  
 Perak Malaysia  
 ORCID: 0000-0002-8576-0521*

Lee-Peng NG

*Faculty of Business and Finance,  
 University Tunku Abdul Rahman,  
 Perak Malaysia  
 ORCID: 0000-0002-5785-7801*

**ABSTRACT**

Tourism industry has been recognised as one of the important industries which contributed to the country's economic growth. Thus, it has become essential to investigate the aspects which could strengthen the service provision in the hotel industry in Malaysia. The motive of this paper is to investigate the effects of managerial coaching (MC) on the willingness of frontline service employees to practise service-oriented citizenship behaviours (SOCB) using employees' commitment to service quality (ECSQ) as mediator. A total of 398 questionnaires have been completed and were applied for data analysis. Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed to test the hypotheses. Results indicated MC and ECSQ significantly affect frontline service employees' SOCB. Moreover, the results show that ECSQ has partially mediated the relationship between MC and SOCB.

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**INTRODUCTION**

The Covid-19 outbreak has a destructive implication on every nation, inclusive of Malaysia. The travel and tourism industries in Malaysia have been badly hit because of closing the border to foreign tourists and travel restrictions through the implementation of the movement control order (MCO) in 2020. Under enforcement of MCO, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Cultures (MOTAC) has withdrawn the Visit Malaysia 2020 campaign, while the cancellation of tour packages and the reduction in inbound

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<sup>1</sup> Address correspondence to Yip Yen-San, Faculty of Business and Finance, University Tunku Abdul Rahman, Perak, Malaysia. E-mail: [yipys@utar.edu.my](mailto:yipys@utar.edu.my)

international tourists has affected the hotel and airline sectors. Malaysia Tourism data shows that hotel average occupancy rates (AOR) declined from 56.6% in 2019 to 27.8% in 2020. A survey by the Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH) indicated that around 50% of hotel operators might have to cease their operations or remain closed until year-end as a result of the pandemic (Teoh, 2020). The unfortunate circumstances have also put economic pressure on hotel operators, resulting in 2,041 employees being laid off, 9,773 forced to take unpaid leaves, and 5,054 suffering a pay cut (Kaur, 2020).

It has become a great challenge for the human resource management of the hospitality industries to identify new strategies to motivate frontline service employees to practise positive attitudes and behaviours during the time of the Covid-19 outbreak. This situation required employees with a higher level of organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB) to handle the challenges and maintain their job performance and job satisfaction, to reduce their job anxiety and turnover intention (Organ et al., 2006; Ozduran & Tanova, 2017; Organ, 2018; Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2020). For instance, researchers are interested to explore certain forms of leadership which able to foster the employees' OCB (Ribeiro et al., 2018). Therefore, it's time for the service practitioners to re-examine their human resources management practice by incorporating specific forms of OCB which are suitable in the service industry context during this outbreak.

In service organizations, frontline employees deal with the customers and represent their organization to outsiders (Bettencourt et al., 2001; Nasurdin et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2020; Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2020). Therefore, the authors believe that hotel performance and effectiveness can be significantly influenced by these employees' citizenship behaviours. Service-oriented citizenship behaviours (SOCB) are defined as frontline service employees' discretionary actions, such as voluntarily working beyond their job descriptions regardless of formal rewards or compensation, in order to deliver superior service to customers (Bettencourt et al., 2001). Thus, when frontline employees are willing to make an extra effort in serving the customers, the organizations can win back the customers' trust and confidence (Nasurdin et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2018; Gigauri, 2020; Gössling et al., 2021).

However, the challenging part is to convince frontline employees to perform outstanding service in the current climate of uncertainty of employment (Bajrami et al., 2020). Recognizing this phenomenon, employees' willingness to comply with SOCB requires serious investigation

by researchers (Filimonau et al., 2020; Guzzo et al., 2020). All the challenges now facing the hospitality industry are associated with devolving human resource development (HRD). How managers react and communicate with the frontline service employees during the Covid-19 crisis will have a significant impact on their hotel's performance.

Empirical research indicates that managerial coaching (MC) has contributed significantly to employees' job outcomes and organizational performance in various industries, such as insurance (Kim, 2014), banking (Pousa & Mathieu, 2015), and logistics (Ellinger et al., 2003). MC emphasizes effective communication between managers and subordinates to mitigate the negative feelings of employees by giving them more guidance and support (Zhang et al., 2020). Thus, researchers believe that the application of MC in the hospitality sector will buffer employees' anxiety and stress. However, the potential benefits of MC as perceived by frontline employees, and how this practice may influence their SOCB during the Covid-19 pandemic, have not yet been fully explored.

Researchers have called for more evidence on how MC will influence the organizational commitments of frontline employees in providing high-quality service during the period of recovery from the pandemic (Park et al., 2020; Carvalho et al., 2021). Past research has determined the relationship between MC and employees' commitment to service quality (ECSQ) (Elmadag et al., 2008; Sun et al., 2012). ECSQ is identified as an attitudinal commitment which encourages the enthusiasm of individual employees to provide high-quality service to the organization's customers, especially in the service sector (Ahmed & Parasuraman, 1994; Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997; Kumar & Krishnaraj, 2018). The authors believe that frontline service employees with a strong feeling of affection, belongingness as well as attachment towards the organization will be committed to providing this quality to customers. Thus, they will be more willing to perform their OCB by helping their co-workers to fulfil the expectations of the organization (Gursoy & Chi, 2020; Jones & Comfort, 2020; Rabiul et al., 2021). However, empirical research linking frontline service employees' job-related outcomes with ECSQ and SOCB, influenced by MC, is yet to be undertaken.

### **Significance of Study and Research Objectives**

This research is expected to provide a body of knowledge on Social Exchange Theory (SET) and create a comprehensive framework to determine the relationships between managers, employees, and

organizations through the norms of the reciprocity concept. The authors aim to fill the research gaps by examining the possibility of MC influencing frontline service employees' SOCB. In addition, the authors investigate whether ECSQ acts as an intervening variable in the relationship between MC and SOCB. The issues will be addressed theoretically and tested empirically, based on the perspectives of frontline employees within the hospitality industry in Malaysia. The findings will be valuable to hoteliers and service operators by offering more insights into applying managerial coaching (MC) to foster the ECSQ and enhance the employees' SOCB in the long run.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This study employs aspects of social exchange theory (SET) to discover and structure the relationship between MC and SOCB with the mediating variable of ECSQ. SET is identified as one of the fundamental frameworks which describe human relationships based on reciprocity (Blau, 1964). By using the concept of reciprocity in SET, the relationships in the hospitality context among managers and subordinates can be revealed, through the obligation of frontline service employees to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviours (Ellinger et al., 2007; Elmadag et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2014). Kim and Kuo (2015) denote that employees who obtained perceived favours from MC in the workplace would feel obliged to reciprocate the manager's goodwill by performing extra-role behaviours.

SET is also used to indicate that employees' commitment to the organization is generated from the organization's human resources practices, which ultimately affect the organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB) (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Thus, the effect of ECSQ in the hotel industry is determined by the support and guidance received from supervisors (Clark et al., 2009; Kumar & Krishnaraj, 2018; Rabiul et al., 2021). When employees feel appreciated and supported by the managers, they will support the organization's performance through their commitment to providing exceptional levels of service to customers and their colleagues when in need. Hence, in the light of SET, this research suggests that ECSQ will mediate the relationship between MC and SOCB among frontline service employees in the hospitality context.

### **Service-Oriented Citizenship Behaviours (SOCB)**

Bettencourt and Brown (1997) introduced the concept of service-oriented citizenship behaviours (SOCB) of customer-contact employees in his thesis

by applying the original OCB to the service industry. SOCB was defined as employees' discretionary actions in voluntarily working beyond their job description, regardless of formal rewards or compensation, in order to deliver high-quality service to customers (Bettencourt et al., 2001). The three-dimensional SOCB comprises of loyalty, participation, and service delivery. Firstly, the term *loyalty* means personnel who represent the organization's image and reputation, acting as advocates of the organization by promoting their products or services to outsiders. Secondly, *participation* indicates that employees take initiatives to improve their service quality to achieve better customer satisfaction. Lastly, *service delivery* emphasizes employees' conscientious action to provide superior service, performing in a reliable, responsive, and polite manner when dealing with customers (Bettencourt et al., 2001).

SOCB constructs become an important indicator for service organizations to discover the employees' customer-oriented behaviours in order to gain distinctive competitive advantages (Schneider et al., 2005; Sun et al., 2007; Nasurdin et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2018). Apart from providing service to customers, frontline service employees also represent the company's image to the public. They should proactively provide consumers with relevant details and make suggestions to management for improving the service. Frontline service providers must show their dependability, honesty, and courtesy toward customers since their attitudes and behaviours during the service delivery will directly influence customers' satisfaction and their intention to repeat purchases (Chen et al., 2018; Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2020).

Indeed, SOCB has become an important determinant of a service organization's performance, although there is still limited knowledge on how organizations create an environment which encourages managers and employees to perform SOCB properly (Ariffin et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2018; Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2020). Past researchers have suggested that managers should proactively communicate with their employees about the organizational systems by providing managerial coaching to illustrate how to deliver high-quality service to customers (Chou & Lopez- Rodriguez, 2013; Nasurdin et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2018; Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2020).

### **Managerial Coaching (MC) and Service-Oriented Citizenship Behaviours (SOCB)**

Managerial coaching (MC) involves new and emerging leadership skills which enable employees to learn, participate in and improve their work

performance effectively (Park et al., 2007; Ellinger et al., 2010). According to Ellinger et al. (2003), managers in the logistics industry acted as coaches to nurture and encourage their employees to learn, discover and understand the array of tasks through empowerment and facilitation rather than being controlled and commanded what to do. MC means practising active listening, helping, supporting, and providing opinions and constructive feedback to the employees (Guzzo et al., 2020; Wong et al., 2021). In strategic human capital planning and development of talent, researchers have widely deliberated MC as a useful technique to improve manager's performance, management, and leadership style, in various service industries such as logistics, insurance, and banking (McLean et al., 2005; Agarwal et al., 2009; Hamlin et al., 2009; Gilley et al., 2010; Hagen, 2012).

McLean et al. (2005) proposed four dimensions of managerial coaching skills: open communications, team approach, valuing people over tasks, and accepting ambiguity. Open communication involves openness and an information-exchange culture within an organization, whereby both employers and employees should have an open mind on sharing information, values, and feelings. The team approach means that employers should see themselves in partnership with their employees; they should create a supportive atmosphere whereby everyone works together for common goals and assures the quality of the working environment. Managers should value their employees above their tasks by considering their ideas and feedback during decision-making rather than giving instructions or directing them to complete a task. Accepting ambiguity is seen from the perspective of managers' viewpoint and requires effective collaborative skills with employees, as far as accepting uncertainty and conflicts generated by different cultures and other unknown outcomes when solving work-related problems. Park et al. (2008) extended the work of McLean et al. (2005) by adding facilitating employees' development, which requires managers to assist employees in understanding their work role and helping them to remove barriers to success. The authors follow the study of Kim and Kuo (2015) by combining the dimensions of managerial coaching skills (open communications (OC), team approach (TA), valuing people over task (VP), accepting ambiguity (AA), and facilitating employees' development (FD) as they share a common value which leads to the improvement of job-related outcomes among the employees.

In the service sector, managers who coach their own subordinates tend to have advantages over external trainers because they recognize the organization's issues and internal dynamics more intensely (He et al., 2012). Furthermore, frontline managers who perform as coaches do not require



extra time and effort to understand the service organization's culture and customers, as they are already familiar with them and can provide instant feedback for frontline employees to improve their performance (Ellinger et al., 2010; He et al., 2012; Ali et al., 2020). Through the notion of reciprocity, frontline service employees will treat the customers in a friendly manner, voluntarily show their enthusiasm in helping them and be willing to work beyond the job description (Yoon & Suh, 2003; He et al., 2012; Tang & Tang, 2012; Nasurdin et al., 2015). For instance, this study proposes that frontline hotel managers should create and maintain a high-quality social exchange relationship with their frontline employees. Since there is a scarcity of research linking MC with employees' SOCB, this study proposes that managers who can practise the characteristics of MC will ensure that frontline is given generous, supportive, and encouragement to enhance their performance. Hence, they will be more willing to reciprocate by engaging in SOCB towards customers and co-workers, in response to the managers' goodwill. Hence, the following hypothesis is suggested:

**H1:** *Managerial coaching (MC) will have a significant influence on the service-oriented citizenship behaviours (SOCB) of frontline service employees.*

### **Managerial Coaching (MC) and Employees' Commitment to Service Quality (ECSQ)**

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997, p. 69) described ECSQ as "the relative propensity of a service employee to engage in continuous improvement and exert effort on the job for the benefit of customers". ECSQ is a form of attitudinal commitment delineated by the dedication of individual employees to provide high-quality service to the customers (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997; Kumar & Krishnaraj, 2018). If frontline employees are to be committed to service quality, managers must demonstrate how to deliver high-quality service to customers. Researchers found out that MC will influence the employees to exert a positive attitude and behaviour toward the clients because supervisors who act as coaches will show their gratitude to their subordinates by listening to their suggestions and providing valuable feedback to them (Elmadag et al., 2008; Clark et al., 2009; Ribeiro et al., 2020).

In return, frontline service employees will reflect their consideration, acceptance, and concern for the needs and feelings of customers once they have received the same treatment from managers (Peccei & Rosenthal., 1997; Burdett, 1998; Elmadag et al., 2008; Ellinger et al., 2012; Ellinger et al., 2013). Therefore, their motivation to commit to service quality is influenced

by the managerial efforts and the organization's support (Berry et al., 2002; Ellinger et al., 2013). MC tends to be associated with employees' job satisfaction and their performance in the service industry (Ellinger et al., 2013; Kumar & Krishnaraj, 2018; Ma'amoor et al., 2018; Rabiul et al., 2021). Furthermore, MC is viewed as a favourable leadership approach which enables the communication between supervisors and their subordinates in an open and collaborative environment, generating greater commitment, empowerment, and tolerance in the workplace (Huang & Hsieh, 2015; Pousa & Mathieu, 2015; Ozduran & Tanova, 2017; Raza et al., 2017; Park et al., 2020).

Qiu et al. (2019) mentioned that there is limited study on the causal relationships between leadership styles and importance to commit on the service in hospitality industry. Instead, researchers have found that when service-oriented organizations dedicated to implementing MC, employees will commit to providing service quality to enhance the customer experience (Berry et al., 2002; Ma'amor et al., 2018). Perhaps, MC could be an important factor to influence ECSQ in the hotel industry. However, fewer studies have been carried out to test this relationship. Hence, this research focus on the impact of MC towards frontline service employees' commitment to providing high-quality service to customers (ECSQ).

*H2: Managerial coaching (MC) will have a significant influence on frontline service employees' commitment to providing high-quality service to customers (ECSQ).*

### **Employees' Commitment to Service Quality (ECSQ) and Service-Oriented Citizenship Behaviours (SOCB)**

Based on social exchange theory, employees' OCB is motivated by a positive job attitude, such as affective commitment or employees' positive emotional attachment to the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Konovsky et al., 1994; Meyer et al., 2002). Moorman et al. (1993) concluded that when organizations exhibit clearer roles and expectations toward building positive attitudes among service employees, they have less role ambiguity, driving an assortment of positive work outcomes such as higher job satisfaction, commitment, and OCB. In the service sector, employees who are treated well by the organization tend to be more committed to offering themselves as good citizens by performing beyond their required duties (Hagen, 2012).

In the hotel industry, frontline employees who are committed to giving high-quality services to customers tend to provide assistance and support to both co-workers and customers, beyond their job descriptions



(Organ, 1997; LePine et al., 2002; Bienstock et al., 2003). Researchers are urged to prioritize investigations into how high-quality services can be delivered through the attitudes of service personnel (Raza et al., 2017; Kumar & Krishnaraj, 2018; Ma'amoor et al., 2018). Employees' commitment to service quality (ECSQ) has a direct impact on OCB (Elmadag et al., 2008; Chen et al., 2018).

At the same time, employees who revealed higher SOCB tend to generate greater customer satisfaction through their propensity to provide better service to customers, beyond their job description (Elmadag et al., 2008; Raza et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2018). Thus, when employees are committed to service quality, they are more likely to exert extra effort to perform better in their jobs, as explained above (Raza et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2018).

However, the relationship between ECSQ and SOCB still needs further investigation, even though the dimensions of SOCB (loyalty, participation, and service delivery) are similar to the characteristics of ECSQ (Bettencourt et al., 2001; Chang & Chang, 2017; Chen et al., 2018). Thus, this study investigates whether there is a correlation between SOCB and ECSQ. Hence:

**H3:** *Employees' commitment to service quality (ECSQ) will have a significant influence on the service-oriented citizenship behaviours (SOCB) of frontline service employees.*

### **ECSQ as mediator between MC and SOCB of frontline employees**

The presence of OCB is considered as a method of retaining the balance of exchange between employees and managers (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Moorman et al., 1993). From the perspective of social exchange theory, managers' leadership tends to influence the willingness of employees to perform OCB (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Managers who always give full support and resources to their employees will inspire them to complete the work with passion, not only accomplishing their required tasks but also performing with discretionary effort and working extra miles to get the job done (Cook & Rice, 2003; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Such reaction is to repay their managers' support by performing extra-role behaviours, helpful for business development.

This study proposes that if hotel managers perform MC, frontline employees will make extra effort to achieve the organization's success, consistent with the concept of reciprocity in SET which implies that when employees receive coaching from managers, they tend to repay their

managers' goodwill. They will be committed to providing high-quality service and helping both co-workers and customers. However, the feasibility of this relationship still needs further discussion since there is no empirical study to prove the existence of intervening variables between MC and employees' SOCB to date, especially from the perspective of frontline employees in the hotel industry.

According to Ribeiro et al. (2020), managers with coaching skills are able to stimulate the employees' affective commitment, thereby, improve their work performance. Their study has proven that affective commitment mediates the relationship between MC and employees' work performance (Ribeiro et al., 2020). Simultaneously, this study examines the effects of MC on frontline employees' SOCB through ECSQ as an important driver to improve their work performance in the hospitality context. The reason for selecting ECSQ as mediator between MC and SOCB is that ECSQ is a type of attitudinal commitment which will enhance the dedication of individual employees to achieve organization's objectives (Kumar & Krishnaraj, 2018; Ma'amoor et al., 2018; Park et al., 2020). This study aims to confirm that ECSQ of frontline employees will mediate the relationship between managerial coaching and employees' SOCB. It proposes that:

**H4:** *ECSQ mediates the relationship between MC and SOCB of frontline service employees.*

### Research Model

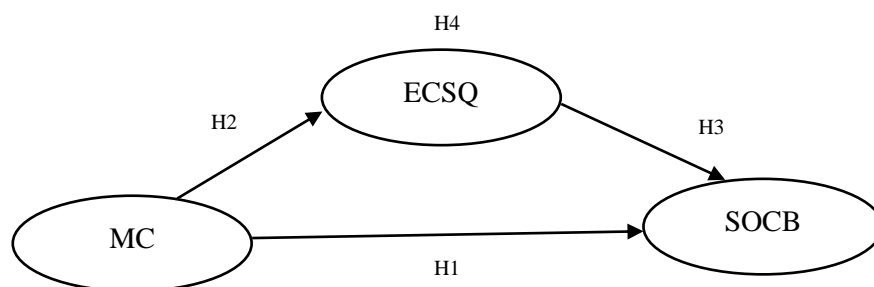


Figure 1. *Research Framework*

Notes: MC= Managerial Coaching; SOCB= Service-Oriented Citizenship Behaviours; ECSQ= Employees' Commitment Service Quality

## METHODOLOGY

### Sample

This study is focused on 4-star and 5-star hotels located in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, Malaysia. The target respondents are frontline employees: front-desk agents, reservations agents, waiters and waitresses, guest relations representatives, bartenders, door attendants, bell attendants, and

concierges. Since the population of frontline service employees is unknown, the sample size is based on Cochran's Formula which uses the finite population correction factor. By choosing a 95% confidence level, 0.5 standard deviation, and margin error with confidence interval of 5%, this study required approximately 385 respondents.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected between 12 June and 1 August 2020. Three research assistants were recruited and briefed about the procedure for the data collection. Convenience sampling was used as it was impossible to obtain all the respondents' consent to participate during the pandemic. To protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents, they were inquired to leave their completed survey forms in an envelope. In order to encourage participation in the survey, each respondent was eligible to receive an RM10 shopping voucher as a token of appreciation. Out of 500 questionnaires distributed to hotel employees in the two states, 398 completed ones were returned, a 79.6% response rate.

Based on their demographic profiles, 81.4% of respondents hold non-supervisory positions, with the remaining 18.6% at the supervisory level. A majority of respondents (59.8%) had around 1-3 years of working experience in the hospitality industry, and over 70% worked in front-office departments. 78.1% of respondents had been working for more than 8 hours a day. 65.6% earned around RM2,001- RM3,000 per month. The larger proportion (59%) were female, and a majority of respondents (62.3%) were under the age of 26. As for education level, 68.3% had at least an STPM/ A-Level/ Diploma/ Advanced Diploma.

### **Measurement**

The measurement items for the key variables in the current study can be found in Appendix A.

*Service-Oriented Citizenship Behaviours (SOCB)*. SOCB is a 3-dimensional scale that consists of loyalty, service delivery, and participation, developed by Bettencourt et al. (2001), together accounted for 16 items, with responses measured on a scale from "1= strongly disagree" to "5= strongly agree". All the items reflect the discretionary roles of frontline employees during their interactions with customers and co-workers (Chen, 2016; Chen et al., 2018).

*Managerial Coaching (MC)*. MC was measured with the Measurement Model of Coaching Skills developed by Park et al. (2008) and included both

behavioural and skill-based managerial coaching. There were 20 items in five dimensions, namely open communication, team approach, valuing people, accepting ambiguity, and facilitating development, all measured on the same scale, from “1= strongly disagree” to “5= strongly agree”.

*Employees’ Commitment to Service Quality (ECSQ).* ECSQ was operationalized as the strength of an individual’s affective and non-calculative attachment, related to employees’ willingness and their capacity to engage in proactive forms of customer service (Elmadag et al., 2008; Ellinger et al., 2013). It was assessed with the 9-item scale proposed by Peccei and Rosenthal (1997). The reliability and validity of these items had been tested and confirmed in previous studies (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997; Elmadag et al., 2008; Ellinger et al., 2013).

*Control Variable.* Past studies indicated that demographic variables such as age, gender, and organization tenure had a significant influence on SOCB (Nasurdin et al., 2015; Jain et al., 2016), so these variables were included as control variables in this study.

## RESULTS

### Data Analysis

The data entry, data screening, and descriptive statistics as well as descriptive analysis were performed using IBM’s SPSS ver. 23 statistical software. In addition, Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) which is available through SMART PLS 3.0 software was used for hypothesis testing. This is because PLS-SEM has been widely used to predict the results of hypothesis testing in hospitality and tourism research (Henseler et al., 2018; Hair et al., 2019). PLS-SEM also makes it possible to examine complex data with multiple indicators and relationships (Hair et al., 2014). In PLS-SEM, the measurement model is first assessed to examine reliability, convergent validity, and internal consistency, followed by the structural model to test the hypotheses.

### Assessment of measurement model

The measurement model is constructed using the PLS-Algorithm in Smart-PLS. It is necessary to ascertain the internal reliability and validity measures in PLS-SEM. According to Hair et al. (2019), constructs’ indicator loadings should exceed the threshold value of 0.70. CFA in the measurement model is used to measure the reliability ascertained by Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  (value should

be more than 0.60) and composite reliability (value should be above 0.70). As mentioned by Hair et al. (2019), validity is established as convergent validity (AVE) should be at least 0.5. In addition, the authors stated that multicollinearity can be detected by using the variance inflation factor (VIF). Rule of thumb states that VIF above 5 (tolerance value below 0.2) shows the presence of multicollinearity.

Table 1. *Convergent Validity Result*

Higher Order Construct	Lower Order Components	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's $\alpha$	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE	VIF
Employees' Commitment to Service Quality (ECSQ)		EC1	0.805				2.248
		EC4	0.882				3.430
		EC5	0.740				1.971
		EC6	0.858	0.935	0.947	0.721	3.071
		EC7	0.899				3.828
		EC8	0.878				3.554
		EC9	0.869				3.426
Managerial Coaching (MC)	Open Communication	OC1	0.736				1.587
		OC2	0.926	0.893	0.927	0.761	3.916
		OC3	0.902				3.184
		OC4	0.911				3.700
	Team Approach	TA1	0.792				1.839
		TA2	0.910	0.901	0.931	0.773	3.172
		TA3	0.904				3.359
		TA4	0.905				3.419
	Value People over Task	VP1	0.849				2.269
		VP2	0.920	0.909	0.936	0.786	3.600
		VP3	0.896				3.113
		VP4	0.880				2.666
	Accept Ambiguity	AA1	0.896				3.076
		AA2	0.903	0.914	0.939	0.795	3.360
		AA3	0.877				2.698
		AA4	0.891				2.994
Facilitate development	FD1	0.898				2.473	
	FD3	0.917	0.901	0.938	0.836	3.050	
	FD4	0.927				3.283	
Service-Oriented Citizenship Behaviours (SOCB)	Loyalty	LO1	0.761				1.667
		LO3	0.901	0.890	0.925	0.755	3.198
		LO4	0.923				4.544
		LO5	0.882				3.137
		SD1	0.883				3.494
	Service Delivery	SD2	0.907				4.111
		SD3	0.908	0.936	0.950	0.759	4.181
		SD4	0.801				2.128
		SD5	0.851				2.747
		SD6	0.873				3.181
		PA1	0.845				2.678
Participation	PA2	0.913				4.102	
	PA3	0.902	0.923	0.943	0.768	3.852	
	PA4	0.927				4.642	
	PA5	0.786				1.925	

Notes: AVE= average variance extracted; CR= composite reliability; CA= Cronbach's alfa; EC= Employees' Commitment to Service Quality; OC= Open Communication; TA= Team Approach; VP= Value People over Task; AA= Accept Ambiguity; FD= Facilitate development; LO= Loyalty; SD= Service Delivery; PA= Participation. EC2, FD2 & LO2 were removed due to loading <0.700.

The Fornell-Larker criterion was used to determine discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and cross-loadings (Hair et al., 2019). Table 2 shows that all the items' loadings for each construct were higher than the other constructs in cross-loadings. Thus, the results demonstrated that the measurement model met the criteria for satisfactory discriminant validity. Moreover, Table 3 shows that the discriminant validity results also met the criteria for discriminant validity because the square root of AVE (diagonal) for higher-order constructs as well as lower-order components was greater than all the correlations (off-diagonal) for all the reflective constructs.

Table 2. *Cross Loadings*

	ECSQ	OC	TA	VP	AA	FD	LO	SD	PA
EC1	<b>0.805</b>	0.636	0.620	0.621	0.645	0.717	0.598	0.553	0.528
EC4	<b>0.882</b>	0.551	0.543	0.522	0.586	0.649	0.650	0.636	0.587
EC5	<b>0.740</b>	0.456	0.509	0.444	0.539	0.453	0.475	0.474	0.517
EC6	<b>0.858</b>	0.546	0.550	0.482	0.553	0.593	0.555	0.563	0.528
EC7	<b>0.899</b>	0.557	0.551	0.543	0.547	0.599	0.599	0.621	0.573
EC8	<b>0.878</b>	0.546	0.599	0.549	0.565	0.577	0.590	0.584	0.535
EC9	<b>0.869</b>	0.550	0.529	0.548	0.567	0.605	0.532	0.571	0.531
OC1	0.536	<b>0.785</b>	0.620	0.569	0.610	0.550	0.572	0.557	0.553
OC2	0.611	<b>0.926</b>	0.746	0.740	0.720	0.764	0.615	0.597	0.539
OC3	0.509	<b>0.902</b>	0.758	0.771	0.747	0.743	0.525	0.501	0.523
OC4	0.611	<b>0.911</b>	0.754	0.777	0.760	0.775	0.554	0.554	0.556
TA1	0.499	0.628	<b>0.792</b>	0.681	0.638	0.529	0.525	0.469	0.496
TA2	0.622	0.737	<b>0.910</b>	0.756	0.757	0.704	0.608	0.583	0.579
TA3	0.599	0.780	<b>0.904</b>	0.787	0.778	0.735	0.584	0.569	0.601
TA4	0.586	0.706	<b>0.905</b>	0.764	0.723	0.650	0.533	0.573	0.609
VP1	0.519	0.717	0.766	<b>0.849</b>	0.737	0.680	0.486	0.461	0.501
VP2	0.557	0.751	0.790	<b>0.920</b>	0.776	0.725	0.551	0.529	0.532
VP3	0.562	0.732	0.730	<b>0.896</b>	0.717	0.666	0.577	0.563	0.530
VP4	0.585	0.724	0.732	<b>0.880</b>	0.801	0.703	0.555	0.536	0.560
AA1	0.613	0.766	0.725	0.795	<b>0.896</b>	0.721	0.537	0.547	0.570
AA2	0.576	0.717	0.751	0.748	<b>0.903</b>	0.720	0.545	0.512	0.568
AA3	0.619	0.724	0.713	0.726	<b>0.877</b>	0.673	0.553	0.604	0.616
AA4	0.600	0.702	0.756	0.778	<b>0.891</b>	0.742	0.581	0.532	0.535
FD1	0.651	0.753	0.699	0.722	0.734	<b>0.898</b>	0.599	0.552	0.542
FD3	0.642	0.750	0.650	0.722	0.714	<b>0.917</b>	0.550	0.517	0.518
FD4	0.656	0.740	0.705	0.703	0.748	<b>0.927</b>	0.569	0.548	0.557
LO1	0.565	0.548	0.497	0.487	0.494	0.544	<b>0.761</b>	0.593	0.537
LO3	0.663	0.640	0.640	0.608	0.609	0.631	<b>0.901</b>	0.781	0.716
LO4	0.582	0.559	0.558	0.537	0.545	0.531	<b>0.923</b>	0.753	0.697
LO5	0.540	0.499	0.525	0.490	0.506	0.474	<b>0.882</b>	0.748	0.712
SD1	0.591	0.532	0.566	0.534	0.561	0.520	0.805	<b>0.883</b>	0.705
SD2	0.630	0.586	0.572	0.546	0.568	0.537	0.777	<b>0.907</b>	0.724
SD3	0.620	0.555	0.558	0.483	0.532	0.497	0.737	<b>0.908</b>	0.725
SD4	0.487	0.458	0.481	0.418	0.472	0.417	0.641	<b>0.801</b>	0.740
SD5	0.604	0.599	0.551	0.583	0.550	0.592	0.701	<b>0.851</b>	0.691
SD6	0.596	0.560	0.540	0.510	0.527	0.516	0.673	<b>0.873</b>	0.762
PA1	0.489	0.480	0.492	0.444	0.475	0.439	0.639	0.765	<b>0.845</b>
PA2	0.525	0.516	0.543	0.509	0.519	0.457	0.680	0.727	<b>0.913</b>
PA3	0.571	0.602	0.609	0.569	0.625	0.563	0.682	0.714	<b>0.902</b>
PA4	0.552	0.567	0.596	0.577	0.601	0.555	0.687	0.716	<b>0.927</b>
PA5	0.665	0.541	0.611	0.518	0.586	0.566	0.683	0.715	<b>0.786</b>

Notes: EC= Employees' Commitment to Service Quality; OC= Open Communication; TA= Team Approach; VP= Value People over Task; AA= Accept Ambiguity; FD= Facilitate development; LO= Loyalty; SD= Service Delivery; PA= Participation.



Table 3. *Fornell-Larcker Criterion*

No.	Higher Order Constructs	1	2	3
1	Employees' Commitment to Service Quality (ECSQ)	<b>0.849</b>		
2	Managerial Coaching (MC)	0.719	<b>0.820</b>	
3	Service-Oriented Citizenship Behaviours (SOCB)	0.713	0.722	<b>0.817</b>

Lower Order Components	AA	FD	LO	OC	PA	SD	TA	VP
AA	<b>0.892</b>							
FD	0.801	<b>0.914</b>						
LO	0.621	0.627	<b>0.869</b>					
OC	0.816	0.818	0.646	<b>0.872</b>				
PA	0.641	0.590	0.770	0.619	<b>0.876</b>			
SD	0.615	0.590	0.831	0.630	0.831	<b>0.871</b>		
TA	0.826	0.749	0.640	0.827	0.652	0.626	<b>0.879</b>	
VP	0.855	0.783	0.612	0.824	0.599	0.589	0.851	<b>0.887</b>

Notes: EC=Employees' Commitment to Service Quality; OC= Open Communication; TA= Team Approach; VP= Value People over Task; AA= Accept Ambiguity; FD= Facilitate development; LO= Loyalty; SD= Service Delivery; PA= Participation.

### Assessment of structural model

The results of the control variables age, gender, and organization tenure are presented in Table 4. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$  value) of 0.047 showed that only 4.7 percent of the variance in SOCB was explained by these three variables. The results indicated that only age has a minimally significant impact, whereas gender and organizational tenure have no significant impact on SOCB.

Table 4. *Control Variables*

Control Variables	Path Coefficient	T-values	P-values	$R^2$
Age	0.175	2.63	0.009	0.047
Gender	0.081	1.54	0.124	
Organizational Tenure	0.073	0.81	0.148	

Next, bootstrapping technique was run with 5,000 subsamples used to measure the structural model. The statistics of each proposed hypothesis were supported by Table 5. The results of the total effect of MC on SOCB were significant (H1: 0.438, T-value=8.088, p-value < 0.000). Hence, H1 is supported. This result also supports H2 as MC has a significant impact on ECSQ (H2:  $\beta$ = 0.719, T-value=27.970, p-value < 0.000). Similarly, the hypothesis H3 is supported, with ECSQ having a significant impact on SOCB (H3:  $\beta$ = 0.386, T-value= 7.213, p-value < 0.000).

ECSQ as mediator between the relationship between MC and SOCB was then examined. With the inclusion of the mediating variable (ECSQ), MC also have significant impact on SOCB (H4:  $\beta$ = 0.277, T-value= 6.952, p-

value < 0.000). In addition, to conclude the mediation, the researchers applied the VAF (Variance Accounted For) approach, to calculate the ratio of the indirect-to-total effect (Hair et al., 2017, 2019). The VAF value is represented by the indirect effect of 0.277 divided by the total effect of 0.716, i.e., 0.387 (38.7 percent) which falls between 20 percent and 80 percent. Thus, the results showed that ECSQ partially mediated the relationship between MC and SOCB, supporting H4. Figure 1 illustrates the final model and the results of hypothesis testing.

Furthermore, the predictive accuracy of the structural model was used for explanatory power of endogenous constructs, as suggested by Hair et al. (2017). The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$  value) had predictive accuracy value, the amount of variance in the endogenous constructs explained by all the exogenous constructs linked to it.  $R^2$  ranges between 0 and 1 indicating higher values of predictive accuracy. According to Hair et al. (2017), the rule of thumb for acceptable  $R^2$  predictive accuracy is 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 defined as weak, moderate, and substantial respectively. Thus, the results showed that predictive accuracy for SOCB ( $R^2 = 0.608$ ) and ECSQ ( $R^2 = 0.517$ ) were considered moderate.

The effect size ( $f^2$ ) was assessed; according to Cohen's guidelines in 1998, values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effect sizes respectively. In Table 5, the results indicate that MC (1.069) has a large effect on producing  $R^2$  for ECSQ. Moreover, it can be observed that MC (0.231) and ECSQ (0.182) have medium effect size on producing  $R^2$  for SOCB. In addition, cross-validated redundancy measure  $Q^2$  values were calculated using the blindfolding procedure to evaluate the predictive relevance of exogenous constructs towards endogenous constructs. According to Hair et al. (2017), if  $Q^2$  is larger than 0, the model has predictive relevance for a certain endogenous construct. According to Hair et al. (2019), the rule of thumb for  $Q^2$  indicates the values of 0, 0.25 and 0.50 which respectively represent small, medium, and large predictive relevance in the PLS-path model. Since the predictive relevance  $Q^2$  of ECSQ has a value of 0.344 and SOCB a value of 0.372, the model has achieved medium predictive relevance based on two endogenous constructs.

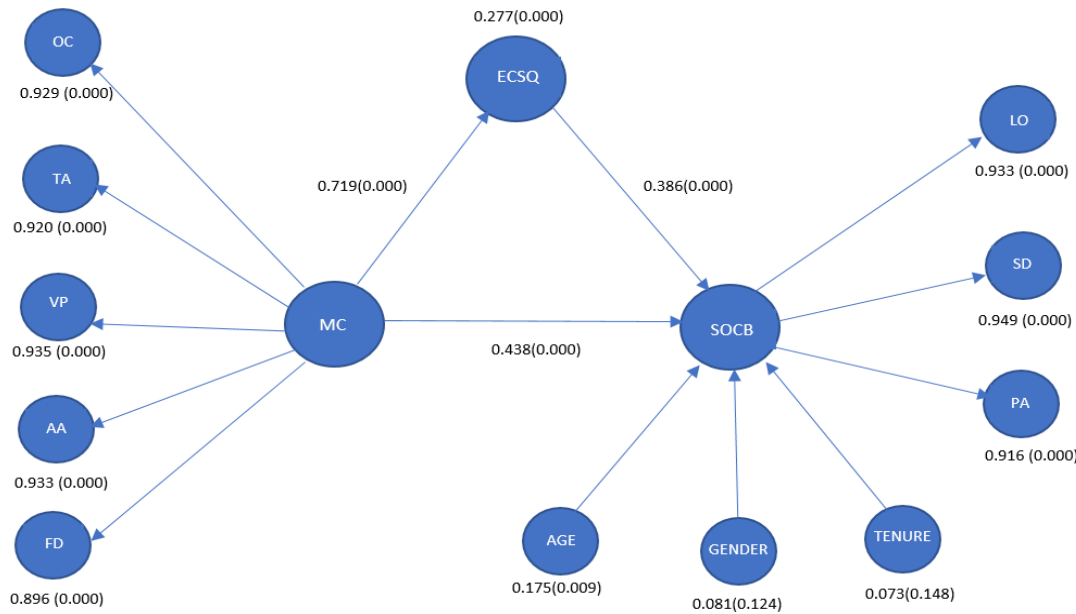


Figure 2. Results of Structural Model

Notes: MC= Managerial Coaching; OC= Open Communication; TA= Team Approach; VP= Value People over Task; AA= Accept Ambiguity; FD= Facilitate development; SOCB= Service-Oriented Citizenship Behaviours; LO= Loyalty; SD= Service Delivery; PA= Participation; ECSQ= Employees’ Commitment Service Quality . Research Model showed the value of path coefficient and p-values. All path coefficient significant at  $p < 0.001$  level.

Table 5. Structural Model Results

Path	Path Coefficient		Standard Deviation	Total Effect	VAF	T-values	P-values	Decision	R <sup>2</sup>	f <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup>
	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect									
MC -> SOCB (H1)	0.438		0.054			8.088	0.00	Supported	0.608	0.231	0.372
MC-> ECSQ (H2)	0.719		0.026			27.970	0.00	Supported	0.517	1.069	0.344
ECSQ-> SOCB (H3)	0.386		0.054			7.213	0.00	Supported		0.182	
MC-> ECSQ -> SOCB (H4)		0.277	0.040	0.716	38.769	6.952	0.00	Supported			

Notes: MC= Managerial Coaching; SOCB= Service-Oriented Citizenship Behaviours; ECSQ= Employees’ Commitment to Service Quality; VAF= Variance accounted for; Q<sup>2</sup>= predictive relevance; f<sup>2</sup>= effect size; R<sup>2</sup>= explanatory power.

## DISCUSSION

The current study has evaluated the direct and indirect effects of MC on frontline service employees' SOCB, the direct influence of MC on SOCB, and the indirect influence of MC and SOCB through ECSQ. To test the study's hypotheses, data from 398 frontline service employees from 4- and 5-star hotels in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor were analysed. As expected, the PLS-SEM analysis showed that all the hypotheses, H1, H2, H3, and H4, are supported. That is, MC has a significant positive influence on employees' SOCB (H1), a new discovery filling the gap in research into managerial coaching and frontline employees' SOCB. The results also revealed a strong association between MC and ECSQ (H2), in line with the predictions of past research (Kumar & Krishnaraj, 2018; Ma'amoor et al., 2018; Ali et al., 2020; Rabiul et al., 2021). ECSQ also has a significant relationship with SOCB (H3), confirming the previous proposition that employees committed to providing high-quality service will exhibit a SOCB to fulfill customers' satisfaction (Chen et al., 2018; Ma'amoor et al., 2018).

Finally, the findings of the present study suggest that the relationship between MC and frontline employees' SOCB is partially mediated by ECSQ, revealing an indirect effect between MC and SOCB (H4). According to these results, ECSQ acts as an important "stabilizer" between MC and SOCB. Specifically, MC will have a greater influence on frontline employees' SOCB once the managers are able to nurture employees' attitudinal commitment to service quality. MC tends to promote ECSQ which, in turn, will increase the likelihood of frontline service employees performing SOCB during their daily routine. This outcome is in-line with SET assumptions, that managers who provide coaching tend to listen to their subordinates and give them constructive feedback, as well as being supportive and caring of their well-being (Guzzo et al., 2020; Wong et al., 2021). In return, the employees will have emotional attachment to the organization and will offer high-quality service to customers, at the same time adhering to their obligation to display SOCB during their customer duties (Ariffin et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2018; Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2020). The results showed that neither gender nor tenure was related to SOCB, although age was found to significantly relate to it, consistent with past studies (Bettencourt et al., 2001; Nasurdin et al., 2015).

### **Theoretical Implications**

Due to the economic lockdown during Covid-19, many hotel operators in Malaysia are facing extreme stress and anxiety because they have yet to find

effective strategies to increase their frontline employees' performance and review their service offerings. Furthermore, management and scholars of hospitality industries are being urged to find new knowledge and insights to cope with the scarce resources during the Covid-19 outbreak (Gigauri, 2020; Gössling et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2020). As previous studies have yet to examine the possibility of engaging frontline employees in performing SOCB in their daily routine, this study shed new light on the role of MC in dealing with employees' SOCB and ECSQ, especially during Covid-19. The results reveal that perceived MC among frontline service employees significantly influences their SOCB performance. In addition, without sacrificing service quality for the time being, this study has developed a holistic conceptual framework to explore the impact of ECSQ in the association between MC and frontline employees' SOCB in the hotel industry.

The research agenda nowadays focuses on how to spawn new knowledge and provide insights into the management of the hospitality sector. Several important implications for future researchers and business practitioners are highlighted here. From the theoretical perspective, the study developed a conceptual model associated with positive workplace attitudes and behaviours in manager-employee reciprocal relationships. The current study has discovered the motivation behind social exchange in choosing MC as an important determinant to encourage the frontline employees to fulfil their responsibilities in delivering high-quality service to customers as well as the willingness to take extra efforts to help the hotel survive the hardships during the pandemic. By selecting SOCB as an outcome variable in this study, the results show that SOCB is suitable to be applied in service organizations as it is able to enhance the service performance of the hotel industry as well as representing the positive behaviours required of frontline service employees today.

Furthermore, this study recommends ECSQ as a mediator between MC and employees' SOCB since attitudinal commitment was found to improve employees' dedication in delivering customer service (Kumar & Krishnaraj, 2018; Ma'amor et al., 2018). In this study, the researchers argue that MC is an appropriate leadership style which will promote employees' tendency to commitment to service quality; performing SOCB with this attitudinal component (ECSQ) in turn has enhanced the proposed theoretical framework because it reinforces the social exchange relationship between MC and SOCB (Elmadag et al., 2008; Sun et al., 2012; Ellinger et al., 2013; Siva & Unas, 2016; Kumar & Krishnaraj, 2018; Ma'amor, et al., 2018).

## Practical Implications

This study has also made several contributions to business management by evaluating the roles of managers and employees in providing high-quality service to customers. In the service context, frontline employees' discretionary behaviours have been found to be an important factor in delivering service quality which is rarely mentioned in the formal job description (Kumar & Krishnaraj, 2018; Ma'amoor et al., 2018; Park et al., 2020). However, suitable organizational practice for frontline employees remained unexplored in Malaysia's hotel industry during the Covid-19 outbreak. This study has provided valid reasons for hotel practitioners to focus on frontline employees' SOCB so that they will have a more appropriate direction to capitalize on service behaviours, which is apparently the best way to provide more benefit for both organizations and customers.

This study provides further rationale and motivation for hotel practitioners to initiate MC as a new leadership style, to foster and support the employees' willingness to perform SOCB during the service delivery in the hotel industry. Since the service organizations have yet to resolve the work-related issues of frontline employees during the Covid-19 crisis, the empirical impact of this study has reinforced the need for the hotel practitioners to support MC as an effective strategy to overcome the current issues. From the perspectives of Human Resource Development (HRD), this study gives service organizations an insight to develop their managers' interpersonal skills by offering their managers to attend the coaching and mentoring workshops or courses such as Train the Trainer Program (TTT). This study suggests incorporating MC subconstructs such as OC, TA, VP, AA, and FD into the TTT training program's structure to improve the managers' communication skills, enhance their emotional intelligence and practice transformational leadership. The management of service organizations should offer their employees to join team-building workshops so that managers are able to apply the MC skills as well as create bonding with their subordinates during the session.

Finally, some doubts have been expressed as to whether the leadership of a manager will influence the corresponding behaviours of frontline employees directly or indirectly (Ribeiro et al., 2020). From the results, we discovered that MC will indirectly influence the SOCB of employees through the presence of ECSQ. Substantively, our findings indicate that MC skills should be imposed so that managers are ready to take on the role as a coach to improve the ECSQ and SOCB of the employees.



The fundamental implication of this study is that managers who provide coaching will set targets for their employees, provide helpful comments, and ask questions instead of offering them solutions to improve their job-related attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, the findings offer compelling support to the scholar that MC should be initiated to cultivate ECSQ so that frontline service employees are ready to serve customers better by helping their co-workers and volunteering to perform SOCB during the service delivery process.

### **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Further research is required to resolve certain limitations in this study. First, since the total population was unknown, the convenience sampling technique was used, leading to potential bias. Future studies should use more appropriate sampling techniques to avoid bias in the results. This study focused on 4- and 5-star hotels located in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur, which may not represent the whole population of frontline service employees in Malaysia. Future research should therefore cover all the hotels in Malaysia, including low-budget ones and a wider geographic area. Next, as the study depended on a self-administered survey to measure the MC, ECSQ, and SOCB, the respondents might have given their answers based on their own subjective views which they thought applicable to the current situation. This method may create doubts as respondents might not really have understood the questions properly. Future researchers should apply mixed-method surveys which cover both quantitative and qualitative perspectives to provide further explanations from the target respondents.

The current study examined the perception of frontline service employees regarding the implementation of MC, ECSQ, and SOCB without measuring when and how their perceptions might change over time. Moreover, the partial mediating effect suggests that the mediating variable of ECSQ accounts for some but not all the relationship between MC and SOCB. Thus, future studies should consider other variables that might influence the findings, such as organizational culture (Ali et al., 2020), organizational climate (Chen et al., 2018), or perceived organizational support (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2020); this might moderate the impact of MC on the employee-SOCB relationship. From the perspective of human resource management, the current study did not consider a favourable organizational culture which encourages hotel managers to practise coaching. Managers might feel reluctant to learn and use MC skills since they are not rewarded for developing their subordinates. Hence, future

studies need to focus on how to strengthen the managers' willingness to practise MC; empirical research is needed to compare the performance of frontline employees before and after the implementation of MC. In conclusion, future researchers should focus on other factors or variables which lead to successful implementation of MC in service organizations.

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