Leadership and followers' voice behavior in hospitality and tourism industry: mapping the state of the art trends and future direction

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Abstract

Purpose – This study investigates the knowledge structure surrounding leadership styles and employee voice behavior within the hospitality and tourism sector. The primary objective is to offer a comprehensive overview of global research trends in this domain through a bibliometric analysis.

Design/methodology/approach – A total of 746 relevant publications were retrieved from the Web of Science database. To achieve the study's objective, two science mapping techniques, bibliographic coupling and co-word analysis, were employed. VOSviewer (version 1.6.18) was utilized as a visualization tool to map and interpret the research network effectively.

Findings – Results reveal that the first study on the topic appeared in 1998, but scholarly interest remained limited in the following years. Research activity resumed in 2001 and began gaining traction in 2004, with a steady rise in publications leading up to a peak in 2024. Current and emerging trends based on bibliographic coupling relate to employee voice for sustainable innovation in tourism and hospitality. In contrast, future trends based on co-word analysis relate to leadership dynamics and employee voice in enhancing organizational performance.

Research limitations/implications – The present study offers valuable practical insights for the hospitality and tourism industry by emphasizing the significance of cultivating supportive leadership that encourages employee voice, thereby enhancing performance and innovation. Nonetheless, it recognizes certain limitations that may constrain the breadth of its findings.

Originality/value – This study advances social exchange theory in the tourism and hospitality literature by showing that supportive and fair leadership encourages employee voice behavior, which subsequently enhances service quality, innovation and organizational performance. Additionally, it contributes to the growing body of research by examining the relationship between leadership and employee voice behavior in the hospitality and tourism sector through a quantitative and visually oriented bibliometric approach.

Keywords Leadership, Voice behavior, Followers, Bibliometric analysis, Science mapping

Paper type Literature review

1. Introduction

Although official research on the subject commenced in the twentieth century, the impact of leadership has persisted for millennia throughout human history (Markham, 2012). Since the

inception of human civilization, leaders have coordinated and directed essential activities such as hunting and gathering, playing a pivotal role in the survival and advancement of communities (Allison and Goethals, 2014). Leadership is a social influence mechanism wherein leaders endeavor to inspire and empower followers to facilitate the achievement of collective objectives (Bass, 1990). A growing corpus of literature acknowledges the significance of leadership in enhancing the voice of followers (Papakonstantinou *et al.*, 2025; Thakur, 2024). Leader and follower behaviors are frequently perceived as highly equivalent (Crossman and Crossman, 2011).

Leadership plays a critical role in shaping employee voice behavior, which refers to the voluntary expression of ideas, concerns, suggestions or opinions aimed at improving organizational functioning (Papakonstantinou *et al.*, 2025; Duan *et al.*, 2017). Effective leadership creates a psychologically safe environment where employees feel empowered to speak up without fear of negative consequences (Saleem *et al.*, 2024). Leaders influence not only the structural pathways for communication but also the interpersonal dynamics that determine whether voice is encouraged or silenced (Yang *et al.*, 2020). Leadership styles such as transformational, ethical, servant and inclusive leadership have been found to positively impact employee voice by promoting trust, fairness and open dialogue (Kaur and Jaiswal, 2025; Thakur, 2024; Wu and Zhou, 2024; Rasheed *et al.*, 2021). For example, transformational leaders motivate and intellectually stimulate their followers, pushing them to question the way things are done and come up with new ways to solve problems (Stewart, 2006). Ethical leaders encourage fairness and moral standards, making it easier for people to speak up (Viana and Machado, 2025). In service-oriented fields like hospitality and tourism, where frontline workers have a unique perspective on how customers feel, leadership encouraging voice behavior is important for improving service quality, innovation and the organization's ability to respond quickly (Mahran *et al.*, 2025; Ali, 2024). Leadership is not just a job for managers, it is also a key way to get employees to act proactively and help the organization get better all the time through employee voice (Zhang *et al.*, 2024).

Despite growing scholarly interest, research on leadership and employee voice in the hospitality and tourism industry is still fragmented (Mahran *et al.*, 2025). This is due to various theoretical frameworks, inconsistent methodological approaches and scattered findings across several academic publications (Ali, 2024). The development of a coherent understanding of how leadership styles affect employee voice behavior in service-intensive contexts is hampered by this conceptual and empirical diffusion (El-Reqib and Tariq, 2025). A bibliometric analysis is necessary to address this lack of coherence. By identifying significant authors, highly cited works, important research topics and new scholarly trends, bibliometric approaches enable the methodical mapping of the intellectual structure of a field of study. With an emphasis on the hospitality and tourism sector, the current study aims to assess the knowledge structure of leadership styles and employee voice behavior. To uncover the intellectual underpinnings, thematic evolution and potential gaps in existing scholarship, the study will use co-word analysis to identify core themes and conceptual linkages within the literature and bibliographic coupling to find connections between publications based on shared references. This analysis will direct future research efforts toward more targeted and theory-driven investigations and help to create a more comprehensive understanding of the field. Thus, the research questions are outlined as follows:

(1) What are the prevailing and emerging trends in leadership and employees' voice behavior within the tourism and hospitality industry?

(2) What are the future trends of leadership and employees' voice behavior in the tourism and hospitality industry?

The structure of this review is organized as follows. The opening section provides an overview of leadership and followers' voice behavior in the tourism and hospitality sector. Section 2

presents the literature review, followed by Section 3 outlines the bibliometric methodology employing a science mapping approach. Section 4 reports and discusses the findings derived from the two science mapping analyses. Sections 5 and 6 elaborate on the theoretical and managerial implications, respectively. Section 7 highlights the study's limitations and suggests avenues for future research. Finally, Section 8 offers the conclusion.

2. Literature review

2.1 Social exchange theory

Scholars have explored the leadership–employee voice relationship through several theoretical perspectives, such as affective events theory (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996), self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2012), the job demands resources model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007) and conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 2011). Although these frameworks enrich our understanding by highlighting diverse mechanisms underlying voice behavior, the current study draws on social exchange theory (SET, Blau, 1964) as its primary lens to explain how reciprocal exchanges between leaders and employees shape the likelihood of voice behavior.

SET emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers and is widely used to understand leadership (Blau, 1964). It implies that when leaders show their employees support, trust and equitable treatment, they feel compelled to return the favor by exhibiting positive traits like commitment, loyalty and voice (Zhang *et al*., 2018). This mutual exchange forms the foundation of effective leadership and follower engagement (Fan *et al*., 2021). SET underscores that leadership is not merely a top-down influence but a dynamic exchange process in which leaders provide socioemotional resources such as support, respect, recognition and fairness (Xuecheng *et al*., 2022). These leader behaviors are perceived by employees as investments in the relationship, creating a sense of obligation, trust and loyalty (Khan *et al*., 2024). When employees feel valued and supported, they are more likely to reciprocate with positive organizational behaviors, including employee voice behavior (Thakur, 2024). Transformational or ethical leaders demonstrate concern for employee well-being and model openness to feedback fosters a climate of psychological safety, where employees feel secure in speaking up (Sharif *et al*., 2024). Conversely, when leadership fails to demonstrate fairness or support, employees may withhold voice due to perceived relational risks or lack of reciprocity (Liu and Ling, 2025). Thus, through the social exchange theory, employee voice behavior is conceptualized as a form of constructive reciprocation to positive leadership practices, highlighting the importance of relational quality in enabling open communication and proactive involvement in organizational improvement (Vu *et al*., 2025).

2.2 Leadership and employee voice behavior

The relationship between leadership and employee voice behavior has garnered substantial academic attention in recent years, especially as organizations recognize the value of employee input in fostering innovation, improving decision-making and enhancing organizational effectiveness (Guo *et al*., 2022). Numerous studies have explored how different leadership styles influence the likelihood of employees speaking up. For instance, transformational leadership has been consistently associated with increased voice behavior, as leaders intellectually stimulate employees are more likely to foster a culture of openness and participation (Duan *et al*., 2017). Similarly, servant and ethical leadership styles create a psychologically safe environment where employees feel encouraged to share constructive feedback (Dua *et al*., 2023; Song *et al*., 2022). Inclusive leadership is another important approach that explicitly values diverse perspectives and actively solicits employee input, thereby reinforcing voice behavior (Jiang *et al*., 2022).

In contrast, leadership styles rooted in dominance and hostility tend to silence employee voice. Authoritarian leaders, who emphasize rigid control and unquestioned obedience, foster a climate of uncertainty that discourages ethical voice (Liu and Ling, 2025). Likewise, abusive

leaders, characterized by persistent verbal aggression and manipulative tactics, erode employees' willingness to express concerns by weakening their work engagement (Bhattacharjee and Sarkar, 2024). Within the hospitality and tourism industry, where frequent employee–customer interactions and service quality are crucial, employee voice is particularly vital (Ajmal *et al*., 2025). Studies in this sector underscore the value of supportive leadership in motivating frontline employees to raise issues related to operational inefficiencies, customer experiences and service innovations (Lin and Ling, 2021). While the literature confirms a positive association between effective leadership and employee voice (Papakonstantinou *et al*., 2025), inconsistencies in measurement approaches, leadership constructs and contextual variables indicate the need for more integrative and systematic investigations (Ali, 2024).

3. Methodology
3.1 Bibliometric approach
The bibliometric approach is a quantitative research method that utilizes science mapping techniques to analyze patterns and trends within bibliographic databases (Donthu *et al*., 2021). It has emerged as a popular review approach complementing systematic review and meta-analysis by incorporating the quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single analysis (Zupic and Čater, 2015). Past studies have adopted bibliometric analysis covering various areas, including finance (Khan *et al*., 2022), knowledge management (Farooq, 2023), information systems (İyibildiren *et al*., 2023) and pro-environmental behavior (Zulkepeli *et al*., 2024). More recent topics include big data analytics in human resources (Fauzi *et al*., 2023a, b) and Industry 4.0 in supply chain management (Jetty and Afshan, 2025).

The bibliometric method comprises performance analysis and science mapping (Noyons *et al*., 1999). The former is based on publication output and citations, measuring the impact on research constituents such as author, institution, country and journals. In comparison, the latter evaluates the literature structure based on the relationship between the research constituents. Science mapping has become a popular approach in recent years, contributing to its visualization function in mapping past studies' performance and content analysis (Linnenluecke *et al*., 2020). To meet the objective of this study, two science mapping analyses, bibliographic coupling and co-word analysis, are applied. The VOSviewer version 1.6.18 was used as a visualization tool to map the network on the subject as an effective tool for map visualization (Moral-Muñoz *et al*., 2020). To achieve the aim of this study, covering the emerging and future trends on the subject, this study applies the following science mapping analysis:

(1) Bibliographic coupling analysis: This technique assumes that two publications sharing the same references possess similar themes (Rojas-Lamorena *et al*., 2022). It simply evaluates that when two publications share the same ten publications, they are said to have a bibliographic strength of ten. This approach allows researchers to reflect on the most current streams of scientific output of a field that has not had a significant impact yet (Bretas and Alon, 2021).

(2) Co-word analysis: Co-word analysis assumes that the interactions between keywords that co-occur in the title, abstract and keywords represent the future trends of a specific field (Zupic and Cater, 2015). Words frequently used together in bibliographic databases form a thematic relationship among them (Donthu *et al*., 2021). This analysis predicts the future trends of a field.

3.2 Research design and data collection procedure
The following search string (Table 1) was used to locate publications containing relevant keywords. The keywords comprise leader, supervisor, manager and voice behavior within the tourism and hospitality context. The topic search (TS) was employed in the WoS core

Table 1. Search string in WoS database

| No	Keywords	Justification
1	"leader*" OR "supervis*" OR "manager*"	To identify literature related to small and medium firms
2	"voice behav*r*"	To identify literature related to enterprise

Source(s): Authors' own

collection database to retrieve relevant articles on the subject. Only journal publications were included in the study, while other less rigorous sources, such as conference proceedings, books, book chapters and editorials, were excluded. Other publications were excluded to maintain homogeneity in the database and to ensure that only rigorous peer-reviewed publications were included. A similar approach has been used for the same reason in past bibliometric publications (Zulkepeli *et al.*, 2024; Fauzi *et al.*, 2023a, b; Lu *et al.*, 2023). There was no period restriction on the topic. It can be seen that the earliest publication emerged in 2011. No language restriction was applied.

4. Results
The search in WoS was performed on 31st May 2025. The initial document was 797. After limiting to only journal publication, 746 were finalized. The number of citations was 23,226 and 18,719 (without self-citations). The average citations were 31.13, with an h-index of 73. The number of publications and citations is shown in Figure 1. The first study emerged in 1998, but did not gain significant numbers in the coming years. Studies emerged again in 2001 and only picked up momentum in 2004. Since then, the numbers have increased significantly and shown an inclining trend until they peaked in 2024. The number of publication is expected to increase in the future, considering the crucially impact of leadership and voice behavior in organizations.

4.1 Bibliographic coupling
From the 746 documents, 50 met a threshold of 93 minimum citations. The threshold level was tested several times to ensure its suitability in creating a robust network map. The threshold
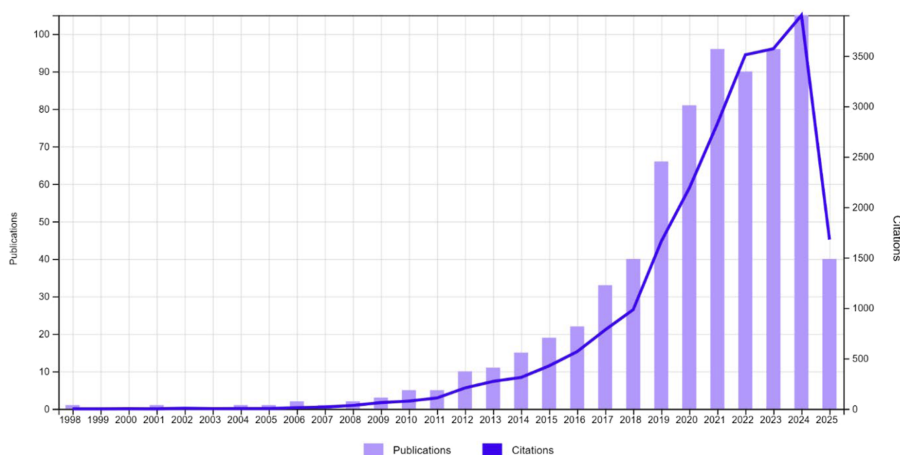
Figure 1. Number of publications and citations on leadership and voice behavior. Source: Web of Science

should not be too high or too low, causing over filtering and under filtering, respectively (Fauzi *et al.*, 2025; Geng *et al.*, 2020). Since bibliographic coupling depends on the relationship between citing documents, the value of concern is the total link strength (TLS), depicting the strength of the bibliographic network of the citing documents. Documents with the highest bibliographic links are Chiaburu *et al.* (2013) (476 TLS), Liu *et al.* (2017) (438 TLS) and Liang *et al.* (2012) (356 TLS). Table 2 presents the top 10 documents and their scope of studies.

Figure 2 presents the network visualization of co-citation analysis. The four clusters are visibly independent of one another.

(1) Cluster 1 (red): fundamental of employee voice behavior in tourism and hospitality

Table 2. Top 10 documents in bibliographic coupling analysis

| Rank	Author	Scope	Citation	TLS
1	Chiaburu *et al.* (2013)	Employees' and change-oriented citizenship in social context	127	476
2	Liu *et al.* (2017)	Leadership and employee upward voice behavior	193	438
3	Liang *et al.* (2012)	Two-wave examination of promotive and prohibitive voice based on psychological antecedents	1,096	356
4	Chen and Hou (2016)	Innovation on creativity climate: Impact of leadership and voice behavior	344	340
5	Burris *et al.* (2008)	Psychological attachment and voice behavior	409	328
6	Li and Sun (2015)	Employee voice behavior and Chinese leadership	160	316
7	Duan *et al.* (2017)	Transformational leadership and employee voice behavior	59	315
8	Takeuchi *et al.* (2012)	Employee voice behavior and uncertainty management theory	105	314
9	Hsiung (2012)	Employee voice behavior and authentic leadership	210	313
10	Xu *et al.* (2019)	Employee voice behavior based on signaling theory	104	309

Source(s): Authors' own
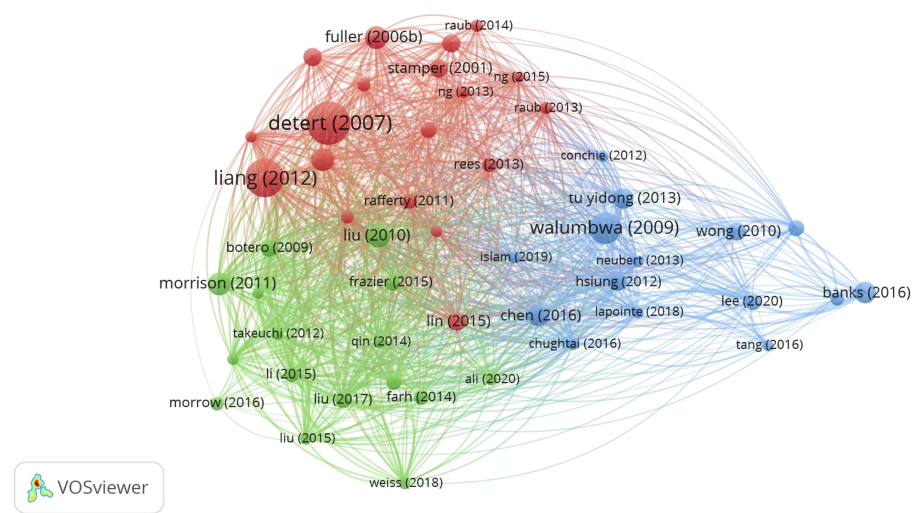
Figure 2. Bibliographic coupling of leadership and voice behavior

Employee voice behavior in the tourism and hospitality sector is shaped by a complex interplay of individual, relational and organizational factors. Detert and Burris (2007) studied on managerial openness and transformational leadership significantly influences frontline employees' willingness to speak up, which is especially critical in service-driven industries where customer experiences rely heavily on employee input. Apart from leadership influence, Crant *et al*. (2011) emphasized the role of personality, suggesting that proactive employees in tourism firm are likely to share ideas for service improvement and guest satisfaction. The combination of effective leadership and proactive personality, particularly dimensions of the five-factor model of personality, strongly predicts voice behavior. Furthermore, Rees *et al*. (2013) discovered that employees' voice behavior is mediated by trust in senior management and the quality of employee-line manager relationship as an essential factor in hospitality workplaces where strong team cohesion and trust-based communication result in effective service delivery.

(2) Cluster 2 (green): determinants of employee voice behavior in tourism and hospitality

Recent studies have highlighted leadership's critical role in shaping employee voice behavior, which is particularly relevant in the tourism and hospitality industry where service quality depends on open communication and feedback. Liu *et al*. (2017) found that leaders' positive affect influences employees' voice behavior, mediated through employees' psychological safety and their positive emotions. Venkataramani *et al*. (2016), who studied employees within team settings, discovered that team leaders' position in informal networks plays crucial role in ensuring the employee workflow centrality–voice relationship. This is highly applicable in hospitality teams such as front desk, kitchen staff and housekeeping, where leaders who occupy a central position in leadership can foster greater openness and communication, encouraging staff to raise service and operational related concerns. Weiss *et al*. (2018) further examined how leaders' language impact voice behavior. The use of inclusive "we" references promotes in-group and out-group voice behavior. In tourism and hospitality, when supervisors frame feedback in collective terms, employees are more likely to engage in constructive voice behaviors, strengthening team cohesion and service innovation.

(3) Cluster 3 (blue): servant, authentic and ethical leadership in tourism and hospitality

In the tourism and hospitality sector, servant, authentic and ethical leadership styles play a vital role in shaping employees' voice behavior, directly affecting service quality and guest satisfaction. Lapointe and Vandenberghe (2018) found a mediating impact of affective commitment between servant leadership and voice behaviors. In hospitality settings, this finding implies that when hotel managers prioritize the needs of their staff, employees become more emotionally committed and willing to share ideas to enhance service delivery. In their meta-analysis, Lee *et al*. (2020) discovered several positive behaviors of servant leadership including voice behavior. Servant leaders encourage followers to believe they possess the knowledge, skills and abilities to meet personal and others' needs by improving work situations. By empowering staff to recognize their own knowledge, skills and abilities, servant leaders encourage frontline hospitality workers to proactively suggest ways to improve guest experiences and work conditions. Similarly, Chughtai (2016) found that psychological safety and organizational identification mediate the relationship between servant leadership on voice and negative feedback seeking. This is especially relevant in hospitality, where employees who strongly identify with the organization and feel safe from retaliation are more likely to propose service innovations or raise operational concerns. Another leadership trait in this cluster is ethical leadership. This leadership style comprises attributes such as honesty, care, trustworthiness and fairness. Chen and Hou (2016) revealed a positive influence of ethical leadership and employees' voice behavior and its impact on individual creativity via voice behavior, an outcome valuable for hospitality firms seeking to differentiate their guest experience. Islam *et al*. (2019) discovered that ethical leadership exerts significant impact on

voice behavior and organizational identification, while negative impact on poor working conditions and bullying at the workplace. In hospitality environments, where long working hours and high-pressure service contexts are common, ethical leadership can foster a healthier workplace culture.

The following Table 3 presents the summary of the bibliographic coupling analysis with cluster number and color, labels, number of publications and representative publications.

Employee voice behavior emerges as a multidimensional construct shaped by individual characteristics, workplace relationships and leadership approaches. The foundational studies (Cluster 1) emphasize that proactive personalities and trust between leader and follower create the psychological foundation for speaking up. However, these traits only translate into voice when supported by open and transformational leadership. Building on this, cluster 2 highlights that leaders' emotional tone, structural positioning within social networks and language use are critical mechanisms that activate psychological safety and group identification, suggesting that voice is not merely dyadic but socially embedded. Cluster 3 extends the analysis by underscoring the role of value-driven leadership, servant, authentic and ethical styles in promoting voice within organizational culture. In summary, these clusters reveal that employee voice is best understood as the product of an interplay between foundations (personality and trust), mechanisms (emotions, networks, communication) and values (ethics and service-oriented leadership), suggesting that organizations seeking to foster voice climates must integrate structural, relational and moral dimensions of leadership.

4.2 Co-word analysis

Applying the same database, the co-word analysis presents 41 out of 2,602 keywords meeting the threshold of a minimum number of occurrences of 42. Table 4 presents the highest co-occurred keywords. The most significant keywords are voice behavior (276 occurrences), performance (256 occurrences) and employee voice (254 occurrences). These keywords show that the research streams on employee voice behavior and leadership revolves around the generic leadership and specific types of leadership, like the transformational and ethical leadership. The top 15 keywords are presented in Table 4 based on the highest co-occurrence.

Figure 3 presents the network structure of the co-word analysis. It visibly shows three clusters representing three different themes. Following the author's inductive interpretation, the three clusters are assigned the appropriate labels.

(1) Cluster 1 (red): leadership styles and employee motivation to speak up

(2) This cluster discusses how leadership style motivates employees to speak up by influencing their psychological empowerment, self-efficacy and creativity, factors essential in the tourism and hospitality industry, where service innovation and guest satisfaction rely heavily on employee input. Studies have shown that employees are

Table 3. Bibliographic coupling analysis on leadership and voice behavior

Cluster No and color	Cluster label	Number of publications	Representative publication
1 (red)	Fundamental of employee voice behavior	19	Detert and Burris (2007), Crant *et al.* (2011), Rees *et al.* (2013
2 (green)	Determinants of employee voice behavior	16	Weiss *et al.* (2018) Liu *et al.* (2017)
3 (blue)	Servant, authentic and ethical leadership	15	Lee *et al.* (2020), Lapointe and Vandenberghe (2018)
Source(s): Authors' own			

Table 4. Top 15 keywords in the co-occurrence of keywords analysis

Rank	Keyword	Occurrences	TLS
1	Voice behavior	276	1,319
2	Performance	256	1,333
3	Employee voice	254	1,202
4	Antecedents	182	972
5	Work	180	932
6	Transformational leadership	151	832
7	Mediating role	143	771
8	Leadership	140	665
9	Model	132	655
10	Ethical leadership	127	706
11	Behavior	125	619
12	Moderating role	106	574
13	Psychological safety	105	578
14	Voice	104	490
15	Prohibitive voice	100	487

Source(s): Authors' own
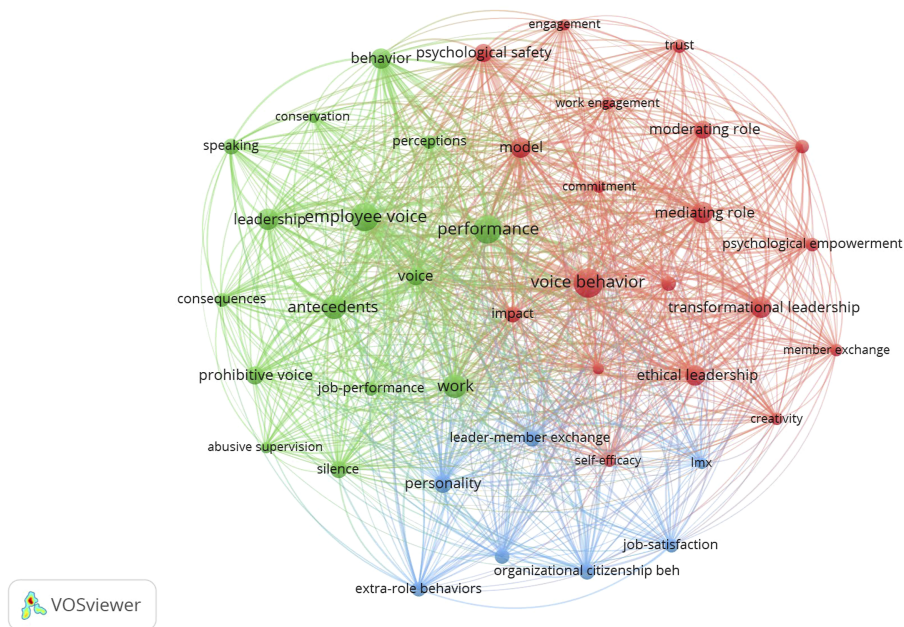
Figure 3. Co-word analysis on leadership and voice behavior

not inclined to speak up with ideas, suggestions and opinions unless they are motivated to do so (Jolly and Lee, 2021). It was found that an inclusive leader is found to influences followers' need for competence and relatedness, which are crucial in a service-driven context. In hotels or restaurants, when managers show inclusivity by actively listening to staff and valuing their contributions, employees are likely to propose ideas for improving guest experiences. Tarkang *et al.* (2022) revealed that leaders' interactive behavior positively influences followers' engagement,

stimulating their positive voice behavior and innovativeness. Peng and Chen (2022) examined the impact of traditional Chinese leadership on employee's voice behavior. The finding shows that benevolent leadership and paternalistic leadership exert positive impact on voice behavior, while authoritative leadership had a negative relationship. In the tourism and hospitality sector, where cultural diversity is common, this finding suggests that leadership styles rooted in care, respect and guidance can encourage employees to raise valuable service-related suggestions, while authoritarian approaches may silence staff, hindering innovation and service quality.

(3) Cluster 2 (green): impact of leadership and employee voice on performance

Leadership plays a crucial role in employee voice behavior, leading to a significant impact on individual and organizational performance in the tourism and hospitality industry. Trust in leaders was found to influence employees' motivation and proactivity to speak up. Hao and Han (2022) emphasized that trustworthy leaders catalyze stronger voice behavior. To enhance employees' voice behavior at the workplace, leaders should gain trust to proactive employees by exhibiting trustworthiness and granting trust from less proactive employees. Hwang *et al.* (2023) found that coaching leadership influences employees' creative performance, mediated by constructive voice behavior. Within hotels, restaurants or tour operations, coaching leaders who provide guidance and feedback create an environment where employees feel empowered to suggest service improvements, such as new guest interaction techniques that elevate overall performance. Similarly, Ajmal *et al.* (2025) discovered that ambidextrous leadership fosters employees' innovative work behavior, with voice behavior serving as a key mediator. Encouraging voice behavior aligned with moral values foster innovativeness, ultimately enhancing customer satisfaction and organizational competitiveness in a service-driven market.

(4) Cluster 3 (blue): leader-member exchange and voice behavior

(5) Leader-member exchange (LMX) has become a crucial determinant influencing employees' engagement in voice behavior. Recent findings highlight the positive outcome of the leader–subordinate relationship, which acts as a critical mediator and moderator in organizational contexts. For instance, Sharif *et al.* (2024) discovered that transformational leadership and the LMX as a mediator strongly influence employee voice behavior. Based on the cultural value orientation, Lu and Gursoy (2024) found that LMX strengthens the relationships between collectivism, orientation and uncertainty avoidance on employee promotive and prohibitive voice behavior. Furthermore, Assefa *et al.* (2024) identified a significant direct and indirect influence of LMX and perceived organizational justice on employees' voice behavior. When their organization is perceived to be fair, they form positive relationships with their leaders, leading to greater voice behavior. In the tourism and hospitality industry, strong LMX fosters a supportive environment where employees feel confident speaking up about guest concerns, service improvements and innovative practices. For instance, hotel employees with high-quality exchanges with supervisors will likely suggest solutions to enhance guest experiences and proactively address service failures. The tourism and hospitality workplace is highly diverse, where LMX would facilitate cross-cultural communication and help employee's voice concerns and suggestions to their supervisors and management.

A summary of the co-word analysis is presented in Table 5, comprising cluster number and color, cluster labels, number of keywords and representative keywords.

5. Discussion and conclusions
5.1 Conclusions
The study maps the intellectual structure, thematic focus, influential authors, key journals and collaboration patterns within the field by analyzing peer-reviewed journal publications

Table 5. Summary of co-word analysis on leadership and voice behavior

Cluster No and color	Cluster label	Number of keywords	Representative keywords
1 (red)	Leadership Styles and Employee Motivation to Speak Up	19	Voice behavior, transformational leadership, ethical leadership, psychological empowerment, member exchange, creativity, self-efficacy
2 (green)	Impact of leadership and employee voice on performance	15	Employee voice, antecedents, performance, leadership, work, consequence
3 (blue)	Leader-Member Exchange and Voice Behavior	7	Leader-member exchange, personality, organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, extra-role behaviors

Source(s): Authors' own

retrieved from the Web of Science Core Collection. The findings confirm the growing academic interest in understanding how different leadership approaches influence employee voice behavior, offer suggestions and contribute to organizational improvement. The study highlights the central role of leadership in creating psychologically safe environments where voice behavior can thrive, emphasizing the need for relational, empowering and ethical leadership styles. It also reveals the dominance of specific theoretical perspectives, the clustering of research around key themes and the emergence of interdisciplinary collaborations. Despite its contributions, the study acknowledges methodological limitations regarding database selection, exclusion criteria and keyword sensitivity. These limitations open avenues for future research to adopt broader data sources, integrate alternative publication types and apply complementary methodological tools.

5.2 Theoretical implications
The study contributes to SET in several important ways. First, it reinforces the value of SET as a comprehensive and reliable framework for explaining workplace dynamics, particularly how reciprocal relational exchanges between leaders and employees shape discretionary behaviors such as voice. By conceptualizing leadership as a key catalyst for initiating and sustaining social exchange relationships, the study underscores that employee engagement is fundamentally rooted in reciprocity. When employees perceive their leaders as supportive, fair, empowering and responsive, they feel compelled to reciprocate by exhibiting constructive voice behaviors that contribute to organizational improvement and effectiveness (Zhang *et al.*, 2022). Second, the findings highlight the psychological processes, such as trust, felt obligation and mutual respect that mediate the relationship between leadership and employee behaviors. This enriches leadership theory by demonstrating that the influence of leadership extends beyond inherent traits or leadership styles. Instead, leadership effectiveness is deeply tied to the quality of interpersonal exchanges it fosters, emphasizing the relational rather than the purely structural or positional aspect of leadership (Khan *et al.*, 2024). Third, the study advances the literature on employee voice by positioning voice as a contextually driven behavior rather than solely an outcome of individual dispositions such as proactivity, courage or self-efficacy. It argues that employees' willingness to speak up is highly responsive to social cues rooted in leader–subordinate exchange, thereby highlighting the situational and relational contingencies that shape voice behaviors (Memon and Ghani, 2020). Finally, by establishing a relational link between leadership and voice behavior, the study encourages scholars to further explore how different leadership approaches, such as transformational, ethical, servant or inclusive leadership, vary in their capacity to cultivate positive social exchange relationships that motivate employees to speak up. This relational lens not only broadens the theoretical

understanding of voice but also provides a foundation for comparing leadership philosophies in terms of their effectiveness in stimulating constructive upward communication.

5.3 Practical implications

The findings of the current study provide valuable practical implications for managers in hospitality and tourism sector. First, fostering employee voice is a strategic necessity in today's competitive hospitality and tourism landscape, where innovation, responsiveness to customer needs and continuous improvement are crucial for sustaining competitiveness. This study highlights the critical role of leadership in cultivating conditions that encourage employees to share constructive suggestions and feedback (Lee *et al.*, 2023). Second, the findings suggest that traditional command-and-control leadership approaches are increasingly ineffective in this context. Instead, leaders should adopt ethical, empowering and participatory styles that make employees feel valued and heard. Employees are more likely to raise concerns and offer constructive input when they perceive their leaders as approachable, fair, and responsive. Therefore, organizations should invest in leadership development programs emphasizing psychological safety, emotional intelligence, active listening and feedback-seeking behaviors and strengthening voice behavior (Safrizal *et al.*, 2020). Third, leadership practices that promote employee voice should not remain isolated to individual leaders but must be embedded within the broader organizational culture. HR professionals can play a pivotal role by incorporating voice-supportive leadership behaviors into training programs, promotion criteria and performance appraisal systems (Sisson and Roberts, 2023). By institutionalizing these practices, hospitality and tourism organizations can create a consistent, organization-wide environment where employees feel respected and empowered to contribute openly. Fourth, the hospitality and tourism industry is characterized by high levels of dynamism and vulnerability to crises, making employee voice even more critical. Employees often serve as the first point of contact with customers and are well-positioned to detect service inefficiencies, ethical risks or emerging challenges. Leadership styles that stifle voice risk silencing this vital information, which may result in operational shortcomings or missed opportunities. Conversely, encouraging upward communication enhances organizational resilience and boosts employee engagement and reduces turnover, as workers are more inclined to remain in workplaces where their input is valued and acted upon (Mahran *et al.*, 2025). Finally, these insights extend beyond organizational boundaries, offering guidance to policymakers and industry consultants. At micro (team and individual) and macro (organizational and sectorial) levels, leadership audits, climate surveys and 360-degree feedback mechanisms can help identify and address gaps in voice-supportive behaviors. Leadership in the hospitality and tourism sector must go beyond directing tasks to building trust-based relationships that encourage employees to actively participate in shaping organizational outcomes.

5.4 Limitations and future research avenues

This study has limitations, even though it offers insightful information about the state of leadership and employee voice behavior research. First, the bibliometric analysis only used the topic search feature of the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection. Despite being a reliable and popular database, WoS's sole dependence on one source may restrict how thorough the retrieved literature can be. The analysis's breadth and diversity may have been limited if pertinent studies in other databases, like Scopus, PubMed or Google Scholar, had gone unnoticed. Second, the study purposefully excluded other types of scholarly output, including books, dissertations, editorials, conference proceedings and book chapters, in favor of concentrating only on journal publications. Although this method made sure that only rigorous, peer-reviewed literature was included, it might have left out new or interdisciplinary viewpoints that are frequently offered in different formats. As a result, the results might not accurately reflect new or early-stage studies that have not yet been accepted for publication in

prestigious journals. Moreover, topic search may have unintentionally overlooked studies that were pertinent to the theme but employed different terminologies or theoretical frameworks, even though it was successful in locating literature with specific keywords in titles, abstracts and keywords. This might lead to an incomplete portrayal of the field, especially in an area as conceptually diverse as employee voice behavior and leadership.

Future research can overcome these constraints by broadening the range of data sources to include numerous scholarly databases and grey literature. Understanding new trends and interdisciplinary contributions could be enhanced by including conference proceedings and book chapters, particularly those published by prestigious academic associations. Furthermore, to find studies with conceptual relevance but no direct keyword matches, future bibliometric or systematic reviews may use sophisticated search techniques like full-text search or citation chaining. Moreover, future studies may explore comparative bibliometric analyses across regions, sectors or leadership styles to uncover contextual nuances in how leadership impacts voice behavior. Integrating qualitative and quantitative content analysis with bibliometric techniques can also provide deeper theoretical and practical insights. As the field evolves, longitudinal mapping of research trends and collaboration networks can help identify future directions and emerging research frontiers. Future studies could expand specific leadership types with employees' voice behavior. For instance, in non-Western contexts, servant and ethical leadership demonstrate particularly strong relevance due to cultural values emphasizing collectivism, respect and community well-being. For instance, studies in Asian contexts, such as China and Malaysia, suggest that servant leadership enhances employees' psychological safety and willingness to express constructive voice because leaders are viewed as moral role models who prioritize group harmony and shared responsibility (e.g. Liden *et al.*, 2015; Eva *et al.*, 2019). In South Asia, ethical leadership has been linked to employees' increased voice behavior as it aligns with cultural expectations of fairness and moral conduct within hierarchical organizations (Islam *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, servant leadership in Middle Eastern settings has been found to mitigate power distance by fostering trust and empowerment, encouraging employees to speak up despite strong hierarchical traditions (Bilal *et al.*, 2021).

Ethical approval

Ethical approval was not required for this study as it involved only secondary data obtained from publicly available databases and did not include any human participants or confidential information.

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