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Transformational leadership and employee performance: The role of identification, engagement and proactive personality

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the underlying mechanisms and boundary conditions that explain the relationship between transformational leadership and frontline employee performance. Specifically, it explores the mediating role of organizational identification and work engagement in the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance and organization-directed citizenship behaviors. Additionally, it examines whether proactive personality moderates the effect of transformational leadership on identification and engagement. Data from 323 frontline hotel employees were analyzed using partial least square regression. Results show that identification and engagement fully mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational citizenship behaviors, whereas engagement partially mediates the link between transformational leadership and job performance. Results indicate a sequential mediation effect of identification and engagement on employee performance. Finally, findings show that proactive personality strengthens the effect of leadership on identification and engagement. The study provides information for hotel managers about why and under what circumstances employees perform the way they do.

1. Introduction

Due to the importance of frontline employee performance in the competitive hospitality industry, scholars and practitioners have long tried to determine its predictors. Among the different variables investigated in the literature, previous research widely identifies supervisory behavior as playing a key role in affecting the performance of frontline employees. In service- and people-oriented businesses, such as the hospitality industry, the success of an organization largely depends on the role of managers (Terglav et al., 2016), as they influence employees' emotions, attitudes and behaviors (Avolio et al., 2004) and the way they interact with customers (Wallace et al., 2013). Specifically, transformational leadership, defined as a "style of leadership that transforms followers to rise above their self-interest by altering their morale, ideals, interests, and values, motivating them to perform better than initially expected" (Pieterse et al., 2010, p. 610), is currently the most widely accepted paradigm in the leadership literature (Judge and Piccolo, 2004).

Prior studies in the transformational leadership area provide empirical evidence of the positive effects of this variable on frontline employee performance (Fuller et al., 1996; Judge and Piccolo, 2004;

Lowe et al., 1996). However, further research is needed regarding the specific mechanisms by which these effects occur, and the boundary conditions under which transformational leadership improves employee performance (Holten et al., 2018; Pan and Lin, 2015; Patiar and Wang, 2016). Therefore, this research aims to provide new insights into why and under what circumstances transformational leadership enhances the performance of frontline employees, including job performance and organizational citizenship behaviors directed at the organization (OCBO), in the context of the tourism and hospitality industry.

In response to these calls for further research, this study draws on social identity theory (SIT) and social exchange theory (SET) to explore the mediating role played by the psychological relationship between the employee and the organization, in terms of the employee's organizational identification and work engagement. Under SIT, organizational identification is a form of social identification "where the individual defines him or herself in terms of their membership in a particular organization" (Mael and Ashforth, 1992, p. 105). Although many researchers underline the importance of this psychological bond, as Tse and Chiu (2014) posit, few studies have investigated how the identity orientations of followers influence the impact of transformational leadership. Hence, it is critical to understand how employees'

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perceptions of belongingness to the organization may mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and frontline employee performance (i.e. job performance and OCBO). Drawing on SET (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005), we further explore the mediating role of work engagement. Work engagement reflects “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). Researchers and practitioners have stressed the importance of this variable in the success of service organizations (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008; Slåtten and Mehmetoglu, 2011); however, recent calls highlight the need to further explore the role of work engagement in the hospitality literature (Karatepe and Olugbade, 2016; Lee and Ok, 2016). Therefore, this study also explores whether transformational leadership affects followers’ performance and makes them go above and beyond their roles by enhancing their level of engagement. Furthermore, we investigate whether the relationship between transformational leadership and performance might be sequentially mediated by both organizational identification and work engagement.

In addition, this study investigates the boundary conditions that may moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and employees’ organizational identification and work engagement. Although managers and their leadership styles are key determinants of employee performance, individual frontline employees’ characteristics, such as their personality traits, are also relevant in shaping their attitudes and influencing followers’ behaviors. Previous research has identified proactive personality as one of the most important personality traits that fosters employees’ in-role and extra-role behaviors (e.g., Bakker et al., 2012; Bergeron et al., 2014; Crant, 2000; Fuller and Marler, 2009; Thomas et al., 2010). Extant research also shows that this trait “explains unique variance in criteria over and above that accounted for by the Big Five personality factors” (Bakker et al., 2012, p. 1360). Nevertheless, little is known about whether this personality trait, defined as a “stable disposition to take personal initiative in a broad range of activities and situations” (Seibert et al., 2001, p. 847), strengthens the influence of transformational leadership on the mediating variables explored in this study. Thus, given this limited evidence, this study examines whether proactive personality moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and employees’ organizational identification and work engagement.

This study provides several contributions to the academic literature and to managerial practice. First, it responds to calls for more research examining the intervening mechanisms that explain how transformational leadership might affect employee performance (Pan and Lin, 2015; Patiar and Wang, 2016). In particular, it investigates the mediating effects of two mechanisms: organizational identification and work engagement. Second, as noted by Walumbwa and Hartnell (2011), limited research has explored whether multiple mediators sequentially mediate the effects of transformational leadership on employee performance. Therefore, to address this gap, this research also examines whether both organizational identification and work engagement sequentially mediate this relationship. In sum, by investigating these mediation effects in a single study, this research offers valuable and useful insights into the transformational leadership literature. Third, as recently noted by Lu et al. (2018, p. 187), “in current organizational and management research, one of the main missions is to delineate boundary conditions of a certain theory or studied phenomenon.” Previous research in the leadership area has advocated the investigation of how personality traits influence followers’ perceptions and responses to different leadership styles (Antonakis et al., 2012; Zaccaro, 2012). However, to our knowledge, no previous studies have investigated whether proactive personality amplifies the effects of transformational leadership. Therefore, by examining the moderating role of proactive personality, this research enriches our understanding of the conditions

under which transformational leadership influences employee performance. Finally, the results of this study allow organizations in the hospitality industry to gain insights into why and under what circumstances employees perform the way they do, enabling them to make informed decisions on their human resource management strategies.

2. Literature review and research hypotheses

2.1. The effect of transformational leadership on job performance and OCBO

Transformational leadership refers to an approach by which leaders motivate followers to identify with organizational goals and interests and to perform beyond expectations. Transformational leadership plays a critical role in causing changes necessary for effective management. As suggested by Kim (2014, p. 398), “transformational leaders have the ability to transform organizations through their vision for the future, and by clarifying their vision, they can empower the employees to take responsibility for achieving that vision.” These leaders typically display four different behaviors: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985, 1990). Briefly, idealized influence, or “charisma,” refers to leaders that demonstrate high standards of moral and ethical conduct. They are confident, are held in high personal regard and act as strong role models for followers. Inspirational motivation involves energizing followers by articulating a motivational and exciting vision. Transformational leaders inspire followers to share a vision and empower them to achieve it. Intellectual stimulation refers to leaders that encourage followers’ creativity, presenting challenging new ideas and different ways to solve problems. Finally, individualized consideration involves paying attention to followers’ individual needs for achievement and growth, as well as providing coaching and mentoring.

Prior research has linked transformational leadership to different organizational outcomes. In this study, we focus on two performance outcomes: job performance and OCBO. Job performance is an important organizational benefit that derives from transformational leadership. Babin and Boles (1998, p. 82) define this construct as “the level of productivity of an individual employee, relative to his or her peers, on several job-related behaviors and outcomes.” Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) represents “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly recognized by the formal reward system, and in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization” (Organ, 1988, p. 4). In particular, this study explores OCBOs (Williams and Anderson, 1991), behaviors that benefit the organization in general. OCBOs positively relate to different organizational effectiveness measures, such as productivity and profitability and customer satisfaction (Podsakoff et al., 2009). Therefore, it is important to explore these behaviors in the hospitality industry.

Transformational leadership is one of the more effective leadership styles for encouraging positive in-role and extra-role behaviors from employees (MacKenzie et al., 2001). As noted earlier, transformational leaders: encourage followers to rise above their own self-interest; provide feedback; establish high standards of performance; help followers to become more creative and innovative; and pay attention to followers’ needs (Bass, 1985; Yukl, 1999). They also “motivate followers to achieve performance beyond expectations by transforming followers’ attitudes, beliefs, and values” (Rafferty and Griffin, 2004). As a result, transformational leaders can improve employee performance and encourage OCBO. Several meta-analyses have provided evidence for these positive effects (Fuller et al., 1996; Judge and Piccolo, 2004; Lowe et al., 1996). For instance, Judge and Piccolo’s (2004) meta-analysis reported that transformational leadership positively correlated with group and organizational performance. Likewise, Piccolo and Colquitt

(2006) concluded that this leadership style enhances both follower task performance and OCB. Therefore, based on both theoretical and empirical evidence, we propose:

H1. Transformational leadership has a positive effect on job performance of frontline employees in the hospitality industry.

H2. Transformational leadership has a positive effect on OCBO of frontline employees in the hospitality industry.

2.2. The mediating role of organizational identification

Drawing on SIT, Ashforth and Mael (1989, p. 34) conceptualized identification as the “perception of oneness with or belongingness to a group.” More specifically, organizational identification is defined as “the degree to which a member defines him- or herself by the same attributes that he or she believes define the organization” (Dutton et al., 1994, p. 239). Organizational identification implies a psychological merging of self and organization (Van Knippenberg and Sleebos, 2006). When identification is strong, the individual’s self-concept incorporates a large part of what they believe is unique, central and permanent about the organization (Dutton et al., 1994). Likewise, the greater the identification, the more an employee will act in accordance with group norms and organizational values and goals (van Knippenberg, 2000).

In this study, we posit that organizational identification is one of the main mechanisms by which transformational leaders influence employees’ job performance and OCBO. Transformational leadership has been argued to affect followers’ identification with a group (Tse and Chiu, 2014) and relational identification (Liang et al., 2017), which is “the extent to which an individual defines himself or herself in terms of the leader–subordinate role relationship” (Sluss and Ashforth, 2007, p. 32). Interestingly, a review of empirical studies by Van Knippenberg et al. (2004) describes the importance of the self-concept and identity constructs to the understanding of how leadership influences followers’ behaviors. Transformational leaders change followers’ views of themselves and build social identification. These leaders connect followers with the objectives and mission of the organization. As noted by Bass (1985, 1990), transformational leaders focus on employees’ needs and individual development, act as mentors and motivate employees to transcend their self-interest in the interest of the organization. This leadership style is also characterized by the inspiring vision of the supervisor, which enhances employees’ pride and attachment to the organization. As such, in line with previous empirical studies that provide evidence of the relationship between transformational leadership and employees’ identification with their organization (Epitropaki and Martin, 2005; Kark et al., 2003) or work unit (Walumbwa et al., 2008), we expect that transformational leadership enhances organizational identification.

Organizational identification, in turn, will positively predict job performance and OCBO, for two reasons. First, employees who strongly identify with their organizations have positive attitudes toward them (Dutton et al., 1994). SIT states that the perception of oneness with, or belongingness to, a group such as an organization arises in part to increase self-esteem (Hogg and Turner, 1985; Tajfel, 1978). In this sense, higher levels of self-esteem may result in greater employee efforts (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Identification also motivates employees to act in support of the organization’s interests (van Dick et al., 2008). In sum, these greater efforts and motivation help employees to focus more effectively on their tasks and increase their individual performance (Walumbwa et al., 2008, 2011). Previous research has shown that employees’ identification relates to outcomes such as in-role behavior and job performance (Riketta, 2005; Riketta and Van Dick, 2005; Smidts et al., 2001; Walumbwa et al., 2008, 2011). Second, individuals who perceive themselves as belonging to an organization see the collective’s interests as self-interest, which motivates behaviors in support of the collective (Tse and Chiu, 2014; Van Dick et al., 2008; Van Knippenberg, 2000). As noted by Van Dick et al. (2006), employees who identify more with their organizations are more likely to engage in

behaviors that go beyond basic role prescriptions. More recently, Zhang et al. (2017) found a positive relationship between organizational identification and supervisor-rated OCB, including individual OCB, OCB directed to co-workers and OCBO. Thus, based on the above arguments, we expect organizational identification to mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance and OCBO. Therefore, we postulate:

H3. Organizational identification positively mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance of frontline employees in the hospitality industry.

H4. Organizational identification positively mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and OCBO of frontline employees in the hospitality industry.

2.3. The mediating role of work engagement

Work engagement has received increasing research interest in recent decades and it remains an extremely relevant and contemporary topic (Karatepe and Karadas, 2015). The construct of work engagement is composed of vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Briefly, vigor refers to employees experiencing “high levels of energy and mental resilience while working” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). Dedication involves “a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge” at work (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). Absorption is characterized by being “fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 75).

We propose that work engagement plays a mediating role between transformational leadership and job performance and OCBO. Extant research suggests a positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement (e.g. Macey and Schneider, 2008). As noted earlier, transformational leaders inspire and intellectually stimulate their employees. They also use ideals and show individualized consideration by paying attention to their employees’ needs (Bass, 1990). Based on SET, frontline employees may feel obliged to repay these behaviors with higher levels of engagement. Previous empirical studies support this relationship (e.g. Salanova et al., 2011; Zhu et al., 2009). In their diary studies, Tims et al. (2011) and Breevaart et al. (2014) found a positive relationship between daily fluctuations in transformational leadership and employees’ daily work engagement. Similarly, Ghadi et al. (2013) and Kopperud et al. (2014) confirmed that transformational leadership positively influences the level of employees’ work engagement.

We also argue that engaged employees perform better and demonstrate OCBO. When employees are engaged they dedicate their resources (e.g. cognitive, emotional and physical) to work roles, thereby contributing to organizational goals (Rich et al., 2010). Thus, engaged employees “work with greater intensity on their tasks for longer periods of time, they pay more attention to and are more focused on responsibilities, and they are more emotionally connected to the tasks that constitute their role” (Rich et al., 2010, p. 620). Therefore, it is more likely that they will positively respond to customer requests and display better job performance. Previous empirical studies suggest that work engagement positively relates to employee performance (e.g. Bakker et al., 2012; Halbesleben and Wheeler, 2008; Rich et al., 2010), including in the hospitality industry (Karatepe, 2013; Karatepe et al., 2014). Citizenship behaviors may also result from work engagement (e.g., Alfes et al., 2013; Babcock-Roberson and Strickland, 2010; Rich et al., 2010). As posited earlier, work engagement implies that employees are physically, cognitively and affectively connected with their workplace (Rich et al., 2010). Engaged employees perform better than nonengaged employees because they display positive emotions (e.g. enthusiasm, joy and happiness) and experience better health (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008). Saks (2006) also suggested that when employees are engaged they have higher trust in their organizations and a better relationship with their employers. Therefore, as these individuals are

more likely to invest themselves in their work, it is to be expected that they will find it worthwhile to make extra effort and exhibit behaviors beyond their job description (Rich et al., 2010). In sum, based on the above reasoning, we propose that work engagement mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance and OCBO. Thus, we postulate:

H5. Work engagement positively mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance of frontline employees in the hospitality industry.

H6. Work engagement positively mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and OCBO of frontline employees in the hospitality industry.

2.4. The sequential mediating role of organizational identification and work engagement

In this study, we further suggest that transformational leaders increase organizational identification, which leads to engagement, which in turn affects frontline employee performance. As discussed earlier, transformational leaders foster followers' organizational identification. Employees who identify with their organizations exhibit positive attitudes and are more attached to their organizations and their jobs (Biswas and Bhatnagar, 2013). Identification with an organization increases employees' job satisfaction and reduces turnover intentions (Van Dick et al., 2004). Likewise, employees with high organizational identification perceive the successes and failures of the company as their own (Ashforth and Mael, 1989), which influences the attention they give to their work assignments. Consequently, employees who notably identify with their organizations are more likely to be engaged with their work. In this sense, Rich et al. (2010) revealed that individuals who perceive congruence between their personal values and those of the organization are more likely to show higher levels of job engagement. Likewise, Biswas and Bhatnagar (2013) found that when the association between employees and the organization is high, the employees are more engaged. More recently, studies have empirically demonstrated a positive relationship between organizational identification and work engagement (He et al., 2014; Karanika-Murray et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2017). Finally, when employees are engaged, as described earlier, they are more likely to display better job performance (Bakker et al., 2012; Halbesleben and Wheeler, 2008; Rich et al., 2010) and go above and beyond their job roles (Rich et al., 2010). Consequently, we propose:

H7. Organizational identification and work engagement sequentially mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance of frontline employees in the hospitality industry.

H8. Organizational identification and work engagement sequentially mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and OCBO of frontline employees in the hospitality industry.

2.5. The moderating effect of proactive personality

Organizations in the hospitality industry operate in complex, dynamic and unpredictable environments (Madera et al., 2017). To cope with these changing environments and remain competitive, organizations need to adopt proactive, change-oriented behaviors (Fuller and Marler, 2009). Proactive personality refers to "the relatively stable tendency to effect environmental change" (Bateman and Crant, 1993, p. 103). Individuals who are high in proactive personality traits are more likely to take personal initiative to intentionally change their situations. Instead of waiting to respond to elements in their work environment, proactive individuals have an active orientation, search for information, explore the environment and try to anticipate future opportunities (Bateman and Crant, 1993; Crant, 2000; Thomas et al., 2010). In contrast, individuals who are low in proactive personality remain passive

and adapt themselves to the circumstances of the situation (Bateman and Crant, 1993; Bergeron et al., 2014). In other words, they are reactive and satisfied with maintaining the status quo within their organization.

Previous research has provided a thorough review of proactive personality literature. For example, using career success as a framework, Fuller and Marler (2009) reported in their meta-analysis that proactive personality relates to objective and subjective career success, job performance, motivation constructs, proactive behaviors and variables related to mobility and adaptability, among others. Likewise, a meta-analysis by Thomas et al. (2010) revealed significant correlations between proactive personality and job performance, affective organizational commitment, work satisfaction and social networking. Prior research has also investigated the link between proactive personality and leadership (e.g. Deluga, 1998). Bateman and Crant (1993) found a positive correlation between students' proactive personality and peer nominations of transformational leadership. Similarly, Crant and Bateman (2000) found that managers who scored themselves as having a proactive personality received a higher rating on a measure of charismatic leadership completed by their bosses. However, to our knowledge, no previous study has explored how employees' proactive personality influences their responses to transformational leadership behavior. In this sense, we argue that proactive personality may, for several reasons, moderate the effects of transformational leadership on organizational identification and work engagement.

First, proactive personality and transformational leadership share several behaviors. As noted earlier, transformational leaders encourage employees to rise above their self-interest and to perform better than initially expected (Bass, 1985; Yukl, 1999). These leaders are engaged with their organizations, feel empowered and believe that they can change their environments (Barbuto and Burbach, 2006). Given that proactive employees also have an active orientation toward the work environment (Bateman and Crant, 1993; Crant, 2000), we argue that when frontline employees have a high level of proactive personality and leaders use a transformational leadership style, this combination may amplify the effects of transformational leadership on organizational identification and work engagement.

Second, as noted by Thomas et al. (2010), proactive employees' recognition of their ability to change their environment may influence the extent to which "they identify with and feel involved in their organizational surroundings" (Thomas et al., 2010, p. 279). In this sense, previous studies (e.g., Chan, 2006; Fuller and Marler, 2009) have shown that proactive personality is significantly correlated to a similar concept, affective organizational commitment, which is an "emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization" (Allen and Meyer, 1990, p. 1). Therefore, it can be expected that proactive personality interacts with transformational leadership, helping to develop perceived oneness with the organization.

Finally, proactive employees who change their work environment are likely to become deeply involved in their jobs (Bateman and Crant, 1993) and, therefore, be more engaged (Dikkers et al., 2010; Ghorbannejad and Esakhani, 2016; Hakanen et al., 2008; Li et al., 2017). As argued previously, this might enhance the positive effect of transformational leadership on employees' engagement.

Hence, we postulate:

H9. Proactive personality moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational identification of frontline employees in the hospitality industry, such that the positive relationship will be stronger for those with more proactive personalities.

H10. Proactive personality moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement of frontline employees in the hospitality industry, such that the positive relationship will be stronger for those with more proactive personalities.

Fig. 1 summarizes the conceptual model.

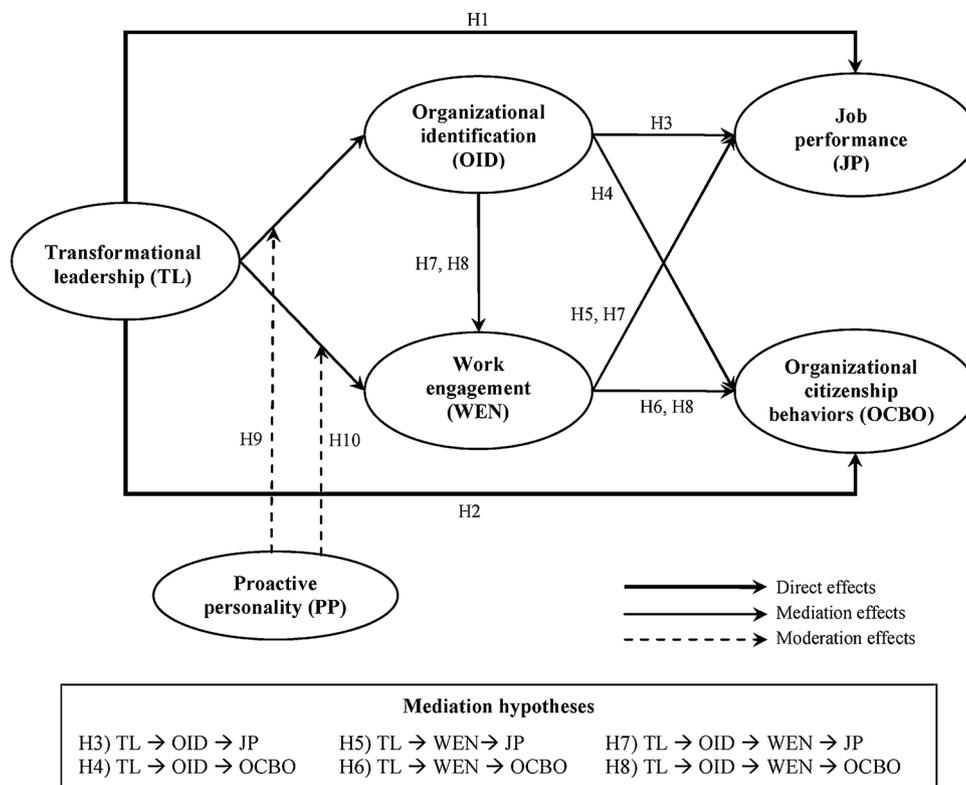


Fig. 1. Theoretical model.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and data collection

To test the proposed hypotheses, we undertook an empirical study with frontline hotel employees. The population was composed of 881 three, four and five-star hotels that were part of the 12 major hotel chains in Spain in terms of size (i.e. number of hotels of each group in Spain).

A market research company administered a telephone questionnaire on behalf of the researchers to collect the data. The questionnaire was aimed at frontline employees working at hotel receptions, as these employees represent their organizations and have direct contact with customers. After the purpose of the study was explained, the respondents were asked to answer the questions bearing in mind the hotel where they worked; they were assured of anonymity. Using a quota sampling method, hotels were selected based on the size of the chains and number of hotels of each chain in the Spanish regional communities. Only one front-desk employee per hotel was invited to participate in the study. Therefore, data were gathered from single respondents from different hotels in a one-time survey.

The final sample consisted of 323 employees from 323 hotels. A total of 62.8% of respondents were female. The mean age was 33.45 years, with an average organizational tenure of 7.44 years. The sample was predominantly composed of four-star hotels (69.7%); 20.2% were three-star and 10.1% were five-star. Finally, the average number of rooms was 178.

3.2. Measures

We employed well established scales to measure the study constructs (see Appendix A). The respondents assessed all items on 11-point Likert scales (0 = strongly disagree; 10 = strongly agree) to enhance the functionality and clarity of the telephone questionnaire.

Transformational leadership was measured using Carless et al.'s

(2000) scale. Organizational identification was assessed following Smidts et al. (2001). Work engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale proposed by Schaufeli et al. (2006). Job performance was measured with items from Karatepe (2013), drawing on Babin and Boles (1998). OCBO was assessed following Lee and Allen (2002); Saks (2006) and Karatepe (2013). Finally, proactive personality was measured with items from Bateman and Crant's (1993) scale.

3.3. Common method bias assessment

Since the data for the model's variables came from single respondents in a one-time survey, common method variance bias had to be effectively assessed. We used both procedural and statistical methods to control for potential common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Considering the procedural methods, we ensured respondents of the confidentiality and anonymity of the information provided. This reduced the possibility that the front-desk employees would respond in an artificial or dishonest way (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Moreover, the model's variables were randomly introduced into the survey to prevent respondents from inferring cause-effect relationships among the constructs. Regarding the statistical procedures, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis, from which seven factors emerged to explain 73.83% of the total variance. The largest factor explained only 20.54% of that variance. In addition, we performed a Harman single-factor test by means of confirmatory factor analysis with EQS 6.1, which established that the presence of common method bias was not a major concern. This test showed that the goodness of fit (GoF) for a measurement model where all the variables loaded on a single latent factor was substantially inferior to the GoF for a model where every item loaded on its corresponding latent variable. Finally, we implemented a full collinearity test based on variance inflation factors (VIFs), following Kock's (2015) and Kock and Lynn's (2012) procedure. This procedure specifies that when a VIF achieves a value greater than 3.3 there will be an indication of collinearity, which suggests the existence of common method bias. Our estimations showed that VIF values ranged from

1.060 to 2.786, thus suggesting, again, that common method bias is not a significant problem in this research.

4. Results

The research model was tested using partial least squares (PLS). Specifically, the SmartPLS 3.0 software was used. This methodology is appropriated for predictive applications and theory building in contexts where the phenomenon under study, as in our case, is new or rapidly evolving (Roldán and Sánchez-Franco, 2012). PLS is a distribution-independent method that is also recommended when the conceptual model is complex and includes many indicators and latent variables (Chin, 2010; Hair et al., 2011).

4.1. Measurement model evaluation

The measurement model attempts to confirm whether the theoretical constructs are correctly gauged by the manifest variables. We followed Schaufeli and Bakker's (2004) work engagement (WEN) conceptualization to operationalize this variable as a second-order reflective-reflective construct. It should be noted that some studies have failed to replicate the three-factor structure of work engagement (Shimazu et al., 2008), and that using the overall score for work engagement may sometimes be more useful in empirical research than using the three scores separately (Bakker et al., 2008). Nevertheless, most investigations using confirmatory factor analyses have revealed that the fit of this three-factor structure to the data was superior to others. Although some other previous studies have treated work engagement as a single variable or have included the independent first-order constructs (Schaufeli et al., 2002, 2006), for the purpose of this study we employed a second-order latent construct composed of three first-order latent variables: vigor, absorption and dedication. Given this level of abstraction of the WEN variable, we estimated our model following Wetzels et al.'s (2009) two-step method.

During the initial estimation, all the manifest variables presented individual reliability. In addition, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) values were greater than 0.7 and 0.5, respectively. Discriminant validity was examined with the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratios method (Henseler et al., 2015) and Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion. All HTMT ratios between the first-order constructs were below 0.85. Similarly, the root-squared values of the AVE were above the correlations between pairs of variables. These results confirm the existence of discriminant validity.

The latent variable scores to be used as indicators of the WEN second-order reflective construct were obtained in the initial estimation. Table 1 reports the results of the second-order final measurement model. To evaluate the adequacy of the measures of this second-order construct model, we again assessed the indicators' individual reliabilities by examining the loadings of the measures on their corresponding latent constructs. All the indicators' loadings exceeded 0.707, suggesting an adequate correlation between indicators and their respective constructs (Wetzels et al., 2009). In addition, all CR ratios are above 0.7. This confirms that the set of variables is consistent with what it was designed to measure. The latent constructs also prove convergent validity as the AVE extracted by the constructs is above 0.5. Consequently, it is confirmed that the amount of variance that a construct captures from its manifest indicators is larger than the amount of variance that is explained by the measurement error. Finally, the findings suggest the existence of discriminant validity among the constructs, since the HTMT ratios are below the suggested threshold of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015) and the root squared values of the AVE are above the correlations between pairs of variables (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) (see Table 2).

Table 1
Results of the final measurement model.

Construct	Indicator	Standardized Loading	CR	AVE
Transformational Leadership (TL)	TL1	0.892	0.967	0.805
	TL2	0.899		
	TL3	0.895		
	TL4	0.927		
	TL5	0.856		
	TL6	0.904		
	TL7	0.905		
Proactive Personality (PP)	PP1	0.865	0.852	0.659
	PP2	0.732		
	PP3	0.833		
Organizational Identification (OID)	OID1	0.875	0.954	0.837
	OID2	0.900		
	OID3	0.939		
	OID4	0.944		
Work Engagement (WEN)	ABS	0.871	0.926	0.807
	DED	0.921		
	VIG	0.903		
Job Performance (JP)	JP1	0.756	0.880	0.711
	JP2	0.869		
	JP3	0.897		
Organizational Citizenship Behavior to Organization (OCBO)	OCBO1	0.704	0.770	0.528
	OCBO2	0.775		
	OCBO3	0.700		

4.2. Hypothesis testing: direct effects

We used the bootstrapping nonparametric technique of resampling with 8000 subsamples to test the proposed model. Appendix B presents the complete structural model's results. The results of the estimation of the inner model reveal that it explains 40.3% of the organizational identification variance, 63.2% of work engagement, 42.5% of job performance and 25.2% of OCBO. Complementarily, we used the Stone–Geisser test to confirm the predictive relevance of the model. The results indicated that the Q^2 values are positive, which confirms the predictive relevance of the model in relation to the endogenous variables. In support of hypothesis 1, we found a significant, direct and positive relationship between transformational leadership and job performance ($\beta = 0.253$; t -value = 3.692). On the contrary, the estimation of the structural model offers no support for hypothesis 2. There is a positive but nonsignificant relationship between transformational leadership and OCBO ($\beta = 0.014$; t -value = 0.182). Fig. 2 shows the path estimates and t -values of the model's structural main direct effects between the latent variables.

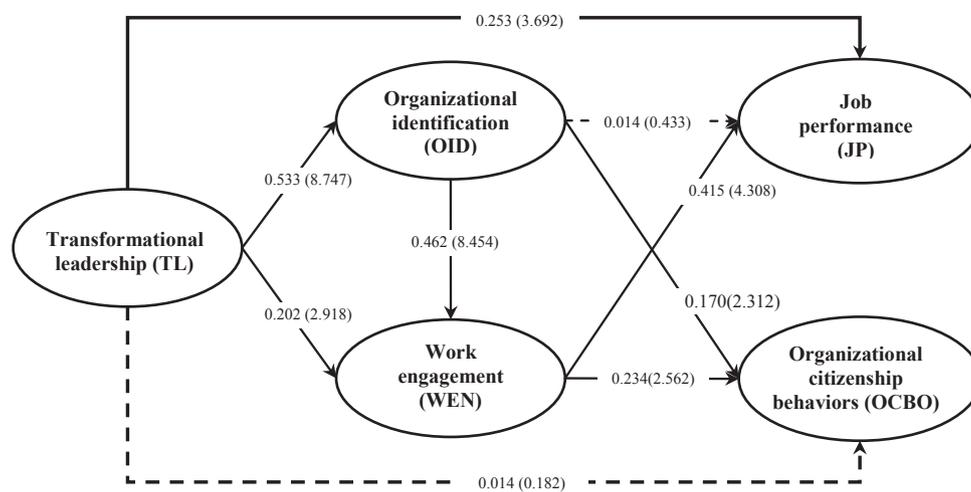
4.3. Hypothesis testing: mediation effects

To test the mediation effects, we employed the procedure suggested by Nitzl et al. (2016) for multi-mediation and complex models. Essentially, these authors suggest applying a bootstrap analysis with a large

Table 2
Discriminant validity.

Construct	TL	PP	OID	WEN	JP	OCBO
TL	0.897	0.358	0.624	0.637	0.603	0.422
PP	0.301	0.812	0.387	0.662	0.508	0.583
OID	0.595	0.322	0.915	0.772	0.551	0.563
WEN	0.588	0.537	0.703	0.899	0.729	0.664
JP	0.526	0.347	0.480	0.614	0.843	0.518
OCBO	0.307	0.373	0.404	0.463	0.347	0.727

Note: Diagonal elements are the root squared AVE values. Elements below the diagonal are the constructs' correlations. Elements above the diagonal represent the constructs' HTMT ratios.



Note 1: Path coefficients and *t*-values (between brackets) are reported.
 Note 2: Dotted lines represent nonsignificant paths.
 Note 3: Bolder lines represent direct hypothesized paths; medium-bolder lines indicate mediating hypothesized effects.

Fig. 2. Summary of the main direct effects of the structural model.

Table 3
 Mediation effects.

Hypothesis	β Indirect effect	<i>t</i> -value	Confidence interval (5–95%)
H3: TL → OID → JP	0.008	0.169	(-0.066; 0.082)
H4: TL → OID → OCBO	0.091	2.291**	(0.024; 0.143)
H5: TL → WEN → JP	0.084	2.478**	(0.033; 0.144)
H6: TL → WEN → OCBO	0.047	1.972**	(0.010; 0.088)
H7: TL → OID → WEN → JP	0.102	3.187*	(0.053; 0.158)
H8: TL → OID → WEN → OCBO	0.058	2.176**	(0.016; 0.102)

Note: ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.01$.

number of subsamples to assess the indirect effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable through a mediating variable. For each bootstrapping subsample, the path coefficients of the mediating relationships are obtained. These path coefficients are subsequently multiplied to create the specific indirect product terms. Next, the standard deviation, equivalent to the standard error (SE) in bootstrapping (Chernick, 2011), is computed for all the indirect effects. Using the SE values of the indirect effects obtained from the bootstrapping procedure, a pseudo *t*-test can be calculated to assess the significance of the indirect effects. In addition to this method, we employed MacKinnon et al.'s (2004) technique to calculate confidence intervals for each specific indirect effect. This method computes confidence intervals for the indirect paths and eliminates extreme cases through a percentile formula. If the confidence interval for a mediating variable does not include the value zero, this means that the indirect effect is significantly different from zero and, therefore, significant.

Table 3 shows the results of the mediation analysis estimations. Contrary to our expectations, organizational identification does not mediate the influence of transformational leadership on job performance ($\beta = 0.008$; *t*-value = 0.169). This result can be explained by the fact that, according to the estimation of the direct paths in Fig. 2, organizational identification does not significantly influence job performance ($\beta = 0.014$; *t*-value = 0.433). On the contrary, organizational identification mediates the influence of transformational leadership in citizenship behaviors ($\beta = 0.091$; *t*-value = 2.291). The direct effect of transformational leadership in OCBO was not significant. Therefore, this result indicates that organizational identification fully mediates this causal relationship. These results lead us to reject hypothesis 3 and

to accept hypothesis 4. The model also supports hypotheses 5 and 6. The bootstrapping estimations reveal that transformational leadership indirectly influences job performance ($\beta = 0.084$; *t*-value = 2.478) and OCBO ($\beta = 0.047$; *t*-value = 1.972) via work engagement. The finding that transformational leadership has a direct effect on job performance, but that this influence is nonsignificant in the case of OCBOs, means that work engagement partially mediates the relationship between leadership and job performance and fully mediates the influence of transformational leadership on OCBOs. Finally, estimations indicate a strong partial sequential mediation for the relationship between transformational leadership and its outcomes. Specifically, our findings suggest that the effect of transformational leadership on job performance ($\beta = 0.102$; *t*-value = 3.187) and citizenship behaviors ($\beta = 0.058$; *t*-value = 2.176) is explained by its positive influence on organizational identification, which, in turn, enhances employees' work engagement. In line with these findings, hypotheses 7 and 8 are accepted.

4.4. Hypothesis testing: the moderating role of proactive personality

We used the interaction approach to calculate the moderating effects. This involves creating interaction terms by using the product of the two variables involved in the moderating effect. We specifically employed the two-stage approach (Henseler and Chin, 2010) to analyze these interactions. Results of these interaction estimations are presented in Table 4. According to these estimations, the interaction effect of leadership and proactive personality on identification ($\beta = 0.117$; *t*-value = 1.657) and engagement ($\beta = 0.125$; *t*-value = 2.128) reveals

Table 4
Estimation of the moderating effect of proactive personality.

Hypothesis	β	t-value	Confidence interval (5–95%)
H9: TL * PP \rightarrow OI	0.117	1.657*	(0.022; 0.231)
H10: TL * PP \rightarrow WEN	0.125	2.128*	(0.036; 0.220)

Note 1: * $p < 0.05$; (one-tailed Student's *t*-test).

positive and significant paths. Specifically, the results show that the influence of transformational leaders on both organizational identification and work engagement is higher when frontline employees exhibit a more proactive personality. These results lead to acceptance of hypotheses 9 and 10.

5. Discussion

This study explores the underlying mechanisms and boundary conditions that explain why and under what circumstances transformational leadership relates to job performance and OCBO in the context of the tourism and hospitality sector. Specifically, the present study represents one of the first attempts to examine (1) the mediating role of organizational identification and work engagement in the relationship between transformational leadership and employees' work performance in the hospitality industry; and (2) the moderating influence of frontline employees' proactive personality in the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational identification and work engagement.

The results show that transformational leadership directly predicts job performance. As expected, work engagement partially mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance, indicating that this variable is an important mechanism linking this leadership style and employees' job performance. However, organizational identification, on its own, does not mediate this relationship. This result suggests that organizational identification alone does not account for the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance, unless it leads to work engagement.

In addition, the findings reveal that transformational leadership is not directly related to OCBO, but indirectly through a full mediation effect of organizational identification and work engagement. Thereby, both identification and engagement, as mediator variables, govern the underlying mechanism of the relationships between transformational leaders and their followers' behaviors. This finding reinforces the idea that supervisors with inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, idealized influence and intellectual stimulation play a key role in promoting identification and engagement among their employees. Such engaged and identified employees, in turn, are more willing to perform above and beyond their basic role prescriptions. Interestingly, the results also indicate that organizational identification and work engagement sequentially mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and both job performance and OCBO. Thus, transformational leaders are more effective in enhancing frontline employee performance in the hospitality industry because they motivate their followers to identify with their organizations, which, in turn, increases their level of engagement.

Finally, the results reveal an interaction effect of transformational leadership and proactive personality on both organizational identification and work engagement, such that, when proactive personality is stronger, the relationship between transformational leadership and identification and engagement becomes stronger. Based on the findings, theoretical and managerial implications are discussed.

5.1. Theoretical implications

This research contributes to the literature in several ways. First, in response to calls for more research into the different influence processes

involved in transformational leadership (Holten et al., 2018; Pan and Lin, 2015; Patiar and Wang, 2016), this study explores the underlying mechanisms that link transformational leadership and frontline employee performance in the hospitality industry. Extant research has found that transformational leadership behaviors predict in-role performance and OCB through different mediators, such as followers' perceptions of core job characteristics (Piccolo and Colquitt, 2006), leader–member exchange (Wang et al., 2005) and role ambiguity and trust in one's manager (MacKenzie et al., 2001). Drawing on SIT and SET, this study extends these previous findings by investigating the importance of frontline employees' organizational identification and work engagement in hospitality companies.

Second, few studies have investigated the potential sequential mediation effects of the mechanisms underlying the link between transformational leadership and employee performance (Walumbwa and Hartnell, 2011). In particular, although past research has suggested a relationship between identification and engagement, empirical evidence for this has only recently been found (e.g. He et al., 2014; Karanika-Murray et al., 2015) and no research has investigated how these two mechanisms function together in explaining the relationship between transformational leadership and frontline employee performance. Our results confirm the presence of this sequential mediation effect in the hospitality industry and extend past research by demonstrating that identification with the organization and work engagement may help explain the relationship between leadership styles and frontline employee performance.

Third, this research explores the boundary conditions that qualify the relationship between transformational leadership and employees' organizational identification and work engagement. Although previous research has underlined the importance of employee proactive personality (e.g., Bakker et al., 2012), to the best of our knowledge researchers have not yet explored the moderating role of proactive personality on the relationship between transformational leadership and these variables. The results show that employee proactive personality is important, as the positive effects of transformational leadership are strengthened when frontline employees have a proactive personality. Thereby, the relationships between a leader's transformational leadership and his/her followers' level of organizational identification and work engagement should not be regarded as constant, since they depend on the employees' personality traits, such as proactive personality. In other words, these relationships are not the same for all employees, but differ depending on the employees' personalities. As such, this study reinforces the idea that personality traits should be considered as means to account for heterogeneity in the relationships between leaders and followers within an organization. Thus, this study contributes to transformational leadership and proactive personality literature and responds to calls for a better understanding of how individual personality traits influence employees' perceptions and responses to different leadership styles (Antonakis et al., 2012; Zaccaro, 2012).

5.2. Managerial implications

This study provides several managerial implications and offers managers in this industry a comprehensive framework by which to understand how frontline employee performance is created. First, the tourism and hospitality industry may benefit from recruiting managers who are high in transformational leadership style. Therefore, hotels should consider type of leadership style when recruiting and when promoting and training supervisors. Managers should, among other behaviors: adopt transformational leadership practices, such as communicating and reinforcing the vision, mission, goals and objectives of the hotel; create supportive organizational cultures; foster both upward and downward communication; act as mentors; pay attention to employees' needs; and use active listening. Of note is the fact that work engagement and organizational identification play a very important mediating role in the relationship between transformational leadership

and frontline employees' performance. This suggests that, in the hospitality sector, transformational leaders can create conditions within the company to encourage employees to go the extra mile and to exhibit discretionary behaviors. Consequently, hospitality managers should be aware of their potential as transformational leaders who can define the organizational climate and culture that lead to the achievement of organizational goals.

Second, customers' perceptions and opinions are very important in the tourism and hospitality industry (Viglia et al., 2014). As frontline employees are the link between the organization and its customers, increasing the identification and engagement of the former is a critical challenge to encourage positive outcomes, such as better performance and behaviors that, although not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, are essential for the achievement of organizational goals. Therefore, hospitality organizations should create environments that promote work engagement and encourage employees' identification with their organizations. This is especially relevant in the tourism and hospitality industry, in which many employees have poor working conditions, such as low wages and unsocial working hours, which can diminish their energy, enthusiasm and immersion in their work, as well as their identification with their organization. Hotel managers could also periodically monitor identification and engagement levels among their employees, as this may enable them to implement changes before low levels in these aspects result in poor performance or inappropriate behaviors.

Finally, the interactive findings related to the moderating effect of proactive personality also have some practical implications for organizations. Human resource managers should select frontline employees with proactive personalities. It would be valuable to be able to assess the proactive personality of job applicants during selection and promotion processes. For example, organizations that want to foster organizational identification and work engagement may become more successful if they can find the right combination of transformational leaders and highly proactive followers. Hotels should implement strategies to develop and stimulate proactivity among their employees and reward employees that show initiative, seek out opportunities and stimulate meaningful change. Similarly transformational leaders should acknowledge the importance of the proactive personality trait and recognize how it can foster the positive effects of their leadership

Appendix A. Measurement scales

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

My supervisor...

- TL1....communicates a clear and positive vision of the future
 - TL2....treats staff as individuals, supports and encourages their development
 - TL3....gives encouragement and recognition to staff
 - TL4....fosters trust, involvement and cooperation among team members
 - TL5....encourages thinking about problems in new ways and questions assumptions
 - TL6....is clear about his/her values and practices what he/she preaches
 - TL7....instills pride and respect in others and inspires me by being highly competent
-

PROACTIVE PERSONALITY

- PP1. I am always looking for better ways to do thing
 - PP2. I excel at identifying opportunities
 - PP3. I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life
-

behaviors. Given that frontline employees with proactive personalities are found to better respond to transformational leadership in the form of higher identification and engagement, organizations should seek to match their supervisors' leadership styles with their subordinates' personalities. This would help organizations enhance their frontline employees' willingness to perform well, exhibit discretionary behaviors and to minimize conflicts between leaders and followers.

5.3. Limitations and suggestions for future research

As with all research, there are limitations to this study. First, the empirical study is cross-sectional. Therefore, longitudinal research could provide more insight into probable causation and facilitate better understanding of the relationships explored in the study. Second, this study relies only on frontline employee self-report measures. Therefore, future research could adopt a dyadic perspective to analyze both managers' and frontline employees' views. In addition, more objective measures could be included to minimize the effects of any response bias, such as social desirability bias. In fact, future research should examine the impact of transformational leadership, organizational identification and engagement in objective measures of job performance by considering the nature of the work outcomes for frontline employees. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to consider the use of more objective indicators related to productivity, efficiency, service quality and service recovery performance (Babakus et al., 2003; Rich et al., 2010). Third, this research focuses on frontline hotel employees in only one country. Further research could consider other countries to provide broader insights into the effects of transformational leadership and proactive personality on employee outcomes.

Despite the limitations, this work reveals why and under what circumstances hotel frontline employees perform the way they do, and informs hotel managers about this process to enable them to make more informed decisions.

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ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

- OID1.** I feel strong ties with this hotel
OID2. I experience a strong sense of belonging to this hotel
OID3. I feel proud to work for this hotel
OID4. I am glad to be a member of this hotel

WORK ENGAGEMENT

- Vigor**
VIG1. At my work, I feel bursting with energy
VIG2. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work
VIG3. At my job I feel strong and vigorous
Dedication
DED1. I am proud of the work that I do
DED2. I am enthusiastic about my job
DED3. My job inspires me
Absorption
ABS1. I get carried away when I am working
ABS2. I feel happy when I am working intensely
ABS3. I am immersed in my work

JOB PERFORMANCE

- JP1.** As employee, I get along better with customers than do others
JP2. I know more about services delivered to customers than others
JP3. I know what my customers expect better than others

ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIORS DIRECTED AT THE ORGANIZATION

- Concerning my work at this hotel, I...**
OCBO1....attend functions that are not required but that help the organizational image
OCBO2....offer ideas to improve the functioning of the organization
OCBO3....take action to protect the organization from potential problems

Appendix B. Results of the complete structural model

Structural paths	β	t-value	Control variables	β	t-value
TL → JP	0.253	3.692	Relationships		
TL → OCBO	0.014	0.182	Age → OID	0.067	0.886
			Age → WEN	0.001	0.010
TL → OI	0.533	8.747*	Age → JP	-0.026	0.346
			Age → OCBO	0.008	0.122
PP → OI	0.159	2.468*	Tenure → OID	0.096	1.458***
			Tenure → WEN	0.029	0.618
TL → WEN	0.202	2.918*	Tenure → JP	0.045	0.662
			Tenure → OCBO	0.006	0.136
PP → WEN	0.322	5.303*	Size → OID	0.041	1.020
			Size → WEN	0.039	1.159
OI → WEN	0.462	8.454*	Size → JP	0.023	0.548
			Size → OCBO	0.033	0.635

OI → JP	0.014	0.433	R^2 (OID) = 0.403; R^2 (WEN) = 0.632
WEN → JP	0.415	4.308*	R^2 (EP) = 0.425; R^2 (OCBO) = 0.252
OI → OCBO	0.170	2.312**	Q^2 (OID) = 0.311; Q^2 (WEN) = 0.474
WEN → OCBO	0.234	2.562*	Q^2 (EP) = 0.272; Q^2 (OCBO) = 0.113
Moderating relationships			
TL * PP → OI	0.117	1.657*	
TL * PP → WEN	0.125	2.128*	
Mediating relationships			
Mediation paths	β	t-value	Confidence interval (5%-95%)
TL → OID → JP	0.008	0.169	(-0.066; 0.082)
TL → OID → OCBO	0.091	2.291**	(0.024; 0.143)
TL → WEN → JP	0.084	2.478**	(0.033; 0.144)
TL → WEN → OCBO	0.047	1.972**	(0.010; 0.088)
TL → OID → WEN → JP	0.102	3.187*	(0.053; 0.158)
TL → OID → WEN → OCBO	0.058	2.176**	(0.016; 0.102)

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