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Original Article

The Impact of Selective Hiring, Training and Employment Security on Guest Satisfaction in Mauritian Five-Star Hotels: The Mediating Role of Organizational Support

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Abstract

Background: High-Performance Work System (HPWS) practices may shape service outcomes, but evidence on Perceived Organizational Support (POS) in Mauritian luxury hospitality is limited. **Objectives:** This study examined associations among selective hiring, extensive training, employment security, POS and employee-perceived guest satisfaction and tested whether POS mediates these associations. **Methods:** The study employed a cross-sectional, sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, combining an employee survey (n = 380) from six Mauritian five-star hotels, analyzed using PLS-SEM with 5,000 bootstrap samples, and thematic analysis of 13 interviews (9 HR managers or supervisors, 4 frontline employees). Survey measures were employee-reported. **Results:** The results show that all three HPWS dimensions - selective hiring, extensive training and employment security - have significant direct effects on guest satisfaction, and POS partially mediates about 38 to 40% of these effects. Extensive training was the strongest antecedent of POS (β = 0.312), followed by selective hiring (β = 0.241) and employment security (β = 0.198). POS was the strongest single predictor of guest satisfaction (β = 0.389). The qualitative themes explain five contextual themes that underpin the psychological mechanisms behind these statistical relationships (signal value of selective hiring, training as relational investment, fragility of employment security in a SIDS context, experiential gestalt of POS and contextual enablers/barriers to POS) and the Mauritian luxury hospitality environment. **Conclusion:** HPWS practices and POS are positively associated with employee-perceived guest satisfaction, and POS partially mediated each HPWS association.

Keywords: *Guest Satisfaction; High-Performance Work Systems; Luxury Hospitality; Perceived Organisational Support; Small Island Developing States*

Introduction

In luxury hospitality, guest encounters depend not only on facilities and brand positioning but also on service employees. Their attentiveness, knowledge, and responsiveness matter strategically, as do HR practices that recruit, develop, and retain them (Kandampully *et al*., 2023). Strategic HR research examines high-performance work systems (HPWS) as practice configurations linked to employee and organizational outcomes (Delery & Doty, 1996; Jiang *et al*., 2012). In hospitality, the key question is how these practices shape service outcomes through employees' work experiences (Dorta-Afonso *et al*., 2021).

This question matters in Mauritius, where high-end tourism makes consistent, personalized service a competitive priority. The resource-based view holds that human capabilities can create advantage when

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developed and deployed as valuable, hard-to-replicate resources (Barney, 1991). In a small-island destination, frontline employees' contributions remain central to the guest experience alongside destination features and hotel assets (Kruesi & Bazelmans, 2022). This study examines three relevant practices, namely selective hiring, extensive training, and employment security.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) refers to employees' belief that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being, thus providing a grounded way to examine an intervening perception (Eisenberger *et al*., 1986). Organizational support theory suggests employees interpret how they are treated and may reciprocate perceived support through work attitudes and behavior (Eisenberger *et al*., 2023). Hiring, capability-building opportunities, and employment security may signal how the organization values employees, shaping perceptions linked to service outcomes. Hospitality research links POS with well-being and service quality (Yan *et al*., 2024; Ngwa & Bayram, 2026). Recent studies examine related pathways involving support, engagement, citizenship behavior, and hotel workforce outcomes (Chouhan, 2025; McManus *et al*., 2025; Wang & Tsai, 2026). Other work explores how technology and HR practices jointly shape workforce dynamics and guest perceptions (Radović *et al*., 2025). These studies motivate the proposed relationships but do not resolve the specific model and setting examined here.

Research Gap

Three connected gaps motivate this study. First, the HPWS "black box" remains a useful but broad problem statement. The links between particular HR practices, employee perceptions, and service-related outcomes need to be specified and tested. Prior strategic HRM work examines mediating processes generally (Jiang *et al*., 2012), and hospitality research has investigated HRM performance and employee outcome relationships (Dorta-Afonso *et al*., 2021; Elshaer *et al*., 2023). Yet evidence remains limited on whether POS statistically accounts for associations between selective hiring, extensive training, and employment security and guest satisfaction in Mauritian five-star hotels.

Second, destination and institutional context deserve empirical attention rather than assumption. Mauritius provides a relevant small island luxury hospitality setting in which the proposed HR support service relationships can be examined. The study's quantitative data concern employees' perceptions; therefore, its guest-satisfaction measure is employee-perceived guest satisfaction, not an independent guest rating, online review, or objective service indicator. Making that distinction is essential both to define the empirical gap and to bound what the study can establish.

Third, a statistical mediation model alone cannot explain how employees make sense of HR practices. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design can pair estimates of direct and indirect associations with interview accounts that contextualize those patterns. The interviews can inform interpretation of employees' experiences, but they cannot prove temporal order, establish causal mechanisms, or show that Mauritian culture moderates the estimated relationships. This study consequently addresses an integrated conceptual, contextual, and explanatory gap while maintaining appropriate limits on inference.

Purpose, Objectives, and Research Questions

This study examines the relationships among selective hiring, extensive training, employment security, POS, and employee-perceived guest satisfaction in Mauritian five-star hotels and uses follow-up qualitative evidence to contextualize the quantitative results. The objectives are to (1) assess the associations of the three HR practices with POS; (2) assess their direct associations with employee-perceived guest satisfaction and the association between POS and that outcome; (3) estimate whether POS statistically mediates each HR practice–outcome association; and (4) use interview accounts to interpret and contextualize the observed quantitative pattern.

RQ1: How are selective hiring, extensive training, and employment security associated with POS among frontline employees in Mauritian five-star hotels?

RQ2: How are these three HR practices and POS associated with employee-perceived guest satisfaction?

RQ3: To what extent are the associations between each HR practice and employee-perceived guest satisfaction statistically mediated by POS?

RQ4: How do interview accounts help contextualize the quantitative relationships among the study variables?

Contribution and Significance

The study tests POS as one employee perception pathway linking three distinct HR practices to employee-perceived guest satisfaction. Comparing direct and indirect paths shows whether POS partially or fully accounts for these associations, without claiming it is the only mechanism in the broader HPWS service-outcome relationship. Comparing the three HPWS dimensions also shows how each relates to POS in this sample.

The study examines frontline employees at six Mauritian five-star hotels, which is an underrepresented setting in the cited strategic-HRM and hospitality literature. Findings reflect employee perceptions, including their assessments of guest satisfaction. Follow-up interviews with 13 purposively selected participants provide context for interpreting relationships, but do not replace guest-level measurement or establish causality.

The explanatory sequential design combines PLS-SEM estimates with thematic analysis. Surveys assess specified relationships; interviews contextualize how participants describe practices and support. Together, these methods enrich interpretation but do not overcome the quantitative evidence's cross-sectional, single-source limitations.

Findings may help hotel managers consider how employees experience hiring, training, and employment security and how these perceptions relate to their assessments of guest satisfaction. They can inform reflection on staff development, support, and service management but are not causal estimates or proof of changes in independently measured guest satisfaction. The results may also support context-specific dialogue among hotel leaders, industry bodies, and policymakers about workforce capability.

Methodology

Research Design and Philosophy

The study adopts a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, in which quantitative data collection and analysis form the primary evidentiary foundation, followed by a qualitative phase designed to explain, contextualise, and deepen the interpretation of the quantitative results (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The quantitative strand is operationalized through a structured self-administered survey instrument administered to frontline service employees in Mauritian five-star hotels and analyzed using PLS-SEM via SmartPLS 4 (Ringle *et al*., 2024).

The qualitative phase used an explanatory sequential design. Although the initial plan targeted 20 to 25 informants across HR/training, supervisory, and frontline roles, saturation was reached after 13 semi-structured interviews at six five-star hotels: nine HR managers or supervisors and four frontline employees. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and de-identified. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2023) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis: familiarization, coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting. Trustworthiness was supported through survey triangulation, reflexive journaling, an audit trail, thick description, and peer debriefing, addressing credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Ten randomly selected participants reviewed transcript summaries and clarified or amended responses. The coding agreement was Cohen's kappa = 0.78. Five themes emerged: selective hiring, training, employment security, perceived organizational support, and Mauritian contextual factors.

Population and Sampling

The target population is all frontline service employees in five-star hotels in Mauritius who work in positions that are directly substantive and recurrently interact with hotel guests; the accessible population consists of 22 MTPA-classified five-star hotels in Mauritius. The total workforce is estimated at 4,500 to 5,500 staff (Statistics Mauritius, 2025). The study used a stratified proportional probability sampling design (stratified by hotel and, secondarily, by department). The study selected individual respondents using systematic random sampling from departmental employee rosters. The minimum a priori sample size of n=250 was calculated using G*Power 3.1 (Faul *et al*., 2009), assuming a medium effect size (f^2=0.15), α=0.05, power=0.80, and accounting for 5 primary predictors plus covariates. This parametrisation guarantees robust statistical power for mediation analysis while curtailing Type II errors (Soper, 2023). To account for non-response and exclude incomplete or invalid questionnaires, the study surveys 500 potential respondents. Based on similar organizational surveys with active management support, 412 returns (82.4% gross response rate) and 380 clean usable responses were used for analysis. For the qualitative component, we purposively selected 13 key informants (9 HR managers and departmental supervisors; 4 frontline employees) from 6 hotels participating in the study. Interviews lasted from 47 to 74 minutes (mean = 58 min) and yielded about 156,000 words of verbatim transcribed data.

Data Collection Instruments

The quantitative survey instrument had six sections, all measured on seven-point Likert scales (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree):

- Selective Hiring (6 items; Sun *et al*., 2007; Delery & Doty, 1996).
- Extensive Training (7 items; Snell & Dean, 1992)
- Employment Security (5 items; Delery & Doty, 1996)
- Perceived Organizational Support (8 items; short SPOS Eisenberger *et al*., 1986)
- Guest Satisfaction (6 items Borucki & Burke, 1999; Bettencourt & Brown, 1997)
- Demographic and Control Variables (age, gender, education, tenure, department, hotel identifier)

Experts reviewed the instrument, which was translated into bilingual (English/French) and back-translated for verification, and pilot-tested with 30 frontline employees from three non-participating five-star hotels. Pilot results showed good psychometric properties and an average completion time of 18 minutes.

The qualitative semi-structured interview guide was structured around five thematic domains corresponding to the focal areas of the conceptual model: (1) organizational approaches to selective hiring; (2) training investments in terms of nature and scope; (3) employment security experience; (4) POS formation; and (5) mechanisms through which HR practices translate into guest-oriented service behaviors.

Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis proceeded in five steps in SmartPLS 4: (1) data preparation and descriptive statistics; (2) measurement model evaluation (outer model quality); (3) higher-order construct specification for HPWS; (4) structural model estimation with 5,000-subsample bootstrapping; (5) mediation analysis of Hypotheses H8 to H10. Qualitative analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2023) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis framework: data familiarization, initial coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and report writing. Inter-rater reliability was assessed using a 20% subsample; Cohen's kappa was 0.78 (good agreement). NVivo 14 was used for management of data and coding.

Results

Sample Characteristics

The 380 respondents' sample was broadly representative of the Mauritian five-star hotel frontline workforce: males (58.4%) and females (41.6%) made up a similar proportion to that reported for the sector as a whole (AXYS Group, 2023) [60:40 male to female ratio]; 30–39 years old was the modal age category (38.2%), followed by 18–29 years old (34.7%); the workforce was a relatively young workforce with high retention in the early to mid-career stage; hospitality diploma holders (42.6%), bachelor's degree holders (31.3%) and postgraduate qualification holders were educated, and departments were Food and Beverage (28.4%), Front Office (22.1%), Housekeeping (18.7%), Recreation and Leisure (14.2%), Spa and Wellness (10.3%) and Concierge and Guest Relations (6.3%). In terms of contract type, 84.2% were on permanent contracts and 15.8% on fixed-term contracts.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for all five focal constructs. All mean scores are in a moderately high range on a seven-point scale (4.87 for Employment Security to 5.32 for Guest Satisfaction). The slightly lower mean for Employment Security reflects the theoretical expectation that employment security is the most contextually sensitive HPWS dimension in Mauritian SIDS because seasonality and contract variability make genuine uncertainty about long-term employment continuity (Bos-Nehles *et al*., 2023). Standard deviations were moderate (0.89 to 1.11), skewness values were negative and modest (−0.52 to −0.38) and kurtosis values were close to zero, which means approximately mesokurtic distributions suitable for PLS-SEM analysis.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Focal Constructs

Construct	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Selective Hiring (SH)	380	5.21	0.94	2.17	7.00	–0.43	0.21
Extensive Training (ET)	380	5.08	1.02	1.86	7.00	–0.51	0.34
Employment Security (ES)	380	4.87	1.11	1.60	7.00	–0.38	–0.12
Perceived Org. Support (POS)	380	5.14	0.98	1.75	7.00	–0.47	0.18
Guest Satisfaction (GS)	380	5.32	0.89	2.33	7.00	–0.52	0.29

Measurement Model Evaluation

All standardized outer loadings exceeded the 0.70 threshold, ranging from 0.731 to 0.831. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all five constructs exceeded 0.50, ranging from 0.598 (Extensive Training) to 0.633 (Guest Satisfaction). Composite Reliability (CR) values substantially exceeded 0.80 for all constructs (range: 0.887 to 0.921), and Cronbach's Alpha values exceeded 0.80 for all constructs (range: 0.851 to 0.903). Discriminant validity was confirmed by both the Fornell-Larcker criterion (all square roots of AVE exceeding maximum inter-construct correlations) and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio (all below 0.85; highest = 0.798 between ET and POS). All Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values fell below the conservative threshold of 3.3 (range: 2.087 to 2.634), confirming no multicollinearity concern.

We assessed common method bias using Harman's single-factor test (the first factor explained 24.3% of total variance, well below the 50% threshold) and the marker variable technique (maximum partial correlation attenuation of 0.03), indicating that common method bias did not materially threaten the validity of the structural model results. We assessed non-response bias using wave analysis (early vs late returners); we found no statistically significant differences on any construct (all $p > 0.05$; all Cohen's $d < 0.10$).

Structural Model Results

The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was 0.061, below the 0.08 threshold, indicating adequate model fit. The R^2 value for POS was 0.612, indicating that the three HPWS dimensions collectively explain 61.2% of the variance in perceived organizational support. The R^2 value for guest

satisfaction was 0.574, indicating that the three HPWS dimensions and POS collectively explain 57.4% of the variance in employee-perceived guest satisfaction. Both the R^2 values are substantially strong per Cohen (1988). Stone-Geisser Q^2 values were positive for both endogenous constructs (POS: 0.387; GS: 0.341), confirming meaningful predictive relevance.

Table 2: Direct Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	*β*	SE	*t*-value	95% CI	f^2	Decision
H1	SH → POS	0.241	0.048	5.021	[0.147, 0.335]	0.087	Supported
H2	ET → POS	0.312	0.051	6.118	[0.212, 0.412]	0.134	Supported
H3	ES → POS	0.198	0.047	4.213	[0.106, 0.290]	0.063	Supported
H4	SH → GS	0.143	0.044	3.250	[0.057, 0.229]	0.041	Supported
H5	ET → GS	0.187	0.046	4.065	[0.097, 0.277]	0.062	Supported
H6	ES → GS	0.124	0.043	2.884	[0.040, 0.208]	0.032	Supported
H7	POS → GS	0.389	0.054	7.204	[0.283, 0.495]	0.201	Supported

Note: All path coefficients significant at $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed); β = standardised path coefficient; SE = bootstrapped standard error; f^2 = Cohen's effect size

All seven direct path hypotheses were supported at $p < 0.001$ with bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals that excluded zero for all paths. Extensive training to POS (*β* = 0.312) was the strongest among the three HPWS-to-POS paths, followed by selective hiring to POS (*β* = 0.241) and employment security to POS (*β* = 0.198). POS to Guest Satisfaction (*β* = 0.389) was the strongest individual path in the model and had the largest effect size (f^2 = 0.201). The relatively weaker direct paths from HPWS dimensions to guest satisfaction are theoretically significant, suggesting that HPWS practices primarily influence guest satisfaction through the mediating mechanism of POS rather than through direct behavioral pathways alone.

Table 3: Indirect Effects, Mediation Tests, and VAF Values

Hypothesis	Indirect Path	*β* (indirect)	SE	*t*-value	95% CI	VAF	Mediation Type
H8	SH → POS → GS	0.094	0.021	4.476	[0.053, 0.135]	0.397	Partial
H9	ET → POS → GS	0.121	0.024	5.042	[0.074, 0.168]	0.393	Partial
H10	ES → POS → GS	0.077	0.019	4.053	[0.040, 0.114]	0.383	Partial

Note: VAF = Variance Accounted For by the indirect effect

All three mediation hypotheses were supported. POS mediates about 38.3% to 39.7% of the total effect of each HPWS dimension on guest satisfaction (VAF range: 0.383–0.397). The mediation is partial (not full), meaning POS is a significant but not exhaustive mediator. This pattern confirms that HPWS practices influence guest satisfaction through several complementary mechanisms operating in parallel (POS is the dominant psychological pathway).

Qualitative Findings: Thematic Analysis

Five major themes emerged from the iterative thematic analysis (with quotations from interview transcripts as supporting evidence). Inter-rater reliability was Cohen's kappa = 0.78.

Theme 1: The signal value of selective hiring in constructing organizational identity.

HR managers in more HPWS-mature hotels saw selection processes as powerful signals of organizational seriousness and commitment to excellence that shape employees' enduring psychological relationship with their employer. HRM3 (HR Director of a large internationally affiliated resort) explained: *"When we put a candidate through a two-day assessment [role plays, panel interview, values assessment] and a reference check process which takes three weeks [etc.], we are sending a message before they even start work. We are telling them this organization takes people seriously and expects them to take it seriously back. The quality of the hiring process becomes the first chapter of the story the employee tells themselves about whom they work for".*

Theme 2: Training as relational investment and the meaning of organizational care.

Training was the dominant theme in all qualitative interviews (the most emotionally charged POS-generating HPWS practice). FLE2, a food and beverage supervisor with 12 years' service, said, *"What*

matters to me is not that the hotel sends me on course, but that they think about me: where am I in my career, what do I need to grow, and what will help me serve guests better. When I feel it is really about me and development, not just ticking a box for compliance, then I feel valued. And when I feel valued, then I give my best." This confirms the theoretical proposition that training investments signal organisational care and activate reciprocal obligations via SET mechanisms.

Theme 3: Employment security as a psychological foundation and its contextual fragility in Mauritius.

Employment security was the most contextually complex HPWS dimension (employees in hotels with formal employment security policies had stronger POS, but qualitative data showed a strong post-COVID temporal asymmetry: experienced employees who had been through rounds of restructuring were more guarded about their employment security perceptions, and even those reporting formal security practices expressed psychological uncertainty). HRM6 said, *"We have policies not to lay off staff during quiet periods […]. We stick to them, but after COVID people know that promises can be broken when things get really bad, so even if the policy is good, there is a shadow of doubt".* This finding shows how psychologically fragile employment security is in the Mauritian SIDS context.

Theme 4: Perceived organizational support as experiential gestalt and its luxury-specific manifestations.

POS was always described not as an intellectual assessment but rather as a holistic experiential quality that employees felt through accumulated daily organizational interactions. FLE4 (a guest relations officer) put this gestalt quality in words: *"POS is not one thing. It is everything this hotel does for me, everything it doesn't do; how it talks to me; how it treats me when things go wrong; if I feel invisible or valued… You can't measure it on a survey. But you know when it is there and when it isn't. And when it isn't, your service to guests changes."* This finding has important implications for how POS should be measured and theorized in luxury hospitality contexts, where the quality of interpersonal experience matters most.

Theme 5: Contextual barriers and enablers of HPWS effectiveness in the Mauritian SIDS environment.

Qualitative data showed that unique contextual factors of the SIDS environment moderate the effectiveness of HPWS practices (small domestic labour market, inter-hotel competition for talent; pronounced seasonality of tourism demand; cultural norm of warmth in Mauritian service identity; structural dependence on FDI in hotel development). These factors both enable and constrain translating HPWS investments into POS and guest satisfaction outcomes.

DISCUSSION

Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Support

The results support all three proposed indirect pathways from selective hiring, extensive training, and employment security to guest satisfaction through perceived organizational support (POS). Indirect effects were $\beta = 0.094$ for selective hiring (H8; VAF = 0.397), $\beta = 0.121$ for extensive training (H9; VAF = 0.393), and $\beta = 0.077$ for employment security (H10; VAF = 0.383). These VAF values indicate partial mediation: POS accounts for 38.3%–39.7% of each total effect, while significant direct paths remain. This aligns with a multi-mechanism account of strategic HRM, where employee perceptions help translate HR investments into service outcomes but do not explain all pathways (Eisenberger *et al*., 2023; Jiang *et al*., 2012; Kehoe & Wright, 2023). Recent hospitality research also identifies work engagement and psychological empowerment as distinct intervening processes linking HR systems or perceived support to employee outcomes (Chouhan, 2025; McManus *et al*., 2025; Wang & Tsai, 2026). These studies make complementary pathways plausible but do not show that unmeasured pathways operated in this sample.

POS had the strongest individual path to employee-perceived guest satisfaction ($\beta = 0.389$, $f^2 = 0.201$). This is consistent with organizational support theory: employees who view organizational treatment as supportive may reciprocate with effort- and service-oriented behavior (Eisenberger *et al*., 2023). However, employees reported guest satisfaction; hotel guests did not assess it independently. The coefficient therefore reflects employee-perceived satisfaction, not verified customer evaluations or service quality. The qualitative account of POS as an accumulated, day-to-day experience helps explain its relevance to luxury service encounters but provides context, not evidence of the causal mechanism. Hospitality research also links POS to citizenship behavior, work engagement, and turnover intention (McManus *et al*., 2025; Ngwa & Bayram, 2026), underscoring the employee–organization relationship without equating these outcomes with guest satisfaction.

Direct effects should be interpreted cautiously. HPWS-to-satisfaction coefficients were $\beta = 0.143$ for selective hiring, $\beta = 0.187$ for extensive training, and $\beta = 0.124$ for employment security, with f^2 values of 0.041, 0.062, and 0.032, respectively. These effects were smaller than the POS-to-satisfaction path ($\beta = 0.389$, $f^2 = 0.201$). Although all direct paths were significant ($p < 0.001$), their individual contributions were modest. Statistical significance does not imply substantial practical impact, and these estimates do not quantify changes in independently observed guest satisfaction. Model R^2 values (POS = 0.612; guest satisfaction = 0.574) indicate variance explained in this sample but do not resolve these measurement and design limitations.

Differential Associations of the HPWS Dimensions with POS

The HPWS-to-POS paths ranked extensive training ($\beta = 0.312$), selective hiring ($\beta = 0.241$), and employment security ($\beta = 0.198$); all were significant ($p < 0.001$). Training was the strongest measured antecedent, though not necessarily the most effective HR practice universally. This aligns with employees' accounts of development opportunities as organizational care and hospitality research connecting HR practices with engagement and employee outcomes, although prior studies cover other mechanisms and contexts (Chouhan, 2025; Singh, 2025; Wang & Tsai, 2026). The data show an association between training and POS in Mauritian five-star hotels; a skills-gap explanation is plausible but was not tested as a moderator.

Selective hiring had the second-strongest association with POS. Interviewees suggested thorough, respectful selection may signal organizational expectations and how employees are treated from the outset. This fits signalling and social-exchange perspectives (Kehoe & Wright, 2023), but the study did not measure perceived hiring signals, person–organisation fit, or obligation as mediators. Thus, signalling remains an interpretation for future testing, not an established causal pathway.

Employment security had the smallest, but still significant, association with POS. Comments on restructuring and post-COVID uncertainty suggest formal policies may seem less credible when shocks weaken confidence in their durability. This finding may be relevant in a tourism-dependent small-island context shaped by seasonality and external shocks. However, cross-sectional data cannot establish this explanation; the finding implies employment security is important.

Service Context and Guest-related Outcomes

Interviews identify warmth, attentiveness, seasonality, labor-market constraints, and foreign-investment dependence as contextual factors shaping employees' experiences of HR practices and support. These insights inform setting-specific interpretation and comparative research but do not test cultural or institutional moderation. The claim that Mauritian service norms strengthen the POS–satisfaction association should therefore remain a hypothesis, not an explanation established by this model. Research on hotel guest perceptions, HR, and technology similarly shows that service outcomes can reflect employee-facing practices and broader service systems (Radović *et al*., 2025) but does not validate a specific Mauritian cultural effect.

Theoretical Contribution

This study adds evidence from an under-researched SIDS luxury-hospitality context on three HPWS dimensions, POS, and employee-perceived guest satisfaction. Its main contribution is a pattern of partial mediation: each HR dimension had a significant indirect association through POS and a remaining direct association with the outcome. POS is thus one explanatory link, not a complete account of how HR practices relate to service outcomes. The relative strength of the three HPWS-to-POS paths also enables context-specific comparison. Finally, the explanatory sequential design uses interview themes to contextualize quantitative findings. Conclusions should remain limited to the measures, participating Mauritian five-star hotels, and study design; they do not establish that these relationships are unique to this setting.

Limitations

All constructs were measured by perception, introducing social desirability and recall bias. Guest satisfaction was not independently verified. A single source and instrument may inflate relationships; procedural remedies and statistical checks (Harman's test, full collinearity VIFs) reduce but do not eliminate this risk. Non-probability sampling and a six-hotel interview base limit representativeness, and the smaller frontline interview group narrows qualitative breadth. Findings reflect Mauritian five-star hotels, so transfer to other tiers, sectors or cultures requires caution; replication and longitudinal designs are recommended.

Future Scope

Building on the limitations above, future research could employ longitudinal and experimental designs to strengthen causal claims. Combining employee perceptions with independent measures, such as guest surveys, manager ratings and operational indicators, would reduce self-report bias. Broader sampling across hotel categories, regions and countries would improve representativeness and test whether POS mediation holds in different contexts. Future studies could examine additional mediators, such as employee engagement, psychological empowerment and service climate, alongside moderators such as job level, tenure and hotel size. Dyadic and multilevel modelling could capture how HPWS operates across organizational levels, while larger interview samples and guest interviews would provide deeper insights. Further research could explore how individual HPWS practices combine to influence service outcomes and how digitalization, hybrid service delivery and workforce shortages reshape the HPWS-support-satisfaction relationship.

Conclusion

This study finds that Perceived Organizational Support (POS) partially mediates the relationship between three High-Performance Work System (HPWS) practices - selective hiring, extensive training, and employment security - and guest satisfaction in Mauritian five-star hotels. Each practice directly and significantly affects POS and guest satisfaction; POS accounts for 38–40% of each practice’s total effect on satisfaction. Extensive training is the strongest source of POS and an indirect contributor to satisfaction, followed by selective hiring and employment security. Qualitative findings clarify these relationships: employees experience POS as an overall impression shaped by their relationship with the organization.

The study contributes by explaining how HPWS practices influence service outcomes in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) luxury hotels, identifying which practices most strongly generate POS, and demonstrating the value of mixed methods. Hotel managers should prioritize comprehensive, tailored training; honor and transparently communicate employment security commitments; and use rigorous hiring to signal organizational commitment from the outset. Because frontline employees embody HR investment and shape guest experiences, policymakers should strengthen vocational training, incentivize long-term workforce development, and address labor market vulnerabilities that weaken employment security.

CRediT Authorship Contribution Statement

L.D.D.C.C.: Conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data curation, formal analysis, visualization, writing-original draft, project administration. N.S.: Supervision, validation, writing-review and editing.

AI Assistance Declaration

The authors used AI tools for language editing, clarity, organisation, and formatting purposes only. All AI-assisted content was reviewed and verified by the authors, who take full responsibility for the final manuscript. AI was not used for data collection or statistical analysis.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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