



## Balancing Acts: The Impact of Workload, Supervisory Support, and Emotional Exhaustion on Job Embeddedness among Hospitality Employees

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### Abstract

Although prior research has explored the impact of job demands and resources on employee outcomes, limited attention has been paid to the psychological mechanisms linking these factors to job embeddedness, particularly in frontline hospitality roles in emerging economies. Data were collected from 280 frontline hotel employees in India and analysed using PLS modelling. The results reveal that workload increases emotional exhaustion, while supervisory support reduces it. Emotional exhaustion partially mediates the relationship between workload and supervisory support, and job embeddedness. These findings underscore the critical role of emotional exhaustion in shaping employees' intentions to remain within their organisations. This study offers practical recommendations for managers, including implementing strategies that mitigate emotional exhaustion, such as fostering supportive supervision, offering employee assistance programs, and addressing workload-related challenges. This study contributes to the literature on job embeddedness by providing insights into the interplay between job demands, resources, and employee retention.

**Keywords:** Emotional Exhaustion, Hospitality Industry, Job Embeddedness, Supervisory Support, Workload

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## **Introduction**

Job embeddedness, a construct that explains why individuals choose to stay in their jobs (Mitchell et al., 2001), has garnered substantial interest in the field of organisational behaviour research (Lee et al., 2004). The construct captures both the aspects, i.e., on-the-job and off-the-job forces that bind employees to their jobs, thereby lowering their quit intentions (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006). It consists of three main dimensions: links, fit, and sacrifice (Mitchell et al., 2001). Links refer to the formal or informal connections an employee has within the organisation and the broader community, fit refers to how well the employee's personal characteristics and goals align well with that of the organization and its surroundings. While sacrifice denotes the perceived losses associated with an employee who is about to leave their job. However, the term was later expanded by Crossley et al. (2007), who defined it in a general sense as a web of all the factors that deeply entrenched employees in their job, thereby enhancing their commitment to both their role and organisation. Unlike traditional turnover models, which predominantly explore the reasons for employee departure, this construct has gained attention as an essential strategy for fostering employee retention (Yam et al., 2018).

Despite its significant contributions, the existing literature on job embeddedness has predominantly focused on its benefits, such as enhanced job satisfaction (Balakumar & Umamaheswari, 2018), reduced turnover (Peltokorpi et al., 2014), and improved performance (Sekiguchi et al., 2008), which have been extensively studied. However, limited attention has been paid to the conditions that may weaken or erode employees' embeddedness (Dechawatanapaisal, 2022), particularly in contexts where job roles are highly demanding.

The hospitality industry is recognised as one of the most demanding and stressful work environments within the service sector (Menon & Manjrekar, 2020). Characterised by long working hours, high-pressure conditions, workload, and elevated customer expectations (Gangai, 2013; Santhanam et al., 2017), this sector requires employees to maintain exceptional service standards under challenging circumstances. Frontline employees, particularly those working in five-star hotels, face unique work stressors as they manage the high demands of elite guests. This not only makes their roles significantly more challenging compared to other sectors but also places them under continuous pressure to deliver impeccable service, often with limited support and resources, thus adversely affecting their level of job embeddedness. Such cumulative stressors often lead to the depletion of emotional

and physical resources, resulting in emotional exhaustion, a critical factor that negatively impacts employees' attachment to their jobs. Employees experiencing emotional exhaustion become less entrenched in their jobs, thus hindering the industry's growth. Despite the critical role of frontline employees in the hospitality industry, there is limited literature on the factors that undermine their job embeddedness, particularly in high-pressure service environments where job demands are consistently high (Dechawatanapaisal, 2018; Wen et al., 2020; Karatepe, 2013a). Most studies have primarily focused on the outcomes of job embeddedness, while scholars have increasingly called for a shift towards investigating the antecedents of job embeddedness (Karatepe & Karadas, 2012; Karatepe, 2013a).

Considering the job embeddedness antecedents, one key factor that has received attention in the context of the hospitality sector is emotional exhaustion, with frontline employees frequently facing this issue due to job stressors, including high workload (Karatepe, 2010; Liang et al., 2007). However, while existing research has examined the relationship between job demands and emotional exhaustion (Grobelna, 2021; Karatepe & Karadas, 2012), few studies have explored how supervisory support might buffer this relationship (Grobelna, 2021).

Furthermore, although emotional exhaustion has been well-documented as a consequence of job stressors, the researcher could not find studies that have examined its effect on job embeddedness in the context of hospitality employees. This gap presents an opportunity to extend previous research that has primarily focused on job stressors/resources and their impact on employee service performance (Grobelna, 2021), satisfaction (Karatepe, 2010), and turnover intentions (Grobelna, 2021). In contrast, this study aims to explore how emotional exhaustion influences job embeddedness among frontline hospitality employees, focusing on the combined impact of job demands, i.e., workload, and job resources, i.e., supervisory support, on emotional exhaustion, and how these factors ultimately affect job embeddedness.

Given the hospitality industry's inherent high workload demands and its reliance on frontline employees, this study provides a unique opportunity to investigate these dynamics. By addressing the gap in the literature, this research offers new insights into the erosion of job embeddedness (Karatepe, 2013a), emphasising emotional exhaustion as a crucial mediator in understanding how job demands and resources shape employees' emotional connection to their work and organisation.

Therefore, based on these gaps, the study focuses on the following research questions:

RQ1: How does workload impact emotional exhaustion and, in turn, affect job embeddedness among frontline hotel employees in high-demand environments?

RQ2: How does supervisory support influence emotional exhaustion and its subsequent effect on job embeddedness among frontline hotel employees?

RQ3: To what extent does emotional exhaustion mediate the relationship between workload, supervisory support, and job embeddedness among frontline hotel employees?

## **Theoretical Foundation**

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) acts as the theoretical base of the study. Its flexible concept of dual process, which describes two distinct mechanisms, i.e., job demands and job resources, offers a flexible approach to examine various occupational contexts (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). It acts as a theoretical lens in understanding how certain workplace factors can adversely or favourably affect employees' behaviour and their attitude towards their jobs. In this study, workload is considered a job stressor, and supervisory support is considered a job resource. According to the JD-R model, the presence of job demands heightens strain, e.g., emotional exhaustion, that may further affect the positive outcomes (Karatepe, 2013b). Additionally, studies also prove that job resources such as supervisory support may also prevent negative outcomes (Karatepe, 2010).

Additionally, several previous studies have also applied the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory to examine how various job stressors and resources impact emotional strain and subsequently influence key outcomes such as employee performance. The theory states that individuals strive to acquire, preserve, and protect valuable resources (Hobfoll, 2001). Stress arises when these resources are endangered, depleted, insufficiently replenished, lost, or when individuals fail to gain resources, despite major investment. This resource loss is central to the stress process, leading to negative outcomes. Research in Turkey (Yavas et al., 2008), Northern Cyprus (Karatepe & Uludag, 2007), and Nigeria (Karatepe & Aleshinloye, 2009) has applied this framework to understand these dynamics among hotel employees and has reported negative job outcomes.

Building on these foundations, the study proposes a model to test how workload, when excessive, can lead to emotional exhaustion, which in turn may

reduce job embeddedness. This study also aims to investigate whether supervisor support can mitigate the negative effects of workload on emotional exhaustion, thereby enhancing job embeddedness. Furthermore, the interaction of these factors on job embeddedness remains underexplored in existing literature, making this research a novel contribution by examining the potential influence of emotional exhaustion on job embeddedness.

## **Literature Review and Hypotheses Development**

To explore the reasons why employees choose to stay in their organisation, Mitchell et al. (2001) developed the construct of job embeddedness, which focuses on “why employees stay, and describes the feelings of being enmeshed in a social system” (Dechawatanapaisal, 2018). Some studies (Lee et al., 2004; Crossley et al., 2007) have also identified job embeddedness as an anti-withdrawal construct since it focuses on the reasons that promote employees to remain in the organisation. Additionally, the construct is unique in itself as it was reported that it is a broader concept as it covers non-work-related factors that other constructs cannot, as it covers all job and non-job-related factors that bind an individual to their job (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Job embeddedness is primarily linked directly to turnover intentions. When managing turnover, managers must address the factors that reduce job embeddedness (Mitchell et al., 2001). This construct has also been tested against various significant outcomes, including job performance (Andresen, 2015), innovative work behaviour (Amankwaa et al., 2022), in-role, extra-role performance (Susomrith & Amankwaa, 2020), and organisational citizenship behaviour (Andresen, 2015).

However, while research has identified antecedents of job embeddedness, the factors influencing its promotion or reduction remain underexplored (Karatepe & Karadas, 2012; Karatepe, 2013a). Promoters of job embeddedness identified in the literature include perceived organizational support (Dirican & Erdil, 2020), coworker and family support (Karatepe, 2016), and psychological capital (Harunavamwe et al., 2020). Conversely, factors that hinder job embeddedness include job insecurity (Safavi & Karatepe, 2019), abusive supervision (Ampofo & Karatepe, 2022), psychological contract breach (Singh, 2023), and career calling (Yang & Chen, 2020).

While research has identified some antecedents of job embeddedness, studies focusing specifically on its antecedents within the hospitality industry remain limited (Arici et al., 2021). Furthermore, studies that simultaneously examine both positive and negative variables affecting job embeddedness, particularly with the mediating effects of emotional exhaustion, remain underexplored. This gap warrants further investigation to better understand the complexities of factors influencing job embeddedness (Grobelna et al., 2021).

### ***Direct Effects***

#### *Workload and Supervisor Support with Emotional Exhaustion*

Workload refers to the experience of feeling overwhelmed and burdened by the demands and pressures of work (Karatepe, 2013b). When excessive, it can lead to emotional exhaustion, a state marked by persistent fatigue, a sense of depletion, and diminished effectiveness. Studies consistently highlight that workload, beyond a certain limit, is positively associated with emotional exhaustion (Maslach et al., 2001; Karatepe, 2013b; Grobelna, 2021). This relationship can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, when individuals face excessive work demands, they may perceive their resources (e.g., time, energy, skills) as inadequate to cope with those demands, leading to feelings of stress and strain (Grobelna, 2021). Chronic exposure to high workloads can gradually deplete individuals' emotional resources, resulting in emotional exhaustion (Baeriswyl et al., 2017). Research indicates that workload stress tends to evoke negative emotions such as frustration, anxiety, and irritability, which further intensify the cycle of exhaustion. Moreover, Grobelna (2021) highlights that workload is a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion among frontline hotel employees in Poland. The author further reported that employees who were unable to cope with the challenges arising from high levels of workload were prone to experience high levels of emotional exhaustion, underscoring its harmful effects.

To offset the negative effects of high job demands, such as workload, a wide range of job resources has been shown to play a mitigating role. Resources such as organisational support, performance feedback, meaningful work, and supervisory support contribute to alleviating emotional strain (Chowhan & Pike, 2023). Among these, supervisor support has emerged as a crucial factor in mitigating against emotional exhaustion. While prolonged exposure to stress and workload can diminish employees' performance and effectiveness, consistent support and guidance from supervisors can help create a positive work environment, fostering employee engagement (Grobelna, 2021).

Strong evidence for the relationship can be found in the empirical studies. For instance, Grobelna (2021), found that supervisor support significantly reduces emotional exhaustion among hotel employees in Poland. Similarly, Karatepe (2010) showed that having access to supervisory assistance helps prevent exhaustion. On the contrary, Kalliath and Beck (2001) reported that a lack of supportive supervisors can intensify stress and emotional exhaustion. These findings highlight the relevance of supervisors in creating a healthy work environment that strikes a balance between job demands and job resources, which subsequently improves employees' well-being and performance.

Building on this, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H<sub>1</sub>: Workload negatively impacts emotional exhaustion.

H<sub>2</sub>: Supervisory support positively impacts emotional exhaustion.

#### *Emotional Exhaustion and Job Embeddedness*

Emotional exhaustion, a precursor to burnout syndrome, is a psychological response to on-the-job stressors (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). It refers to the depletion of emotional resources and energy resulting from prolonged exposure to high levels of work stress. This condition is particularly prevalent in occupations that require substantial interpersonal interactions. Such roles necessitate both professional skills and emotional labour, which can result in the accumulation of negative emotions, ultimately leading to emotional exhaustion (Yeh et al., 2021). Employees experiencing emotional exhaustion are less likely to stay in their jobs (Bettini et al., 2017) since they are less inclined to remain in their positions.

Emotional exhaustion often leads individuals to adopt avoidance behaviours as a way of coping. These behaviours further weaken employees' connection with their organisation (Tricahyadinata et al., 2020). Studies have shown a negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and job embeddedness (Bakker et al., 2008; Karatepe et al., 2019). Employees experiencing emotional strain may struggle to align their skills and values with job demands. This misalignment disrupts their sense of attachment to their jobs (Karatepe, 2013b). Empirical research supports this connection. For instance, Gustiawan et al. (2023) found that emotional exhaustion lowers job embeddedness, while Karatepe et al. (2019) highlighted that increased emotional exhaustion weakens employees' ties with the organisation, diminishing employees' commitment.

Building on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H<sub>3</sub>: Emotional exhaustion negatively impacts job embeddedness.

### ***Mediating Effects***

The role of emotional exhaustion as a mediating mechanism warrants deeper theoretical unpacking beyond its traditional treatment as a mere outcome variable. Drawing on the Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 2001) emotional exhaustion can be conceptualized as a key mediating mechanism that links job demands and resources to employees' attachment to their organizations. As per the theory individuals seek to acquire, maintain, and accumulate resources; when confronted with consistent job demands such as high workload, they experience resource depletion, which manifests as emotional exhaustion (Karatepe, 2010). This chronic strain compromises employees' psychological functioning, reducing their capacity to engage meaningfully with their roles and environment. In this context, workload triggers emotional exhaustion, which then undermines job embeddedness (Karatepe, 2013b) by weakening the perception of job entrenchment.

This sequence reflects how chronic job demands erode emotional resources, resulting in exhaustion that subsequently undermines the multi-dimensional facets of embeddedness, particularly the affective and relational components of embeddedness. Exhausted employees feel less connected and less motivated to maintain ties with their workplace, perceiving fewer benefits and more personal costs in staying.

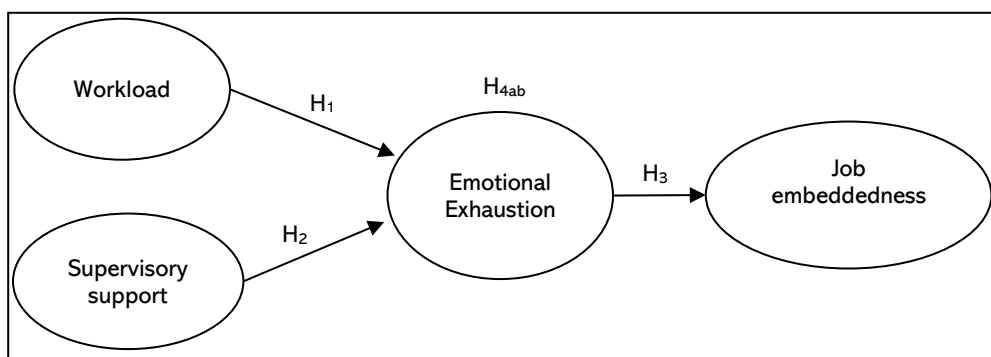
Conversely, supervisory support acts as a valuable job resource that can buffer the negative effects of excessive workload, which helps counteract the effects of job demands and preserves employees' emotional equilibrium (Grobelna 2021). Employees who perceive their supervisors as supportive are more likely to experience reduced emotional exhaustion, enabling them to stay engaged, build stronger social and task-related connections, and perceive greater value in remaining with the organisation. This aligns with the second hypothesised pathway: Supervisory Support → Reduced Emotional Exhaustion → Higher Job Embeddedness [H<sub>4</sub>(ii)].

Notably, emotional exhaustion in this framework does not function as an endpoint but as a psychological conduit through which job demands and resources exert their influence on employees' embeddedness. The model suggests that job demands, such as high workload, are primary predictors of emotional exhaustion, as



they drain employees' emotional and mental resources, leading to burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). However, when supervisor support is available, employees are better equipped to cope with the stress caused by high workload, which can reduce emotional exhaustion (Karatepe, 2010), provided that the support outweighs the negative effects of job demands, i.e., workload (Baeriswyl et al., 2017; Grobelna, 2021). This, in turn, helps mitigate the adverse impact on their connection with the organisation. Hence, while the Job Demands-Resources model explains how demands and resources influence strain and motivation, it is the conservation of resources theory that provides a more direct explanation for the mediating role of emotional exhaustion by emphasising the primacy of resource loss and the protective function of resource gain (Hobfoll, 2001).

**Figure 1: Conceptual Model**



Empirical evidence supports this transmission pathway: studies have found that emotional exhaustion not only results from high workload but also significantly predicts diminished embeddedness (Karatepe, 2010), while supervisor support has been shown to buffer emotional exhaustion (Baeriswyl et al., 2017; Grobelna, 2021).

Building on prior research, this study aims to extend existing knowledge by empirically testing whether emotional exhaustion serves as a central explanatory mechanism through which both workload and supervisory support influence job embeddedness—an integrative mediation pathway that, to the best of our knowledge, has not yet been simultaneously examined in the extant literature.

Building on this, the following hypotheses are proposed (see Figure 1):

H<sub>4a</sub>: Emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship of workload with job embeddedness.

H<sub>4b</sub>: Emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship of supervisory support with job embeddedness.

## **Research Methodology**

### ***Sampling Frame, Sampling Strategy, and Survey Administration***

This study adopted a purposive sampling strategy, targeting frontline employees in five-star hotels located in Punjab and Chandigarh, Northern India. A total of ten five-star hotels (six in Punjab and four in Chandigarh) have received the five-star rating from the Federation of Hospitality and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI). Of these ten hotels, six agreed to join the survey.

The target group for this research consisted of full-time frontline employees (non-managerial) from front desk, housekeeping, and food and beverage production and services departments. These employees were selected due to their pivotal role in direct customer engagement. Their responsibilities often subject them to significant challenges, including high workloads and the need to meet the demanding expectations of an elite clientele. This dual burden not only increases their workload but also places considerable pressure on them to deliver superior customer satisfaction, contributing to difficulties in job retention.

To obtain the employee database and facilitate data collection, HR managers from each hotel were contacted and thoroughly briefed about the research. Managers were reached through contact information provided on the hotels' websites and through follow-up phone calls. Upon receiving their permission, the data collection process was initiated. Non-probability purposive sampling was used since the complete database of all the employees was not accessible. A full-length paper-based questionnaire was used to collect the data from the respondents. To maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents, no personal identifying information was collected. Additionally, a unique code was assigned to each employee to track responses without revealing their identity. Respondents participated voluntarily. To ensure privacy, respondents were informed that their answers would be used solely for research purposes and reported in aggregate form.

Data collection was conducted using a structured, self-administered survey, which was distributed to frontline employees at the six participating hotels. Given the operational constraints and the demanding nature of the industry, the data

collection process extended over two to three months, requiring reminder calls to the managers to ensure participation. Of the 350 distributed questionnaires, 297 were returned. Seventeen were discarded because of incomplete responses, and the remaining were considered useful for the study.

Demographic analysis revealed that 69% of the respondents were male, while the largest proportion (56%) fell into the age category of over 25 but under 35 years. Additionally, 60% of them had served the hotel for a minimum of one to five years in their respective hotels. This demographic profile highlights the composition of the workforce included in the study and provides a relevant context for interpreting the findings.

To establish the appropriate sample size for the study, a power analysis was carried out using G\*Power software as outlined by Faul et al. (2009). The analysis considered a significance level of 0.05 and aimed for a desired power of 0.95. The results of the analysis specified that a minimum of 218 participants were required. Ultimately, 280 complete responses were obtained and analysed, which exceeded the minimum requirement and thus deemed sufficient for conducting the model analysis.

### ***Measurement Instruments***

Workload was operationalised using four items given by Spector and Jex (1998). Supervisory support was operationalised using four four-item scale given by Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe (2003). To measure emotional exhaustion, an eight-item scale from the MBI (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) was used. While job embeddedness was operationalised using a seven-item scale given by Crossley et al. (2007).

### **Data Analysis and Results**

The data was analysed using Smart Partial Least Square Software, version 4.0.9.0, a commonly used method in the field of management research. PLS-SEM operates as a nonparametric technique, thereby eliminating the need for assumptions about multivariate normality. Its predictive relevance suits the study's objective to test the effects of workload and supervisory support on job embeddedness through the mediating effects of emotional exhaustion. The study was conducted among frontline employees serving in five-star hotels. The PLS Predict procedure offers an analysis of predictive performance on out-of-sample data, which is valuable for making managerial decisions. Hence, it was found useful to apply this technique.

### ***Common Method Bias***

To address multicollinearity, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was examined, whose values remained lower than the acceptable threshold limit of 3.33 (Hair et al., 2017). This validates that the constructs are devoid of multicollinearity. In line with the guidelines provided by Kock and Lynn (2012), the inner VIF values of the constructs were compared with those of a randomly chosen exogenous variable. The results revealed that all values were well within the acceptable limit of 3.33, indicating no issue of common method bias.

### ***Measurement Results***

Composite reliability (CR), Rho A, and Cronbach's alpha are used to assess the reliability of constructs. For both measures, the standardised cut-off limit is 0.70 as a general rule (Hair et al., 2020). Table 1 indicates that the reliability values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70. Convergent validity was evaluated through Average Variance Extracted (AVE) scores and factor loadings. The AVE values for all constructs were between 0.515 and 0.651, which significantly exceed the recommended minimum of 0.5. Similarly, factor loadings of most of the items of the constructs were also found above the threshold limit of 0.70. However, one of the items of workload, four items of emotional exhaustion and two items of job embeddedness had factor loadings below the threshold limit. But these items were retained given that their Average Variance Extracted (AVE) score met the stipulated threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2017). The AVE threshold of 0.50 signifies that more than half of the variance in the observed variables is explained by the underlying construct, thereby confirming that the retained items contribute meaningfully to its measurement.

**Table 1: Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity.**

Items	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Rho A	Rho C	AVE
<b>Workload</b>		0.726	0.759	0.832	0.560
My workload is manageable.	0.799				
I feel I am working too hard for my job.	0.516				
Administrative duties do not interfere with my work.	0.821				
I am provided with adequate resources to do my job properly.	0.813				

Items	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Rho A	Rho C	AVE
<b>Supervisory support</b>		0.822	0.860	0.885	0.661
My supervisor is willing to extend himself/herself to help me perform my job.	0.862				
My supervisor is helpful to me in getting the job done.	0.837				
My supervisor takes pride in my accomplishments at work.	0.607				
My supervisor tries to make my job as interesting as possible.	0.915				
<b>Emotional exhaustion</b>		0.861	0.874	0.892	0.515
I feel emotionally drained from my work.	0.568				
I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.	0.653				
I feel burned out from my work.	0.617				
I feel frustrated by my job.	0.760				
I feel I am working too hard on my job.	0.585				
I feel like I am at the end of my rope.	0.795				
I feel very energetic.	0.858				
I feel used up at the end of the work day.	0.839				
<b>Job embeddedness</b>		0.881	0.900	0.907	0.585
I feel attached to this organisation.	0.760				
I am tightly connected to this organisation.	0.788				
I feel tied to this organisation and want to be a part of it.	0.653				
I am too caught up in this organisation to leave.	0.632				
I simply could not leave the organisation that I work for.	0.797				
It would be difficult for me to leave this organisation.	0.819				
It would be easy for me to leave this organisation.	0.891				

To establish the discriminant validity, the study followed the criteria outlined by Henseler et al. (2015) and applied the HTMT criterion. Table 2 illustrates that all values were significantly below the 0.85 threshold, demonstrating adherence to

Henseler's standard. Therefore, this criterion affirms that the study does not violate the discriminant validity condition.

**Table 2: HTMT Criterion for the Assessment of Discriminant Validity.**

	<b>WRL</b>	<b>EEX</b>	<b>JEM</b>
EEX	0.700		
JEM	0.712	0.652	
SPS	0.517	0.564	0.729

Note: WRL: Workload, SPS: Supervisory support, EEX: Emotional exhaustion, JEM: Job embeddedness.

### ***Structural Model Results***

This analysis began with an estimation of inner VIF values to check for multicollinearity, with all values falling below the recommended threshold of 5 (Hair et al., 2019). Later, the model's explanatory power was assessed using  $R^2$ , and path coefficients were computed. Bootstrapping methods were utilised to conduct significance tests and assess structural relationships, while effect sizes ( $f^2$ ) of individual predictor constructs were also calculated. Model's predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) was also tested. According to Hair et al. (2017), the structural model (Figure 2) evaluates the predictive significance of the dependent construct to the independent constructs. Additionally, the  $p$ -values were calculated for hypothesis testing using the bootstrapping procedure with the recommendation of 10000 bootstraps (Hair et al., 2022).

As shown in Table 3, the results revealed that workload positively impacted emotional exhaustion among frontline hotel employees ( $\beta = 0.433$ ,  $p = 0.001 < 0.05$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1. This indicates that a higher workload significantly contributes to emotional exhaustion among frontline employees. In contrast, supervisory support was found to negatively affect emotional exhaustion among frontline employees ( $\beta = -0.312$ ,  $p = 0.019 < 0.05$ ), suggesting that strong supervisory support significantly reduces emotional exhaustion, albeit to a lesser extent than workload.

Additionally, a negative relationship was observed between emotional exhaustion and job embeddedness ( $\beta = -0.253$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). The findings indicate that employees experiencing emotional exhaustion in their roles are less likely to develop an emotional connection with their organisations. Consequently, Hypotheses 2 and 3 were also supported.

Furthermore, the analysis highlighted the mediating role of emotional exhaustion in the relationships between workload and job embeddedness, as well as supervisory support and job embeddedness. Specifically, it was found that emotional exhaustion mediates the negative impact of workload on job embeddedness, while supervisory support helps mitigate emotional exhaustion, thereby indirectly enhancing job embeddedness. Thus, supporting Hypotheses 4 (a) and (b). The results were in line with the previous research that has shown that emotional exhaustion is more strongly influenced by job demands than by supervisory support (Grobela 2021; Lee & Ashforth, 1996). These findings underscore the importance of managing workload and providing supervisory support to reduce emotional exhaustion and improve job embeddedness, offering practical insights for enhancing employee retention and well-being in the hospitality sector.

**Table 3: Structural Model Results.**

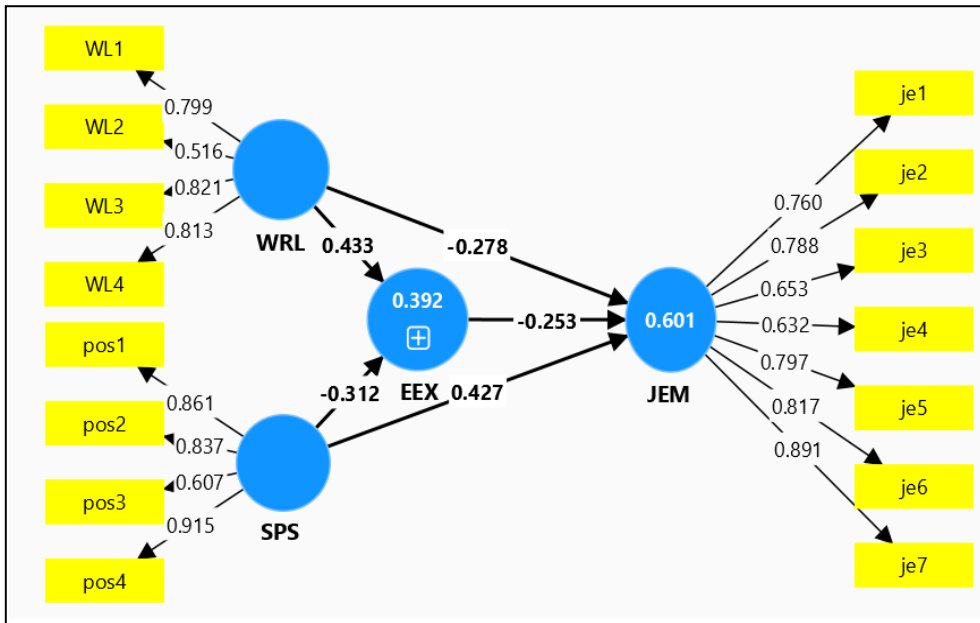
Hypotheses testing	Std. beta	Standard deviation	<i>t</i> – statistics	<i>p</i> values
<i>Direct effects</i>				
WRL → EEX	0.432	0.131	3.213	0.001
EEX → JEM	-0.601	0.069	9.251	0.000
SPS → EEX	-0.312	0.149	2.339	0.019
<i>Mediating effects</i>				
WRL → EEX → JEM	-0.278	0.097	2.753	0.006
SPS → EEX → JEM	0.427	0.108	2.030	0.042

Note: WRL: Workload, SPS: Supervisory support, EEX: Emotional exhaustion, JEM: Job embeddedness

The coefficients of determination ( $R^2$ ) for emotional exhaustion and job embeddedness were found to be significant, accounting for 39.2 % and 60.1% of the variance, respectively (Table 4). This suggests that workload and supervisory support together explain 39.2% of the variance in emotional exhaustion and 60.1 % of the variance in job embeddedness. The  $f^2$  values were also calculated to assess the extent to which exogenous variables contribute to the variance in the coefficients of determination for the endogenous variables. According to Cohen (1988), the guidelines indicate that workload and supervisory support have a medium effect on emotional exhaustion and employees' job embeddedness. Furthermore, the predictive relevance of the path model was tested, with the results showing that the  $Q^2$  values for emotional exhaustion and job embeddedness exceed

the threshold of zero (Hair et al., 2022), thereby confirming the predictive relevance of the model.

**Figure 2: Structural Model**



**Table 4: Explanatory Power, Effect Size and Predictive Relevance.**

Latent variables	R square	Q square	F square	Effect size
Emotional exhaustion	0.392	0.256	{0.256; 0.135}	Medium effect
Job embeddedness	0.601	0.375	{0.098; 0.338}	Medium effect

## Discussion

Workload is a significant source of workplace stress that contributes to emotional exhaustion among employees (Mihelic et al., 2024). Emotionally exhausted employees often exhibit subpar performance and reduced work commitment (Grobelna, 2021). According to the health impairment process of the JD-R model, increased job demands such as high workloads lead to emotional strain, resulting in unfavourable outcomes like turnover intentions (Russeng et al., 2020). This study extends this understanding by demonstrating that supervisory support, as a critical job resource, can mitigate the adverse effects of workload on emotional exhaustion, thereby increasing job embeddedness among employees and cultivating a more engaged and committed workforce in the hospitality sector.



Job embeddedness offers several advantages as an employee retention strategy. It reduces turnover and the associated costs of recruitment and training (Qaiser et al., 2015). Embedded employees are less likely to seek alternative opportunities, directly addressing high turnover rates in the hospitality industry. Furthermore, job embeddedness enhances employee engagement (Chiu et al., 2019) and job satisfaction (Ferreira et al., 2017). Employees who feel aligned with their organisation and maintain strong workplace relationships tend to be more motivated, productive, and committed.

This study examines how workload and supervisory support impact job embeddedness through emotional exhaustion among non-managerial hotel employees. The findings emphasise the dual role of job demands and resources, consistent with the JD-R model (Dirican & Erdil, 2020; Singh et al., 2018). Supervisory support emerges as a vital resource that effectively mitigates emotional exhaustion regardless of workload (Chen et al., 2023). This reduction in emotional exhaustion enhances the connection between employees and the organisation, ultimately improving job embeddedness. Managers can leverage this insight to foster supportive work environments that alleviate job stressors, foster employee commitment, and ensure exceptional customer service (Kim & Yeo, 2024).

Managers must prioritise the establishment of a supportive work environment to address the rising issue of emotional as well as psychological strain among employees. Supervisory support acts as a crucial social resource that can mitigate emotional exhaustion regardless of workload, providing employees with the psychological buffer required to cope with job demands (Wang, 2024). By fostering this supportive work culture, supervisors help employees feel more connected to their jobs.

## **Theoretical Implications**

From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to the evolving literature on job embeddedness by elucidating the complex relationships between workload, supervisory support, and emotional exhaustion. Specifically, it sheds light on how job demands, represented by workload, and job resources, exemplified by supervisory support, interact to influence employees' embeddedness within their organisations. The findings demonstrate that excessive workload diminishes employees' sense of embeddedness by increasing stress levels, whereas supervisory support functions as a critical organisational resource that not only offsets the

adverse effects of workload but also strengthens employees' organizational attachment.

Additionally, the study introduces emotional exhaustion as a mediating variable that clarifies the mechanisms through which workload and supervisory support impact job embeddedness. This expands the application of the job demands-resources (JD-R) framework by identifying emotional exhaustion as a core psychological process that links job demands and resources to employees' retention and engagement. The mediating role of emotional exhaustion highlights its centrality in understanding how adverse workplace conditions and supportive managerial practices jointly affect employees' connection to their roles and organizations.

This research emphasized the crucial role of supervisory support in mitigating the negative effects of high workload and fostering a positive organizational culture. By integrating these findings, the study enhances a deeper understanding of how job demands, organizational resources, and emotional well-being interact with job embeddedness. This contributes to theoretical advancements in employee retention and sustainability, especially in high-pressure settings such as the hospitality industry.

### **Practical Implications**

Based on the preceding discussion, several key implications arise for managers in the hospitality sector. First, managers need to ensure that staffing levels are adequate to effectively manage workloads, particularly during peak seasons. Inadequate staffing can lead to excessive workloads, resulting in employee stress and emotional exhaustion, which negatively impacts job embeddedness. Therefore, regular assessment of workload distribution is vital to prevent burnout and promote employee well-being. Furthermore, fostering a supportive supervisory environment is critical. Supervisors should be trained to provide emotional support, recognize signs of burnout, and actively engage in open communication with employees. Managers should assist employees in attaining a healthy work-life balance by introducing flexible scheduling (Davidescu et al., 2020) whenever feasible, as this can alleviate stress and enhance overall well-being. Developing programs to equip supervisors with the skills to address emotional exhaustion can strengthen employees' attachment to their roles and the organization. Third, flexible scheduling and shift-swapping options should be implemented to address the personal needs of employees, thereby promoting work-life balance. Managers must

also set realistic workload expectations and avoid assigning unachievable deadlines, as these contribute to stress and dissatisfaction (Ishak et al., 2024). Nonetheless, managers can also invest in wellness programs (Westover, 2014), to reduce emotional exhaustion and enhance employee well-being. These could include tailored initiatives like guided mindfulness sessions that not only can strengthen employees' employability (Emanuel et al., 2018), but also enhance employees' perception of organizational support, promoting job embeddedness. In the hospitality industry, where job demands are inherently high, these supportive practices play a vital role in improving employee retention and engagement.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

Like any study, this research has certain limitations. The sample is restricted to hotels in Punjab and Chandigarh, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Future research should validate the model across different sectors, occupations, and geographical regions. Additionally, the cross-sectional design prevents the establishment of causal relationships; longitudinal studies are recommended to address this limitation. Finally, this study primarily examined on-the-job factors. Future research could incorporate off-the-job factors or explore moderating variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of job embeddedness.

### **Conclusion**

This study advances understanding of the Job Demands and Resources model and Conservation of Resources theory by demonstrating that while both job demands (workload) and job resources (supervisory support) influence emotional exhaustion and job embeddedness, the negative impact of workload exerts a stronger effect than the buffering role of supervisory support. Emotional exhaustion emerged as a key mediating mechanism, explaining how job demands and resources shape employees' entrenchment with their jobs. These findings underscore the limited yet critical role of supervisory support, while also highlighting the paramount importance of managing workload in contexts such as hospitality. Theoretical and practical implications suggest that addressing emotional exhaustion through balanced job design and resource allocation is essential for enhancing job embeddedness and organisational sustainability.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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