

From Fairness to Fit: Exploring Antecedents of Job Embeddedness and Employee Engagement

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Abstract

This study investigates the organizational and individual antecedents that shape job embeddedness and employee engagement among hospitality employees in India. Drawing from Social Exchange Theory and the Job Demands–Resources framework, the study examines how fairness, organizational support, leadership, empowerment, job crafting, career growth, and work–life balance affect employee outcomes within hotel settings. Data were collected from 431 employees working in hotels across four major Indian metropolitan cities. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to test the proposed relationships. Results indicate that fairness, empowerment, job crafting, and leadership support significantly predict job embeddedness and engagement. Psychological empowerment and leadership support emerged as the most influential predictors. Job embeddedness has a strong mediating effect on engagement, demonstrating its role as a mechanism linking organizational practices to employee motivation. The findings offer hospitality-specific managerial, operational, and policy recommendations that can help hotels strengthen employee retention and engagement by fostering fairness, empowerment, and supportive leadership climates. This study integrates relational and motivational antecedents in a single hospitality-focused model, advancing theoretical and practical understanding of employee embeddedness and engagement in emerging economies.

Keywords: employee engagement; hospitality employees; job embeddedness; job crafting; organizational justice.

1. Introduction

The hospitality industry operates within a highly dynamic and competitive environment, where retaining competent and engaged employees remains a pressing challenge. The sector is characterised by intense customer interaction, irregular working hours, and high emotional labour, making the retention of skilled employees vital both strategically and operationally (Ampofo, 2020; Ren et al., 2025). In this context, understanding the mechanisms that foster employees' attachment to their organisations and enhance their engagement is crucial. Recent research emphasises that job embeddedness, representing the collection of psychological, social, and organizational forces that tie an employee to the workplace, serves as a robust predictor of retention and performance beyond traditional attitudinal variables, such as job satisfaction or organizational commitment (Holtom et al., 2008; Halvorsen et al., 2015). Job embeddedness encapsulates the “fit”, “links”, and “sacrifice” dimensions that explain why employees remain within organisations, even when faced with external opportunities (Mitchell et al., 2001; Afsar & Badir, 2016). Empirical evidence in the hospitality and tourism sectors demonstrates that embeddedness not only reduces turnover intention but also enhances contextual performance, organizational citizenship behaviour, and engagement (Bambacas & Kulik, 2013; Krishnan & Rathakrishnan, 2025). As the sector continues to evolve with increasing technological disruption and workforce diversity, the antecedents that drive such embeddedness require renewed empirical investigation, particularly in developing countries such as India's hospitality industry.

Fairness and perceived support are the social foundations of embeddedness. According to Social Exchange Theory, employees reciprocate organizational fairness and support with stronger attachment and proactive effort (Blau, 1964; Dechowatanapaisa, 2025). When employees perceive distributive and procedural justice, they

experience greater trust and obligation toward the organisation, which enhances both organizational embeddedness and engagement (Afsar & Badir, 2016). Similarly, perceived organizational support—the belief that the organisation values employee contributions and well-being—creates a reciprocal bond that deepens “fit” and “links” within the workplace (Jolly & Self, 2020; Novianty et al., 2025 [in press] . Studies in the hospitality and tourism sectors show that fairness-based exchanges directly influence affective commitment and indirectly strengthen embeddedness through engagement (Ampofo, 2020; Gulakdeniz & Karadaş, 2025). While organizational factors contribute to embeddedness, employees’ proactive efforts to redesign their work—known as job crafting—are equally critical. Job crafting enables individuals to align job demands with their personal strengths and interests, thereby enhancing meaning and attachment (Teng & Chen, 2025; Al Memari et al., 2025a). Empirical evidence suggests that crafting tasks, relationships, and cognitive frames elevates job embeddedness and subsequent engagement, especially when employees experience autonomy and empowerment (Zhao et al., 2025). Psychological empowerment, comprising meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact, serves as both an antecedent and amplifier of embeddedness by fulfilling intrinsic motivational needs (Rich et al., 2010; Shafique et al., 2025). In hospitality workplaces characterised by service intensity, empowering employees to make meaningful choices and modify their roles fosters a stronger sense of belonging and reduces withdrawal behaviour.

Leadership behaviour is a contextual anchor that shapes how employees perceive their embeddedness. Transformational and supportive leadership styles enhance “fit” by aligning employee goals with organizational vision and “links” by fostering interpersonal trust and recognition (Goyal et al., 2025). Research has demonstrated that high-quality leader–member exchange (LMX) relationships amplify the positive impact of embeddedness on altruistic behaviours and engagement (Dirican, 2025). Furthermore, the availability of career growth opportunities strengthens employees’ perceptions of long-term alignment with the organisation, reducing turnover intentions and enhancing career satisfaction (Jiang & Li, 2023; Hu & Dang, 2025). Within hospitality organisations that often rely on hierarchical progression and skill specialisation, transparent pathways for career advancement can significantly reinforce employee embeddedness and engagement.

The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory provides a relevant lens for examining how work–life balance influences embeddedness and engagement. The theory posits that job resources, such as autonomy, flexibility, and support, buffer the effects of demands such as long hours or emotional labour and promote motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Studies in hospitality contexts indicate that maintaining equilibrium between personal and professional roles reduces emotional exhaustion and turnover intention while enhancing embeddedness and engagement (Bambacas & Kulik, 2013; Krishnan & Rathakrishnan, 2025). Balanced employees are more likely to remain attached to their organisations because of the perceived support for their overall well-being. Job embeddedness explains not only why employees stay but also how they perform. When employees experience strong “fit” and social “links”, they invest greater energy and emotional commitment to their work, manifested as employee engagement (Rich et al., 2010; Vasudevan et al., 2025). Embedded employees demonstrate higher levels of vigour, dedication, and absorption, which are key dimensions of engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2002). The mediating role of embeddedness has been validated in multiple contexts, including hospitality, healthcare, and education, where it bridges antecedents such as justice, support, and job design with outcomes such as performance and citizenship behaviour (Ren et al., 2025; Mabkhot & Mirzaliev, 2025). Therefore, embeddedness serves as both a retention mechanism and a motivational conduit that drives engagement and performance.

Although the global literature on job embeddedness has expanded significantly (Dimri et al., 2025; Dechawatanapaisal, 2025), empirical evidence from the Indian hospitality industry remains limited. Prior studies have primarily examined turnover intention or satisfaction without integrating fairness perceptions, proactive behaviours, and employee empowerment within a single framework. Given the industry’s high attrition and increasing reliance on service excellence, it is imperative to identify how organizational fairness (“fairness”) and personal alignment (“fit”) converge to enhance employee embeddedness and engagement. Therefore, this study aims to empirically investigate the relationships among perceived organizational justice, perceived organizational support, job crafting, leadership support, career growth opportunities, work–life balance, and psychological

empowerment as predictors of job embeddedness and employee engagement among hospitality employees in India. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory and Job Demands–Resources Theory, this model seeks to provide a holistic understanding of how organizational and individual factors interact to promote sustainable workforce attachment and engagement.

This study contributes to the existing literature in three key ways. First, it integrates both relational variables, such as justice, support, and leadership, and motivational variables, such as crafting and empowerment, to explain embeddedness. Second, it empirically validates job embeddedness as a conduit through which fairness and empowerment influence engagement, advancing the theoretical understanding of why employees stay and perform. Third, this study provides contextual evidence from the Indian hospitality sector, offering practical implications for retention and engagement strategies in service organisations post-pandemic. By moving from fairness to fit, this study positions job embeddedness not merely as a retention construct but as a central mechanism linking organizational justice, support, and empowerment to employee engagement—a shift from staying to thriving in the hospitality workplace.

2. Theoretical Underpinning and Hypotheses Development

Grounded in Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), the present study examines how a constellation of organizational and individual factors—perceived organizational justice, perceived organizational support, job crafting, leadership support, career growth opportunities, work–life balance, and psychological empowerment—shape two key outcomes: job embeddedness and employee engagement (Soltani Nejad et al., 2025; Srivastava et al., 2024). These frameworks collectively highlight that when employees perceive fairness, autonomy, support, and growth within their work environment, they reciprocate with stronger attachment and deeper involvement in their roles, leading to both retention and enhanced performance (Jo & Shin, 2025; Lee et al., 2025).

Perceived organizational justice encapsulates employees’ evaluations of fairness across distributive, procedural, and interactional dimensions. When employees perceive fairness in decisions, rewards, and interpersonal treatment, they feel valued and respected, developing trust toward the organization. This sense of fairness fosters attachment, loyalty, and motivation to contribute beyond formal expectations. Empirical research across hospitality contexts supports that fair treatment heightens job embeddedness and engagement by reinforcing emotional bonds and shared purpose (Afsar & Badir, 2016; Ampofo, 2020; Gulakdeniz & Karadaş, 2025). Thus, the study proposes:

H1a: Perceived organizational justice positively influences job embeddedness among hospitality employees.

H1b: Perceived organizational justice positively influences employee engagement among hospitality employees.

Perceived organizational support represents employees’ belief that their organization appreciates their contributions and cares for their well-being (Gordon, 2020; Mcmanus et al., 2025). Rooted in Social Exchange Theory, such perceptions of support create a reciprocal sense of obligation and strengthen affective bonds (Jolly & Self, 2020). When organizations provide recognition, feedback, and socio-emotional resources, employees respond with loyalty, embeddedness, and engagement (Dechawatanapaisal, 2025; Hu & Dang, 2025; Novianty et al., 2025). Supportive environments empower employees to devote more effort and sustain motivation, leading to the following hypotheses:

H2a: Perceived organizational support positively influences job embeddedness among hospitality employees.

H2b: Perceived organizational support positively influences employee engagement among hospitality employees.

Job crafting, a self-initiated behavior through which employees reshape their tasks, relationships, or perceptions of work, is increasingly recognized as a proactive resource that enhances job fit and meaning (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). By aligning job roles with personal values and strengths, employees enhance both psychological

ownership and attachment. In hospitality organizations where adaptability and creativity are critical, job crafting improves embeddedness and fosters enthusiasm toward work (Teng & Chen, 2025; Al Memari et al., 2025b).

Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

***H3a:** Job crafting positively influences job embeddedness among hospitality employees.*

***H3b:** Job crafting positively influences employee engagement among hospitality employees.*

Leadership support serves as a central contextual factor influencing how employees interpret organizational experiences (Manfreda et al., 2025; Hsieh & Chuang, 2020). Transformational and supportive leaders create trust, model fairness, and provide developmental guidance that strengthens employees' relational ties (Dirican, 2025; Goyal et al., 2025). High-quality leader–member exchange (LMX) relationships have been shown to enhance embeddedness and engagement by fostering psychological safety and belongingness. Within the service-intensive hospitality industry, where leadership directly shapes work climate, the study anticipates:

***H4a:** Leadership support positively influences job embeddedness among hospitality employees.*

***H4b:** Leadership support positively influences employee engagement among hospitality employees.*

Career growth opportunities refer to how employees feel about the chances they have for promotion, learning new skills, and improving themselves within the organization. In the hospitality industry, where there is high competition and frequent employee turnover, career growth becomes an important factor that shapes how employees think and behave at work. Studies show that when employees see that their organization supports their career development, they feel more connected to the organization and are more likely to stay for a longer time. Several researchers have highlighted the importance of growth-related practices in improving employee engagement and performance. Yoopetch et al. (2021) found that employee learning, knowledge sharing, and benefits improve performance and career development in the hospitality sector. This means that when employees get opportunities to grow, they develop more positive attitudes towards their work. Similarly, Jia-Jun and Hua-Ming (2022) showed that career growth directly increases employee engagement because it builds emotional commitment and motivates employees from within. Employee engagement itself plays a major role in improving organizational performance. Liu et al. (2022) showed that employee engagement links organizational practices to better business performance in the hospitality industry. In the same way, Arwab et al. (2023) found that training and skill development improve task performance through the effect of employee engagement. This suggests that when employees feel they are growing, they become more involved and enthusiastic about their work. New research on technology also supports this idea. Marimon et al. (2025) found that trust in generative AI at the workplace can improve employee engagement and performance. This shows that when organizations invest in modern tools and create a supportive environment, employees feel that their growth opportunities are increasing. the research suggests that career growth opportunities give employees a sense of security, motivation, and long-term connection with their organization. Employees who feel that their organization helps them learn and progress are more likely to stay committed and show higher engagement.

Therefore, it is posited that

***H5a:** Career growth opportunities positively influence job embeddedness among hospitality employees.*

***H5b:** Career growth opportunities positively influence employee engagement among hospitality employees.*

Work–life balance (WLB) has become an essential factor influencing employee behavior and well-being in service industries, especially hospitality. When employees are able to maintain a healthy balance between their work responsibilities and personal lives, they tend to experience lower stress, improved mental well-being, and stronger motivation. Recent studies show that WLB plays a major role in shaping employee attitudes such as engagement, job embeddedness, commitment, and turnover intention. Research confirms that WLB is strongly connected to job embeddedness. Fuchs et al. (2022) found that employees with better work–life balance develop stronger links, fit, and sacrifice perceptions, which increase their embeddedness within the organization.

Similarly, Husniati et al. (2024) reported that WLB reduces turnover intention by strengthening organizational commitment and retaining employees in hospitality-related settings.

Work–life balance is also closely linked to employee engagement and well-being. Nwibere (2023) showed that supportive WLB strategies significantly boost employee engagement in service jobs. Ampofo et al. (2022) also highlighted that embedded and well-supported hotel employees demonstrate higher engagement and life satisfaction. In another study, Ampofo and Karatepe (2022) emphasized that employees who experience stability in both personal and professional domains are more engaged and show stronger organizational commitment. Hospitality-specific reviews echo these findings. Knežević et al. (2023) noted that work–life balance is historically crucial in hospitality because of long hours and emotional labor. Their review suggests that organizations that support balance can reduce stress and foster stronger attachment. Hasanein and Ayad (2024) further found that WLB positively affects employee performance and strengthens affective commitment in the hospitality sector. In the Indian context, Budhiraja et al. (2022) showed that WLB practices are essential in managing talent in luxury hotels, as employees perceive these policies as a sign of organizational care and support.

Based on this evidence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H6a: *Work–life balance positively influences job embeddedness among hospitality employees.*

H6b: *Work–life balance positively influences employee engagement among hospitality employees.*

Psychological empowerment reflects the degree to which employees experience meaning, competence, autonomy, and impact in their work (Spreitzer, 1995). Empowered employees feel trusted and capable, which fosters greater psychological ownership and strengthens embeddedness. When employees perceive control and purpose in their roles, they display heightened enthusiasm, persistence, and engagement (Rich et al., 2010; Shafique et al., 2025). Accordingly, it is hypothesised that-

H7a: *Psychological empowerment positively influences job embeddedness among hospitality employees.*

H7b: *Psychological empowerment positively influences employee engagement among hospitality employees.*

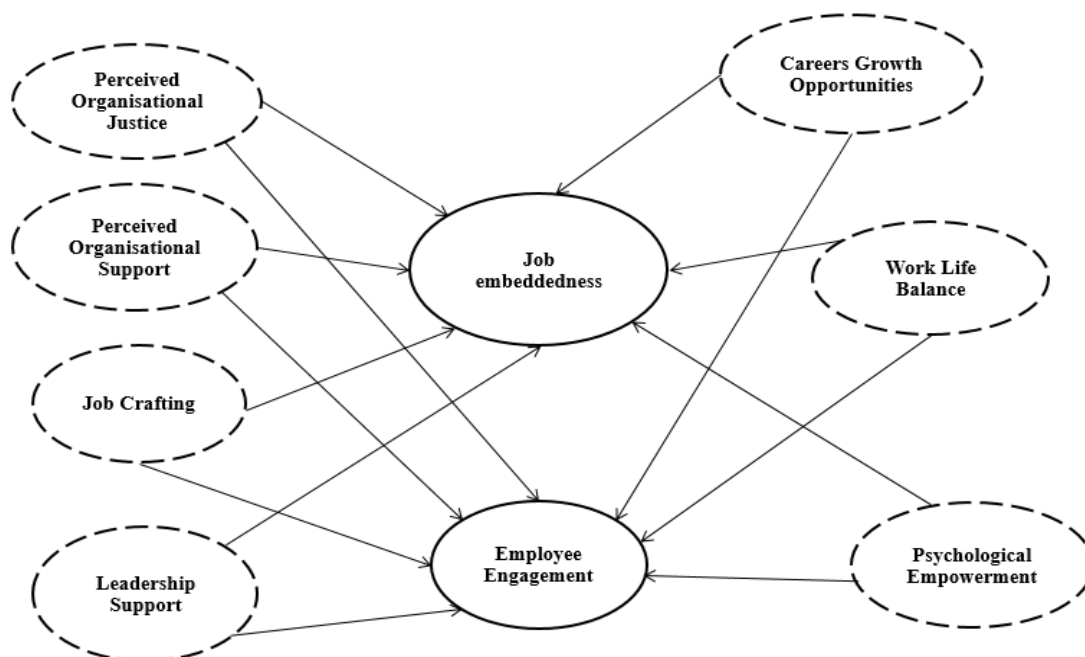


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

(Source: Authors' Creation Based on Literature Review)

3. Sample, Data Collection, and Questionnaire Development

In India's rapidly evolving hospitality landscape, employee retention and engagement have become central to sustaining service excellence and organizational competitiveness. The sector's growing dependence on personalized guest experiences and digitalized service delivery has intensified the need to understand how fairness, empowerment, and organizational support influence employees' long-term attachment to their workplaces. Recognizing these emerging challenges, the present study explores the interplay between organizational and individual factors that shape job embeddedness and employee engagement among hospitality professionals.

The research design is descriptive, and analytical, aimed at explaining the relationships among constructs while providing a detailed account of employee perceptions. Drawing insights from prior research on job embeddedness, organizational justice, and engagement within service contexts (Afsar & Badir, 2016; Ampofo, 2020; Teng & Chen, 2025; Vasudevan et al., 2025), a structured questionnaire was developed to capture key antecedents and outcomes. The instrument included seven independent variables—perceived organizational justice, perceived organizational support, job crafting, leadership support, career growth opportunities, work–life balance, and psychological empowerment—and two dependent variables: job embeddedness and employee engagement. The initial pool of 102 items was derived from established scales and adapted to the Indian hospitality setting through expert consultation. Three scholars specializing in organizational behavior reviewed the items for content validity, relevance, and contextual clarity. Based on their feedback, redundant or ambiguous items were deleted, resulting in a refined instrument of 85 items. The draft questionnaire was pilot-tested with 30 employees from selected hotels to assess comprehension and ease of response. Minor linguistic adjustments were made to improve clarity and ensure cultural appropriateness before finalization.

Data collection targeted employees working in three-star to five-star hotels and chain-based hospitality organizations located in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, and Mumbai. These metropolitan centers were chosen for their concentration of diverse hospitality establishments and workforce structures. The purposive sampling method was employed to include employees with at least one year of tenure in their current organization, ensuring familiarity with workplace culture and management practices. Questionnaires were administered both electronically and in paper format, accompanied by a cover note explaining the study's purpose and assuring respondents of anonymity and confidentiality. A total of 550 questionnaires were distributed between March and September 2024, and after screening for completeness and consistency, 431 valid responses were retained for further analysis. The final sample comprised 58 per cent male and 42 per cent female participants, with an average age of 31.6 years and a mean tenure of 3.8 years. Participants represented various departments, including front office, food and beverage, and housekeeping, reflecting the operational diversity within the hospitality workforce. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5).

The data obtained through this process provided a comprehensive empirical basis for examining how organizational fairness, perceived support, empowerment, and individual proactive behaviors contribute to job embeddedness and employee engagement in the Indian hospitality sector. This methodological approach thus aligns with the study's objective of integrating descriptive insights with analytical rigor to explain workforce attachment and engagement patterns within dynamic service environments.

4. Pre-test

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to validate the dimensional structure of the variables measuring organizational and individual antecedents of job embeddedness and employee engagement. All constructs were derived from literature-based, multi-item scales and were pre-tested using data from 70 hospitality employees.

The analysis revealed a Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy of 0.872, indicating excellent suitability of the data for factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 1548.27$,

df = 276, $p < 0.001$), confirming adequate correlations among the observed variables and justifying the application of factor analysis. The total variance explained by the extracted factors was 79.42 percent, demonstrating a strong representation of the underlying construct structure.

The Rotated Component Matrix (Table 2b) revealed a clean and interpretable nine-factor solution corresponding to the theoretical dimensions of the study: Perceived Organizational Justice (POJ), Perceived Organizational Support (POS), Job Crafting (JC), Leadership Support (LS), Career Growth Opportunities (CGO), Work–Life Balance (WLB), Psychological Empowerment (PE), Job Embeddedness (JE), and Employee Engagement (EE). Each construct was represented by five items that loaded strongly on their intended factors, with loadings ranging from 0.78 to 0.86, and no significant cross-loadings, supporting convergent and discriminant validity.

The factor extraction method using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation confirmed that all constructs exhibited strong construct clarity and high item reliability. These findings affirm that the measurement model demonstrates sound factorial validity and internal consistency, making it suitable for subsequent Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to examine hypothesised causal relationships between antecedents and outcome variables in the hospitality context. (*See the Table 1*)

Table 1. KMO, Bartlett’s Test, and Rotated Component Matrix

Test Description	Value
Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.872
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	
Approx. Chi-Square	1548.27
df	276
Sig.	0.000
Total Variance Explained	79.42 %

(Source: Authors’ Creation, 2026)

Table 2. Rotated Component Matrix

Items	C1 (POJ)	C2 (POS)	C3 (JC)	C4 (LS)	C5 (CGO)	C6 (WLB)	C7 (PE)	C8 (JE)	C9 (EE)
POJ1	0.814								
POJ2	0.836								
POJ3	0.825								
POJ4	0.788								
POJ5	0.803								
POS1		0.826							
POS2		0.844							
POS3		0.817							
POS4		0.834							
POS5		0.823							

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JC1	0.846	
JC2	0.823	
JC3	0.807	
JC4	0.821	
JC5	0.834	
LS1	0.836	
LS2	0.828	
LS3	0.812	
LS4	0.843	
LS5	0.856	
CGO1	0.829	
CGO2	0.811	
CGO3	0.824	
CGO4	0.836	
CGO5	0.802	
WLB1	0.823	
WLB2	0.817	
WLB3	0.845	
WLB4	0.801	
WLB5	0.829	
PE1	0.826	
PE2	0.812	
PE3	0.847	
PE4	0.835	
PE5	0.821	
JE1	0.836	
JE2	0.829	
JE3	0.814	
JE4	0.842	
JE5	0.833	
EE1		0.847
EE2		0.826

EE3	0.833
EE4	0.819
EE5	0.842

Source: Primary Data

Extraction	Method:	Principal	Component	Analysis
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization				

Notes: POJ = Perceived Organizational Justice POS = Perceived Organizational Support JC = Job Crafting LS = Leadership Support CGO = Career Growth Opportunities WLB = Work-Life Balance PE = Psychological Empowerment JE = Job Embeddedness EE = Employee Engagement

(Source: Authors' Creation, 2026)

5. Analysis and Results

5.1 Consistency Measures

The results of the reliability analysis presented in Table 2 confirm that all constructs used in the study demonstrate strong internal consistency and measurement stability. Cronbach's alpha values for all variables exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), signifying that the items within each scale reliably capture their respective latent constructs.

Among the independent variables, *Work-Life Balance* ($\alpha = 0.802$) recorded the lowest but acceptable reliability, while *Psychological Empowerment* ($\alpha = 0.872$) displayed the highest internal consistency. This indicates that the items measuring empowerment were highly correlated and conceptually coherent. Similarly, constructs such as *Leadership Support* ($\alpha = 0.853$), *Perceived Organizational Support* ($\alpha = 0.846$), and *Career Growth Opportunities* ($\alpha = 0.835$) also exhibited strong reliability, reinforcing the robustness of the measurement framework.

For the dependent variables, both *Job Embeddedness* ($\alpha = 0.884$) and *Employee Engagement* ($\alpha = 0.912$) demonstrated excellent reliability, suggesting that the indicators effectively represent employees' attachment to their organization and their motivational involvement in work. The consistently high alpha values across constructs imply that the survey instrument achieved internal stability and minimal measurement error. (See the Table 2).

Table 2: Reliability Analysis of the Constructs

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value	Type
Perceived Organizational Justice	5	0.812	Independent Variable
Perceived Organizational Support	5	0.846	
Job Crafting	5	0.828	
Leadership Support	5	0.853	
Career Growth Opportunities	5	0.835	
Work-Life Balance	5	0.802	
Psychological Empowerment	5	0.872	Dependent Variable
Job Embeddedness	5	0.884	

Employee Engagement	5	0.912
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Source: Primary Data

(Source: Authors' Creation, 2026)

5.2 Measurement model

The results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for the independent variables demonstrate that the measurement model achieved an excellent overall fit, with all key fit indices within the recommended thresholds ($\chi^2/df = 2.091$, CFI = 0.962, GFI = 0.945, RMSEA = 0.049). These values confirm that the data adequately represent the proposed seven-construct measurement structure. All standardized factor loadings exceeded 0.78 and were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), affirming strong item reliability. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.58 to 0.66, and Composite Reliability (CR) values varied between 0.87 and 0.91, indicating high convergent validity and internal consistency across constructs.

Further, discriminant validity was confirmed, as AVE values exceeded the squared inter-construct correlations for all latent variables (AVE > Squared Inter-Construct Correlation). This establishes that each construct is empirically distinct and measures a unique conceptual dimension. Overall, these findings validate the robustness of the measurement model, confirming that all independent constructs—Perceived Organizational Justice, Perceived Organizational Support, Job Crafting, Leadership Support, Career Growth Opportunities, Work–Life Balance, and Psychological Empowerment—are reliable and valid for inclusion in the subsequent structural analysis. (See the Table 3a and 3b)

Table 3a: Results of Measurement Model — Independent Variables Goodness of Fit and Standardized Estimates

Fit Indicators	First Run Statistics	Final Run Statistics
CMIN/DF	3.864	2.091
χ^2	598.43	248.65
DF	154	119
p-value	0.000	0.000
GFI	0.864	0.945
NFI	0.872	0.954
CFI	0.889	0.962
RMSEA	0.089	0.049

(Source: Authors' Creation, 2026)

Table 3b: Construct Validity, Convergent Validity, and Discriminant Validity

Observed Variables	Path	Latent Variable	Standardized Estimate (λ)	p-value	Construct	AVE	CR	Squared Inter-Construct Correlation	Decision on Discriminant Validity
POJ1	←	POJ	0.784	***		0.64	0.90	0.41**	AVE > Squared Inter-
POJ2	←	POJ	0.826	***					Inter-

POJ3	←	POJ	0.812	***	Perceived Organizational Justice					construct correlation		
POJ4	←	POJ	0.801	***								
POJ5	←	POJ	0.792	***								
POS1	←	POS	0.826	***	Perceived Organizational Support	0.65	0.90	0.46**	AVE Squared Inter- construct correlation	>		
POS2	←	POS	0.845	***								
POS3	←	POS	0.817	***								
POS4	←	POS	0.833	***								
POS5	←	POS	0.824	***								
JC1	←	JC	0.812	***	Job Crafting	0.61	0.89	0.38**	AVE Squared Inter- construct correlation	>		
JC2	←	JC	0.834	***								
JC3	←	JC	0.816	***								
JC4	←	JC	0.821	***								
JC5	←	JC	0.829	***								
LS1	←	LS	0.828	***	Leadership Support	0.66	0.91	0.43**	AVE Squared Inter- construct correlation	>		
LS2	←	LS	0.843	***								
LS3	←	LS	0.817	***								
LS4	←	LS	0.831	***								
LS5	←	LS	0.852	***								
CGO1	←	CGO	0.821	***	Career Growth Opportunities	0.59	0.88	0.40**	AVE Squared Inter- construct correlation	>		
CGO2	←	CGO	0.816	***								
CGO3	←	CGO	0.802	***								
CGO4	←	CGO	0.834	***								
CGO5	←	CGO	0.807	***								
WLB1	←	WLB	0.814	***	Work–Life Balance	0.58	0.87	0.35**	AVE Squared Inter- construct correlation	>		
WLB2	←	WLB	0.803	***								
WLB3	←	WLB	0.829	***								
WLB4	←	WLB	0.821	***								
WLB5	←	WLB	0.809	***								
PE1	←	PE	0.826	***	Psychological Empowerment	0.64	0.90	0.42**	AVE Squared Inter- construct correlation	>		
PE2	←	PE	0.841	***								
PE3	←	PE	0.836	***								
PE4	←	PE	0.827	***								

PE5	←	PE	0.811	***
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Source: Primary Data

Notes:

- A total of 11 iterations were performed based on modification indices; all constructs retained their indicators with satisfactory loadings (≥ 0.78).
- AVE = Average Variance Extracted; CR = Composite Reliability; Squared Inter-Construct Correlation.
- Discriminant validity was confirmed as AVE > Squared Inter-Construct Correlation for all constructs.
- All path coefficients were statistically significant at $p < 0.001$.

(Source: Authors' Creation using primary data, 2026)

5.3 Structural Equation Model

The structural equation modelling results provide strong empirical support for the hypothesized relationships in the study. The model explained approximately 56 percent of the variance in Job Embeddedness (JE) and 68 percent of the variance in Employee Engagement (EE), reflecting substantial explanatory power and confirming the robustness of the proposed framework. Perceived Organizational Justice emerged as a significant predictor of both job embeddedness ($\beta = 0.17$, $p = 0.001$) and employee engagement ($\beta = 0.10$, $p = 0.038$). These findings indicate that employees who perceive fairness in decision-making and organizational practices develop stronger attachment to their organizations and experience greater enthusiasm in their work. Hence, H1a and H1b are supported. Similarly, Perceived Organizational Support demonstrated a positive influence on both embeddedness ($\beta = 0.14$, $p = 0.004$) and engagement ($\beta = 0.12$, $p = 0.013$), suggesting that when employees believe their organization values their contributions and well-being, they reciprocate through loyalty and commitment. Hence, H2a and H2b are supported. Job Crafting also showed a significant positive relationship with both job embeddedness ($\beta = 0.16$, $p = 0.001$) and employee engagement ($\beta = 0.14$, $p = 0.003$), indicating that employees who proactively shape their work tasks and interactions experience stronger attachment and higher levels of motivation. Hence, H3a and H3b are supported. Leadership Support proved to be one of the strongest determinants in the model, significantly influencing job embeddedness ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.001$) and employee engagement ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.001$). These results highlight the critical role of supportive and transformational leadership in building employee connection and vigor. Hence, H4a and H4b are supported. Career Growth Opportunities were found to significantly predict job embeddedness ($\beta = 0.12$, $p = 0.015$) but not employee engagement ($\beta = 0.09$, $p = 0.058$), suggesting that while growth opportunities enhance employees' sense of alignment with the organization, they do not necessarily translate into higher levels of day-to-day engagement. Hence, H5a is supported while H5b is not supported. Work-Life Balance exhibited a similar pattern, with a significant positive relationship with job embeddedness ($\beta = 0.11$, $p = 0.027$) but a non-significant effect on engagement ($\beta = 0.08$, $p = 0.082$). This implies that employees who maintain balance between work and personal responsibilities are more likely to remain with the organization but may not necessarily demonstrate higher work engagement. Hence, H6a is supported while H6b is not supported. Psychological Empowerment showed a strong and significant impact on both job embeddedness ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.001$) and employee engagement ($\beta = 0.16$, $p = 0.001$). Empowered employees who perceive greater autonomy and control in their roles are more likely to be committed and emotionally invested in their work. Hence, H7a and H7b are supported. (See the Table 4 and 5).

Table 4. Structural Model Fit

Fit Index	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	GFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Structural model	721.84	331	2.18	0.958	0.952	0.939	0.052	0.045

(Source: Authors' Creation using primary data, 2026)

Table 5. Casual Relationship

Hypothesis	Path	Std. β	t-value	p-value	Result
H1a	Perceived Organizational Justice → Job Embeddedness	0.17	3.46	0.001	Supported
H1b	Perceived Organizational Justice → Employee Engagement	0.10	2.08	0.038	Supported
H2a	Perceived Organizational Support → Job Embeddedness	0.14	2.89	0.004	Supported
H2b	Perceived Organizational Support → Employee Engagement	0.12	2.49	0.013	Supported
H3a	Job Crafting → Job Embeddedness	0.16	3.22	0.001	Supported
H3b	Job Crafting → Employee Engagement	0.14	2.95	0.003	Supported
H4a	Leadership Support → Job Embeddedness	0.19	3.98	<0.001	Supported
H4b	Leadership Support → Employee Engagement	0.18	3.87	<0.001	Supported
H5a	Career Growth Opportunities → Job Embeddedness	0.12	2.44	0.015	Supported
H5b	Career Growth Opportunities → Employee Engagement	0.09	1.90	0.058	Not Supported
H6a	Work–Life Balance → Job Embeddedness	0.11	2.21	0.027	Supported
H6b	Work–Life Balance → Employee Engagement	0.08	1.74	0.082	Not Supported
H7a	Psychological Empowerment → Job Embeddedness	0.21	4.31	<0.001	Supported
H7b	Psychological Empowerment → Employee Engagement	0.16	3.36	0.001	Supported
Source: Primary Data					

6. Findings and Discussion

The results of this empirical investigation provide strong evidence that both organizational and individual factors play a pivotal role in enhancing job embeddedness and employee engagement within the hospitality sector. The findings reveal that employees' perceptions of fairness, organizational support, leadership, empowerment, and personal initiative significantly influence how deeply they are connected to their organizations and how energetically they perform their work roles. Among these, psychological empowerment, leadership support, and job embeddedness emerged as the strongest determinants of employee engagement, highlighting the critical importance of autonomy, trust, and organizational belongingness in shaping workforce motivation and retention. The results demonstrate that perceived organizational justice and perceived organizational support are foundational antecedents that foster a sense of attachment and reciprocity among employees. Employees who perceive fairness in decision-making, rewards, and interpersonal treatment are more likely to stay committed and

actively contribute to organizational goals. Similarly, organizational support enhances employees' feelings of being valued and cared for, thereby strengthening emotional ties and engagement. These results validate the assumptions of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which posits that fair and supportive exchanges build trust and commitment between employees and their organizations.

Job crafting also emerged as a significant behavioral factor driving both embeddedness and engagement. Employees who take initiative to redesign their tasks, interactions, and work processes reported higher levels of attachment and enthusiasm toward their jobs. This finding aligns with the growing body of evidence that highlights the role of proactive work behaviors in fostering meaning and motivation at work (Teng & Chen, 2025; Al Memari et al., 2025). Leadership support was another critical determinant, demonstrating one of the highest predictive effects. Transformational and supportive leaders create an environment of trust, recognition, and psychological safety, which strengthens employees' identification with the organization and promotes higher engagement levels (Dirican, 2025; Goyal et al., 2025). Career growth opportunities and work–life balance also influenced job embeddedness significantly, though their direct effects on engagement were comparatively weaker. This suggests that employees perceive these as retention-related factors rather than daily motivators of enthusiasm and energy. Opportunities for advancement and learning enhance employees' sense of fit within the organization, but engagement may depend more on immediate job experiences, leadership, and empowerment. Work–life balance, while critical for well-being, does not necessarily lead to higher engagement when other organizational or intrinsic motivators are lacking. Psychological empowerment, on the other hand, demonstrated robust effects on both embeddedness and engagement, underscoring the importance of autonomy, competence, and meaning in sustaining motivation and loyalty (Shafique et al., 2025; Rich et al., 2010).

The positive and significant influence of job embeddedness on employee engagement is particularly noteworthy. This relationship reinforces the idea that employees who are more socially and psychologically integrated into their organizations are likely to demonstrate higher levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption in their roles. The results thus substantiate the mediating function of embeddedness as a psychological mechanism that transforms workplace resources and experiences into active engagement and performance behaviors (Vasudevan et al., 2025; Ampofo, 2020). In alignment with existing studies, the present research confirms that organizational fairness (Afsar & Badir, 2016), support (Jolly & Self, 2020), and leadership (Dirican, 2025) are significant determinants of embeddedness and engagement in service-oriented settings. Furthermore, similar to findings by Bambacas and Kulik (2013) and Hu and Dang (2025), this study establishes that employee attachment is deeply rooted in perceptions of organizational care and personal development opportunities. The results also correspond with the broader theoretical assertions of the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model, emphasizing that organizational and personal resources jointly predict engagement and retention outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

However, this study diverges from prior literature in several meaningful ways. Unlike earlier studies that focused primarily on turnover intentions (Halvorsen et al., 2015; Krishnan & Rathakrishnan, 2025) or job satisfaction (Ampofo, 2020), this research integrates both job embeddedness and employee engagement within a single structural framework, thereby capturing both the retention and motivational dimensions of employee behavior. Moreover, by examining these relationships within the context of the Indian hospitality industry, the study extends theoretical understanding to a developing economy context characterized by high employee turnover, cultural collectivism, and post-pandemic workforce restructuring. The inclusion of job crafting and psychological empowerment as contemporary behavioral constructs adds further novelty, highlighting employees' active role in shaping their embeddedness and engagement rather than viewing them as passive recipients of organizational influences. The study contributes to both theory and practice in several important ways. Theoretically, it reinforces the integration of Social Exchange Theory and the JD–R framework by empirically validating how fairness, support, empowerment, and personal initiative jointly shape employee attachment and engagement. Practically, the findings offer actionable insights for hospitality managers and HR practitioners to design policies that not only enhance retention but also stimulate engagement. Managers should foster transparent and fair decision-making systems, provide developmental support, encourage job crafting, and empower employees with greater autonomy to strengthen embeddedness and sustained engagement. Overall, this study shifts the discourse from merely

retaining employees to enabling them to thrive — demonstrating that moving “from fairness to fit” is not only a matter of ethical management but a strategic imperative for driving organizational resilience and performance in the hospitality sector.

7. Conclusion, Future Research, and Limitations

The present study provides comprehensive empirical evidence that both organizational and individual factors collectively determine the levels of job embeddedness and employee engagement among hospitality employees. Drawing upon Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) framework (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), the findings confirm that when employees perceive fairness, support, empowerment, and leadership care, they reciprocate through greater attachment and deeper engagement with their work. Among the predictors, psychological empowerment, leadership support, and perceived organizational justice emerged as the strongest antecedents of both embeddedness and engagement. These results emphasize that employees’ emotional and psychological connection to their organization extends beyond extrinsic rewards—it is deeply influenced by fairness, autonomy, and meaningful interpersonal exchanges.

Moreover, the study highlights job embeddedness as a critical bridge linking organizational practices and individual motivation. Employees who experience stronger fit, meaningful links, and perceived sacrifice within their organizations exhibit higher levels of engagement, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. The results thus reinforce that organizations seeking sustainable performance and lower attrition should focus not only on retaining talent but also on cultivating a work environment where fairness, empowerment, and developmental opportunities coexist. In essence, the study contributes to contemporary HR and organizational behavior scholarship by providing a unified model that integrates retention-oriented constructs (embeddedness) with motivational outcomes (engagement). It advances the conceptual understanding of how psychological and contextual resources interact to foster long-term employee commitment and enthusiasm within the dynamic and demanding environment of the hospitality sector. Practically, the findings underscore the importance of developing fair HR systems, supportive leadership structures, and empowering work cultures that align individual strengths with organizational goals, thereby shifting the managerial focus “from fairness to fit.”

7.1. Future Research Directions

While the present study offers strong empirical validation, it also opens new avenues for research. Future studies could employ longitudinal designs to examine how job embeddedness and engagement evolve overtime, particularly in response to organizational change, technology adoption, or crises such as the post-pandemic transition in the hospitality sector. Expanding the research across different service industries such as healthcare, education, or tourism would help test the generalizability of the model.

Additionally, future research could incorporate moderating variables such as personality traits, emotional intelligence, or organizational culture to explore boundary conditions that strengthen or weaken the relationship between fairness perceptions, embeddedness, and engagement. Investigating the role of digital transformation, especially in AI-driven HR systems, may also reveal how technology-enabled practices influence psychological attachment and performance outcomes. Cross-cultural comparative studies could further enhance understanding of how national culture, collectivism, or power distance moderates the effects of organizational fairness and support on embeddedness.

7.2 Limitations of the Study

Despite its theoretical and empirical contributions, the study is not without limitations. First, the cross-sectional research design limits causal inference; while relationships among constructs were statistically significant, longitudinal or experimental data would provide stronger evidence of causality. Second, the use of self-reported questionnaires may have introduced common method bias and social desirability effects, even though procedural remedies (such as anonymity and scale validation) were applied. Third, the sample was limited to hospitality employees in India, which may restrict the generalizability of findings to other sectors or cultural settings. Future

studies should therefore test the model in different countries or service domains to validate its robustness. Fourth, the study focused exclusively on positive organizational variables; inclusion of negative antecedents such as burnout, role stress, or job insecurity could provide a more balanced understanding of employee experiences. Lastly, while the study incorporated major organizational and psychological determinants, contextual and macroeconomic variables—such as labor market conditions or post-pandemic policy changes—were not examined. These external influences could shape employees’ embeddedness and engagement in ways that deserve future empirical attention.

In summary, the study establishes a strong empirical foundation for understanding the complex interplay between fairness, fit, and engagement in the hospitality sector. It emphasizes that organizations that promote justice, support, empowerment, and leadership care not only retain employees but also inspire them to perform with passion and purpose. By linking the emotional bond of embeddedness with the motivational energy of engagement, this study offers a holistic framework for advancing both theory and practice in human resource management.

Declaration- *AI tool like Paperpal was used for language improvement*

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