

## The Causal Effects of Leader-Member Exchange on Job Embeddedness towards Enhancing Creative Performance in the Hotel Industry

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### ABSTRACT

**Background and Objectives:** The hotel industry in Thailand is highly competitive and hotel employees play important roles in achieving business success. Creativity has therefore become one of the most widely used tools to satisfy customers, and employees' creative performance is crucial to achieving customer satisfaction. To establish creative performance, it is necessary to investigate its antecedences and causal effects. Thus, this research examines the causal effects of leader-member exchange, which characterizes the relationship between leaders and employees on job embeddedness, which refers to the employee's devotion to their job role towards enhancing the creative performance of frontline employees in five-star hotels in Bangkok, Thailand.

**Methodology:** A total of 559 hotel employees participated in this quantitative research study, which utilized a survey questionnaire as the research tool. The responses were analyzed with descriptive and inferential methods, including exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis was used to test the goodness of fit of the data.

**Main results:** The results revealed the positive effects of the mediator role that job embeddedness plays between leader-member exchange and creative performance, with structural model test results showing model fit indices having good fit with  $\chi^2/df = 1.133$ , GFI = 0.924, AGFI = 0.905, CFI = 0.993, TLI = 0.992, RMSEA = 0.015, RMR = 0.014.

**Discussion:** The results indicate that the leader-member exchange factor positively influences the creative performance of frontline employees in the hotel industry and aligns with the principles of the social exchange theory between constructs. It underlines the importance of leader-member exchange in shaping positive attitudes among hotel employees, which translates into enhanced creative performance. Specifically, when frontline hotel employees feel positive emotional connections and loyalty to their supervisors, they are more inclined to contribute high-quality work. Furthermore, the findings suggest that job embeddedness is a valuable tool for fostering increased creativity and support the notion that hotel frontline employees who are deeply embedded in their jobs are more likely to exhibit creative performance. Those who achieve job embeddedness, characterized by a good fit within the job, strong connections with colleagues, and a reluctance to leave, are more likely to generate creative ideas.

**Conclusion:** The findings have implications regarding the importance of human resources and hotel management in establishing leader-member exchange and promoting job embeddedness in frontline employees for enhancing creative performance to achieve a competitive advantage in the hotel business. Job embeddedness is recognized as crucial for overall work performance. However, these concepts have received limited attention within the tourism and hospitality sector. Consequently, this research addresses this gap, introducing a novel theoretical framework that integrates three key components: leader-member exchange, job embeddedness, and creative performance. Hence, this study makes a substantial contribution to the literature by establishing a new framework for future research on employee motivation related to job embeddedness that encompasses creative performance, applicable across various sectors and segments. Moreover, the findings highlight the need for human resource management and executives to prioritize the establishment of leader-member exchange in their practices. Ultimately, the cultivation of leader-member exchange relationships serves to enhance hotel employee job embeddedness and foster increased creative performance.

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## **Introduction**

Tourism is one of the most crucial segments of many national economies. In Thailand, the travel and tourism sector has made a significant contribution to the broader national economy and is well-known to international tourists (Klinsrisuk & Pechdin, 2022). This influence affects lodging and hotel facilities provided for the convenience of visiting tourists. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the hotel sector has tried to find a proper strategy to improve business performance (Chanyasak et al., 2022). Hotels have different characteristics from other businesses. A hotel is a service-oriented place, and several aspects of its services are generally intangible products, which makes the hotel industry a highly labor-intensive business in which employees need strong work skills (Datta, 2020). Since workers play a pivotal role in driving business success, effective human resource management is considered a vital asset for hotels, especially for staff whose work brings them into contact with guests and customers. Frontline staff are important in delivering hotel services to ensure customer satisfaction, serving as ambassadors who reflect the overall image of the hotel. In particular, frontline workers in the food and beverage department, who are responsible for restaurant and catering services, dedicate significant time to ensuring the satisfaction of hotel customers (Mahafzah et al., 2020). Therefore, they require ideas and creativity to achieve organizational success (Abdullah & Othman, 2019). In sum, creativity from food and beverage employees seems to play a crucial role in the success of hotels. Thus, it is necessary to identify the factors that affect the creative performance of the employees.

Considering leader-member exchange, which is the quality of the relationship between leaders and followers, this relationship can provide various benefits to both organizational and personnel success (Jha & Jha, 2013). When leaders and followers have good or healthy relationships, staff tend to embed at their work. This relationship creates a high quality of work with better employee performance, which includes the creativity of staff. With job embeddedness as the mediating construct, defined as fitting in the job, linking to people, and sacrificing for their job (due to not wanting to leave the company), it can increase the level of work performance and other outcomes (Rahimnia et al., 2019). There is a growing body of studies introducing job embeddedness as a motivational construct to enhance staff attitudes and behavioral outcomes, which are related to turnover intention and job performance (Eslamlou et al., 2021). However, little is known about the relationship between leader-member exchange and job embeddedness towards creative performance in the tourism and hospitality literature. According to a comprehensive literature review, these three constructs have not been thoroughly investigated in the context of five-star hotels in Bangkok, Thailand. This study establishes a novel model for both academic and practitioner contributions, encouraging further exploration of how to enhance employees' job embeddedness and creative performance across different sectors and hotel segments. The empirical results not only address existing gaps but also offer valuable contributions to the current body of literature. Therefore, this research aims to fill the knowledge gap and expand our understanding of the influence of leader-member exchange on job embeddedness towards the creative performance of frontline employees in the hotel industry.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Social Exchange Theory***

According to Blau (1964), the social exchange theory is a concept referring to people or individuals in the process of exchanging rewards or benefits to motivate others during social behavior, particularly, relating to the relationships among organizations and employees. The social exchange theory is one of the most widely used theoretical approaches in describing how leader-member exchange leads to greater employee performance (Martin et al., 2016). Therefore, the social exchange theory is adopted to explore the mediating process by which

leader-member exchange influences creative performance. In sum, this research framework underlines the basic ideas of the social exchange theory. The model is targeted toward staff members' perceptions of leader-member exchange, which influence job embeddedness toward employee creative performance of hotel frontline employees.

### ***Leader-member exchange***

Leader-member exchange is defined as a relationship between two parties: leaders and followers. A good quality relationship between leaders and members helps to predict an organization's outcomes at the levels of the staff, groupwork, and the company (Gerstner & Day, 1997). The issues involving leaders, followers, and their relationships have become more apparent as these relationships are based on the attributes of working relationships in the workplace and are focused on how individuals are classified. Therefore, positive the leader-member exchange can improve workplace outcomes. On the other hand, a leader-member exchange is dependent on the stage where staff and their managers support each other and exchange necessary resources (Akgunduz et al., 2023). Subsequently, one of the main keys to maximizing worker performance is to examine the relationship between managers and their followers since the supervisors know their staff and the way to delegate jobs based on their work potential, and good relationships make subordinates feel comfortable with the assigned work, thereby leading to high quality work performance.

### ***Creative Performance***

Creativity in organizations refers to the collaborative generation of new products, services, ideas, procedures and processes (Woodman et al., 1993). Studies of staff creativity are increasing in tourism and hospitality and public works since a creative employee has the ability to transform challenges into opportunities and difficulties into advantages.

Previous research has studied how the relationships between leaders and followers result in various outcomes. For instance, Maqsoom et al., (2022) presented a link between the leader-member exchange and creative behavior in a study among 288 employees in the construction industry in Pakistan. The results indicated that a positive leader-member exchange enhanced staff creative performance within the construction business. This finding has contributed to the development of best practices for industry managers in setting targets and boosting related skills in order to achieve positive results from their followers. Moreover, this study suggests that leaders are concerned about motivating staff creativity in workplaces. In addition, Abbas et al., (2021) observed 375 staff in the banking and education sectors in Pakistan, and the results showed that leader-member exchange was related to employee creativity.

Ouyang et al., (2021) reviewed 82 academic journals and found that leader-member exchange is a potential factor effecting employee creativity in tourism and hospitality. Their study was crucial in suggesting that establishments' managers can adopt this finding to foster staff ability and chances for creativity. The results from a study of 43 leaders and 215 workers at a theme park in Taiwan showed that leader-member exchange and employee creativity were positively related (Liao et al., 2018). Wang (2016) investigated 312 samples in tourist hotels located in Taiwan and pointed out that leader-member exchange influenced performance and staff creativity. Overall, hotels require good relationships between supervisors and team members to increase the staff's novel ideas. These research studies provide suggestions for human resource management to enhance reciprocal relationships, which can bring more creativity to a hotel's services. Based on the above review, the first hypothesis, which predicts the effects of leader-member exchange on hotel frontline individuals' creative performance, was put forward as follows:

**Hypothesis 1:** Leader-member exchange perceived by hotel frontline employees is positively associated with creative performance.

### ***Job Embeddedness***

Job embeddedness serves as a construct to illustrate why staff members remain in and continue with their jobs. It represents a web or net in each person that serves to attach them by means of fitting into the job, linking to people, and being unwilling to sacrifice their job benefit by leaving (Mitchell et al., 2001). Prior studies include Maham et al., (2021), who examined 298 frontline hotels and restaurants regarding customer service employees in restaurants in Pakistan and found that leader-member exchange is positively linked to job embeddedness. In a study of 213 employees in companies in Australia, Steward and Wiener (2021) investigated leader-member exchange concerned with the for gender dominant leadership patterns, especially regarding females working in leading industries. These patterns include affect, loyalty, contribution, and professional respect. The results of the study show that staff job embeddedness presented a mediating role among leader-member exchange and staff job satisfaction.

Rahimnia et al., (2019) conducted a study of 300 staff members of an electricity company located in Mashhad, Iran, which indicated that a mediating role of job embeddedness was confirmed via the social exchange theory and also showed that perceived job flexibility positively affected job embeddedness and staff creative performance. Eslamlou et al., (2021) analyzed 121 frontline cabin attendants in 13 private aviation airline businesses in Turkey and found that job embeddedness was not a mediating factor between resilience and cabin creative performance. However, other studies on the hospitality industry presented the positive effect of the mediating role of job embeddedness on creative performance. Khorakian et al., (2021) demonstrated that job embeddedness positively affected staff creativity as it played a mediating role between leadership and staff creativity in a sample of 412 managers and chefs from 500 restaurants in Mashhad, Iran. A study of 398 travel agent employees in Egypt reported that high-performance work practice, linked to job embeddedness as a mediator role, increased staff creativity (Zaki & Al-Romeedy, 2019). A study of 212 hotel frontline staff in Cameroon found that receiving support from colleagues or family increased staff's sense of belonging to their workplace, through the linkage mechanism of job embeddedness's mediation to boost the staff members' creative performance (Karatepe, 2016). With reference to the above review and academic evidence in the literature, three additional hypotheses were proposed as follows:

**Hypothesis 2:** Leader-member exchange perceived by hotel frontline employees is positively associated with job embeddedness.

**Hypothesis 3:** Job embeddedness has a positive influence on the creative performance of hotel frontline employees.

**Hypothesis 4:** The relationship between leader-member exchange and creative performance is potentially mediated by job embeddedness.

### **Method**

The design of this research follows the outline of a quantitative approach, conducted by using stratified random sampling and the purposive sampling technique. The data were collected within five-star hotels in Bangkok which were listed in the Thai Hotel Association in the year 2023. The Thai Hotel Association (2023) is expected to keep an extensive and regularly updated compilation of five-star hotels in Bangkok. By incorporating this information into the research, it guarantees the inclusion of a diverse selection of hotels that meet the specified criteria for the five-star rating, thus ensuring a representative sample of the industry. The samples were analyzed with descriptive and inferential methods consisting of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the four hypotheses identified above.

## Respondents

The respondents were hotel frontline employees in the food and beverage sections of five-star hotels in Bangkok, Thailand. The population included all frontline employees that have regular and daily working contact with customers. Each respondent was a full-time employee.

## Instrument

The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 as “strongly disagree” to 5 as “strongly agree.” The item measurement of this research is based on the following constructs.

### *Leader-member exchange*

Leader-member exchange measures frontline employees’ perception of leader-member exchange, which forms a relationship between leaders and subordinates. This involves four elements that were adapted from Liden and Maslyn (1998), namely: (1) affect, such as (“You like your supervisor very much as a person”), (2) loyalty (“Your supervisor would defend you to others in the hotel if you made an honest mistake”), (3) contribution (“You are willing to apply extra effort, beyond that normally required, to further the interests of your work group”), and (4) professional respect (“You respect your supervisor’s knowledge and competence on the job”).

### *Job embeddedness*

Grounded in the study of Mitchell et al., (2001) on job embeddedness, frontline job embeddedness is assessed in three dimensions: (1) fit, such as (“Your job utilizes your skills and talents well”), (2) link (“You interact frequently with your work group members”), and (3) sacrifice (“You believe the prospects for continuing employment with your hotel are excellent”).

### *Creative performance*

Creative performance follows a rating scale of frontline employee creative performance by including three dimensions, which are: (1) creative practices, such as (“You come up with new ideas to satisfy hotel customer needs”), (2) problem-solving (“You generate multiple alternatives for hotel customer problems”) applied by Wang and Netemeyer (2004), and (3) flexibility, which was adapted from Martin and Ruben (1995), for example, “In any given situation, you are able to act appropriately”.

The survey questionnaire validity (item-objective congruence method: IOC) was analyzed to examine the quality of each question by five experts. Since the quality of the questionnaire was predominantly associated with the reliability that the measurement is consistent and accurate, the questionnaire instrument was checked for reliability through a pre-test with 30 cases. These 30 samples, assessed among prior hotel frontline employees, were used exclusively for a pilot test, and not combined with actual samples. After receiving pilot test results, the data was analyzed by specific software to verify and compute questionnaire’s reliability value. Cronbach’s alpha was used to determine the consistency or reliability of the questionnaire. Principally, a Cronbach’s alpha reliability value over 0.70 indicates that it is acceptable to use the questionnaire (Hair et al., 2010). In this study, the indicators had a range of values from 0.802 to 0.942, which is acceptable for the data collection.

## Data collection

The self-administered survey was conducted with 600 questionnaires. After receiving approval from each hotel, the questionnaires were distributed to 18 hotels. The number of questionnaires returned was 570, and eight needed to be removed due to incomplete information. Thus, a total of 562 responses went through the process of a normality check, which resulted in three outliers being removed.

## Data analysis

The inferential statistics method was performed for factor analysis and establishing the construct validity of the variables. EFA was performed in the measurement model and CFA was conducted to examine the factor structures of the group of observed variables. The structural equation method was then utilized. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a statistical technique used to analyze complex relationships among variables based on theoretical models. Its key principles include: 1) Theory-driven approach, SEM relies on theoretical models that hypothesize relationships among variables, often depicted in path diagrams. 2) Model specification, SEM involves specifying a model that represents the theoretical relationships, including identifying latent variables (factors), their indicators, and directional paths among variables. 3) Measurement model, Latent variables in SEM are inferred from observed indicators. The measurement model specifies how latent variables are measured by indicators, allowing for estimating reliability and validity of measurement instruments.

In the context of screening outliers through Mahalanobis distance, this inquiry involved data truncation from 562 to 559 to address outlier concerns. The primary focus was on adhering to methodological prerequisites prior to engaging in measurement model and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Four pivotal assumptions were diligently examined:

**Normality:** Drawing inspiration from Kline (2015), the normality of the data was evaluated, with an acceptance criterion falling within the range of  $\pm 3$ , as illustrated in Table 1. Notably, all variables were found to meet this requisite.

**Homoscedasticity:** The Durbin–Watson test was employed to gauge serial correlation among residual errors, with a value approaching 2 signifying uncorrelated and independent residual errors, thereby validating the goodness of fit for the substantive model.

**Linearity:** While the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests indicated significant values below 0.05, signaling potential non-linearity, adherence to the methodology outlined by Hair et al. (2010) prompted data transformation to fulfill the linearity assumption. Transformation decisions were guided by evaluating the impact, calculating the ratio of the variable's mean to its standard deviation. Transformations were selectively applied to independent variables, with due consideration given to minimizing the ratio, while preserving the original format for profiling and interpretation.

**Absence of Correlated Errors:** The Durbin–Watson test was again deployed to examine the absence of correlated errors, ensuring residual errors remained uncorrelated even after data transformation. A value approximating 2 indicated the desired outcome. Consequently, this investigation successfully attested to the fulfillment of the four crucial assumptions, paving the way for the subsequent application of measurement models and SEM.

## Findings

According to the demographic of the respondents used in this paper, there were 240 male respondents and 319 were female respondents. The predominant age range was 21-29 years, accounting for 264 employees (47.23%). Most respondents held an undergraduate degree (342 employees or 75.49%), and the majority were single (422 employees or 75.49%). The category of food and beverage attendants, 301 (54%) constituted most of the positions. The majority of frontline employees, 428 individuals (76.57%), had a high level of direct guest contact. Regarding salary, the most common pay range was between 15,001-20,000 baht, comprising 151 employees (27.01%). Most employees had experience in the hotel industry for 1-5 years, with 206 respondents (36.85%).

The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1, showing the means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis of all variables used in the analysis.

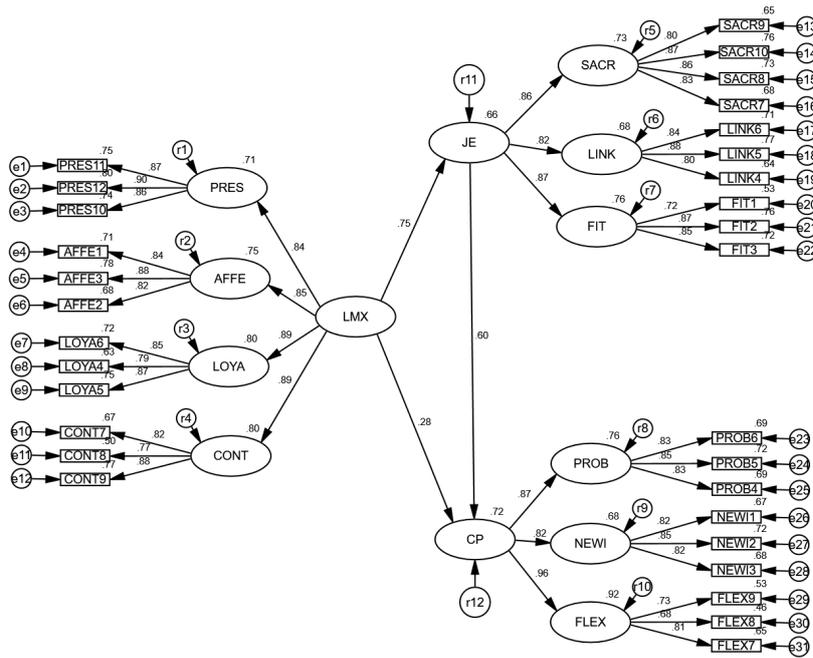
**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics

Code	Variables	$\bar{x}$	<i>S.D.</i>	Skew.	Kur.	Level
LMX	Leader-member exchange	4.22	0.59	-0.52	-0.32	Very high
JE	Job embeddedness	4.30	0.53	-0.40	-0.46	Very high
CP	Creative performance	4.20	0.53	-0.22	-0.47	High

EFA involves two statistical measures to check the factorability of the sampling data: (1) Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin or KMO, measuring the adequacy of the sample data, with values above  $>0.6$  considered adequate for analysis; (2) Bartlett's test of sphericity, which tests the null hypothesis, where a value  $<0.05$  indicates significant deviation is observed in the correlation matrix from identity matrix, making factor analysis worthwhile for the data set (Shrestha, 2021). For the EFA, the Common Method Bias assessment confirmed 42.24 from 57 items which is less than 50% of the construct validity by KMO indicating the three variables are between 0.903–0.934, and Bartlett's test was at 0.000 significance. The satisfactory value of more than 0.6 and less than 0.05 explains that the correlation matrix diverges significantly from the identity matrix, and the factor analysis results showed good fit with the data set.

The CFA of leader-member exchange demonstrated acceptable model fit indices:  $\chi^2/df = 1.156$ , GFI = 0.984, AGFI = 0.972, CFI = 0.999, TLI = 0.998, RMSEA = 0.017, RMR = 0.009. Job embeddedness showed acceptable model fit indices at  $\chi^2/df = 1.425$ , GFI = 0.989, AGFI = 0.973, CFI = 0.997, TLI = 0.995, RMSEA = 0.028, RMR = 0.009. Creative performance demonstrated acceptable model fit indices:  $\chi^2/df = 1.501$ , GFI = 0.988, AGFI = 0.973, CFI = 0.997, TLI = 0.994, RMSEA = 0.030, RMR = 0.007. All variables were identified as an acceptable model fit. The overall measurement model indices were at  $\chi^2/df = 1.144$ , GFI = 0.921, AGFI = 0.903, CFI = 0.992, TLI = 0.991, RMSEA = 0.016, RMR = 0.015, which also presented a good model fit.

The first model indicated  $\chi^2/df = 2.324$ , GFI = 0.834, AGFI = 0.818, CFI = 0.922, TLI = 0.917, RMSEA = 0.049, RMR = 0.106, this model does not pass criteria. After adjusting based on the suggestion of modification index for 10 times, the structural model testing results demonstrated that the model fit indices with hypotheses model yielded a good fit to the data with  $\chi^2/df = 1.133$ , GFI = 0.924, AGFI = 0.905, CFI = 0.993, TLI = 0.992, RMSEA = 0.015, RMR = 0.014. All indices fit well within the acceptable range (Kline, 2015). These findings verified the convergent validity, with a satisfactory model fit. The results also indicated that the scales used for testing the structural model were reliable and valid, as depicted in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** Tested Structural Causal Model for Research Constructs

Table 2 displays the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient testing of the measurement scale. Additionally, in order to evaluate the reliability of the construct and assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the instrument, the authors asserted that they calculated composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE). The range of the coefficient is between 0.914 – 0.931, which exceeds the recommended threshold (> 0.70). The convergent validity of all measurement scales was affirmed, given that the composite reliability (CR) and average extracted variance (AVE) for each measurement scale exceeded the recommended thresholds of 0.70 and 0.50, respectively (Hair et al., 2010). The maximum shared variance (MSV), and average shared variance (ASV) is between 0.669 – 0.801.

**Table 2.** Results of Reliability and Convergent Validity Testing of the Measurement Model

Constructs	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
LMX Leader-member Exchange ( $\alpha = 0.942$ )	0.931	0.770	0.669	0.586
JE Job Embeddedness ( $\alpha = 0.924$ )	0.923	0.802	0.801	0.682
CP Creative Performance ( $\alpha = 0.920$ )	0.914	0.780	0.711	0.645

Table 3 presents the direct effect, indirect effect, and total effect. The leader-member exchange factor had a direct impact on job embeddedness (DE = 0.754), and creative performance (DE = 0.281), while leader-member exchange had an indirect effect upon creative performance (IE = 0.449). Its total effect (TE) was 0.730. Meanwhile, job embeddedness had a direct effect on creative performance (DE = 0.595), and its total effect (TE) was 0.595.

**Table 3.** Standardized Direct Effect, Indirect Effect, and Total Effect of Causal Variables

Causal Variables	Effect Variables					
	Job Embeddedness (JE)			Creative Performance (CP)		
	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE
Leader-member Exchange	0.754***	-	0.754***	0.281***	0.449***	0.730***
Job Embeddedness	-	-	-	0.595***	-	0.595***
	R <sup>2</sup>		0.660			0.724

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , ns = Not significant

Discriminant validity and the correlation matrix among the study’s constructs should not exhibit high inter-correlation. A coefficient below 0.90 confirms that each construct demonstrates its indicators rather than those of other constructs in the model (Kline, 2015). Table 4 illustrates the correlations between the constructs, displaying positive correlation coefficients ranging from 0.730 to 0.837. In summary, the discriminant validity of this measurement model and all constructs is supported, indicating that these factors are not intercorrelated.

**Table 4.** Discriminant Validity and Correlation Matrix among the Research Constructs

	LMX	JE
JE	0.753***	
CP	0.730***	0.837***

**Hypothesis testing**

*H1: Leader-member exchange perceived by hotel frontline employees is positively associated with creative performance.* The findings supported Hypothesis 1 ( $\beta = 0.281$ ,  $t$ -value = 4.404,  $p < 0.001$ ). This outcome signifies that the higher the level of perceived leader-member exchange from employees’ leaders, the more those employees are likely to have a greater degree of creative performance.

*H2: Leader-member exchange perceived by hotel frontline employees is positively associated with job embeddedness.* These findings indicate that leader-member exchange as perceived by hotel frontline employees is positively linked to job embeddedness ( $\beta = 0.754$ ,  $t$ -value = 13.894,  $p < 0.001$ ), showing that Hypothesis 2 is validated. Therefore, when hotel frontline employees have a high level of perceived leader-member exchange, it likely increases the level of hotel frontline employees’ job embeddedness.

*H3: Job embeddedness has a positive influence on the creative performance of hotel frontline employees.* Hypothesis 3 was validated ( $\beta = 0.595$ ,  $t$ -value = 7.984,  $p < 0.001$ ), which confirmed that job embeddedness has a significantly positive on hotel frontline employees’ creative performance. Therefore, this finding can be used to affirm that a higher level of job embeddedness increases the hotel frontline employees’ creative performance in the hotels.

*H4: The relationship between leader-member exchange and creative performance is potentially mediated by job embeddedness.* The results illustrate that the mediator effect of job embeddedness between leader-member exchange and creative performance is supported with regard to Hypothesis 4 by the standard of DE = 0.281, IE = 0.449, and TE = 0.730. Thus, this hypothesis was validated.

**Discussion**

This current research found that the leader-member exchange factor has a positive effect on the creative performance of hotel frontline employees, which presents empirical evidence

in accord with the social exchange theory among the constructs. This result is consistent with Wang (2016) in that leader-member exchange is considered a potential construct influencing employees' creative performance and presenting an essential factor to shape hotel employees having positive thoughts in terms of their work. For instance, when hotel frontline employees feel affection and a sense of loyalty toward their supervisors, they feel more inclined to contribute high quality effort into their job. The next finding demonstrates that leader-member exchange affects job embeddedness, which is similar to Maham et al., (2021), interpreting that staff in the service sector are more embedded in their job when they perceive there to be a healthy leader-member exchange. Furthermore, this study's outcomes reported a positive link between job embeddedness and creative performance, which aligns with Zaki and Al-Romeedy (2019), by recognizing the mediator role that embeddedness plays in increasing creative performance. Essentially, increasing job embeddedness is a useful strategy for increasing frontline staff creativity, because it contributes to work environment where they can demonstrate their creativity. This empirical evidence is supported by the current findings which help deepen the understanding that hotel frontline employees who are embedded in their job are more likely to exhibit creative performance. The hotel frontline employees who achieve job embeddedness (fitting well in their job, linking to other people at work, and having to sacrifice benefits if they leave their job) tend to have creative ideas and performance. In essence, these findings clearly prove all the hypotheses by confirming the constructs in forming the creative ideas of hotel workers to improve hotel work services, which can lead to the hotel's ultimate goal of providing exemplary service to their customers.

While the significance of job embeddedness for establishing a competitive advantage in the hotel business is widely recognized, the literature within the tourism sector has received limited attention. This research addresses this gap by examining the influence of job embeddedness and its antecedents on the creative performance of employees in the hotel sector. The study contributes to existing knowledge by presenting a unique theoretical framework that integrates leader-member exchange, job embeddedness, and creative performance into a unified model. Leader-member exchange is treated as independent variable, while creative performance is considered a dependent variable, allowing for the validation of the mediating role of job embeddedness. According to a comprehensive literature review, these three key constructs have not been thoroughly investigated in the context of five-star hotels in Bangkok, Thailand. The findings support the applicability of the proposed framework to empirical data for seven hypotheses. Consequently, this study establishes a novel model for both academic and practitioner contributions, encouraging further exploration of how to enhance employees' job embeddedness and creative performance across different sectors and hotel segments. The empirical results not only address existing gaps but also offer valuable contributions to the current body of literature.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this research was to study the relationship between leader-member exchange, job embeddedness and creative performance in the hotel sector in Bangkok. Many studies have posited that the creative performance of employees is important to business outcomes, and job embeddedness is essential in enhancing work performance (Eslamlou et al., 2021). However, these concepts have rarely been studied in the field of tourism and the hospitality industry. Thus, this research fills this academic gap and sheds light on the importance of job embeddedness. Based on Blau (1964), this research introduces a unique theoretical research framework that incorporates three major components of leader-member exchange, job embeddedness and creative performance into a single model. Therefore, this current study contributes to the literature by establishing a new framework for future research on employee

motivation associated with job embeddedness, including employees' creative performance that can be applied to different sectors and other segments of the Thai hotel industry.

To establish creative performance, this research reveals that leader-member exchange plays a crucial role, exhibiting a strong direct impact on creative performance. This observation contributes to the understanding of the social exchange theory, emphasizing that leader-member exchange sends signals to employees about their relationships, ultimately enhancing creative performance. Notably, leaders' relationships or their leader-member exchange, emerges as a pivotal driver of employee work outcomes. This implies that employees' willingness to demonstrate job embeddedness is influenced by their ties with their leaders and can consequently increase their creative performance within their hotels. Furthermore, the research outcomes point to recommendations for human resource management teams and executives about the importance of establishing positive leader-member exchange in their hotel management practices. Leaders should support their team members and provide guidance to showcase their skills and be a positive role model within the work team. Hotel leaders can consider putting effort into building the exchange relationships in the workplace. This can help to establish healthy relationships between leaders and team members in hotels. Leader-member exchange has been highlighted as an important factor impacting the job embeddedness and creative performance of hotel frontline employees. There are many ways that hotel leaders can exhibit and build positive relationships with their employees, such as providing breaks during work shifts, which can facilitate participation in discussions during the downtime. Ultimately, the leader-member exchange relationship can be utilized to help build hotel employee job embeddedness and increase creative performance.

In future research, this study model can be applied to various types of hotel employees or other businesses. This research exclusively focused on five-star hotels in Bangkok, Thailand. Future research should broaden its focus to include other types of hotels, such as boutique hotels, or hotels of different star ratings, and their efforts to promote their employees' creative performance. Finally, this study only investigated mediator job embeddedness. In the future, researchers should be encouraged to explore other valuable mediators in investigating causal effects on other variables, such as happiness at work, job satisfaction, and job commitment on positive hotel performance and outcomes in the hotel business.

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