

## THE SYNERGY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AND JOB EMBEDDEDNESS: EXTENDING THE CONSERVATION OF RESOURCES THEORY IN HOSPITALITY EMPLOYEE RETENTION

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**Abstract:** Psychological capital (PsyCap), comprising hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism, is a critical psychological resource that enhances employee retention (ER) in the hospitality industry. Grounded in the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, this study examines the direct impact of PsyCap on ER and explores job embeddedness (JE) as a mediating factor. JE represents the psychological and social forces that keep employees attached to their organization, reducing turnover intentions. The study surveyed 429 frontline employees working in five-star hotels across Saudi Arabia, and the data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings reveal that PsyCap significantly enhances JE by strengthening employees' alignment with organizational values, relationships, and career opportunities. Employees with higher PsyCap demonstrate greater job satisfaction and a stronger sense of belonging, leading to reduced turnover intentions. Additionally, JE positively influences ER, confirming its crucial role in hospitality workforce stability. Importantly, JE partially mediates the relationship between PsyCap and ER, illustrating its role in transforming psychological resources into actual retention outcomes. These insights provide practical implications for hospitality managers aiming to mitigate high turnover rates. Investing in PsyCap-enhancing initiatives—such as resilience training, career development programs, and mentoring—can cultivate stronger employee embeddedness. Similarly, strengthening JE through organizational strategies, including fostering social connections, aligning company values with employee expectations, and improving career progression pathways, can further reduce attrition and enhance organizational performance. The study contributes to COR theory by integrating PsyCap and JE into the context of the hospitality industry, offering a more comprehensive understanding of their influence on ER. Future research should explore the long-term effects of PsyCap on ER through longitudinal studies and examine additional moderating variables, such as organizational culture and leadership styles, to provide a deeper understanding of employee retention dynamics.

**Keywords:** PsyCap, COR theory, hospitality industry, retention, job embeddedness

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## INTRODUCTION

Retaining employees remains a continual concern within the hospitality sector, often depicted by the high turnover rates and stressful work environments (Yam et al., 2018; Abdou et al., 2024; Dwesini, 2019). The industry's reliance on personal interactions, demanding hours, and customer service complexities make it hard for organizations to keep a stable workforce (Cho et al., 2009; Abdou et al., 2022; Salama et al., 2022). Despite numerous studies focusing on factors like wages, working conditions, and job satisfaction, the psychological resources of employees and how they impact their retention are the areas that require deeper exploration. One framework that offers a promising lens for understanding this aspect is psychological capital (PsyCap), a positive mental state defined by resources like hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy as mentioned by Luthans et al. (2007). Employees with higher PsyCap will likely experience greater job satisfaction, cope better with challenges, and exhibit stronger motivation to remain with their employer (Jung & Yoon, 2015; Yam et al., 2018). PsyCap fosters positive emotions and constructive behavior, improving job performance and enhancing employees' likelihood of staying at their positions (Flinkman et al., 2023; Chaleoykitti & Thaiudom, 2017). PsyCap has been widely recognized as a driver of employee engagement and satisfaction, but its potential influence on retention, primarily when mediated by job embeddedness (JE), has been underexplored.

In the setting of the hospitality industry, which is labor-intensive, ER is a serious issue, making job embeddedness crucial. As per Mitchell et al. (2001), JE denotes the combined forces that motivate employees to remain attached to their current employment. It comprises three components: links (describing the relationships employees have with their family, society, and organization), fit (referring to how compatible employees are with their jobs, values, and environment), and sacrifice (the perceived loss when someone decides to leave his/her job). Earlier studies suggested that to build a more sustainable workforce that enhances customer satisfaction in this competitive industry, hospitality establishments should focus on job embeddedness to reduce turnover, lower attrition, and improve retention (Chan et al., 2019; Khattak et al., 2022).

While earlier research highlighted a significant direct effect of PsyCap on several important workplace outcomes—like employee performance, employee satisfaction, and turnover intentions, a distinguished gap exists in empirical studies specifically investigating the intermediating role of JE within this context. This gap is especially significant within the hospitality industry, where employee turnover rates are extremely high. Moreover, a considerable portion of the existing literature tends to focus on individual resources of PsyCap, i.e. optimism, self-efficacy, hope, and resilience. Moreover, it examines JE as a standalone construct. However, there has been a dearth of examining how these constructs interact to influence employee retention. Understanding these interactions is critical, as it may reveal underlying mechanisms contributing to employees' decisions to stay with their employers. Therefore, the primary aim of this study is to investigate the relationship amid PsyCap and employee retention, specifically inside the hospitality industry, analyzing the extent to which JE is an intermediary factor in this relationship. To achieve this aim, the study intends to explore the under-mentioned key questions:

1. How do PsyCap resources, such as “hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism,” influence JE and ER in the hospitality sector?
2. How does PsyCap, with its dimensions of hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism, influence employees' job embeddedness?
3. How significantly does JE act as a mediator in the link between PsyCap and ER?

This study is grounded in the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which explores the PsyCap-JE-ER relationship and answers the key questions mentioned above. The COR theory, developed by Hobfoll (1989), posited that individuals are enthused to acquire, protect, and conserve valuable resources. These resources can be psychological (i.e., PsyCap including self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience), or organizational (i.e., job embeddedness including links, fit, and sacrifices). In the context of ER, COR theory posits that employees are apt to continue with their employers once they sense that their psychological resources, such as self-efficacy and resilience, and organizational resources, such as links and fit, are secure and expanding. By exploring the association between these variables, this research offers a more nuanced and holistic perspective of the factors contributing to retaining employees in a sector marked by high turnover rates such as the hospitality sector. While much of the literature has examined these factors separately, this research takes a holistic approach to understanding how psychological and organizational resources impact an employee's decision to retain his/her employer. Ultimately, the findings are expected to provide valuable perceptions of hospitality management practitioners seeking to enhance ER strategies and foster a more stable workforce. The present research is divided into eight sections. Following the Introduction, Section 2: Review of Literature outlines the theoretical background, focusing on the relationship between Psychological Capital (PsyCap) and Job Embeddedness (JE), and their relevance to employee retention. Section 3, Materials and Methods, describes the research design, measurement tools, sampling strategy, and data collection procedures utilized in the study. Section 4, Results, provides a detailed analysis of the study's findings. Section 5, Discussion, interprets the study's results in the light of existing literature, offering a comprehensive understanding of the findings. Section 6, theoretical and practical implications, highlights the study's contributions to both theory and practice. Section 7, Conclusion, summarizes the key findings, emphasizing their significance in understanding the relationships among PsyCap, JE, and employee retention in the hospitality sector. Finally, Section 8, Limitations and Future Research discusses the study's limitations and proposes directions for further research.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 1. Psychological capital (PsyCap) and employee retention (ER)

PsyCap denotes an optimistic mental state describing the confidence of an individual in his/her capacity to achieve and handle obstacles/challenges. Luthans et al. (2007: 3) described PsyCap as “*an individual's positive psychological state of*

*development characterized by: (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success."*

ER is a key aspect of human resource management, emphasizing strategies to keep employees in an organization for extended periods (Das & Baruah, 2013). Effective ER can be achieved through training, development, financial rewards, management support, positive work environments, career growth opportunities, and job satisfaction (Hausknecht et al., 2009; Dewi et al., 2021; Ramachandran & Prasad, 2022; Frye et al., 2020; Islam et al., 2024). These strategies are crucial in reducing turnover, saving costs associated with recruitment and training, and enhancing organizational productivity, sustainability, and success—especially in high-turnover sectors like hospitality (AL-Makhadmah et al., 2020; Vasquez, 2014; Ghani et al., 2022).

Research highlights the significant role of psychological capital (PsyCap), with its components—self-efficacy, resilience, hope, and optimism, in predicting ER. Self-efficacy fosters employees' belief in their ability to succeed, enhancing their commitment to stay (Ellett, 2014). Resilient employees are better equipped to handle workplace challenges, contributing to higher retention rates, particularly in organizations that promote resilience through training and recognition (Rangachari & Woods, 2020; Yang & Lee, 2023). Hope, another PsyCap component, influences how employees perceive their future growth and success within an organization, thereby encouraging retention (Fazal-e-Hasan et al., 2023). Similarly, optimism, which reflects employees' expectations of positive outcomes and opportunities within their organization, has been linked to stronger retention intentions (Kim & Hyun, 2017). Grounded in the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, PsyCap is viewed as a critical personal resource that employees strive to conserve and develop. When employees possess high PsyCap, they are more probable to continue working in the organization. Taking these insights into account, the following hypothesis is suggested.

**H1:** PsyCap is significantly associated with ER in the context of the hospitality industry.

## **2. Psychological capital (PsyCap) and job embeddedness (JE)**

Job embeddedness is a notion that has gained considerable attention in organizational studies, particularly within the hospitality industry (Ampofo & Karatepe, 2022; Robinson et al., 2014; Yam & Raybould, 2018). JE denotes the forces that let workers get attached to their jobs, encompassing both on-the-job (organization) and off-the-job (community) aspects (Mitchell et al., 2001). Job embeddedness is typically divided into three main elements: links, fit, and sacrifice. *Links* denote the connections of an employee with other people or activities. These links can include relationships with colleagues, managers, and guests. *Fit* describes how employees perceive their job and organizational culture align with their values as well as professional objectives. The dynamic plus diverse environment of the hospitality industry often requires a solid fit to ensure job satisfaction and performance. *Sacrifice* involves the professed cost of saying goodbye to a job, encompassing monetary plus non-financial aspects. These aspects may include loss of benefits, career progression opportunities, and societal connections (Mitchell et al., 2001; Yam et al., 2018).

Several studies have probed the interplay between PsyCap and JE (Sun et al., 2012; Ali et al., 2022; Joo & Shin, 2023). Sun et al. (2012) conducted research involving 1000 nurses from Chinese university hospitals, which revealed that PsyCap significantly correlates to nurses' JE. The study suggested that nurses who experience a positive psychological condition tend to build more vital connections with their organization, making them more deeply embedded in their work. This positive mindset also enhances their adaptability and competence in fulfilling their responsibilities. Similarly, Ali et al. (2022) found that PsyCap significantly influences JE ( $\beta = 0.361$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), suggesting that improving nurses' psychological state will positively impact their JE. Nurses with strong connections within the organization, like positive associations with their colleagues, often possess higher levels of PsyCap. Their ability to foster these meaningful relationships reflects their resilience, optimism, and positive mindset. Additionally, in the banking industry setting, Pillay et al. (2020) suggested that employees possessing high levels of PsyCap are additionally inclined to become closely connected to their organizations. This is largely because they tend to foster their links with colleagues, allowing them to experience a stronger sense of fit and deeper connections within the organization. Hence, the following hypothesis is suggested.

**H2:** PsyCap is significantly associated with JE in the context of the hospitality industry.

## **3. Job embeddedness (JE) and employee retention (ER)**

Through its links, fit, and sacrifice dimensions, JE undertakes a crucial part in retaining employees (Hassan et al., 2024). Considering the broader organizational and social factors that anchor individuals to their jobs, JE provides an in-depth perspective on ER. Researchers have shown that JE is a crucial determinant of ER. For example, in the hospitality sector context, Yam et al. (2018) established that workers possessing extraordinary levels of embeddedness, particularly in terms of social connections and alignment with organizational values, are less inclined to vacate their positions when faced with external opportunities. Furthermore, in their empirical investigation involving 143 novice teachers, Watson and Olson-Buchanan, (2016) demonstrated that novice educators who feel that their values are closely tied to the organization's vision report higher retention rates and demonstrate stronger loyalty to their schools. Additionally, Holtom and Darabi (2018) confirmed that when employees feel that the potential sacrifices of leaving, including losing professional connections, financial benefits, or career advancement—are too great, they tend to remain with their current employer. Finally, underpinning the COR theory, JE acts as a crucial organizational resource that employees seek to maintain, leading to higher retention rates among those deeply connected to their roles. Bearing in mind the previous insights, the following hypothesis is suggested.

**H3:** JE is significantly associated with boosting ER in the context of the hospitality industry.

#### 4. The mediating effect of JE in the link between PsyCap and ER

Previous research has identified PsyCap as a critical determinant of JE. Earlier research has presented that workers with positive PsyCap are more entrenched in their roles due to stronger connections with colleagues and greater adaptability to their work setting (Sun et al., 2012; Ali et al., 2022; Joo & Shin, 2023). Furthermore, the prior research concluded a substantial optimistic interplay amid PsyCap and ER, suggesting that employees with high PsyCap are more probable to continue working with their business (Flinkman et al., 2023; Chaleoykitti & Thaiudom, 2017; Schulz et al., 2014). Similarly, according to (Robinson et al., 2014; Lim et al., 2022; Yam et al., 2018), JE significantly fosters the ER in various contexts. Hence, following COR theory which views JE as a valuable organizational resource that employees seek to protect and grow, the authors of this research assumed that JE will possibly play an intervening role in the PsyCap-ER relationship acting as the mechanism through which employees' psychological resources can significantly enhance their retention rate. Accordingly, the next hypothesis is introduced.

**H4:** JE has a significant positive effect as a mediating variable in the PsyCap-ER relationship in the context of the hospitality industry.

As depicted in Figure 1, this study's framework defines PsyCap as an independent factor and ER functions as the dependent one. Further, JE acts as an intervening variable, shedding light on the indirect connection between PsyCap and ER.

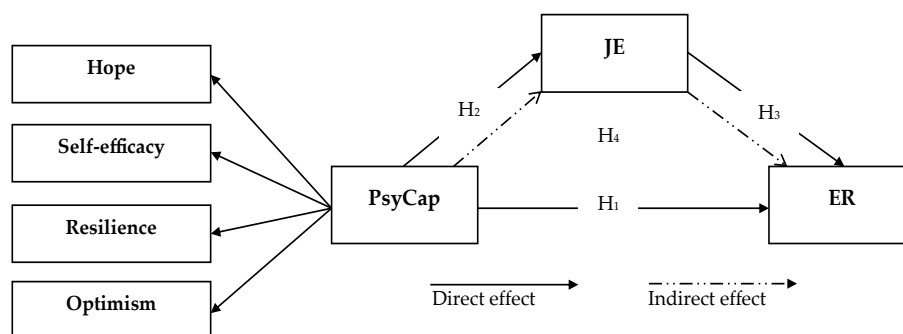


Figure 1. Study's theoretical framework

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 1. Development of Instruments and Measures of the Study

A cross-sectional survey was implemented to empirically examine the relationships among PsyCap, JE, and ER. Data collection was conducted through a self-administered questionnaire, designed keeping in view an extensive literature review to incorporate dependable and commonly utilized measures. The survey contained four sections. The first section collected demographic details comprising age, gender, education, current department, and experience in the hotel, while the second section evaluated participants' perceptions of PsyCap. The third section focused on JE, and the fourth section measured employee retention. Two experts in psychology and two experts in hospitality management were consulted for feedback on the questionnaire's content to confirm that it accurately measures the targeted variables. Furthermore, a pilot test with 35 individuals not part of the main study sample was conducted to evaluate the survey's clarity, simplicity, and consistency as well as to spot any unclear terms or meanings. Regarding the study's measures, psychological capital was assessed through the Compound PsyCap Scale (CPC-12), created by Lorenz et al. (2016) and later revised by Lorenz et al. (2022), including four subscales. Each one out of the four subscales - "hope", "self-efficacy", "resilience", and "optimism"- was evaluated with three items, using a 5-point scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). A higher score reflects a higher level of psychological capital. Samples of these items are "If I should find myself in a jam, I could think of many ways to get out of it.", "Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad.", and "I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events." One of the most widely used and validated scales, the global JE scale, established by Crossley et al. (2007), was utilized to evaluate JE. This 7-item scale focuses on employees' overall perceptions of being embedded. It provides a holistic view of embeddedness without separating into distinct dimensions (links, fit, and sacrifices). One statement of this scale is "I am tightly connected to this organization." Like the previous scale, participants were requested to assign a rating to their perceptions of JE on a 5-point scale. Concerning employee retention, a 3-item scale initially prepared by Seashore et al. (1982) and modified and utilized by Kundu and Lata (2017) was employed to assess the extent to which employees will likely remain with their organizations over time. Participants were also invited to assess their agreement level on a 5-point scale, as was done with the earlier questions. One item of this scale is "I plan to stay in this organization for the next five years."

### 2. Sampling and data collection

The sample of the current study focuses on frontline staff working in 5-star hotels in Saudi Arabia who interact directly with guests, including roles such as receptionists, concierges, housekeepers, and food and beverage staff. The study focused on this category (frontline employees) for two reasons. First, frontline employees, such as those in the front office, housekeeping, and food and beverage departments, are directly responsible for customer interactions and overall guest satisfaction. In the luxury hospitality sector, particularly 5-star hotels, the quality of service and customer experience is of paramount importance, making employee retention a critical factor for maintaining high service standards and guest loyalty. Second, frontline employees in 5-star hotels often face unique job demands, high expectations, and stress from

maintaining excellent service standards. The ability to manage these stressors, foster resilience, and remain engaged in their work is critical for their retention (Afsar et al., 2018). Examining PsyCap and JE in this context can reveal how employees' psychological and organizational resources influence their ability to stay with the organization.

To achieve a representative sample, a stratified random sampling technique was utilized to ensure that various hotel departments, such as front desk, housekeeping, and food and beverage, are represented. To participate, employees must be frontline staff and have worked in their current hotel for at least six months to ensure sufficient experience with their jobs, organizations, and working conditions. They must be full-time employees, as retention factors for part-time staff might differ.

Hotels were chosen across various regions of Saudi Arabia (e.g., Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam), where most five-star hotels are located. An invitation letter revealing the objective of the research was sent through official e-mails to get formal permission to conduct a survey. Twelve hotels agreed to participate, supported by the researchers' established connections with HR managers through their collaboration on student internship placements for summer training programs. Self-administrated questionnaires were distributed during employees' break periods. The required sample size was calculated under the suggestions made by Hair et al. (2019), which recommend that for PLS-SEM, a minimum of 155 respondents is necessary when the expected minimum path coefficients (*Pmin*) range from 0.11 to 0.20 and the significance level is set at 0.05. To ensure ethical standards, all the respondents investigated were made cognizant of the study's objectives, voluntary participation, and the privacy of their replies. Consent forms were signed before starting the survey. Of 480 questionnaires distributed, 445 were returned, with 429 (89.4%) fully completed and suitable for analysis. Incomplete forms (11 forms) and straight-lining answers (5 forms) were excluded. The participants' demographic details are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' demographic details (N= 429)

1	Baseline characteristics	2	No.	3	%
4	Gender	5		6	
7	Male	8	321	9	74.8
10	Female	11	108	12	25.2
13	Age	14		15	
16	From 20 to 30 years	17	272	18	63.4
19	From 31 to 40 years	20	126	21	29.4
22	From 41 to 50 years	23	31	24	7.2
25	More than 50 years	26	-	27	-
28	Level of education	29		30	
31	High school diploma or equivalent	32	79	33	18.4
34	Bachelor's degree	35	298	36	69.5
37	Postgraduate degree	38	52	39	12.1
40	Department	41		42	
43	Front Office	44	92	45	21.5
46	Housekeeping	47	172	48	40.1
49	Food & beverage	50	155	51	36.1
52	Other	53	10	54	2.3
55	Experience in this hotel	56		57	
58	Less than 1 year	59	17	60	4.0
61	From 1 to less than 3 years	62	176	63	41.0
64	From 3 to 5 years	65	138	66	32.2
67	More than 5 years	68	98	69	22.8

### 3. Data analysis

For data analysis, the study utilized SPSS 25 and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM was chosen for several reasons (Hair et al., 2019). First, it is well-suited for exploring complex relationships between latent constructs. Given that this study investigates the impact of PsyCap on ER through the mediating role of JE, PLS-SEM offered the flexibility needed to model these intricate, multi-dimensional relationships. Second, PLS-SEM is advantageous for studies where data may not follow a normal distribution—an issue often encountered in survey-based research involving human behavior. This characteristic makes it particularly appropriate for this study's context. Third, unlike covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM), PLS-SEM does not require a large sample size to yield reliable results (Usakli & Rasoolimanesh, 2023). While our sample size was adequate, the larger number of respondents further enhanced the statistical power of the analysis, ensuring more robust and stable parameter estimates. Finally, PLS-SEM is known for its predictive capabilities, making it ideal for research focused on providing practical insights and actionable strategies. This aligns well with the objectives of our study, which aims to inform management practices in the hospitality industry.

## RESULTS

### 1. Common method bias (CMB)

In the current study, where self-reported data was gathered through a self-administrated survey, CMB has been mitigated by various methods. First, anonymity and confidentiality were ensured. Participants' information and responses were kept confidential and anonymous, solely for research purposes, which helps reduce response bias (Randall & Fernandes, 1991; Nancarrow et al., 2001). Participants were also encouraged to provide honest answers, where no right or wrong answers, to further minimize bias (Phillips & Clancy, 2002). Statistically, following Podsakoff et al. (2003)

suggestions, CMB is a concern if one factor explains over 50% of the variance. Based on the findings of the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), a single factor accounted for 36.8% of the variance, indicating that CMB is not an issue.

## 2. Constructs' reliability and validity

After completing data collection, the constructs' reliability, convergent, and discriminant validities were assessed via the PLS-SEM algorithm. Table 2 demonstrated good psychometric characteristics. All latent variables showed that Cronbach's  $\alpha$  and composite reliability (CR) values surpassed the 0.70 threshold mentioned by Hair et al. (2019), with  $\alpha$  values between 0.798 and 0.959 and CR values between 0.833 and 0.964, confirming excellent reliability. In terms of convergent validity, following Hair et al. (2019), acceptable validity requires factor loadings to be above 0.70 and latent variables' AVE higher than 0.50. In Table 2, all variables showed factor loadings exceeding 0.70, with AVE values amid 0.637 and 0.754, indicating that convergent validity has been achieved. To determine the discriminant validity, the evaluation of the Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) was conducted, as shown in Table 3, following the recommended threshold of 0.85 suggested by Henseler et al. (2015). As a result, all HTMT ratios in this study were below the established threshold, supporting the existence of discriminant validity amid the examined latent variables.

Table 2. Constructs' Reliability and Convergent Validity Measures (Note: PsyCap= Psychological capital, JE= job embeddedness, ER= employee retention,  $\alpha$ '= Cronbach's alpha, CR<sup>2</sup>= composite reliability, and AVE<sup>3</sup>= average variance extracted. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ )

Construct	Item	Outer Loading	$\alpha$	CR	AVE
Psychological capital (PsyCap)			0.959	0.964	0.689
Hope	PsyCap1	0.948***	0.907	0.942	0.843
	PsyCap2	0.892***			
	PsyCap3	0.915***			
Self-efficacy	PsyCap4	0.878***	0.922	0.951	0.867
	PsyCap5	0.941***			
	PsyCap6	0.971***			
Resilience	PsyCap7	0.961***	0.969	0.980	0.942
	PsyCap8	0.965***			
	PsyCap9	0.986***			
Optimism	PsyCap10	0.963***	0.939	0.961	0.892
	PsyCap11	0.929***			
	PsyCap12	0.942***			
Job embeddedness (JE)	JE1	0.905***	0.945	0.955	0.754
	JE2	0.869***			
	JE3	0.737***			
	JE4	0.925***			
	JE5	0.909***			
	JE6	0.885***			
	JE7	0.835***			
Employee retention (ER)	ER1	0.817***	0.798	0.833	0.637
	ER2	0.849***			
	ER3	0.702***			

Table 3. Discriminant Validity via HTMT (Note: HTMT scores are lower than 0.85)

Construct	1	2	3
1- Psychological Capital			
2- Job Embeddedness	0.539		
3- Employee Retention	0.705	0.841	

Table 4. Structural Parameter Estimates (Note: PsyCap= psychological capital; JE= job embeddedness; ER= employee retention; STDEV= standard deviation; CI= confidence interval; UL= upper limit; LL= lower limit, \*\*\*  $p < .001$ )

Hypothesized Path	Path coefficient	STDEV	T statistics	95% CI		Result
				LL	UL	
Direct effect						
PsyCap -> ER	0.344	0.050	6.897***	0.245	0.441	Accepted
PsyCap -> JE	0.515	0.042	12.299***	0.429	0.595	Accepted
JE -> ER	0.603	0.044	13.748***	0.516	0.689	Accepted
Indirect effect						
PsyCap -> JE -> ER	0.310	0.032	9.708***	0.249	0.375	Accepted

## 3. Testing hypotheses of the study

In this study, the proposed hypotheses were tested via PLS-SEM. To evaluate the strength and significance of the path coefficients, the bootstrapping technique was applied, running 5,000 iterations to ensure robust and reliable results. As shown in Figure 2 and Table 4, the results indicate that all the proposed paths were found to be significant and positive, confirming support for all the proposed hypotheses. Results in Table 4 showed that PsyCap is significantly associated with ER ( $\beta = 0.344$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ), confirming H1, suggesting that PsyCap resources significantly contributed to predicting ER. Furthermore, the

significant association between PsyCap and JE was also confirmed ( $\beta = 0.344$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ), indicating that H2 is supported. In addition, the results aligned with Hypothesis 3, show that JE is significantly associated with ER in the hospitality industry context ( $\beta = 0.537$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ). Hence, H3 is accepted. To explore the mediating role of JE in the relationship between PsyCap and ER, the researchers followed the guidelines of Baron and Kenny (1986) and Latan and Noonan (2017) for demonstrating full and partial mediation. Full mediation is established when the direct effect (PsyCap  $\rightarrow$  ER) is insignificant, while the indirect effect (PsyCap  $\rightarrow$  JE  $\rightarrow$  ER) is significant. Partial mediation occurs when both the direct and indirect effects are significant. Based on these criteria, the results in Table 4 indicate that JE significantly partially mediates the positive relationship between PsyCap and ER. Therefore, H4 is supported. The results in Figure 2 also reflect that PsyCap undertakes a significant role in predicting JE.  $R^2$  value 0.265 signifies that PsyCap explains 26.5% of the variance in JE, including hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism. The remaining 73.5% is affected by other variables not captured by PsyCap in this model. Furthermore, the  $R^2$  value of 0.696 reveals that the combined effects of PsyCap and JE can explain a significant 69.6% of the variance in ER. This highlights how vital these resources are for predicting retention among hospitality sector employees.

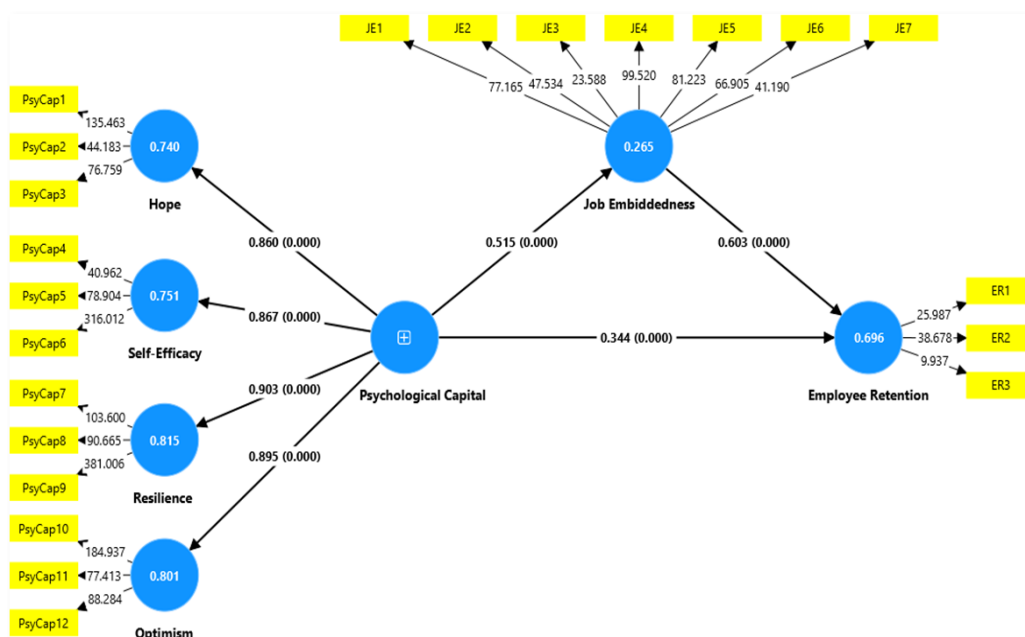


Figure 2. The study's structural model  $R^2$  values are highlighted inside the blue circles

## DISCUSSION

This research primarily aimed at recognizing the impact of psychological capital on ER besides probing the possible intervening effect of job embeddedness in this association in the hospitality industry perspective. The findings of PLS-SEM concluded that all the projected paths were significant and positive, supporting all the proposed hypotheses. First, in the PsyCap-ER relationship, the findings confirmed hypothesis 1, suggesting that PsyCap resources, i.e. hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism, play an important role in predicting ER in the hospitality industry context. This finding supports the conclusions of earlier researchers (i.e., Flinkman et al., 2023; Chaleoykitti & Thaiudom, 2017; Schulz et al., 2014), affirming that the higher the perceived PsyCap resources, the higher the job retained in the hospitality organization.

Second, this study's findings supported H<sub>2</sub>, confirming that PsyCap resources are significantly associated with JE in the hospitality industry setting. This finding corresponds with previous research findings concluding that the higher the perceived PsyCap, the greater the professed JE (Sun et al., 2012; Ali et al., 2022; Joo & Shin, 2023). For instance, Joo & Shin (2023) concluded that the positive PsyCap of clinical nurses is the key predictive of their JE, recommending that to promote JE, it is essential to develop, implement, and utilize targeted intervention programs aimed at strengthening positive PsyCap. Accordingly, this finding demonstrates, more specifically, that hotel employees with higher levels of PsyCap resources are more likely to be embedded in their jobs and establishments.

Third, the results support H<sub>3</sub>, highlighting the significant role of JE as a key factor in determining ER. These findings emphasize the significant impacts that job embeddedness can have on ER. The study's findings have shown that JE significantly promotes employee retention in their roles and organizations. This finding corresponds with prior research, which frequently demonstrated a clear, positive association between JE and ER, and endorsed that employees who experience strong JE tend to stay with their organization, even when facing challenges or dissatisfaction, as they feel a deep connection to their current workplace (Robinson et al., 2014; Yam et al., 2018; Holtom & Darabi, 2018; Lim et al., 2022).

Fourth, the findings of the study endorsed JE's significant, partial intermediary part in the link amid PsyCap and ER in the hospitality industry. This finding advocates that JE is a crucial mechanism that helps explain how PsyCap influences whether employees choose to stay with their organizations. Although PsyCap has a direct positive impact on ER, improving JE has enhanced this relationship. More specifically, when employees own higher levels of PsyCap, they are probable to feel more embedded in their roles, facilitating them to be more inclined to stay in their organizations.

### **Theoretical and practical implications**

1. Theoretical implications: This study provides various theoretical contributions specifically related to the context of the hospitality industry. Firstly, this study's findings enrich the body of knowledge on psychological capital (PsyCap) by demonstrating its significant positive impact on ER and JE in the hospitality sector. These outcomes extend the use of COR theory in the framework of the hospitality industry. Through the lens of COR, PsyCap resources, i.e. hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism, are perceived to be vital personal resources that significantly boost ER and foster JE. Secondly, reviewing the exciting literature, this is a pioneering study analyzing how job embeddedness functions as an arbitrator in the relationship amid psychological capital and staff retention within the hospitality sector, especially in developing nations like Saudi Arabia. Based on the COR theory, a novel theoretical framework has been developed and validated to explore the direct and indirect effect (via JE) of PsyCap on ER, which has not been examined before. The proposed model contributes to a deeper understanding of to what extent personal (PsyCap) and organizational (JE) resources affect employees' retention in their jobs and organizations. Thirdly, the study's outcomes emphasize the substantial character of JE in predicting employee retention. Furthermore, the study adds value to resource-oriented frameworks, particularly COR theory, by JE as a mediating variable in the hospitality context. JE acts as a resource-conserving mechanism, suggesting that employee retention can be enhanced not just through individual psychological resources (PsyCap), but also by fostering organizational environments where employees feel socially and professionally embedded.

2. Practical implications: Based on the study's findings, some recommendations emerge for hospitality organizations to improve employee retention (ER). Firstly, investing in employees' psychological capital (PsyCap), comprising hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism, can undertake a significant role in augmenting job embeddedness (JE) and ER. Organizations must, therefore, implement training and development programs that promote these resources. For example, programs that encourage goal setting, provide skill-building sessions, and foster a growth mindset equip employees to handle workplace challenges effectively, thereby reducing turnover. Additionally, since JE significantly predicts ER, hospitality organizations should create a work setting which aligns with the values of the workers and promotes social connections. This might be realized via initiatives like mentorship programs, team-building activities, and structured career development, all of which facilitate the workers to sense more linked to the business. Cultivating a positive organizational culture is also essential; a workplace that values collaboration, open communication, and positive social interactions strengthens employees' sense of belonging and boosts their PsyCap. Finally, since JE partially mediates the PsyCap-ER relationship, hospitality organizations should adopt integrated strategies that simultaneously strengthen PsyCap and JE. Managers should be trained to lead in a way that inspires and supports employees by fostering optimism, resilience, hope, and self-efficacy, besides creating a cohesive, supportive environment. Together, these approaches reinforce employees' psychological and organizational resources, ultimately leading to higher retention in the hospitality industry.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to examine the impact of Psychological Capital (PsyCap)—comprising hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism—on employee retention (ER) in the hospitality sector, with job embeddedness (JE) as a mediating variable. Grounded in the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, the study explored how PsyCap influences ER directly and indirectly through JE. Data were collected from 429 frontline employees in five-star hotels in Saudi Arabia using a cross-sectional survey. The relationships between variables were analyzed through PLS-SEM. The findings revealed that PsyCap significantly enhances both JE and ER, with JE partially mediating the relationship between PsyCap and ER. These results underscore the importance of both psychological (PsyCap) and organizational (JE) resources in retaining employees in the demanding hospitality industry. Theoretically, the study extends COR theory by integrating PsyCap and JE into the context of the hospitality industry. Practically, it highlights the need for hospitality organizations to invest in PsyCap-enhancing programs, such as resilience training, and foster environments that strengthen JE through initiatives like mentorship and team building.

### **Limitations of the study and further research**

The present study has certain limitations, outlined as follows. (1) This research involved only frontline workers in 5-star hotels in Saudi Arabia, which may reduce the generalizability of the outcomes to other areas or industries where the work environment and employee dynamics are different. (2) This study employed a cross-sectional approach, implying that data collection was done at a single time, which does not allow for establishing the causal relationship between PsyCap, JE, and ER. A more in-depth, long-term study would help better understand how PsyCap affects job embeddedness and employee retention over time, providing a clearer picture of these relationships. (3) The focus on frontline employees excludes insights from other roles in the hospitality industry (e.g., managers and back-office staff). Their retention dynamics might differ, limiting the broader applicability of the findings. Further research, including these categories, would suggest a deeper understanding of this study's outcomes. (4) The unique circumstances of the hospitality industry, especially in five-star hotels, may not fully apply to other sectors or even different hospitality segments (i.e., budget hotels and restaurants), which may limit the study's relevance on a broader scale. Consideration should be given to exploring these relationships in different hospitality sectors. (5) Job embeddedness is found to have a partial mediating role, which suggests that other variables, possibly unexamined, could also play an essential role in mediating and moderating the interplay between PsyCap and ER. For example, hospitality scholars may explore the role of career satisfaction, work meaningfulness, stress reduction, and adaptability to change as mediators. In addition, demographic factors, perceived organizational support, work autonomy, and workplace flexibility as moderators.

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formal analysis, A.A., M.E., A.E., A.R., H.S., and M.H.; investigation, A.A., M.B., H.K., H.A., and A.M.; data curation, A.A., M.B., H.K., H.A., and A.M.; writing - original draft preparation, A.A., M.E., A.E., A.R., H.S., and M.H.; writing - review and editing, A.A., M.B., H.K., H.A., and A.M.; visualization, A.A., M.E., A.E., A.R., H.S., and M.H.; supervision, A.E.; project administration, A.A. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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