Distributive Injustice and Job Engagement in Travel Agencies and Hotels: The Moderating Role of Trust in Leadership

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Abstract

The study aimed to explore the impact of distributive injustice on job engagement, considering the moderating role of trust in leadership. The study utilized 423 valid responses from five-star hotels and travel agencies in Egypt, analyzed using the PLS-SEM approach and WarpPLS software version 7.0. Results found that distributive injustice negatively impacts job engagement. In addition, trust in leadership negatively affects distributive injustice perception, positively affects job engagement, and negatively moderates the relationship between distributive injustice and job engagement. This study offers crucial findings on the interplay between trust in leadership, distributive injustice, and employee engagement within the Egyptian hospitality and tourism sector. It emphasizes the urgent need for managers in this industry to address distributive injustice to boost performance and combat employee disengagement. Recommendations include ensuring fair resource allocation, transparent decision-making, and creating a positive, inclusive work environment. The study also highlights the significance of fostering respect and collaboration throughout organizations to improve employees' trust in leadership. Further, providing clear ways for employees to express concerns and having effective conflict resolution processes further builds trust and engagement.
Keywords: Distributive injustice, job engagement, trust in leadership, five-star hotels, travel agencies.

Introduction

In the competitive and ever-changing hospitality and tourism industry, work engagement is a crucial factor in employee performance, organizational success, and gaining a competitive advantage (Olugbade *et al.,* 2019; Tsaur *et al.,* 2019, Ashour *et al.,* 2023; Khairy *et al.,* 2023). Job engagement or work engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, and work-related psychological state; it reflects an individual's dedication enthusiasm, and commitment to their job (Bakker *et al.,* 2008; Chughtai & Buckley, 2011). Work engagement is a positive, fulfilling, and persistent state of mind that is characterized by three aspects; vigor is the willingness to invest effort in work and to persist in the face of difficulty. Dedication is a strong sense of involvement and enthusiasm for work and a belief that work is important and meaningful. Absorption is a

feeling of being fully concentrated and immersed in work, such that time flies by and distractions are ignored (Salanova *et al.,* 2005; Christian *et al.,* 2011). Work engagement serves as a significant predictor of work attitude and behavior, particularly in the tourism and hospitality industry where employee interactions directly impact customer satisfaction and loyalty (Christian *et al.,* 2011; Karatepe & Karadas, 2015; Baum *et al.,* 2016). Hence, fostering a work environment that promotes engagement is essential for organizational effectiveness (Tsaur *et al.,* 2019). One of the concepts that influence job engagement is employees' perception of organizational justice (Onyango *et al.,* 2022).

To achieve organizational goals, provide excellent customer service, and thrive in the market, hospitality and tourism businesses must foster a perception of fairness and justice among their employees (Karatepe, 2011; Aş ık, 2016; Soliman & Wahba, 2019; Khairy & Elzek, 2023). Organizational justice refers to employees' perception of their organization's fairness through their emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses across various aspects, including procedural, interpersonal, distributive, and informational (Colquitt, 2001; Farndale *et al.,* 2011). Distributive injustice refers to the feeling that rewards, resources, or outcomes are not distributed fairly within an organization. This perception of unfairness can lead to negative emotions and dissatisfaction among employees (Khattak *et al.,* 2021). When distributive injustice exists, employees may feel that others are receiving preferential treatment or rewards despite their contributions (Marescaux *et al.,* 2019). This perception can breed resentment, demotivation, and a reduced sense of loyalty toward the organization (Ghaderi *et al.,* 2023). Distributive injustice can adversely affect various aspects of the workplace, including morale, interpersonal relationships, and the overall organizational culture (Narisada, 2019; Alyahya *et al.,* 2021; Agina *et al.,* 2023). This sense of organizational justice, which is cultivated through effective management practices, directly impacts employee morale and engagement (Mostafa *et al.,* 2020; Yu *et al.,* 2020; Viseu *et al.,* 2023). Therefore, the hospitality and tourism industry should develop strategies to enhance distributive justice to maintain a motivated and engaged workforce (Onyango *et al.,* 2022; Abd El Salam & Abdelmawgoud, 2023). Understanding the mechanisms through which perceived distributive injustice affects work engagement is crucial for developing effective interventions and improving employee well-being (Agina *et al.,* 2023).

Organizational justice fosters trust in leadership (Rosenbaum & McCarty, 2017), and trust in leaders is one of the fundamental indicators of job engagement (Prastio *et al.,* 2020). Trust can be described as a willingness to accept risk based on the belief that others will act in our best interests (Rousseau *et al.,* 1998; Ötken & Cenkci, 2012). Trust is considered a critical component of various leadership theories and has been shown to empower subordinates and confirm that leaders have faith in their abilities and skills (Solomon & Flores, 2003; Bartram & Casimir, 2007; Ekaningsih, 2014). Trust in the leader is a belief in a manager's reliability and fairness in a situation that involves uncertainty or vulnerability (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Oh, 2019). Trust in leaders also refers to employees' unwavering belief, loyalty, and confidence that the leaders will not

exploit or mislead them, even when presented with the opportunity to do so (Podsakoff *et al.,* 1990; Raza *et al.,* 2022). A strong foundation of trust between employees and leaders is essential for fostering positive and productive working relationships (Enwereuzor *et al.,* 2020). Social exchange theory SET (Blau, 1964, 2017) provides a valuable framework for understanding the grounds for employees' trust in leadership. SET suggests that employees develop a sense of obligation towards leaders who demonstrate integrity, as they perceive them as trustworthy and reliable. This perception of integrity fosters optimism among employees, leading to increased trust in their leadership. In essence, employees' trust in their leaders is directly influenced by their perception of the leaders' ethical conduct, specifically their honesty, transparency, and integrity (Afsar & Shahjehan, 2018; Enwereuzor *et al.,* 2020). This trust enhances employee loyalty and commitment, leading to a more engaged and motivated workforce (Engelbrecht *et al.,* 2017; Håvold *et al.,* 2021).

Several studies highlighted the relationship between distributive justice and job engagement in different contexts like banking (Pieters, 2018; Khan *et al.,* 2019; Suhartatik *et al.,* 2020), civil defense (Firdaus *et al.,* 2019), education (Pieters, 2018; Fadhilaini *et al.,* 2021; Jayus, 2021), hospitals (Suganda, 2021; Chen *et al.,* 2022), airlines industry (Suifan *et al.,* 2021), civil servants (Rahayu, 2021), and hospitality and tourism industry (Liu *et al.,* 2022; Onyango *et al.,* 2022; Abd El Salam & Abdelmawgoud, 2023). Although the tourism and hospitality industry provide a unique setting for exploring the relationship between distributive injustice and job engagement, there is no study that examined this relationship. To bridge the gap in the literature, this study investigated the relationship between distributive injustice and job engagement in the hospitality and tourism context. In addition, it explored the moderating role of trust in leadership in the relationship between distributive injustice and job engagement.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

In the evolving hospitality industry, strategically fostering employee engagement is essential to maintain a competitive edge (Ncube & Jerie, 2012). Job engagement refers to the deep involvement and dedication of employees toward their work roles. It encompasses the emotional, physical, and cognitive aspects of their engagement, signifying their complete immersion in their work (Kahn, 1990; Rich *et al.,* 2010). Job engagement is an indicator of employees' happiness, well-being, and motivation (Poon, 2013). Engaged employees actively participate in achieving the organization's goals, demonstrating their commitment to the organization's success (Harms, 2018). Job engagement has emerged as a crucial management strategy for organizations to thrive and succeed. By fostering employee engagement, organizations can align their workforce with their overall goals and objectives (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). Employee perceptions of organizational justice, especially distributive justice in the workplace influence their level of engagement (Firdaus *et al.,* 2019; Khan *et al.,* 2019). A perception of distributive justice causes higher job satisfaction, greater organizational commitment, and more willingness to exceed work expectations; hence, this leads to higher levels of job

engagement (Sharoni *et al.,* 2015; Suhartatik *et al.,* 2020; Chen *et al.,* 2022). While employees who feel distributive injustice in the workplace may lose their sense of purpose and become less engaged and productive (Haynie *et al.,* 2016; Qin & Zhang, 2022).

In the workplace, employees may feel unjustly treated when rewards or resources are not distributed fairly. This perception of distributive injustice can negatively affect their attitudes and behaviors (Fuller, 2021). Several studies showed that perceived distributive injustice in the distribution of resources and outcomes has detrimental effects on employees' psychological well-being (Judge & Colquitt, 2004; Francis & Barling, 2005; Spell & Arnold, 2007; Taştan, 2014) consequently, these negative effects impede employees' job engagement (Çankır & Şahin, 2018; Tesi *et al.,* 2019; Lu *et al.,* 2022). Employees may experience negative emotions such as resentment, frustration, and dissatisfaction when they feel they are not being treated equitably in terms of pay, promotions, bonuses, recognition, or opportunities (Henderson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2021). Unfair treatment at work can lead to negative emotions such as anger, resentment, and feeling undervalued. These negative emotions can make it difficult for employees to be fully engaged in their work, which can result in reduced effort and enthusiasm (Qin & Zhang, 2022). The negative emotional consequences of distributive injustice can further contribute to employee disengagement (Loi *et al.,* 2015; Agina *et al.,* 2023).

One negative consequence of perceived distributive injustice is work disengagement, distinguished by a deficiency of motivation, detachment, and concern for one's job (Hystad *et al.,* 2014; Aslam *et al.,* 2018). Employees may react to perceived distributive injustice by exhibiting a range of behaviors, including decreased effort, reduced collaboration, job disengagement, increased absences, and even resignation (Fatima *et al.,* 2012; De Clercq *et al.,* 2021; Kee & Chung, 2021; Aliedan *et al.,* 2022; Agina *et al.,* 2023). It was noted that organizations that give primacy to distributive justice tend to have more motivated and engaged employees. Addressing issues of perceived distributive injustice requires executing translucent reward strategies, ensuring equal promotion opportunities, and consistently recognizing employee contributions. Failure to address distributive injustice can lead to decreased job engagement, increased employee turnover, and overall organizational performance decline (Restubog *et al.,* 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H1: There is a negative relationship between distributive injustice perception and job engagement.

Distributive justice encompasses both the evaluation of principles governing the allocation of resources and the perception of fairness or unfairness in their application. Principles such as equality, need, and equity guide how valued resources should be distributed among individuals (Kaufman, 2012). When the perceived distribution deviates from these principles, a sense of injustice arises. This sense of injustice stems from the evaluation of fairness in resource allocation, leading to the question of what constitutes a deserved or equitable distribution (Nozick, 2013). The unfairness of how resources are

being allocated can be traced back to the strained relationship between leaders and their workers (Saad & Elshaer, 2017). Overloading employees with work without adequate compensation increases the likelihood of social loafing and fosters interdependency, which can lead to individuals relying on others and the spread of this behavior within the workplace (Etemadi *et al.,* 2015). Distributive injustice perception may lead to poor job performance and reduced collaboration among coworkers (Zhu *et al.,* 2019). Studies have shown that distributive injustice can cause employee dissatisfaction and job stress (Ezeh & Etodike, 2017), which may decrease their job engagement (Padula *et al.,* 2012; Aslam *et al.,* 2018) and prompt them to consider quitting their jobs and looking for new employment opportunities (Alyahya *et al.,* 2021). Distributive justice is affected by several aspects, among them trust in leadership, as trust in a leader is closely associated with employee perceptions of fairness (Kuang & Dung, 2015; Herminingsih, 2017).

Trust in the leader is the ability to expect and influence the attitudes and behaviors of other parties (Ole Borgen, 2001). Trust in a leader refers to the perceptions of individuals and their extent of susceptibility to the leader's behaviors (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Trust was founded on the perception of justice; this is because they share similar features, such as fairness and consistency. When employees perceive that they are treated fairly and that their organization is consistent with its promises, they are more likely to trust their leaders. As a result, employees who feel that their leaders are fair are more likely to repay that trust with their loyalty and commitment (DeConinck, 2010; Tremblay *et al.,* 2010). Organizational justice fosters trust in leaders, as fair treatment conveys respect for the rights and dignity of employees, consequently minimizing the vulnerability and inherent risks associated with workplace exchange relations (Wu *et al.,* 2012; Alpkan *et al.,* 2021). When employees believe that their organization distributes compensation fairly, they tend to trust and respect their leaders more. Distributive justice, or the perceived fairness of how rewards are allocated, is a key factor in building trust between employees and their leaders. Employees who feel that they are being treated fairly are more likely to view their leaders as trustworthy and reliable (Raza *et al.,* 2017). The notion that trust in leadership significantly influences justice is widely accepted. The positive correlation between trust in leadership and organizational justice indicates that as employees' trust in leaders increases, their perception of organizational justice, encompassing both procedural and distributive fairness also increases. This trust reflects employees' belief that leaders are ethical, reliable, and competent (Kuang & Dung, 2015; Herminingsih, 2017). This relation was built on Blau's (1964, 2017) notion of social exchange, where employees' positive work attitudes, such as trust in leadership, stem from a reciprocal response to the pervasiveness of organizational justice in the workplace (Mehmood, 2019). Accordingly, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H2: There is a negative relationship between trust in leadership and distributive injustice perception.

For job engagement, trust is one of the fundamental indicators. As employees trust their leaders, they are more likely to be productive, motivated, and engaged in their work

(Agarwal, 2014). A lack of trust in the workplace leads to employees spending more time and energy safeguarding themselves rather than focusing on their work. This highlights the importance of trust in fostering a positive work environment where employees are motivated to go above and beyond without expecting additional compensation (Guinalíu & Jordán, 2016; Dinh *et al.,* 2021). SET (Blau, 1964, 2017) suggests that trust between leaders and employees is a two-way lane. When employees feel valued and respected, they are more likely to respond with positive work attitudes and behaviors. This mutual trust is essential for maintaining a healthy and productive work environment. Leaders can foster trust by providing employees with economic benefits, such as fair wages and bonuses. However, social exchange goes beyond mere economic rewards. It also includes intangible benefits, such as recognition, respect, and a sense of belonging. When employees feel that their contributions are valued, they are more likely to feel more engaged and productive (Basit, 2021; Håvold *et al.,* 2021). During challenging times or when faced with increased workloads, employees demonstrate discretionary behavior that reflects their commitment and sense of obligation to the organization. They believe that acknowledging the expertise and skills of their leaders will yield greater rewards for both the organization and its employees. This understanding enables employees to concentrate on the tasks at hand, rather than being distracted by other concerns (Mayer & Gavin, 2005; Fulmer & Ostroff, 2017; Fodor *et al.,* 2021). Leaders who foster trust among their employees will reap the benefits of increased productivity and job engagement (Zhou *et al.,* 2022; Islam *et al.,* 2023).

Organizational justice fosters trust and confidence among employees toward their leaders. When employees believe their leaders are just, they have a sense of security that they will be treated fairly and rewarded for their efforts (Rosenbaum & McCarty, 2017). Leaders act as guiding forces within organizations, possessing the ability to assess current needs and respond accordingly. When a leader demonstrates trustworthiness, those around them are more inclined to trust their words and actions. People have faith in their leaders, believing that they have a clear understanding of employee expectations (Li & Lin, 2021). Trust in a leader has a direct relation with job engagement. As leaders are keenly aware of the skills and strengths of their team members, they can effectively delegate tasks to foster a more productive and engaged workforce (Prastio *et al.,* 2020; Basit, 2021; Håvold *et al.,* 2021). True leaders empower their employees by providing them with opportunities to utilize their skills and talents to their fullest potential. They foster a collaborative environment where individuals work together harmoniously to achieve shared goals, resulting in a synergistic effect that benefits both the organization and its employees. As a result, employees develop unwavering trust and confidence in such leaders (Bacha & Walker, 2013; Novitasari *et al.,* 2021).

Leaders have a significant impact on shaping employee behavior (Oreg & Berson, 2019). Trust in leaders is crucial for converting positive perceptions "such as justice" into positive behaviors "such as engagement" (Flavian *et al.,* 2018). Employees form trusting relationships with their leaders, which contributes to a favorable work attitude. Trust in leaders fosters a productive connection between employees and leaders, which can help

to lessen job disengagement (Du & Jang, 2022). Even when they believe there is a lack of justice, employees who trust their leaders may continue to put in the effort because they feel compelled to do their best for their leaders, as trust acts as a buffer for organizational injustices (Bal *et al.,* 2011; Raza *et al.,* 2022). Håvold *et al.* (2021) and Rahal & Farmanesh (2022) concluded that job engagement is built on a bedrock of trust in leadership. This result is compatible with social exchange theory, which posits that leaders who act with integrity foster trust among their employees (trust in leaders). This trust, in turn, motivates employees to reciprocate with positive behavior (job engagement). Thus, it can be confirmed that employees who have a high level of trust in their leader are more likely to be involved in efforts to improve job engagement compared to employees who have a low level of trust in their leader. Consequently, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H3: Trust in leadership has a positive effect on job engagement.

H4: Trust in leadership moderates the negative relationship between distributive injustice perception and job engagement.

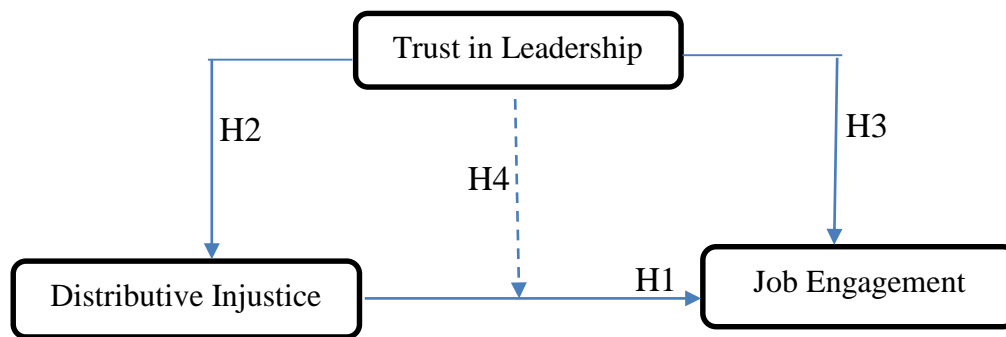The conceptual framework of the study is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure (1): Theoretical model of the study

Methodology

Measures

The study relied on a questionnaire consisting of 4 sections (demographic data, distributive injustice, job engagement, and trust in leadership), as a tool for collecting data. The study evaluated distributive injustice using a Colquitt (2001) 4-item scale. For example, "In hotel/travel agency, the outcome process does not reflect the effort I have put into my work" and "In hotel/travel agency, the outcome process is unjustified, given my performance". In addition, a 5-item scale adapted from Jung *et al.* (2021) was utilized to measure job engagement. For instance, "I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose" and "I am enthusiastic about my work". Moreover, the study utilized seven items from Robinson (1996) to assess employee trust in leadership. For example, "I

believe my leader has high integrity" and "In general, I believe my leader's motives and intentions are good".

Sampling and data collection

The research model was tested on five-star hotels and travel agencies (Category-A) in the Greater Cairo, Egypt, due to their dominance in the hospitality and tourism industry. It was reported that this region had 30 5-star hotels and 1666 category (A) travel agencies (The Egyptian Ministry of Tourism, 2022). The study used a convenience sample strategy due to the large population and limited resources. 800 questionnaires were distributed to investigated businesses between September and November 2023, with 423 valid responses, and a 52.9% response rate. Surveys were obtained from 25 five-star hotels and 40 travel agencies. The survey sample consisted of 245 employees from five-star hotels (57.22%), and 178 from travel agencies (42.08%).

Data analysis

The PLS-SEM technique was used in the study, together with WarpPLS software version 7.0, to analyze the study's measurement and structural model, as well as to assess the research hypotheses.

Results

Employees' profile
According to Table (1), the study involved 423 employees, with the majority being men (n=342, 80.85%). The majority of employees, 78.96%, have a bachelor's degree, with 48.23% belonging to the 18:< 30 years age group, and 44.68% having 3 to <6 years of work experience. Most of the employees, specifically 57.92%, worked in five-star hotels, while the remaining 42.08% worked in travel agencies.

Table 1. Employee's profile (N=423).

		Frequency	**Percent**
Gender	Male	**342**	80.85
	Female	81	19.15
Age	18:< 30 years	204	48.23
	30 : ≤45 years	167	39.48
	45 years and more	52	12.29
Education	High schools/institute	55	13.00

	Bachelor	334	78.96
	Master/PhD	34	8.04
Experience	1:< 3 years	155	36.64
	3 to <6 years	189	44.68
	6 years and more	79	18.68
Work organization	Hotels	245	57.92
	Travel agency	178	42.08

Reliability and validity

The study used confirmatory factor analysis to calculate factor loading, with item loadings ranging from 0.697 to 0.866. Hair *et al.* (2010) considered factor loading levels larger than 0.5 acceptable. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values were over 0.7, demonstrating scale validity. The scales' validity is confirmed by *Hair et al.* (2020) criteria (AVE>0.5), and VIF for each latent variable indicates a free of common method bias because VIF values are less than or equal to 3.3 (Kock, 2015).

Table 2. Factor loadings, Cronbach's, CR, AVE, and VIF.

	Item Loading	CR	CA	AVE	VIF
Distributive Injustice (DiJ)	-				
DiJ.1.	0.838**				
DiJ.2.	0.853**	0.902	0.855	0.698	1.135
DiJ.3.	0.866**				
DiJ.4.	0.780**				
Job Engagement (JE)	-				
JE. 1.	0.751**				
JE.2.	0.829**				
JE.3.	0.853**	0.898	0.858	0.639	1.415
JE.4.	0.748**				
JE.5.	0.809**				
Trust in Leadership (TiL)	-	0.917	0.894	0.615	1.386

TiL.1.	0.697**				
TiL.2.	0.787**				
TiL.3.	0.783**				
TiL.4	0.866**				
TiL.5	0.841**				
TiL.6	0.781**				
TiL.7	0.720**				
"CR: Composite reliability; CA: Cronbach's alpha; AVE: average variance extracted"					
** P value for item loading					

The research model's discriminant validity has been confirmed as per the results presented in Table 3. Franke and Sarstedt (2019) stated that "to ensure discriminant validity, the correlation between two latent variables must be less than unity and the AVE value for each variable must be greater than the greatest common value".

<div align="center">Table 3. Discriminant validity</div>

	DiJ	TiL	JE
Distributive Injustice (DiJ)	0.835	-0.250	-0.115
Trust in Leadership (TiL)	-0.250	0.784	0.491
Job Engagement (JE)	-0.115	0.491	0.799

Model fit metrics
The current study successfully met Kock's (2021) model fit and quality index criteria, as stated in Table (4).

<div align="center">Table (4): Model fit results</div>

	Assessment	**Criterion**	Supported/Rejected
Average path coefficient (APC)	0.256, P<0.001	P<0.05	Supported
Average R-squared (ARS)	0.218, P<0.001	P<0.05	Supported
Average adjusted R-squared (AARS)	0.214, P<0.001	P<0.05	Supported
Average block VIF (AVIF)	1.268	acceptable if ≤ 5, ideally ≤3.3	Supported
Average full collinearity VIF	1.271	acceptable if ≤ 5,	Supported

(AFVIF)		ideally ≤ 3.3	
Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)	0.401	small ≥ 0.1, medium ≥ 0.25, large ≥ 0.36	Supported
Sympson's paradox ratio (SPR)	1.000	acceptable if ≥ 0.7, ideally = 1	Supported
R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)	1.000	acceptable if ≥ 0.9, ideally = 1	Supported
Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)	1.000	acceptable if ≥ 0.7	Supported
Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)	0.875	acceptable if ≥0.7	Supported

Results of testing hypotheses

The Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) was first conducted and indicated that there were no significant differences in path coefficients between five-star hotel workers and travel agency workers due to workplace differences.

According to Figure 2, the study found that distributive injustice negatively impacts job engagement (β=-0.10, P=0.02), with increased injustice leading to lower job satisfaction, thus supporting hypothesis 1. In addition, trust in leadership (TiL) negatively affects distributive injustice perception (β=-0.31, P<0.01), positively affects job engagement (β=0.46, P<0.01), and negatively moderates the relationship between distributive injustice and job engagement (β=-0.15, P<0.01). This means that when trust in leadership increases distributive injustice tends to be low, job engagement tends to be high, and the relationship between distributive injustice and job engagement tends to be dampened. Therefore, H2, H3, and H4 are supported. Figure 2 also shows that trust in leadership interpreted 9% of the variance in distributive injustice perception (R2=0.9). Trust in leadership and distributive injustice interpreted 34% of the variance in job engagement (R2=0.34).
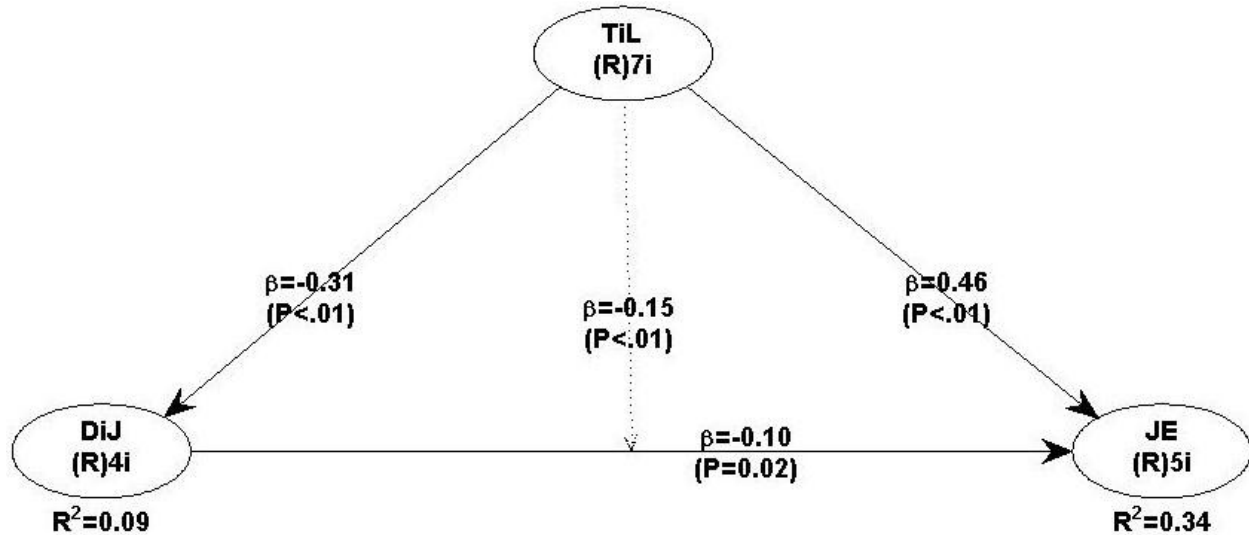
Figure 2: final model of the study

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the effect of distributive injustice on job engagement in travel agencies and hotels with a focus on the moderating role of trust in leadership. Findings revealed that there is a negative effect of distributive injustice perception on job engagement (H1). These findings are consistent with those of Restubog *et al.* (2021) and Agina *et al.* (2023) who argued that the perception of distributive injustice has been found to have a negative correlation with job engagement. Perceived distributive injustice in the workplace can negatively impact employees' attitudes and behaviors, leading to negative emotions such as resentment, frustration, and dissatisfaction. This can result in reduced effort and enthusiasm, leading to work disengagement. Employees may exhibit behaviors such as decreased effort, reduced collaboration, job disengagement, increased absences, and resignation. Addressing issues of distributive injustice requires executing transparent reward strategies, ensuring equal promotion opportunities, and consistently recognizing employee contributions. Failure to address distributive injustice can lead to decreased job engagement, increased employee turnover, and overall organizational performance decline (Chung, 2021; Aliedan *et al.,* 2022). Organizations that prioritize distributive justice tend to have more motivated and engaged employees.

Findings also revealed that there is a negative effect of trust in leadership on distributive injustice perception (H2), trust in leadership has a positive effect on job engagement (H3), and trust in leadership moderates the negative relationship between distributive injustice perception and job engagement (H4). These findings are consistent with those of Håvold *et al.* (2021) and Rahal & Farmanesh (2022) who argued that job engagement is based on trust in leadership and consistent with Raza *et al.* (2017) who claimed that fair treatment of employees leads to a higher perception of leaders as trustworthy and reliable. Trust in leaders is crucial for job engagement and overall organizational success. When employees perceive fair treatment and consistency with promises, they are more likely to

trust their leaders, leading to loyalty and commitment. Organizational justice fosters trust in leaders by minimizing vulnerability and inherent risks associated with workplace exchange relations. Employees who believe their organization distributes compensation fairly are more likely to view their leaders as trustworthy and reliable (Alpkan *et al.,* 2021). In addition, trust in leadership significantly influences justice, as employees' perception of organizational justice increases as their trust in leaders increases. This trust reflects employees' belief that leaders are ethical, reliable, and competent. Trust between leaders and employees is a two-way lane, with both intangible and economic benefits contributing to increased productivity and job engagement (Herminingsih, 2017). Leaders can foster trust by providing fair wages and bonuses, but also by fostering a sense of belonging and recognition for their contributions. Moreover, organizational justice fosters trust and confidence among employees toward their leaders. Leaders act as guiding forces within organizations, assessing current needs and responding accordingly. Trust in leaders has a direct relation with job engagement, as leaders are aware of their team members' skills and strengths, effectively delegating tasks to foster a more productive and engaged workforce (Dinh *et al.,* 2021). True leaders empower their employees by providing opportunities to utilize their talents and create a collaborative environment, benefiting both the organization and its employees. Furthermore, leaders have a significant impact on shaping employee behavior and trust in leaders is crucial for converting positive perceptions into positive behaviors like engagement. Trust in leaders motivates employees to reciprocate with positive behavior, making job engagement a foundation for improved performance (Håvold *et al.,* 2021).

Theoretical and practical implications

Based on the results of the current study, this research has made several theoretical and practical contributions. Despite the high risk of exploitation faced by tourism and hospitality workers (Paraskevas, 2020), research examining the effects of distributive injustice and trust in leadership on employee engagement in the Egyptian context is lacking. This study aimed to address this gap by providing empirical evidence of the negative impact of these factors on work engagement in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Additionally, it investigated the moderating role of trust in leadership in the relationship between distributive injustice and work engagement, offering valuable insights into social exchange theory. Social exchange theory suggested that individuals engage in social interactions with the expectation of mutual exchange and resource sharing. By examining the role of trust in leadership as a moderator, this study deepened our understanding of social exchange dynamics within the hospitality and tourism industry and highlighted the complex interaction between social exchanges, individuals' negative perceptions, and employee outcomes.

In addition, this study made a valuable contribution by pinpointing trust in leadership as a moderating mechanism within the social exchange process. It examined how trust in leaders operates between distributive injustice and work engagement and delved into the psychological processes that exhibit the effects of perceived unfairness on employee engagement. This enhanced knowledge sheds light on the mechanisms underlying social

exchange processes in the context of distributive injustice. Furthermore, the study's emphasis on the hospitality and tourism industry provides valuable insights into how social exchange, distributive injustice, trust in leadership, and work engagement interact in this specific context. This industry-specific understanding increases the relevance and applicability of social exchange theory by considering the unique circumstances and characteristics of the hospitality and tourism sectors.

The findings of this study have important implications for managers in the hospitality and tourism industry. In this competitive and fast-paced industry, managers need to understand factors that could harm organizational performance. This study provides evidence that distributive injustice is a threat to organizational performance, as it can lead to job disengagement among employees. One key implication is the need for organizations to recognize and address distributive injustice. Organizations should ensure fairness and equity in the distribution of resources, such as salaries, rewards, and opportunities for advancement. Implementing transparent and objective decision-making processes can help to reduce perceptions of unfairness and minimize the negative impact on employee engagement. Additionally, it is crucial to create a positive organizational climate that fosters trust and open communication between employees and management. Organizations should strive to develop a culture of respect, collaboration, and fairness, which can help to improve employee trust in leadership. Establishing transparent channels for employees to voice their concerns and providing effective conflict resolution mechanisms can contribute to enhancing trust and creating a more positive work environment.

Hospitality and tourism organizations have to adopt proactive strategies to combat the erosion of trust in leadership. Fostering trust in leadership requires open and honest communication, unwavering ethical conduct, and aligning organizational goals with employee interests. By consistently demonstrating principles of honesty, transparency, and integrity, leaders can inspire greater employee engagement and increase their trust in leadership. Moreover, these organizations should invest in initiatives that foster employee engagement, job satisfaction, and a sense of purpose. This can be achieved by providing opportunities for skill development, recognizing, and rewarding employee achievements, and creating a supportive and inclusive work culture. By engaging employees in this way, organizations can boost motivation, commitment, and productivity, leading to enhanced overall performance.

Hospitality and tourism organizations can enhance employee well-being and engagement by promoting fairness, equity, and effective communication. By implementing training programs that highlight the importance of these principles, organizations can help employees understand the implications of distributive justice and its impact on trust and engagement. Equipping employees with the skills to navigate challenging situations, manage conflicts, and cultivate a positive work environment can foster a healthier and more productive workforce. Managers play a crucial role in establishing a culture of fairness and transparency. They should consistently prioritize equitable resource allocation, including salaries, benefits, work assignments, and promotion opportunities.

Effective communication of decision-making processes and criteria is essential to ensure employees perceive distributive justice, fostering trust in leadership and boosting job satisfaction and engagement.

Finally, managers should foster a workplace environment with constructive feedback and open communication to address issues of distributive justice. To promote a fair and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, managers should encourage employees to voice their concerns and perceptions of distributive injustice. By establishing open channels for dialogue, managers can address any misunderstandings or misconceptions that may exist, thereby enhancing trust and transparency within the organization. Actively involving employees in discussions about distributive justice empowers them to participate in shaping the workplace culture, fostering a more engaged and motivated workforce.

Limitations and further research

While the study on the moderating effect of trust in leadership on the relationship between distributive injustice and work engagement in the hospitality and tourism industry provides valuable insights, it is crucial to acknowledge its limitations and explore possibilities for future research. The main limitation lies in the study's restricted focus on the hospitality and tourism industry, which might hinder the generalizability of its findings to other industries. Future research could delve into whether a similar moderating effect exists in various sectors or industries, such as airlines and restaurants, to determine the wider applicability of the study's findings. The second limitation is the accuracy and reliability of the measurement tools used in this study may affect the validity of the findings. Future research could be strengthened by using a variety of measurement methods, such as self-report surveys, observation, and qualitative interviews. This would provide a more complete understanding of the concepts being studied and deepen our knowledge of the topic. The study found that trust in leadership can moderate the relationship between distributive injustice and work engagement. However, there is still room for further investigation into the underlying mechanisms behind this effect. Future research should explore additional variables, such as perceived organizational support, job commitment, self-compassion, or job satisfaction, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the moderating processes involved. Additionally, it is important to consider the cultural and contextual factors that may influence the study's findings, as these factors may vary across different hospitality and tourism operations. By comparing findings across different cultural and contextual settings, researchers can gain insights into the generalizability and boundary conditions of the study's findings. Finally, future research should focus on developing effective intervention strategies to mitigate the negative effects of distributive injustice on work engagement. Such interventions could include leadership training, organizational policies, or employee support programs. By identifying areas for improvement and implementing evidence-based interventions, organizations can boost employee morale, foster collaboration, and work engagement.

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Appendix (A)
Distributive injustice
DI.1. In hotel/travel agency, the outcome process does not reflect the effort I have put into my work.
DI.2. In hotel/travel agency, the outcome process is inappropriate for the work I completed.
DI.3. In hotel/travel agency, the outcome process does not reflect what I have contributed to the organization.
DI.4. In hotel/travel agency, the outcome process is unjustified, given my performance.
Job Engagement
JE.1. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose
JE.2. I am enthusiastic about my job.
JE.3. My job inspires me
JE.4. At my job, I feel bursting with energy
JE.5. I get carried away when I am working
Trust in leadership
TiL.1. I believe my leader has high integrity.
TiL.2. I can expect my leader to treat me in a consistent and predictable fashion.
TiL.3. My leader is not always honest and truthful [r/c]
TiL.4. In general, I believe my leader's motives and intentions are good
TiL.5. I don't think my leader treats me fairly [r/c]
TiL.6. My leader is open and upfront with me.
TiL.7. I'm not sure I fully trust my leader. [r/c]

الظلم التوزيعي والارتباط الوظيفي في وكالات السفر والفنادق: الدور المعدل للثقة في القيادة

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الملخص

هدفت الدراسة إلى استكشاف أثر الظلم التوزيعي على الارتباط الوظيفي، مع الأخذ في الاعتبار الدور المعدل للثقة في القيادة. اعتمدت الدراسة على 423 رداً صالحاً للتحليل الإحصائي من فنادق الخمس نجوم ووكالات السفر في مصر، وتم تحليلها باستخدام منهج PLS–SEM والإصدار 7.0 من برنامج WarpPLS. ووجدت النتائج أن الظلم التوزيعي يؤثر سلبا على الارتباط الوظيفي. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تؤثر الثقة في القيادة سلبًا على إدراك الظلم التوزيعي، وتؤثر بشكل إيجابي على الارتباط الوظيفي، وتخفف من تأثير الظلم التوزيعي على الارتباط الوظيفي. تقدم هذه الدراسة نتائج مهمة حول التفاعل بين الثقة في القيادة، والظلم التوزيعى، والارتباط الوظيفى في قطاع الضيافة والسياحة المصري. ويؤكد على الحاجة الملحة للمديرين في هذه الصناعة لمعالجة الظلم التوزيعي لتعزيز الأداء ومكافحة عدم مشاركة الموظفين. وتشمل التوصيات ضمان التوزيع العادل للموارد، وشفافية اتخاذ القرار، وخلق بيئة عمل إيجابية وشاملة. وتسلط الدراسة الضوء أيضًا على أهمية تعزيز الاحترام والتعاون في جميع أنحاء المنظمات لتحسين ثقة الموظفين في القيادة. علاوة على ذلك، فإن توفير طرق واضحة للموظفين للتعبير عن مخاوفهم وإجراء عمليات فعالة لحل النزاعات يزيد من بناء الثقة والارتباط الوظيفى.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الظلم التوزيعي، الارتباط الوظيفي، الثقة في القيادة، فنادق الخمس نجوم، وكالات السفر.