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The Interplay between Interpersonal Trust and Employee Loyalty in the Hotel Sector: The Moderating Role of Work Stress

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Abstract

This paper examines the moderating role of work stress on the relationship between interpersonal trust and employees' loyalty, mainly in the hotel sector. A quantitative method was used, and structured online questionnaires were employed for data collection from employees working at five-, four- and three-star hotels located in Amman-Jordan. A total of 274 valid responses were received. Structural Equation Modelling was used for data analysis through AMOS software. The results show that confidence in management and confidence in peers directly affect loyalty, while only faith in management was found to affect employee loyalty. Although these results contradict some previous research findings, this can be explained by cultural differences. Overall, the results did not confirm the moderating role of stress in the relation between interpersonal trust and loyalty. The originality of this study proves the importance of workplace relations in building loyalty that may exceed, in its importance, work stress. Practically, this study result may impulse the hotel managers to focus more on communication with their employees to understand their needs which essentially leads to enhancing their loyalty and service quality.

Keywords: Work stress; interpersonal trust; employees' loyalty; hotel sector; Jordan.

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Introduction

Employees in the hospitality sector are crucial in crafting customer experiences, enhancing satisfaction, and building brand loyalty, making them essential for the growth and longevity of businesses in this field; thus, there is a need to shed light on the factors that affect employees' performance (Alzyoud et al., 2024). The purpose of this search is to examine the interplay between interpersonal trust and employee loyalty in the hotel sector and find out the role of work stress as a moderator. Employees' loyalty is a demonstration of organisational commitment that reflects employees' psychological attachment, identification with, and involvement in a particular organisation (Dhir et al., 2019). Most commonly, loyalty is considered a positive phenomenon that emerged as a natural result of satisfaction (Wu & Norman, 2006; Dhir et al., 2019). It has been claimed that organisations with loyal employees have a major competitive advantage by having better performance, a good reputation, and a higher opportunity for survival (Guillon & Cezanne, 2014; Rice et al., 2017; Dhir et al., 2019). Loyal employees are willing to work extra time, have low turnover rates, and provide better services (Yee et al., 2010; Guillon & Cezanne, 2014). Further, Yee et al. (2010) found that employee loyalty is significantly related to service quality, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and overall profitability. Furthermore, employee loyalty is particularly important in the hospitality industry as loyal employees are committed to delivering services with a high level of quality (Fan et al., 2021). Employees' loyalty can be perceived as reciprocity of fair and beneficial treatment they receive from their employers (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Dhir et al., 2019). Therefore, loyalty has mainly been studied from the social exchange theory perspective (i.e. Lewicka et al., 2018; Guo et al., 2020; Jung et al., 2021; Fan et al., 2021). Hart & Thompson (2007) explained that because of fair treatment, trust and belief in the good intentions of their managers, employees go beyond self-interest and intend to benefit their employers by exercising organisational citizenship or extra-role behaviours on the job. Relation with peers is also crucial, as employees value the support provided by their colleagues and remain attached to the organisation even if more profitable job opportunities are available (Hart & Thompson, 2007). Therefore, we noticed that the employees who experience good interpersonal relationships at the workplace are likely to perceive themselves as being in a social exchange relationship based on the support and trust they enjoy, thus they reciprocate by being loyal to their organisations. In turn, trust in the hospitality industry can enhance the overall performance of hotels, as found by Tefera & Dlamini (2021) in their study in Eswatini.

On the contrary, poor interpersonal relationships can be harmful to workers' psychological well-being, as they entail low levels of support and trust among the parties involved; thus, psychosocial features of the work situation, including interpersonal relations, are potential sources of stress (Guinot et al., 2014). Similarly, Weinberg et al. (2010) claim that amongst the main sources of stress is the lack of support at work and poor work relationships mostly based on distrust. Chudzicka-Czupala et al. (2022) found that stress depends on the level of trust in the skills and competencies of the supervisor and trust in co-workers. On the other hand, stress was found to influence employees' level of loyalty (Rice et al., 2017). Whereas Khuong & Linh (2020) found that individual-related stressors directly affect employee loyalty, job-related stressors indirectly affect employee loyalty. In sum, stress in the workplace is perceived as a global issue that influences the hospitality industry (Manyamba & Ngezi, 2017). However, the role of work stress between interpersonal trust and employees' loyalty relationship

is still unclear; further, the related relations have not received adequate attention. In a similar context, Rice et al. (2017) claim that the link between inter-professional collaboration and employee job tension remains unclear while Khuong & Linh (2020) claim that there is a lack of studies on the association between work stress and employees' loyalty. Therefore, and in order to fill the mentioned gap and based on the social exchange theory, this study aims to investigate the moderating role of work stress in interpersonal trust and employees' loyalty relationship.

Research background and hypotheses development

Interpersonal trust and employees' loyalty

Employee loyalty is an action-oriented concept, encompassing employee behaviours including the extent to which employees are committed and assumes responsibility for work, and the extent to which employees feel inclined to seek alternative employment (Rice et al., 2017). Further, loyalty can be defined as a psychological attachment to the organization that develops as a result of increased satisfaction (Zayas- Ortiz et al., 2015). Satisfaction emerges from a process of internal evaluation when an employee's expectation level is met or exceeded. Employees' loyalty develops thereafter, as a generalized emotional attitude toward the organization, which, in turn, increases the sense of commitment towards the organization (Zayas- Ortiz et al., 2015). Overall, loyalty is generally perceived as a positive payback attitude to good and trustful workplace relations. In this context, interpersonal trust was found to be a predictor of loyalty (Matzler & Renzl, 2006; Khuong & Linh, 2020). Tziner & Sharonin (2014) claim that interpersonal trust is built and maintained through interpersonal relationships, communication, and repeated interactions. Employees develop trust in their colleagues and superiors based on their perception of their reliability, competence, and integrity. McCauley & Kuhnert (1992) indicated that interpersonal trust consists of two elements: lateral trust and vertical trust. Lateral trust refers to the trust relationship between a focal employee and his/her co-workers. On the other hand, vertical trust refers to the trust relationship between a subordinate and his/her direct supervisor. Similarly, Ting (1997) argues that there are two types of interpersonal trust, distinguishing supervisory trust from trust in co-workers. These sub-categories of interpersonal organisational trust imply that there are different dimensions of social relationships among workers in the workplace. Furthermore, Cook & Wall (1980) define interpersonal trust as the extent to which one is willing to ascribe good intentions to others and to have confidence in their words and actions. Therefore, they recognised that with regard to mutually dependent workgroups within an organisation, trust may be placed along two different dimensions: (i) faith in the trustworthy intentions of others, and (ii) confidence in the ability of others, yielding ascriptions of capability and reliability. It's important to note that Khorasani (2023) suggests trust can be viewed as a distinct form of certainty. This implies that when decisions are based on trust, they are made within an environment of uncertainty while still considering other motives or factors. According to Alzyoud et al. (2017), Alzyoud (2019), and Alzyoud et al. (2025), trusted relationships among employees in the hotel sector can encourage them to feel psychologically safe at work, which can lead to positive outcomes such as promoting their loyalty and engagement in innovative activities. Matzler & Renzl (2006) found that trust in colleagues and trust in management are strong predictors of employee satisfaction, which in turn, influences employees' loyalty. A similar result was found by Singh (2022) who concluded that interpersonal trust is a driver of employee satisfaction and, in turn, affects employee loyalty. Similarly, Khuong and Linh (2020) claim that teamwork and supervisor support can lead to increased employee loyalty. Lewicka et al. (2018) stated that research results show that employees are willing to be more engaged in their work if they establish trust-based relationships with their superiors. They explained this behaviour in a reciprocator manner, as managers who expressed high trust in their employees, would more often empower them by encouraging employees to develop a professional career and giving them promotion opportunities. As a result, employees feel obliged to reciprocate with trust and a higher level of engagement and commitment, which is explained through the social exchange theory. Accordingly, it is proposed that (also shown in Figure1):

H1: There is a significant direct effect of interpersonal trust "Faith in peers" on employees' loyalty.
H2: There is a significant direct effect of interpersonal trust "Faith in management" on employees' loyalty.
H3: There is a significant direct effect of interpersonal trust "Confidence in peers" on employees' loyalty.
H4: There is a significant direct effect of interpersonal trust "Confidence in management" on employees' loyalty.

The moderating role of stress

Poor workplace interpersonal relationships that involve low levels of trust can negatively influence workers' psychological well-being, which would probably create a stressful work atmosphere (Weinberg et al., 2010; Guinot et al., 2014). In the hotel sector, Wireko-Gyebi & Ametepeh (2016) shed light on the importance of studying the elements that affect stress, mainly amongst frontline hotel employees. Lau & Tan (2006) explained that high levels of interpersonal trust imply that the parties care about each other, listen to problems, and the supervisor provides coaching advice and consistent feedback. Individuals who trust each other are also expected to be more willing to synchronize, help each other, and work together constructively. According to Lau & Tan (2006), this is likely to increase their commitment to each other and such friendly relationships may lead to lower levels of stress, tension and anxiety in the workplace. Moreover, Guinot et al. (2014) stated that distrust leads to feelings of uncertainty, insecurity and anxiety. Mainly destructive relationships based on mistrust and scant cooperation, co-worker rivalry over more benefits or positions, lack of emotional support in difficult situations or the absence of any relationships among peers, and lack of consideration from managers can generate high levels of stress among the members of a group or organisation. Moreover, inconsiderate behaviour on the part of supervisors or lack of support for their subordinates considerably contributes to creating a feeling of pressure at work (Guinot et al., 2014). Thus, a higher level of trust reduces the

level of stress and tensions at work (Liu et al., 2010; Lau & Tan 2006). On the other hand, Rice et al. (2017) found a direct relationship between job tension and employees' loyalty. Further, Khuong & Linh (2020) found that individual-related stressors directly affect employee loyalty while job-related stressors indirectly affect employee loyalty. Overall, several studied investigated the relationship between interpersonal trust and loyalty (e.g. Matzler & Renzl, 2006; Khuong & Linh, 2020; Singh, 2022). Others studied the relation between interpersonal trust and stress (e.g. Lau & Tan, 2006; Weinberg et al., 2010; Guinot et al., 2014; Chudzicka-Czupala et al., 2022). The relation between stress and loyalty was also examined (e.g. Rice et al., 2017; Khuong & Linh, 2020). However, the moderating role of work stress between interpersonal trust and employees' loyalty is still unclear, but as interpersonal trust is found to increase employees' loyalty and to reduce stress, and as stress is perceived to affect employees' level of loyalty, it is reasonable to propose that (also shown in Figure1):

H5: Work stress moderates the relationship between interpersonal trust "Faith in peers" and employees' loyalty.
H6: Work stress moderates the relationship between interpersonal trust "Faith in management " and employees' loyalty.
H7: Work stress moderates the relationship between interpersonal trust "Confidence in peers" and employees' loyalty.
H8: Work stress moderates the relationship between interpersonal trust "Confidence in management" and employees' loyalty.

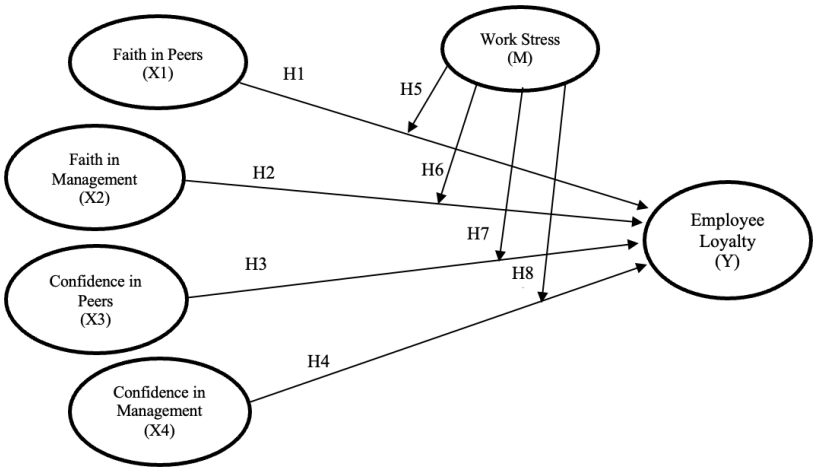

Figure 1: The proposed model

While previous studies have looked at how trust and stress independently affect loyalty, this paper combines them to create a more comprehensive understanding of their combined effects. Specifically, the paper proposes and tests a model that considers how interpersonal trust, from both peers and management, directly influences employees' loyalty. This builds on existing research that highlights the importance of trust in fostering positive workplace relationships, employee commitment and loyalty. Additionally, the paper introduces the moderating role of work stress in the relationship between interpersonal trust and employee loyalty. By considering the potential influence of stress in the workplace, the study provides insights into the complexities of employee loyalty dynamics and the factors that can mitigate or exacerbate its effects. In summary, this paper takes a holistic approach to understanding the interplay between interpersonal trust, stress, and employee loyalty, providing valuable insights for both theory and practice in organisational behaviour and management. Moreover, this research paper is conducted to answer the following research question which is "What is the role of work stress as a moderator between the interpersonal trust and loyalty in employees' hotels".

Methods

A structured online questionnaire was used for data collection. A convenience sampling approach was employed. The research sample consisted of all employees, supervisors, assistant managers and managers who are working at five-, four- and three-star hotels located in the Greater Amman Municipality, Jordan, where most of the hotels are located. The questionnaire was distributed to four hundred employees in the hotels, and a total of 274 valid questionnaire returns and used for the analysis, representing a response rate of 58.5%. This questionnaire was made up of four sections. The first one uses nominal scales to capture basic information related to the respondent characteristics, whereas the following sections used 5-point Likert scales. The second section has items that measure "Interpersonal trust". The third section contains items that measure "loyalty", and the fourth section contains items related to "work stress". This research used three tools to examine the research hypotheses, as follows: (1) To measure interpersonal trust at work, Cook & Wall's (1980) 12-item instrument was utilized. This scale measures four interpersonal trust dimensions (faith in peers, faith in management, confidence in peers and confidence in management). This scale was used by (Matzler & Renzel 2006; Leat & El-Kot, 2009). (2) Employees' loyalty is measured through five items, which are adapted from (Homburg & stock, 2000) and used by (Dhir et al., 2019; Basheer et al. 2019; Matzler & Renzl, 2006; Wibowo & Bhinekawati, 2021). (3) To measure work stress, the workplace stress scale (WSS) was utilized. This scale was

developed by the Marlin Company and the American Institute of Stress (2009). The WSS scale consists of eight items. This scale was used by (Soltan et al., 2020). Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of current research respondents. The majority of respondents were male (60.6%), while only (39.4%) were female. The average age of respondents was between twenty years old and less than twenty-five years old (75.2%). Moreover, most of the respondents were bachelor holders with a percentage of (86.8%). Most of the respondents had less than one year of work experience (47.1%) followed by the respondents who had one year and less than five years of work experience (38.3%). In addition, most of the respondents were employees from none-managerial level (79.9%), while only (20.1%) belonged to a managerial level.

Table 1. Respondents' demographic characteristics (*n*=274)

Demographic variables	Category	Frequency	(%)
Gender	Male	166	60.6%
	Female	108	39.4%
Age	Less than 20 years	25	9.1%
	From 20 years to less than 25 years	206	75.2%
	From 25 years to less than 50 years	40	14.5%
	From 50 years and above	3	1.1
Education	High school or lower level	29	10.6%
	Bachelor	238	86.9%
	Master and above	7	2.7%
Work Experience	Less than one year	129	47.1
	From one year to less than five years	105	38.3%
	From 5 years to less than 10 years	20	7.3%
	10 years and above	20	7.3%
Job Title	Employee	219	79.9%
	Supervisor	18	6.6%
	Assistant Manager	17	6.2%
	Manager	20	7.3%
Hotel Classification	Five Stars	221	80.7%
	Four Stars	45	2.9%
	Three Stars	8	15.2

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to test the hypothesized model through SPSS AMOS 23. SEM is regarded as an advanced method that integrates numerous statistical approaches, including multiple regression and factor analysis (Pallant, 2016). Researchers may utilize it to analyse intricate connections, as well as to evaluate and eliminate errors while studying the correlations between variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Furthermore, the AMOS package is employed as it is a widely used software for structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis that simplifies the process of model-building through a user-friendly graphical interface and it enhances the comprehension of outcomes, allowing for immediate visual feedback and easy modification of models (Alzyoud et al, 2025; Alzyoud, 2019; El-Sheikh et al., 2017). Given that the scales utilized in the study were adapted from various sources and that the researcher made modifications to some items, it appears imperative to establish additional validity for the research's measures. Therefore, a two-step approach to SEM was employed, as recommended by Anderson & Gerbing (1988), in which constructs' validity were assessed first through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), then testing the hypothesized model. Several goodness-of-fit indices were employed to assess the fit of the research model in the CFA (Kline, 1998, Hair et al., 2014) namely: Chi-square divided by degree of freedom ($\chi 2$/df), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). Hair et al. (2014) stated that these indices typically provide sufficient data for evaluating the study model. As recommended in the literature (e.g. Kline, 1998, Hair et al., 2014), the following criteria were employed: $\chi 2$/df is recommended to be less than 3; GFI, CFI, and TLI to be higher than 0.90; and RMSEA preferable to be less than 0.08. Assumptions of SEM were assured before embarking on the analysis, such as having a sufficient sample size, assuring normality, and checking for outliers, multicollinearity, and common method bias (CMB). In order to examine the moderation influence of work stress on the relationship between the exogenous variables and the endogenous variable, the interaction between the moderator and each exogenous variable was performed (Andersson et al., 2014; Memon et al., 2019). SPSS AMOS was utilized to examine the proposed mediation of work stress in the associations between 'faith in peer and employee loyalty', 'faith in management and employee loyalty', 'confidence in peer and employee loyalty', and 'confidence in management and employee loyalty'. The significance levels of the predictor (p-value) and the interaction coefficient values were employed to assess the proposed moderations hypotheses.

Results

Measurement model results

Table 2 demonstrates the means (M), standard deviations (SD), correlations amongst the study's variables, and reliabilities.

Table 2. Mean (M), standard deviation (SD), reliabilities, and correlations

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Faith in colleagues	2.65	1.14	(.83)					
2. Faith in management	2.72	1.21	.52**	(.74)				
3. Trust in colleagues	2.83	1.13	.59**	.52**	(.78)			
4. Trust in management	2.79	1.16	.31**	.59**	.46**	(.88)		
5. Employee loyalty	2.40	1.27	.42**	.57**	.52**	.60**	(.85)	
6. Work stress	2.74	1.21	**-.03**	**-.17****	**-.11**	**-.13***	**-.03**	(.75)

Notes: N=274, Alpha reliabilities appear in parentheses. *p <.05; ** p < .01

The results of the correlation provided initial support to some of the research hypotheses as employee loyalty was positively associated with faith in peers (.42, p<.001), faith in management (.52, p <.001), confidence in peers (.59, p <.001), and confidence in management (.31, p <.001). However, the results showed a weak and/or insignificant relationship between work stress and the other variables. All the variables were found reliable as the results of the Cronbach's Alphas were above the cut-off value of 0.70, as recommended by DeVellis & Thorpe (2021).

Preliminary analysis

Prior to testing the research hypotheses, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed, using AMOS 23, to ensure the constructs' validity of the research's variables. Furthermore, CFA was conducted to assess whether each measurement item would load significantly onto its construct. The results revealed an acceptable fit for the study model as the following fit indices were obtained: $\chi 2/df = 1.990$, GFI = 0.919, CFI = 0.958, IFI = 0.958, TLI = 0.944 and RMSEA = 0.06. Moreover, the results indicated that the relationships between the measurement items and their constructs were significant, and the standardized coefficients ranged from 0.57 to 0.91 (p< .001), which means that the measurement items are loaded significantly into the scales with which they were associated. Based on the outcomes of the CFA, 17 measurement items were used in this study to measure its variables: three items were used to measure the construct faith in peers; two for faith in management; three for confidence in peers; two for confidence in management; three for work stress and four for employee loyalty. The validity and reliability of the study's variables were also examined. According to Hair et al. (2014), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above 0.7 denote convergent validity whereas Composite Reliability (CR) with values greater than 0.5 demonstrate sufficient reliability. As shown in Table 3 below, all the research constructs are considered valid and reliable as the AVE and CR values are above the minimum acceptable values. On another hand, as the data were collected at a single point in time and using a self-administrated questionnaire, Harman's single-factor test was performed to assess the problem of Common Method Bias (CMB), as recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003). The outcome demonstrated that CMB is not an issue in this study as the scale items explained only 28% of the variance.

Table 3. Results of validity and reliability of the research variables

Variable	CR	AVE
1. Faith in colleagues	0.840	0.638
2. Faith in management	0.739	0.586
3. Trust in colleagues	0.784	0.549
4. Trust in Management	0.885	0.793
5. Employee loyalty	0.884	0.662
6. Work stress	0.749	0.501

Hypotheses testing

In the second part of the analysis, the hypotheses were tested using the SEM technique. A model was drawn where faith in peers, faith in management, confidence in peers, and confidence in management were specified as independent variables, whereas employee loyalty was identified as a dependent variable. Direct paths were drawn from the independent variables to the dependent variable. Figure 2. demonstrates the results of the hypothesized model. First, the results of examining the direct influence of faith in peers (X1) on employee loyalty (Y) indicated that the structural coefficient value was 0.072 with a p-value of 0.212 which is more than the threshold value of 0.05. This denotes that there is no significant direct influence of faith in peers on employee loyalty, which means that H1 has been rejected. Second, testing the direct influence of faith in management (X2) on employee loyalty (Y) revealed significant results as p< .001 and the structural coefficient is 0.245. This means that there is a direct effect of faith in management on employee loyalty. This positive influence indicates that an increase in employees' perception of faith in management would lead to an increase in their loyalty, which means that H2 has been accepted. Third, the outcome of examining the direct effect of confidence in peers (X3) on employee loyalty (Y) was significant (p< .01) with a coefficient value of 0.188, which suggests that confidence in peers can directly affect employee loyalty. This positive influence indicates that higher confidence in peers can lead to an increase in employee loyalty, which means that H3 has been accepted.

Table 4. Results of the direct and moderation analysis

Relationships	Beta	t-value	P-value
Faith in colleagues → Employee loyalty	0.072	1.249	0.212
Faith in colleagues*Work Stress→ Employee loyalty	0.046	0.834	0.404
Faith in management → Employee loyalty	0.245	4.118	0.000
Faith in management *Work Stress→ Employee loyalty	-0.075	-1.291	0.197
Trust in colleagues→ Employee loyalty	0.188	3.109	0.002
Trust in colleagues*Work Stress→ Employee loyalty	0.031	0.621	0.535
Trust in management→ Employee loyalty	0.354	6.348	0.000
Faith in management*Work Stress→ Employee loyalty	0.066	1.215	0.224
Work Stress→ Employee loyalty	0.094	2.112	0.035

Finally, the results showed that confidence in management (X4) can directly influence employee loyalty (Y) as the p-value was significant (p< .001) and the structural coefficient was 0.354. As this relationship is positive, this suggests that higher confidence in management would result in higher employees' loyalty, which means that H4 has been accepted. In order to test the moderation effect of work stress on the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, interactions between the moderator and each of the independent variables were performed (Andersson et al., 2014; Memon et

al., 2019). The interaction effects combine the effect of 'faith in peers and work stress' on employee loyalty to examine the hypothesis H5, 'faith in management and work stress' on employee loyalty to assess the hypothesis H6, 'confidence in peers and work stress' on employee loyalty to evaluate the hypothesis H7, and 'confidence in management and work stress' on employee loyalty to test the hypothesis H8. The significance levels of the predictor (p-value) and the interaction coefficient values were employed to assess the proposed moderations hypotheses. The results of the interaction effect are illustrated in Table 4.

The results of the SEM analysis indicated that work stress did not moderate the relationship between faith in peers and employee loyalty as the *p*-value was not significant (p=0.404) and the interaction coefficient value was 0.046. As such, the hypothesized moderation effect of work stress on the relationship between faith in peers and employee loyalty (H5) was not confirmed. Furthermore, the results of the interaction effect revealed that work stress did not moderate the influence of faith in management on employee loyalty as the *p*-value was not significant (p=0.197) and the interaction coefficient was -0.075. Therefore, faith in management can influence employee loyalty directly and that work stress does not moderate that relationship. In addition, the results of the SEM analysis proposed that work stress did not moderate the relationship between confidence in peers and employee loyalty as the *p*-value was not significant (p=0.535) and the interaction coefficient value was 0.031. As such, the hypothesised moderation effect of work stress on the relationship between confidence in peers and employee loyalty was not confirmed. Furthermore, the results of the interaction effect revealed that work stress did not moderate the influence of confidence in management on employee loyalty as the *p*-value was not significant (p=0.224) and the interaction coefficient was 0.066. Therefore, confidence in management can influence employee loyalty directly and that work stress does not moderate that relationship. In conclusion, H5, H6, H7, and H8 have been rejected as shown in Table 4 and Figure 2.

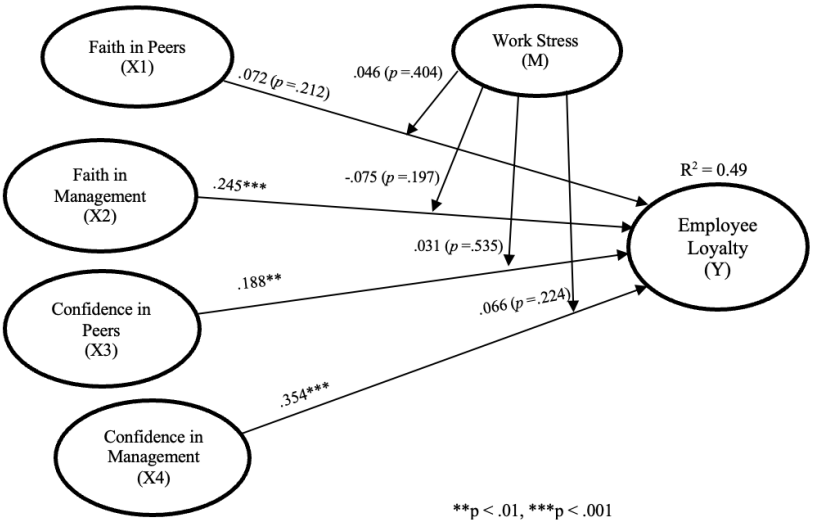

Figure 2. Results of the hypothesised model

Discussion

Results show that there is no significant direct effect of faith in peers on employee loyalty. On the other hand, results indicate that there is a direct effect of faith in management on employee loyalty. Thus, employees build their organizational loyalty based on their faith in the trustworthy intention of their management not the faith in intentions of their peers. In a similar context, Cook & Wall (1980) who initially developed the interpersonal trust scale found that trust subscales correlate significantly with all organizational commitment subscales, with– as they claim- the intuitively acceptable exception that the trust in peers' subscale is unrelated to organizational loyalty. However, confidence in peers was found to have a direct effect on employees' loyalty. This positive influence indicates that higher confidence in peers' capabilities and actions, which would probably facilitate the accomplishment of the required work-related tasks -rather than faith in peers' intentions only- is what matters. In other words, trust in peers' skills and competencies could affect employees' loyalty as they can lean on their colleagues, however, the good intentions of their peers did not have the same importance. Our results suggest that employees may place greater emphasis on their confidence in peers' actions rather than solely relying on their intentions, indicating the importance of practical collaboration and support among colleagues in fostering organizational loyalty. The results also show that confidence in management's actions can directly influence employees' loyalty, this suggests that higher confidence in management would result in higher employees' loyalty. Consistently, Dirks & Ferrin (2002), explained that supervisors hold the power to make significant decisions that can affect an employee's work-life balance, such as promotions, pay, work schedule, responsibilities, and even terminations. Therefore, the level of trust an employee has in their supervisor is crucial to their motivation, loyalty and willingness to engage in work. In this context, Simha & Pandey, (2020) state that management research has indicated that staff respond to leaders who demonstrate trustworthy relationships with increased loyalty and commitment. Similarly, Mitterer & Mitterer (2023) and Alzyoud & Abuzaid (2024) claim that trust in management is necessary for creating positive employee attitudes and behaviours. Khorasani (2023) state that loyalty is influenced by various factors

including trust in leadership. Similarly, Leat & El-Kot (2009) found that there are significant relationships between faith and confidence in management and job satisfaction while the relationships between trust in peers and job satisfaction are not significant. They added that confidence in management is the dimension of trust making a significant contribution to employees' perceptions of their overall job satisfaction. They suggest that the quality, capability and efficiency of their management plays an influential role as a predictor of job satisfaction since it is consistent with a desire for certainty and a belief in the value of expertise which are characteristics of Arab societies with a strong desire to avoid uncertainty. It is also suggested that in societies demonstrating a high-power distance index – like Arab societies- employees do not expect or want to share power, they want their managers to be responsible for decision making and when this decision-making is perceived to be competent this acts as a source of satisfaction. Matzler & Renzl (2006) found that trust in colleagues and trust in management are strong predictors of employee satisfaction, and employee satisfaction, in turn, influences employee loyalty. Contrary to our results, Matzler & Renzl (2006) concluded that trust in peers has a much stronger impact on employee satisfaction than trust in management. However, in societies characterized by high power distance indices, such as many Arab cultures, the role of management in decision-making and the perceived competence of leadership may hold greater sway over employee loyalty compared to the dynamics among peers. Thus, considering the cultural context, where hierarchical structures and power differentials may influence employee perceptions, our findings highlight the significance of understanding cultural nuances in interpreting the relationship between interpersonal trust and employee loyalty, yet this needs more research.

The results of the SEM analysis indicated that work stress did not moderate the relationship between all dimensions of interpersonal trust and employee loyalty. Therefore, faith in management, confidence in management and peers can influence employee loyalty directly. In a related context, Yousaf (2020), found that in the hospitality sector the relationships between stress and its negative outcomes, like turnover are weak for the employees receiving high social support from peers and managers at work. Similarly, Khuong & Linh (2020) found that job-related stress does not have a direct effect on job satisfaction and loyalty. They claim that the hospitality industry requires harsh working hours, seasonal, part-time, and temporary work, and employees might take their effort into work for granted therefore they would not be under high pressure during their working time. Thus, in the hospitality sector, where employees often work long hours and face demanding clientele, stress may be perceived as a normative aspect of the job rather than a detriment to loyalty. Thus, the absence of a moderation effect of work stress on the relationship between interpersonal trust and employee loyalty may be particularly pronounced in industries characterised by such working conditions. Generally, stress due to work is considered to be normal and undeniable by employees in this industry. Overall, loyalty is influenced by all dimensions of interpersonal trust that are related to the management, however, this is not the case regarding the peers, as only confidence in peers' actions is particularly important. This study partially supports the social exchange theory which represents a reciprocal or bilateral exchange relationship in which one party's positive activities are likely to be met with a kind reaction from the other (Wang, 2019). The results of this study show that employees reciprocate faith in the trustworthy intention and confidence in their management's actions in the form of loyalty. Employees who trust their management and have confidence in their peers' actions may hesitate to leave their organization even if they have more attractive offers. Furthermore, this supports the idea proposed by Hart and Thompson (2007) that employees value socio-emotional support at the workplace, which creates deep "group bond" making the relations more stable, which in turn create an attachment to the organization. Although the results did not confirm the moderating role of stress in relation between interpersonal trust and loyalty, nevertheless, this study proves the importance of workplace relations that may exceed in its importance the difficulties and stress of the work. Further, this study shed light on the possibility of having other variables that may affect the trust-loyalty relation probably the personal related stress as found by (Khuong & Linh 2020).

Practical contribution

This research presents an empirical result from the hotel industry context. It offers a significant contribution to hotel managers by presenting more understanding of their employees working conditions. In addition, this research result may assist hotel managers to deal applicably with their employees, which may lead to a high service quality. Moreover, the result identifies that the stress factor does not show any effect on the employees' loyalty. However, faith and confidence in hotel management have more effects on employees' loyalty. In fact, this may impulse the hotel managers to focus more on communication with their employees to understand their needs which essentially leads to enhancing their loyalty. This may be succeeded by sharing the employees with the important decision related to working conditions, and provide the employees with more empowerment, which may lead to more trust and loyalty toward their hotels.

Limitations and future research

The main limitation of this research is that the sample from the hotel sector cannot be generalized and may not be suitable to apply in different sectors such as trade or manufacturing sectors. Moreover, the data collected only from Amman in Jordan, which limited the generalization of the study findings to other cities and countries. For future research, the current result confirms that other factors may have effects on hotel employees' loyalty such as salary and employees' satisfaction. This suggests that as the hotel industry has special working conditions, future researchers are recommended to examine other moderating factors that might affect the relationship between interpersonal trust and employees' loyalty. Furthermore, using a cross-sectional survey can be considered a limitation in this study. This suggest that future research may use different research tools and methods such as interviews and group discussion.

Conclusion

The main objective of this research paper is to examine the moderating role of work stress on the relationship of interpersonal trust and employees' loyalty in hotel industry. This research results propose that work stress does not moderate the relationship between all dimensions of interpersonal trust and employee loyalty. On the other hand, interpersonal trust dimensions' faith in management, confidence in management and peers can directly affect employees' loyalty. This confirms that the employees who are working in hotel industry, are more concerned about their relationship with the management more than their peers. The results show that the hotel employees are familiar with working under stress and pressure. This may explain why the work stress dimension does not moderate and affect the relationship between the interpersonal trust dimensions and employees' loyalty.

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