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**RETAINING CULINARY TALENT:
A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON MOTIVATION,
CONTENTMENT, AND FORTITUDE.**

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Abstract:

Purpose The objective of this paper is to formulate and theorize on an integrated conceptual framework analyzing the effects of employee motivation attributes that include empowerment, physiological elements and work environment on retention of culinary professionals in four- and five-star hotels in Malaysia, with job contentment and job fortitude as mediators respectively. Design/Methodology/Approach A conceptual framework based on three theoretical perspectives will be formulated for the purpose of this study: Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Social Exchange Theory (SET). In order to validate the framework developed in the conceptual phase of the paper, a cross-sectional design of quantitative nature will be used with structured questionnaire data collected from culinary professionals at the level of Chef de Partie and higher in four- and five-star hotels in Malaysia. Expected findings The findings of the study will indicate the way in which relationships exist among the variables such as motivation attribute dimensions and job contentment, job contentment and job fortitude and job fortitude and culinary professional retention. The sequential mediating effect will help determine if the two mediators indeed function as psychological mechanisms in translating the antecedent motivations to retention behavior.

Originality/Value The current paper will contribute to literature in three ways. Firstly, job contentment and job fortitude as mediating constructs have not been fully explored. Secondly, joint applications of JD-R, SDT and SET in the context of culinary retention in Malaysia are expected. Thirdly, the framework developed will help hospitality managers and policy makers to develop better retention strategies.

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Culinary Professionals, Employee Retention, Job Contentment, Job Fortitude, Motivation, Hotel Industry, Malaysia



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Introduction

The hotel business serves as an important cornerstone of the economy of various countries, creating plenty of jobs, facilitating tourism development, and making significant contributions to GDP (Abduraximov, 2020; Sanjeev & Birdie, 2019). Apart from this, at the heart of this business alongside others lies the culinary department, which comprises professional kitchen staff providing culinary experiences that make up the tourist value of the country (Nurwitasari et al., 2024). Nevertheless, despite the importance of this sphere, the hotel business faces significant structural labor problem that is particularly evident among the culinary specialists. Annual employee turnover rate of chefs and other kitchen personnel varies between 30% and 70% for different regions of the globe, and it is significantly higher than the respective figures for most analogous industries (Han, 2022). This problem affects chefs and kitchen personnel to a particularly large extent due to physical nature of their jobs, emotionally charged environment in which they operate, non-standard working shifts, lack of career development prospects, and low remuneration (Giousmpasoglou, 2024; Ferdian et al., 2024). These factors combined contribute to reduced job commitment and professional burnout, which in its turn causes chefs and culinary personnel to leave their jobs or change careers prematurely (Wu et al., 2025; Rinsdale, 2019). As a result, this situation leads to service continuity problems, increased expenses associated with recruitment and training, decreased team coherence, and limited ability of organization to ensure high service quality (Perdomo-Verdecia et al., 2024; Mekoth et al., 2023). Contemporary scholars have increasingly turned its attention to the motivational, psychological, and environmental determinants of retention, recognizing that surface-level interventions such as minor compensation adjustments or scheduling flexibility are insufficient to address the structural roots of the problem (Üngüren et al., 2024; Park & Min, 2020). Retention scholars converge on the premise that employees who are intrinsically motivated, psychologically fortified, and embedded in supportive work environments are significantly more likely to sustain their organizational commitment over time (Pimentel et al.,

2025; Akcin, 2023). Within this discourse, three constructs have emerged as particularly relevant yet insufficiently integrated in the hospitality literature: employee motivation attributes, job contentment, and job fortitude.

There are three interconnected facets where employee motivation in highly stressful settings happens. Empowerment is related to the autonomy that an individual has regarding decision making and discretionary actions and the degree to which he/she is accountable for his/her actions (Rahaman et al., 2020; Conger & Kanungo, 1988). The physiological facet has to do with the fulfillment of basic needs such as sufficient rest, comfortable conditions of work, reasonable remuneration, and good physical condition in order for other aspects of motivation to work properly (Dumitriu et al., 2025; Giousmpasoglou, 2024). Working environment aspects include both physical and relational characteristics of the organization and the availability of resources (Asharani et al., 2021; Dorta-Afonso et al., 2021). While all facets have been investigated separately, the impact of these aspects in total and how it works through psychological mechanisms in order to retain culinary professionals is yet to be revealed.

Contentment in relation to jobs differs from job satisfaction in that it pertains to a more profound and sustained feeling of psychological fulfillment resulting from congruence between an employee's values, career objectives, and experiences at the workplace (Yadav et al., 2022; Labrague, 2021). In contrast to job satisfaction, which can be conditional and short-term, job contentment is stable amid changing conditions and is linked to proactive behaviors and contributions as well as organizational commitment (Buonomo et al., 2024; Singh & Aurora, 2024). Even though this concept is theoretically rich, not much research has been done on job contentment, especially in terms of its role as a mediating variable in retention models focusing on culinary staff (Aufa et al., 2023). As for job fortitude, it describes the ability of employees to cope with challenges faced at work and perform efficiently under difficult conditions (Amani, 2025; Atan & Gelirli, 2025). It should be noted that job fortitude, which combines several psychological concepts, including resilience, grit, and psychological capital, differs from the latter one by offering a more comprehensive view of an employee's ability to withstand stress than any of the other constructs (Ibrahim & Hussein, 2024; Zhang et al., 2025). The importance of job fortitude as a mediating variable between job contentment and retention remains unexplored (Yang & Lee, 2023; Mujajati et al., 2024).

In light of the gaps that have been established above, this conceptual paper seeks to propose a theory that would explain the process whereby the motivation characteristics would be traced all the way to retention of the culinary professionals by way of job contentment and job fortitude in the Malaysian hotel industry. Furthermore, this proposed study assumes even greater significance on account of the highly competitive nature of the hospitality industry in Malaysia, whereby the 4- and 5-star hotels in Malaysia are constantly competing for skilled culinary professionals in the country's most rapidly growing tourism economy in Southeast Asia. Information derived from this study is expected to be immediately relevant in terms of practical application in the quest for sustainable labor solutions among hotel managers, human resource professionals and policy makers in the hospitality industry in Malaysia.

Literature Review

Employee motivation refers to the internal and external motivating forces that drive an individual to perform their job in a way that will help achieve organizational objectives (Gagné et al., 2018; Albrecht & Anglim, 2018). From a modern organizational studies perspective,

motivation is perceived as a multidimensional concept, which includes intrinsic motivators like meaning, mastery, and autonomy and extrinsic motivators such as recognition, compensation, and promotion (El-Said et al., 2020). Recent studies show that motivated employees are characterized by higher discretionary effort, creativity, and congruence with the organizational values (Sharafizad & Redmond, 2020). However, within the context of the hospitality industry, motivation becomes rather challenging due to its emotional demands, physical demands, and operational unpredictability, as well as the need for the presence of intrinsic satisfaction and external environment support (Ferdian et al., 2024; Giousmpasoglou, 2024). Researchers are starting to agree that motivation of employees in the hotel industry should be analyzed from the three-dimensional perspective: empowerment, physiology, and work environment conditions (Harefa et al., 2025; Nurfadila & Herman, 2023; Rahaman et al., 2020). Each of those concepts has been analyzed separately in research studies, but the combined influence of all those concepts on the retention of employees, mediated by psychological mechanisms, has not been sufficiently discussed yet, especially in the case of culinary professionals.

Empowerment

The concept of employee empowerment is one that has gained prominence within the field of Human Resource Management (HRM). The psychological, structural, and relational aspects of empowerment together influence the intrinsic motivation, self-confidence, and organizational commitment of employees (Modise, 2023). The psychological aspect of empowerment, as explained by Spreitzer (1995) involves four cognitive aspects, namely, meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Employees who view their work as meaningful and impactful, and who are allowed freedom of action based on their judgement, are more motivated, creative, and committed to the organization (Rahaman et al., 2020; Muduli & Pandya, 2018).

Within the hospitality sector, empowerment has been proven to increase service quality, decrease emotional exhaustion, and employee retention through providing staff with the authority to handle guests' concerns and service encounters (Lin et al., 2021; Kim & Beehr, 2020). Autonomy, which is an important component of empowerment, entails the amount of discretion exercised by people in determining how, when, and by means of what to accomplish tasks assigned to them. Studies conducted from the perspective of the Self-Determination Theory prove that satisfaction with autonomy greatly boosts intrinsic motivation and sustainability (Deci et al., 2017; Kavalić et al., 2023). However, the success of empowerment programs depends on organizational culture and leadership style and the presence of appropriate structural mechanisms; otherwise, empowerment programs may create role ambiguity and overload (Khairwar, 2024; Ozpamuk et al., 2023).

Control and authority play supporting roles in empowering workers alongside autonomy. Control involves the perception that the employees have influence over the extent and manner in which the tasks are performed by them. Authority involves the formal or informal ability to make decisions that impact the overall service provision process (Slemp et al., 2018; Gerpott et al., 2023). In the case of the culinary field, where hierarchy is common and undermines employee autonomy, the transfer of significant control and authority to kitchen staff can serve as a valuable means of motivating and retaining personnel (Daşkın et al., 2023; Azinuddin et al., 2021). Empirical research has proven time and again that empowered culinary workers demonstrate job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and low turnover intentions. (Alkahtani et al., 2021; Murray & Holmes, 2021).

Physiological Factors

Physiological factors based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the concept of two-factor theory introduced by Herzberg are the preconditions that need to be fulfilled for higher-level motivational factors to have any effect (Dumitriu et al., 2025; Sanyal & Hisam, 2018). In general, within organizational environments, the physiological needs include sufficient pay, breaks for resting, safety of the working environment, and low requirements for workload (Lăzăroiu et al., 2020).

In particular, the role of physiological factors is of special importance in the culinary field as the long hours, constant physical strain, thermal discomfort, and ergonomic problems are inherent aspects of the occupation (Melaku et al., 2024; Ismail et al., 2021). For instance, Giousmpasoglou (2024) highlights the provision of reasonable wages, enough food portions for staff members, organized breaks, and comfortable workplaces as some of the most significant motivational factors in the field of frontline hospitality employment. Moreover, self-efficacy – the psychological variable closely related to physiological state – serves as an important buffer against physical and psychological strain; employees, believing in their capability to cope with the job responsibilities demonstrate reduced levels of burnout, improved performance and increased organizational commitment (Ghani et al., 2024; Wardhana & Harsono, 2024; Karatepe et al., 2018).

The recent discussions emphasize the fact that physiological needs cannot be considered to be always met in modern hospitality organizations, especially those that operate independently or with a limited budget (Giousmpasoglou & Marinakou, 2024). As far as the Malaysian hotel industry is concerned, the wage disparity between managers and frontline culinary employees along with insufficient staff amenities and difficult physical working conditions pose serious obstacles to the formation of motivated and retained culinary staff (Kim, 2025; Rasool et al., 2020).

Working Environment Factors

Work environment can be considered a multifaceted motivational precursor that comprises physical facilities, interpersonal atmosphere, management culture, and resource availability (Alshaabani et al., 2021; Winarno et al., 2022). Those workers who see their work environment as conducive and resource-rich are likely to show higher levels of motivation, job satisfaction, and retention intent (Simanjuntak et al., 2023; Lăzăroiu et al., 2020). On the contrary, threatening, crowded, or deprived environments inevitably lead to job-related demotivation, exhaustion, and voluntary resignation (Sartika et al., 2025; Abdou et al., 2022).

Work culture that fosters openness in communication, respects its members, is characterized by inclusive leadership, and invests in employee growth becomes a powerful motivational factor (Monteiro & Joseph, 2023). For instance, in hotels, Karatepe et al. (2018) prove the power of empowering leadership, participative management style, and collegial support in reducing employee burnout and motivating them in a sustainable way. Availability of necessary resources, such as equipment, proper staffing, technological support, and up-to-date information, creates a structural base without which highly motivated culinary workers cannot perform and stay engaged (Camilleri et al., 2024; Arwab et al., 2023). Physical comfort of the work environment, including an ergonomic kitchen design, good ventilation, sufficient

lighting, and staff resting facilities, moderates physical burden of the culinary profession (Irwanti et al., 2024; El-Sherbeeney et al., 2023).

Job Contentment

Job contentment is an inherently different concept from the more researched notion of job satisfaction. The difference between the two lies in the fact that while job satisfaction stands for an emotionally transient state conditioned by a set of workplace circumstances including, but not limited to, remuneration, management, and variety of tasks, job contentment describes a profound feeling of happiness and psychological wellbeing generated by the concurrence of the working experience and personal values and motivations (Yadav et al., 2022; Kostopoulos, 2019). Thus, for retention studies, it should be noted that one could feel satisfied about some aspects of their job while being discontented with the whole experience and vice versa (Bella, 2023; Labrague, 2021).

A number of studies show that job contentment is a determinant of proactivity, creativity, productive performance in stressful conditions, as well as commitment towards the organization and profession (Chen et al., 2023; Zhenjing et al., 2022). According to Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, hygiene factors can prevent employees from being dissatisfied, however, they cannot provide intrinsic motivation that leads to contentment (Tambunan et al., 2025). Goal-Setting Theory also shows that employees whose personal goals are congruent with the organizational ones tend to become content and committed to their profession (Daşkın et al., 2023; Brown & Galanakis, 2022).

The hospitality industry is an example of the industry where job contentment depends on a wide range of factors including interpersonal relations, requirements for emotional labour, and career development opportunities. In turn, culinary professionals find themselves content not only due to the tasks they perform but also because of the creative process of cooking, mastering their skills, mentoring, and rewarding experience of creating outstanding dining experience (Na & Han, 2025; Ariza-Montes et al., 2018). Nevertheless, the hospitality literature shows that job contentment of culinary workers is undermined by excessive workload, lack of autonomy, lack of appreciation, and hierarchy in kitchens. (Grobelna & Tokarz-Kocik, 2025; Üngüren & Arslan, 2021).

The mediating effect of job contentment between motivation antecedents and outcomes, such as performance, engagement, and retention, has been validated by various studies conducted in organizational settings (Tambunan et al., 2025; Rai & Maheshwari, 2021). Nevertheless, its mediating effect specifically in the culinary setting, specifically in terms of motivation antecedents and job tenacity outcomes, has not received due attention in empirical research. This poses a significant problem since any retention program without consideration for fostering genuine job satisfaction among chefs is bound to be ineffective (Aufa et al., 2023; Jin, 2024).

Job Fortitude

Job fortitude is described as the multi-faceted psychological ability of an employee to cope with occupational challenges and adversity, remain goal-directed despite stress and uncertainty, and persevere when facing professional difficulties (Amani, 2025; Atan & Gelirli, 2025). This construct relies on and builds on the concepts such as psychological capital, occupational

resilience, emotional hardiness, and grit, yet extends them by incorporating the unique vocational aspect of being able to cope with challenges and adversities associated with the working environment in addition to interpersonal issues (Abdou, 2025; Ibrahim & Hussein, 2024).

Job fortitude is theoretically based on the positive organizational behavior and the social cognitive theory. The findings presented by Bandura (2018) that the people's belief in their ability to cope with the challenges is not a static trait, but a competence gained from experience and mentoring, for example, prove this point. In addition, the studies on psychological capital support the idea that the combination of hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy positively influences the coping with occupational stress and the prevention of voluntary turnovers (Newman et al., 2018; Avey et al., 2011). Being highly applicable to the modern volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) working environment, the professional kitchen in particular, job fortitude allows the employees to adapt, sustain their performance level, and be satisfied with their careers (Zambrano-Chumo & Guevara, 2024; Kim & Beehr, 2020).

Constructs of fortitude have been correlated with diminished levels of employee burnout, decreased turnover intentions, and improved quality of services, especially in times of organisational disruptions or recovery after crisis periods (Yang & Lee, 2023; Abubakar et al., 2022). Research shows that individuals who demonstrate high levels of psychological resilience and perseverance tend to perceive occupational difficulties as an opportunity to grow instead of giving up on them, thus, improving organisational stability through commitment (Zhang et al., 2025; Jang et al., 2020). Transformational leadership style, psychological safety, and career development programs are considered vital factors fostering job fortitude among hospitality workers (Messmann, 2023; Lee et al., 2020).

However, despite this knowledge, the construct of job fortitude, as well as the concept of job fortitude as a mediator between job satisfaction and retention, is considerably under-theorised and understudied in terms of culinary professionals. Available research works generally focus on broad psychological capital and resilience measurements that fail to consider the specificities of culinary occupations, such as brigade hierarchical pressure, high physical activity, and necessity to perform emotionally labour-intensive tasks related to maintaining creative excellence under operational pressure (Hall et al., 2023; Kim & Beehr, 2020). This research aims to fill that gap in the available knowledge.

Job Retention

Job retention, which can be described as the ongoing ability of an organization to retain its stable, committed, and productive employees through the minimization of voluntary turnover, has been a topic of numerous academic studies conducted in the fields of management, organizational psychology, and hospitality (Salem et al., 2024; Ghani et al., 2022). In general, the existing research defines a number of structural, relationship, and psychological factors of retention, which include, inter alia, salary satisfaction, career opportunities, perception of support, work-life balance, and quality of relationships with supervisors (Mousa & Abdelgaffar, 2023; Park & Min, 2020). In addition, recently, academic interest in retention began to focus on the fact that retention was not only a result of economic benefits but also the result of psychological and motivational factors such as employees' sense of purpose and organizational values matching (Liu, 2025; Wallace & Coughlan, 2023).

For the hospitality industry, job retention is especially important due to high turnover rates, precarity of employment, and the stressful and emotionally challenging nature of the jobs (Durão et al., 2025; Dogru et al., 2023). Hospitality establishments with a positive work culture characterized by inclusiveness, empowerment, and opportunities for growth demonstrate higher retention of highly skilled workers, including chefs, because this type of work environment ensures meeting of their intrinsic and extrinsic motivators (Ferdiana et al., 2023; Acharya et al., 2022). Moreover, the pandemic period has exacerbated the need to change retention approaches in hospitality businesses due to changing motivations of employees and increased demands (Seyfi et al., 2024; Austin-Egole et al., 2020).

Of utmost importance to note here is the aspect of retention of culinary professionals that does not find an appropriate solution under the umbrella of a broad hospitality retention model. The chefs and kitchen staff function under a brigade system, which has a completely different approach when it comes to matters of hierarchy, stress and human relationships as compared to other jobs in the hospitality industry. What is important to consider in this regard is that the process of retaining chefs involves factors beyond satisfaction with the job or organizational commitment but more of psychological issues like craft mastery, professional identity and occupational endurance.

Underpinning Theoretical Frameworks

Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model proposed by Demerouti et al. (2001) and later elaborated by Bakker & Demerouti (2017) constitutes a robust framework that explains how the imbalance of workplace demands and resources affects the well-being, engagement, and retention of employees. Job demands represent those physical, psychological, and social features of a job that entail efforts from employees and lead to some physiological or psychological expenses, such as workload, emotional labor, and time pressure. Job resources, in turn, constitute the features of jobs that help decrease job demands, assist in achieving goals, and promote employees' personal development, for instance, autonomy, supervision, and learning opportunities.

The JD-R model is highly relevant to the current research since empowerment and supportive organizational climate act as job resources that fulfill the intrinsic motivational needs of employees and alleviate the negative effects of culinary job demands on them. Such job resources help employees meet their intrinsic need for autonomy and relatedness and promote job satisfaction through this process. At the same time, they contribute to building job resilience because they give employees psychological and structural capital needed to overcome occupational challenges. On the contrary, some physiological stressors can be viewed as job demands that destroy both contentment and resilience if ignored (Ahmad Nizam et al., 2024; Lesener et al., 2019). Several practical applications of the JD-R model to hospitality organizations prove its usefulness in explaining how the lack of resources relative to job demands leads to burnout, disengagement, and turnover intentions in employees (Chong et al., 2024; Ampofo & Karatepe, 2022).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), created by Deci and Ryan (2000), is an overarching theory explaining motivation based on the satisfaction of three essential psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. SDT argues that the environment will promote high levels of intrinsic motivation, psychological well-being, and engaged behaviour in people if all these needs are satisfied (Ryan & Deci, 2024). On the contrary, the environment that thwarts people in satisfying these essential needs leads to amotivation, disengagement, and psychological malaise. SDT offers the motivational rationale whereby empowerment can help satisfy the need for autonomy, environmental factors the need for relatedness, and physiological well-being and self-efficacy the need for competence. When these needs are satisfied together, culinary professionals will be able to feel job satisfaction and to develop the psychological strength and persistence that make up job fortitude, allowing them to remain committed to the organization (Gagné et al., 2018; Deci et al., 2017). SDT is widely used in hospitality retention studies, where it is shown that leadership practices and cultures promoting autonomy and inclusivity substantially decrease the turnover intention of frontline staff (Camilleri et al., 2024; Rahmatillah et al., 2024; Gurtner et al., 2023).

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Social Exchange Theory (SET), developed initially by Blau (1964) and later expanded in current organisational literature (Blau, 2017), views work relationships as exchanges in which the norm of reciprocity holds. The sense of being invested in by the organisation in terms of well-being, professional growth, and psychological security motivates workers to reciprocate with positive attitudes and organisational citizenship behaviour, including retention (Meira & Hancer, 2021).

The Social Exchange Theory postulates that empowerment, physiological support, and supportive environment – all organisational efforts in contributing to the welfare of employees give rise to obligation and loyalty in the form of job satisfaction and job perseverance. In turn, this results in decreased turnover intention and strengthened retention commitment. The Social Exchange Theory is especially relevant for the culinary sector, where the nature of employer-employee relationship and appreciation of professional skills and abilities, developmental opportunities, and protection against occupational risks influence the formation of professional identity and organisational membership among chefs (Darmawan & Bagis, 2024; Naz et al., 2020). Empirical application of SET to hospitality management research invariably proves the key role of perceived organisational support in influencing the retention of frontline workers (Bai & Zhou, 2025; Nguyen et al., 2023).

Proposed Conceptual Framework

Based on the three theories and taking into consideration the empirical studies presented above, it can be suggested to integrate the concepts under study into one model in which motivation attributes (empowerment, physiological factors and work environment) will represent exogenous constructs; job contentment and job fortitude will act as sequential mediating variables, while retention of culinary professionals will be regarded as the ultimate outcome variable. This research framework implies the following relational structure: (1) motivation attributes have a positive effect on job contentment of culinary professionals; (2) job contentment has a positive effect on job fortitude; (3) job fortitude has a positive effect on

retention; (4) job contentment acts as mediator between motivation attributes and job fortitude; and (5) job fortitude acts as mediator between job contentment and retention.

Such sequential mediational framework is theoretically justified through JD-R Model as it explains the mechanism through which resources provide individuals with motivational states that protect against job demands and result in positive organisational outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). It is consistent with the SDT notion about need satisfaction and development of intrinsic motivation and well-being through several levels (Ryan & Deci, 2024) and also corresponds to SET understanding of mutual relations through which organisational commitment turns into employees' commitment and vice versa (Meira & Hancer, 2021). In turn, the framework is theoretically and empirically applicable to the specific context of the Malaysian hotel industry and particularly to the segment of four-and-five-star establishments because of competitive labour market situation in the culinary sphere there, cultural diversity and fast-changing requirements of customers (MOTAC, 2024; Azinuddin et al., 2021). Figure 1 depicts the proposed framework.

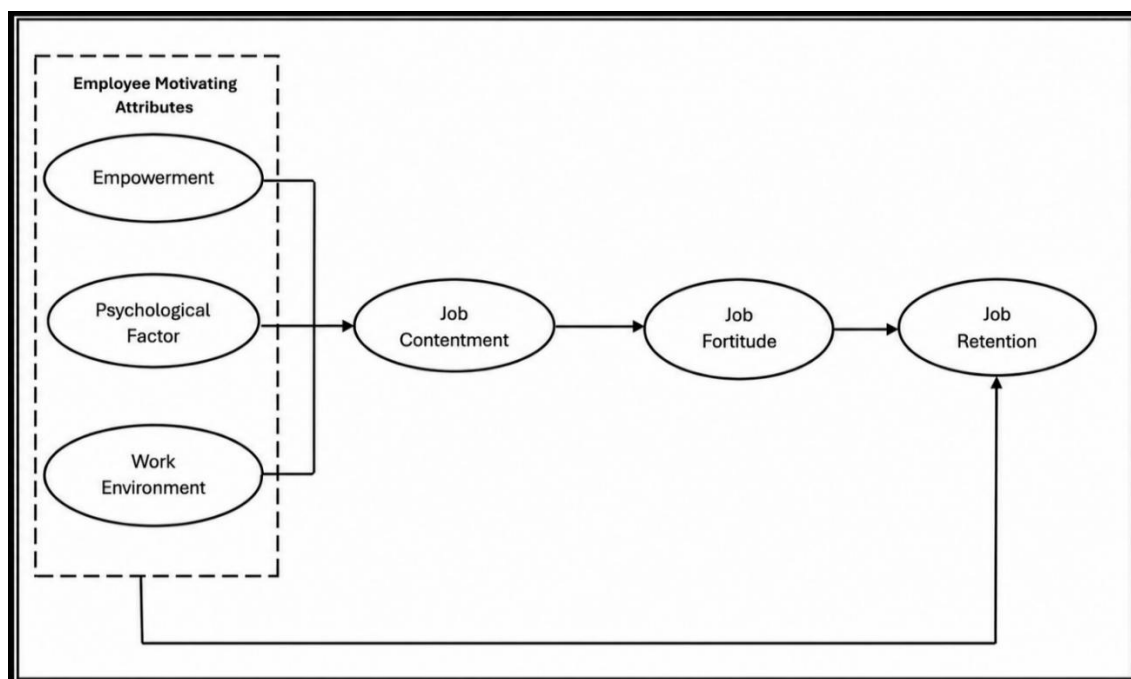


Figure 1: Proposed Framework

Conclusion

This conceptual paper has introduced and theoretically validated an integrated framework connecting motivation characteristics of employees to retention of culinary professionals in the hotel industry in Malaysia, sequentially mediated by job satisfaction and job resilience. With the use of the theoretical models like JD-R Model, Self-Determination Theory and Social Exchange Theory, the integrated framework introduced can provide an insightful account of the process of empowerment, physiological support and working environment conditions translating to workforce commitment of the culinary professionals. The paper has also identified three different research gaps, which are a contextual gap due to lack of consideration of the hospitality workforce in Malaysia; a variable gap due to lack of consideration of job

satisfaction and job resilience as distinct mediating variables; and a geographical gap as a result of the focus of retention studies in western and east Asian regions.

With that, an empirical study of the integrated framework proposed must be done with a quantitative approach involving a cross-sectional survey using a structured questionnaire among experienced culinary professionals, namely Chef de Partie and above, in four- and five-star hotels in Malaysia. This would help in determining the strength of the relationships between the motivation attribute characteristics and job satisfaction; job satisfaction and job resilience; and job resilience and retention of culinary professionals.

Beneficiaries for this proposed research could include not only academics but also practitioners. From an academic perspective, the benefits would include the introduction of underutilized mediating constructs such as job satisfaction and job resilience within the framework of the theoretical literature on motivation and retention. The study will also expand the applicability of the JD-R Model, SDT, and SET by applying them in a particular occupational setting. On the practical side, general managers, executive chefs, and human resource directors within the Malaysian hospitality industry will receive evidence-based understanding of the motivating factors that help to retain culinary talent and therefore devise strategies that could increase retention among culinary workers. At a policy level, policymakers and hospitality industry associations will receive the basis for designing sustainable workforce policies and frameworks. Finally, this paper will become an important foundation towards building a more resilient and motivated culinary workforce in Malaysia, one that is essential for the country's competitiveness in the tourism industry.

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