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How are the exchange relationships of front office employees reflected on customers?

前台员工的交换关系如何体现在客户身上？

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ABSTRACT

In the hotel business, the performance of employees in face-to-face contact with customers, such as front-office employees, is decisive in achieving customer satisfaction. These employees' performance impresses through their relationship with their managers and customers. That is, there is an exchange relationship of the form manager-employee to employee-customer. Based on Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX) and Social Exchange Theory (SET), the current study focuses on LMX, customer-employee exchanges (CEEX), customer-oriented extra role behavior (COERB), and the mediating effect of job dedication in these exchange relationships. Data was collected from front office employees in İzmir, Turkey, yielding 165 valid questionnaires. SEM was used to test the research hypotheses. The results show that high-quality LMX and CEEX increase front office employees' COERB. In addition, job dedication partially mediates the relationships between LMX and COERB, and CEEX and COERB.

简介

在酒店业，员工（如前台员工）与客户面对面接触的表现对于实现客户满意度具有决定性意义。这些员工的工作绩效受他们和经理、客户之间的关系影响。基于领导-成员交换理论（LMX理论）和社会交换理论（SET），本文旨在研究领导-员工交换（LMX）、客户-员工交换（CEEX）、以客户为导向的角色外行为（COERB）、以及工作奉献在这些交换关系中的中介效应。结果表明，高质量的LMX和 CEEX 提高了前台员工的 COERB。

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Introduction

Employees in the hotel business face various problems, such as long working hours, emotional burnout, low wages, limited opportunities for promotion, and stress from work-family conflicts (Dai et al., 2019). In addition, constant face-to-face communication with customers requires front office employees to deal with their needs and complaints, which can negatively affect motivation and job performance (Karatepe & Kilic, 2007). Front office employees who are dedicated to their job are better prepared to identify customers' needs and concerns, and offer bespoke solutions, thereby sustaining customer satisfaction (Ghlichlee & Bayat, 2021). Since hotel businesses are labor-intensive, the

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relationships and interactions between front office employees are particularly intense. Higher quality exchanges among employees can enhance a team's customer-oriented service delivery (Baek et al., 2018).

Various studies have demonstrated how the quality of interaction between managers (leaders) and employees (members) determines the performance of employees. High-quality leader-member exchange (LMX), which is characterized by trust, care, professional respect, and loyalty, increases employee motivation (Sue-Chan et al., 2012). In return, employees engage in more voluntary behavior (Erdogan & Bauer, 2015), such as customer-oriented extra-role behaviors (COERBs). Higher quality LMX also increases job satisfaction, which reduces turnover intention (Cheung & Wu, 2012). In contrast, leaders who delay making decisions and who provide inadequate support to front office employees to tackle issues may cause employee burnout, which in turn reduces employees' extra-role behaviors (Bani-Melhem, 2020). Poor-quality exchanges between leaders and their followers can also hinder desired employee behaviors, such as proactive customer performance, whereas a positive emotional climate between leaders and their followers increases it (Cheng et al., 2020).

Customer contact means direct and simultaneous exchanges between the customer and the service provider, although this does not have to take place in the same physical environment. Services involving direct exchanges require employees to have advanced skills to be able to meet customers' needs (Zomerdijk & Vries, 2007). Moreover, front office employee behavior and customers' positive emotions determine the customer-employee relationship (CEEX) (Lin & Lin, 2017), which therefore forms part of the service process due to the simultaneous production and delivery of services (Ma & Qu, 2011). Similar to employees, customers also perceive the level of a business's support towards them during the service process. Based on this perception, they may have more positive feelings about the service provided and hence be more satisfied with the organization (Yi & Gong, 2008).

According to Social Exchange Theory (SET), customers and businesses develop an exchange relationship that is expected to maximize the satisfaction of both sides. Therefore, reciprocity is important for both parties and allows them to develop a relationship based on reciprocal benefit (Lee et al., 2014). Customers' attitudes and behaviors during CEEX may significantly affect employees' extra-role behaviors (Kim & Qu, 2020a). For instance, customers showing a lack of civility towards front office employees decreases their engagement with extra-role behaviors (Bani-Melhem, 2020). CEEX can also increase employees' creativity as well as economic gains and knowledge exchange as perceived by customers. This exchange enables both employees and customers to feel valued. Front office employees' creativity improves service provision through extra-role behaviors (internal impact) (Chien et al., 2021). According to Lee et al. (2006), high-quality customer-employee interactions enrich customers' service experiences, thereby increasing their satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, customer-employee interaction plays a vital role in the success of the services offered by front office employees, who face increasing difficulties in meeting customer requests. Whereas high-quality CEEX during service mostly produces positive results, low-quality CEEX can have negative consequences by affecting customer purchasing decisions and reducing overall satisfaction (Groth & Grandey, 2012).

There are several differences between LMX and CEEX. First, front office employees' exchange relationships with customers are shorter than those with their leaders and colleagues since customers are constantly changing. This makes the customer-employee relationship unstable (Sierra & McQuitty, 2005). Second, leaders can influence their employees through their decisions and behavior. This results in a difference in employee behaviors towards their managers, with whom they can establish long-term relationships, and towards customers, with whom they have an unstable relationship.

It may be not enough for employees to purely perform the tasks specified in their job descriptions to meet the needs and requests of customers. In this case, employees may need to engage om extra-role behaviors towards customers to ensure customer satisfaction. These are also known as organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), defined as employee behaviors that managers want but cannot oblige their employees to perform, and cannot guarantee that they will be able to reward beyond showing their appreciation (Organ, 1997). OCBs have two dimensions: organizational citizenship behavior – individual (OCB-I), and organizational (OCB-O). OCB-I refers to behaviors that directly impact employees because they receive special attention and hence only indirectly benefit the organization, whereas OCB-O refers to behaviors that directly benefit the organization (Williams & Anderson, 1991). OCB-I is regarded as extra-role performance (Foroutan et al., 2018), whereas OCBs are extra-role helping behaviors (Kang et al., 2020). Pro-social service behaviors include only voluntary extra-role behaviors that go beyond job descriptions to improve service delivery, rather than merely the role-prescribed behaviors specified in job descriptions. These behaviors are important to ensuring the performance of front office employees in terms of service delivery as they reflect the additional effort made by employees to serve customers (Chan et al., 2017), which increases customer perceptions of service quality perception (Castro et al., 2004). Such behaviors strongly affect customer loyalty because they increase customer satisfaction (Yi & Gong, 2008). Customer-oriented employees allow pro-social behaviors to emerge that benefit customers, thereby improving the organization's overall success (Kim & Qu, 2020b).

Hotel customers are mostly frequently in contact with the front office. In response, front office employees must work hard and take the initiative while still obeying the relevant rules to solve problems and show their dedication (Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996). Employees need to have strong emotional management skills to ensure their own emotional stability and control in order to perform well in the face of customer demands or complaints, and when the requested service is not specified in their job description (Tsai, 2009). The dedication shown by employees has a significant positive impact on COERBs, which in turn affects the success of the business (Ghlichlee & Bayat, 2021). By voluntarily engaging with helpful behaviors, employees improve their performance and improve relations with co-workers and managers (Lyons & Bandura, 2016).

A key factor is dedication, which enables employees to cope with difficulties and to volunteer for extra duties beyond those specified in their job descriptions (Govender & Parumasur, 2010; Liu et al., 2013; Lodahl & Kejner, 1965). However, dedication also depends on employees' workplace social relationships. Therefore, LMX and CEEX can both have an impact on dedication, thereby motivating them to perform additional customer-oriented tasks, or indeed otherwise.

There is an increasing amount of research into LMX and employee behavior (Ahmed et al., 2014; Khan & Malik, 2017; Kang et al., 2012; Tang & Naumann, 2015) and CEEX and employee behavior (Chandni & Rahman, 2020; Chen, 2016; Li & Hsu, 2016). However, to date, few empirical studies have investigated the effects of LMX and CEEX on COERB as mediated by job dedication. The present study aims to fill this gap by examining whether high-quality relationships between front office employees and leaders and customers increase employee job dedication, and thereby promote COERB. The study has five specific aims: (1) to examine the effects of LMX and CEEX on job dedication; (2) to test the effects of LMX and CEEX on COERB; (3) to test the effects of job dedication on COERB; (4) to test the mediation effect of job dedication on the relationship between LMX and COERB; and (5) to test the mediation effect of job dedication on the relationship between CEEX and COERB.

Given these five aims, this study is expected to make three contributions to the literature. First, it examines the relationship between LMX and employee COERBs. Second, it examines the interaction between front office employees and customers in Turkey to show how employees' customer-oriented behaviors affect their extra-role behaviors. Third, it examines the potential mediating effects of job dedication on the relationships between LMX and COERBs, and CEEX and COERBs.

Theoretical framework and hypotheses

Drawing on the basic assumptions of SET and LMX theory, this study explains the relationship between LMX, CEEX, and COERBs. The focus of LMX theory is the individual dynamic relationships between leaders and followers. This theory explains how the leaders effect their followers' behaviors and attitudes (Akgündüz, 2021). According to LMX theory, followers feel obliged to develop high-quality exchange relationships with their leaders. The relationship created through the exchanges between leaders and followers is also the basis of social exchange. If leaders support, trust, respect, and protect the interests of their followers, then these followers are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards their leaders and the organization. In light of SET and LMX theory, this study examines how LMX and CEEX determine employees' COERBs; it also examines how employee job dedication mediates this effect. The following section explains the direct and mediation relationships of the study constructs. As can be seen Figure 1, this study predicts that LMX and CEEX both have a direct impact on job dedication. In turn, job dedication boosts employees' COERBs. In this association, job dedication mediates the relationships between LMX and COERB, and between CEEX and COERB.

LMX, job dedication, and customer-oriented extra-role behaviors

High-quality LMX transforms organizations into more productive work environments by providing employees with increased development opportunities and social support. These effective work environments support job dedication and job performance. Low-quality LMX is associated with economic changes. If employees think that their work is not being rewarded, this will result in a low LMX perception. High-quality LMX depends on trust, mutual obligations, and mutual respect, resulting in affective bonds (Breevaart et al., 2015). Leaders can establish different relationships with different

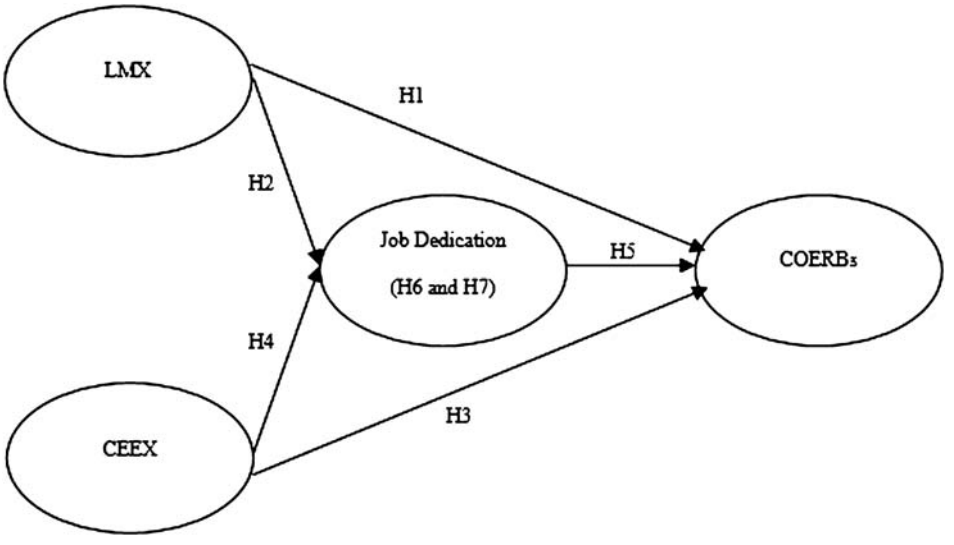


Figure 1. The conceptual framework.

employees. Employees who have a close relationship with their managers are likely to make greater financial and intangible gains (Harris et al., 2014). Considering the limited resources and promotion opportunities in organizations, LMX levels can be easily identified based on the gains made by different employees in a given work environment (Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007).

LMX is based on SET from a mutuality perspective. Mutuality suggests that the actions of each side in a relationship depend on the previous actions of the other (i.e. good deeds are exchanged for good, and bad for bad) (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). If managers protect the interests of their employees, the organization is more likely to gain good results. Positive employee-manager relationships encourage positive organizational and effective working behaviors (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Malhotra et al., 2020).

According to SET, the behaviors of people who depend on each other determine the obligations of each party (Blau, 1964). Rather than bargain, exchange partners rely on discretion to decide whether, how, and when to recompense each other's favors (Hom et al., 2009). Thus, employees who benefit from their organization and think that they are obliged to pay something back will feel like they owe something to the other party (Junghoon & Chihyung, 2016). Employees who establish high-quality relationships with their managers show high levels of job dedication (Garg & Dhar, 2017; Junghoon & Chihyung, 2016; Radstaak & Hennes, 2017). In other words, the quality of the reciprocal leader-employee relationship determines whether job dedication passes from leaders to employees.

LMX theory, which explains the quality of the relationship between an employee and a manager, explains employees' extra-role behavior (Kim et al., 2010). Extra-role behaviors include proactive activities beyond employees' formal duties, such as solving co-workers' and customers' problems, abiding by organizational rules and regulations, showing an interest in organizational activities, and contributing to organizational well-being through constructive suggestions (Gupta & Sharma, 2018). High-quality LMX motivates

employees to transform their personal attitudes and behaviors to benefit their organization instead of merely motivating them to enhance their job performance (Baek et al., 2018).

Front office employees tend to have closer relations with managers and colleagues than personnel in other departments (Garg & Dhar, 2016). A quality working relationship, characterized by mutual respect and trust, increases the willingness of employees to offer extra-role behaviors (Luo et al., 2014). SET assumes that employees cooperate with each other for their mutual interest. As long as employees make gains, they care about their exchange relations with their leaders and are motivated to continue the exchange relationship (Akgündüz, 2020). In addition, high-quality LMX makes followers think that they should be rewarded for the positive behaviors they see from their leaders, which leads them to engaging in extra-role behaviors (Wang, 2014). High-quality LMX also motivates followers to show gratitude for the positive transformation in their leaders' behaviors by benefiting both their co-workers and the organization. This drastically increases followers' level of care for and trust in their leaders (Cha & Borchgrevink, 2018; Testa, 2002). In short, high-quality LMX increases employees' job performance and dedication (Kang et al., 2012; Sekiguchi et al., 2008). This leads to the following two hypotheses:

H1. High-quality LMX is positively related to front office employees' customer-oriented extra-role behavior.

H2. High-quality LMX is positively related to front office employees' job dedication.

CEEX, job dedication, and customer-oriented extra-role behavior

CEEX has become crucial in recent years, along with hotel employees' understanding of service delivery. Hotel customers actively participate in the service delivered and share their requests and views with employees (Chen, 2016). CEEX is a mutually beneficial relationship created by emotional interaction and/or information exchange (Ma & Qu, 2011). Employees who have good relations with their managers feel obliged to act positively towards customers, whether for their managers or the business (Garg & Dhar, 2016). From the perspective of SET, if front office managers are kind and respectful to their employees, the latter will, in turn, tend to show COERBs (Cho & Johanson, 2008). That is, high-quality CEEX is expected to encourage employees to meet customer needs through new actions by evoking positive emotions, such as gratitude to customers (Kim & Qu, 2020a).

Customer-employee interactions are formed by three components: information exchange, solidarity, and harmonization. In a service encounter, the information exchange component relates to the mutual prior notification of employee and customer about specific issues that may affect the service process and its results. The solidarity component means that both sides expect the relationship to continue for a long time, so both parties should act together to their mutual benefit. The harmonization component relates to mutual trust in the relationship and the ability to resolve conflicts (Keith et al., 2004). If CEEX is strong (specifically, the solidarity and harmonization components), then employees are more likely to act in a more innovative manner (Li & Hsu, 2016).

SET is based on economic principles in that the exchange relationship is assumed to emerge and develop depending on costs and rewards or gains (Homans, 1961). These rewards or gains may be economic or social. Research suggests that both customers and employees perceive a certain level of mutual responsibility during the social exchange process (Kim & Qu, 2020a). The theory argues that individuals choose to behave in a certain way depending on a cost-effect analysis of their behaviors. If perceived gains outweigh costs, then individuals perform the behavior; otherwise, they do not (Li & Hsu, 2018). Accordingly, employees perform their best behavior in the exchange relationship with customers when they stand to make future gains (Muldoon et al., 2017). When front office employees believe that they can make valuable social and/or economic gains in their exchange relationships with customers, they perform extra-role behaviors to ensure customer satisfaction (Dalgic & Akgunduz, 2020). Therefore, front office employees are expected to go beyond their job definitions to pay back what they receive from customers. Social exchanges also affect the emotions, thoughts, and behaviors of employees (Lawler, 2001).

CEEX may increase employees' motivation and inspire them to show innovative attitudes (Ma & Qu, 2011). SET argues that if a front office employee achieves the economic and social gains they expect from their interaction with the customer, this interaction will increase their motivation (Blau, 1964), which will result in increased work commitment. Employees who are supported by customers are more likely to perform service-oriented behaviors, which in turn enables customers to develop a more positive outlook and gain greater satisfaction (Wang et al., 2020; Zimmermann et al., 2011). This leads to the following hypotheses:

H3. CEEX is positively related to front office employees' customer-oriented extra-role behaviors.

H4. CEEX is positively related to front office employees' job dedication.

Job dedication and customer-oriented extra-role behavior

Job dedication is the strong desire to be involved in one's job, attribute meaning to one's work, and feel enthusiastic and proud and be inspired and challenged by it. Dedication focuses on the work performed in a job and represents a willingness to dedicate physical, cognitive, and emotional resources to the work (Jankingthong & Rurkkhum, 2012). Job dedication also involves behaviors like self-discipline and commitment that increase the time and effort spent on the job (Grant, 2008). Job dedication also stimulates positive emotions that motivate behaviors like innovation and creativity (Islam & Tariq, 2018). Dedication implies strong engagement, going one step beyond the normal level of identification. It also means that employees voluntarily perform extra-role behaviors to successfully complete their duties (Harzer & Ruch, 2014). Dedicated employees do not avoid challenging tasks; rather, they voluntarily perform tasks that are not part of their job descriptions (Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996).

Job dedication involves self-disciplined behavior, such as work engagement, obeying the rules, working hard, taking the initiative, and solving workplace problems (Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996). These are particularly important to ensure that tasks are successfully performed even if they are not part of an employee's job description so that organizations

can run effectively (Hall & Ferris, 2011). As employees' commitment to work increases, their performance, experience, and knowledge also increase (Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996). Job dedication also ensures a high level of physical and mental resilience among employees and encourages an enthusiastic, fully concentrated, and engrossed state of mind (Xie & Yang, 2021). Job dedication has a strong positive relationship with work functionality, which includes duties beyond formal ones. The higher employees' job dedication is, the better the appreciation they receive for their work performance (Demerouti et al., 2015). Therefore, the job dedication of front office employees is important to maximize service quality in the hotel business. A committed front office employee is willing to commit to extra service performance to protect the interests of the business and ensure customer satisfaction (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2009). In addition, high job dedication also encourages COERBs (Buil et al., 2016). This leads to the following hypothesis:

H5. Employees' job dedication is positively related to front office employees' customer-oriented extra-role behaviors.

Job dedication as a mediator

The above-mentioned relationships imply that job dedication mediates the association between LMX and COERB, and CEEX and COERB. As explained previously, there is a positive relation between LMX and COERB (Garg & Dhar, 2016; Lee et al., 2012; Wang, 2014), and between CEEX and COERB (Ma & Qu, 2011; Ma et al., 2020). LMX theory and SET offer explanations as to why leaders and customers can increase employees' job dedication and COERBs.

According to LMX theory and SET, followers feel obliged to reciprocate interactions to maintain any high-quality social exchange they might have with both leaders and customers (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). For instance, Kim and Qu (2020a) found a positive relationship between LMX and employees' obligation to their organization, and between obligation and extra-role customer service (Lyons & Bandura, 2016). Thus, LMX increases extra-role customer service. As the quality of LMX increases, both role-prescribed behaviors and extra-role customer behaviors are likely to occur. Moreover, LMX has a greater impact on extra-role behaviors than on role-prescribed behaviors (Kang et al., 2012).

Employees who have a higher level of social exchange with customers tend to engage in more extra-role behaviors (Kim & Qu, 2020b). Employees are more likely to receive gratitude from customers after developing a more positive social exchange relationship with them. The relationship between customer-employee exchange and gratitude encourages employees to exhibit positive social behaviors (Kim & Qu, 2020a). Front office employees who think that their leaders pay attention to their benefits exhibit COERBs and experience positive emotional-motivational behaviors in the workplace, such as job dedication. Accordingly, they engage in behaviors that can benefit the business, whether directly or indirectly (Sulea et al., 2012). Employees' job dedication affects organizational success (Ghlichlee & Bayat, 2021).

In terms of SET, employees develop more job dedication when they perceive a positive relationship with their leaders and customers (Breevaart et al., 2015; Johnson et al., 2017; Saks, 2006). Correspondingly, depending on local human resources management practices, employees tend to show extra-role behaviors to their organization in response to the organizational support they receive (Foroutan et al., 2018). Extra-role behaviors

occur in two different ways. The first is interpersonal facilitation, by helping colleagues perform their duties after completing their own. The second is job dedication behaviors involving voluntary participation in various groups within the business (Miller & Gallagher, 2016). Job dedication may also set a benchmark to predict voluntary helpful behavior of employees. Thus, high-quality interactions based on trust and respect between manager and employees, and between customer and employee, increase employees job dedication, which in turn increases employees' COERBs. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H6. Job dedication mediates the relationship between LMX and employees' customer-oriented extra-role behaviors.

H7. Job dedication mediates the relationship between CEEX and employees' customer-oriented extra-role behaviors.

Method

Sample and data

This research focused on front office employees because of their extensive interactions with both their leaders and hotel customers. The universe of the research was eight 4-star and eleven 5-star hotel businesses affiliated with the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism and operating in İzmir province in Turkey. Since the turnover rate of city hotels in İzmir is lower than that for resort hotels (Demir et al., 2007), data were collected from front office employees located in İzmir city center. Although the exact number of front office employees in such hotels is not accurately known, the total size of the research universe was 1258 participants, as based upon the following considerations: first, the average number of staff per room (0.76 staff per room in 4-star hotels, 1.18 staff per room in 5-star hotels) (Tourism Ministry, 1989); and second, the average ratio of front office employees to total staff numbers (10.3%) (Olalı & Korzay, 1993). Quota sampling was used: the participating hotels were categorized by total room capacity and each category was adequately represented within the sampling.

We first contacted the human resources departments of the hotels to request their support and explain the purposes and scope of the research. Five 4-star and six 5-star hotel businesses supported the research and provided the necessary resources to meet hotel staff (such as room allocations and staff guidance). The researchers visited the hotels on different days and hours between December 2018 and March 2019 to administer the questionnaire to employees working on different shifts. Out of 180 valid questionnaires returned by the participants, 15 diverged in the multiple normal distribution test and the analysis of deviation, both of which were conducted to meet the precondition of normalcy. These questionnaires were removed from the data set, so the final data analysis was conducted on 165 questionnaires.

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the sampled employees.

Measures

Front office workers' employee-customer exchange experiences were measured using the seven-item CEEX Scale developed by Keith et al. (2004). A sample item is 'I expend

Table 1. Demographic profile.

Years of Experience	*n*	%	Education Level	*n*	%	Marital Status	*n*	%
5 years and below	50	31	Primary	1	1	Married	57	36
6–10 years	56	34	Secondary	4	2	Single	101	64
11 years and above	58	35	High School	29	18	Years of experience at hotel		
Age			Associate degree	45	27	5 years and below	115	73
25 years and below	33	20	Bachelor and/or Postgraduate degrees	86	52	6 years and above	43	27
26–35	99	61	*Gender*					
36 years and above	31	19	Female	58	35			
			Male	107	65			

considerable energy to come up with creative ways to assist customers facing problems'. Respondents indicate the extent of their agreement with each statement on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (I strongly disagree) to 5 (I strongly agree). The CEEX Scale has been widely applied to employee-customer exchange relationships in the service sector (Ma & Qu, 2011). The scale was adapted to Turkish using three different bilingual experts to ensure the quality of the resultant translation. The reliability of the scale is measured through the alpha reliability coefficient. The reliability value for the original CEEX Scale was .87, which demonstrates internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978).

Front-office employees' extra-role behaviors were measured via a five-item scale developed by Lee et al. (2006). A sample item is 'I voluntarily assist customers even if it means going beyond job requirements'. Respondents indicate their level of agreement on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The scale was adapted to Turkish, using three different bilingual experts to ensure the quality of the resultant translation. The reliability estimated for the translated scale using the alpha coefficient was 0.88, thus indicating internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978).

Front office workers' job dedication was measured with the seven-item Job Dedication Scale developed by Lee et al. (2016). A sample item is 'I put in extra hours to get work done to meet deadlines'. Respondents rate their agreement with each item on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale was adapted to Turkish by Dalgıç and Akgündüz (2019). The reliability estimated for the translated scale using the alpha coefficient was .907, which indicates internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978).

The relationship between employees and their managers was measured with the seven-item LMX Scale developed by Scandura and Graen (1984). A sample item is 'My supervisor would probably say that my work goals and his/hers are the same'. Respondents indicate their level of agreement with each item using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale was adapted to Turkish by Özkutlu et al. (2008). The reliability estimated for the scale using the alpha coefficient was .912, which indicates internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978).

Drawing on guidelines by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test convergent and discriminant validities using SPSS Amos. SPSS was used to complete normal distribution and Chi-squared tests. The hypotheses were examined via serial mediation analysis. Hayes Model 4 was used to test the mediation analysis with CEEX and LMX as predictor variables, job dedication as the intervening variable, and COERB as the outcome variable. We also analyzed the mediation effects with the bootstrapping technique with 95% confidence intervals, as recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2004).

Results

Measurement results

A four-factor model was tested using the two-step approach suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). In the first stage, the fit of the measurement model was tested using CFA. In the first CFA, five items were excluded from the analysis because their factor loadings were below 0.50, which Hair et al. (2014) recommend as the cut-off point: one item in the COERBs scale and LMX scale, and two items each in the CEEX scale and job dedication scale. Previous studies have shown that the items excluded from the job dedication scale had factor loadings below 0.50 (Dalgic & Akgunduz, 2020) while the item excluded from the LMX scale was an overlapping item (Göksel & Ekmekçioğlu, 2016), and the items excluded from the customer-oriented extra-role scale had factor loadings below 0.50 (Kanten & Kanten, 2019); hence, they were removed from the analysis.

The CFA produced the following test results: Chi-squared/df = 2.20 (df = 164), *p*-value = 0.000; RMSEA = 0.084; CFI = 0.96; NFI = 0.93; GFI = 0.82; and SRMR = 0.059. Table 2 presents the standardized factor loadings, *t*-values, average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), maximum shared variance (MSV), average shared square variance (ASV), and alpha values for the observed and implicit variables in the model.

For construct validity, the AVE values of the latent variables should be greater than 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This condition was achieved by all the latent variables in the model. For discrimination validity, the square roots of the AVEs of the latent variables should be greater than their correlation coefficients with other latent variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As seen in Table 3, all square roots of the AVEs of the latent variables were greater than the correlation coefficients with other latent variables. These values demonstrate the structure validity and discrimination validity of the model. All variables had convergent validity as the CR and AVE for all factors were greater than 0.70 and 0.50, respectively. Discriminant validity was achieved as AVE was greater than MSV and ASV in all cases. Finally, all VIF values were less than 2, which shows that there was no collinearity problem in the data (Hair et al., 2014).

Common method bias (CMB)

CMB was determined via two methods, Harman's single factor and the common latent factor (CLF), to determine if there was bias in the dataset from collecting data using the same method**.** As Podsakoff et al. (2003) note, a common variance problem may arise when all variables are grouped under a single factor or when the first factor explains a significant part of the total variance. In this study, the factor analysis included 20 items grouped under four factors, with the first factor explaining 38.8% of the total variance. A CLF was also used to test for CMB. The procedure included adding a common latent variable CFA model in SPSS Amos. The differences between the estimated weight of the models with and without CLF were compared. A large difference (greater than 0.20) indicates that the response is biased (see Table 4). However, the results of both the Harman single factor test and CLF showed that there was no common method variance problem in our data.

Table 2. CFA results.

Latent/Observed Variables	SFL	*t*-Value	AVE	CR/ α	MSV	ASV
Customer-Employee Exchange			*0.548*	*.876/ .877*	*.144*	*.108*
I am assisting co-workers to deliver high-quality customer oriented services.	0.83	12.75				
To serve my customers, I volunteer for things that are not required.	0.81	12.24				
I make innovative suggestions to improve customer service.	0.87	13.65				
I expend considerable energy to come up with creative ways to assist customers facing problems.	0.56	7.49				
I exchange ideas with colleagues on how to improve customer service.	0.70	9.92				
I deal restlessly with customer problems until they are resolved.	0.62	8.42				
Leader-Members Exchange			*0.651*	*.917/ .913*	*.462*	*.254*
I have enough confidence in my supervisor that I would stand up for my supervisor's decisions if my supervisor was not present to do so.	0.76	10.34				
I feel close to my supervisor.	0.92	12.33				
My supervisor understands my job needs.	0.87	14.41				
My supervisor recognizes my potential.	0.84	11.90				
My supervisor would probably say that my work goals and his/hers are the same.	0.74	13.42				
Regardless of how much authority my supervisor has, my supervisor would use his/her power to help me solve problems at work.	0.69	10.64				
Job Dedication			*0.686*	*.916/ .915*	*.462*	*.254*
I put in extra hours to get work done to meet deadlines.	0.76	11.21				
I exercise personal discipline and self-control.	0.92	15.09				
I work harder than necessary.	0.87	13.88				
I persist in overcoming obstacles to complete a task.	0.84	13.03				
I enjoy challenging tasks at work.	0.74	10.91				
Customer-Oriented Extra Role Behaviors			*0.674*	*.858/ .844*	*.240*	*.188*
I voluntarily assist customers even if it means going beyond the job requirements.	0.62	8.53				
I help customers with problems beyond what is expected or required.	0.92	14.37				
I often go above and beyond the call of duty when serving customers.	0.89	13.57				

SFL = Standardized factor loading; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; CR = Composite Reliability
MSV = Maximum Shared Variance; ASV = Average Shared Square Variance

Table 3. Correlations, means, standard deviations, and AVE.

	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1	CEEX	4.3267	.58559	**(.74)**			
2	COERBs	4.2015	.63942	.32**	**(.821)**		
3	Job dedication	3.9801	.83625	.38**	.49**	**(.829)**	
4	LMX	3.8380	.84383	.28**	.47**	.68**	**(.807)**

Note: For discriminant validity, the square roots of AVE are presented in boldface in parentheses along the diagonal.
**$p<0.01$.

Test of the model and research hypotheses

We investigated the effects of CEEX and LMX on COERB via job dedication. Hence, a mediation model was tested using Hayes' process macro. Regarding the main effects, the findings supported H1-5. The relationship between LMX and COERB was significant and positive ($\beta = .2085$, $t = 3.1280$, $p < .0021$), which supports H1. The direct influence of LMX on job dedication was positive and significant ($\beta = .6300$, $t = 10.5135$, $p < .001$), which supports H2. The influence of CEEX on COERB was positive and significant (β

Table 4. Estimated values with CLF and without CLF.

Variables	Without CLF	With CLF	Differences
I am assisting co-workers to deliver high-quality customer oriented services.	0.807	0.807	0
To serve my customers, I volunteer for things that are not required.	0.812	0.819	−0.007
I make innovative suggestions to improve customer service.	0.852	0.856	−0.004
I expend considerable energy to come up with creative ways to assist customers facing problems.	0.604	0.6	0.004
I exchange ideas with colleagues on how to improve customer service.	0.706	0.7	0.006
I deal restlessly with customer problems until they are resolved.	0.641	0.635	0.006
I have enough confidence in my supervisor that I would stand up for my supervisor's decisions if my supervisor was not present to do so.	0.755	0.755	0
I feel close to my supervisor.	0.917	0.916	0.001
My supervisor understands my job needs.	0.869	0.869	0
My supervisor recognizes my potential.	0.784	0.785	−0.001
My supervisor would probably say that my work goals and his/hers are the same.	0.743	0.744	−0.001
Regardless of how much authority my supervisor has, my supervisor would use his/her power to help me solve problems at work.	0.788	0.815	−0.027
I put in extra hours to get work done to meet deadlines.	0.81	0.795	0.015
I exercise personal discipline and self-control.	0.889	0.877	0.012
I work harder than necessary.	0.75	0.76	−0.01
I persist in overcoming obstacles to complete a task.	0.846	0.866	−0.02
I enjoy challenging tasks at work.	0.687	0.707	−0.02
I voluntarily assist customers even if it means going beyond the job requirements.	0.67	0.667	0.003
I help customers with problems beyond what is expected or required.	0.907	0.91	−0.003
I often go above and beyond the call of duty when serving customers.	0.871	0.868	0.003

= .2114, $t = 2.6696$, $p < .0084$), which supports H3. The direct influence of CEEX on job dedication was positive and significant ($\beta = .4719$, $t = 4.4701$, $p < .001$), which supports H4. Finally, the relationship between job dedication and COERB was significant and positive ($\beta = .2995$, $t = 5.4008$, $p < .001$), which supports H5.

Regarding indirect effects, LMX indirectly influenced COERB through job dedication (β = .1352) since the lower and upper levels of the 95% confidence interval did not include zero (lower-level CI = .0570; upper-level CI = .2366). Therefore, H6 was supported. Similarly, CEEX indirectly influenced COERB through job dedication ($\beta = .1413$) since the lower and upper levels of the 95% confidence interval did not include zero (lower-level CI = .0797; upper-level CI = .2187). Therefore, H7 was supported.

H6: The indirect effect of LMX on COERBs through Job Dedication			
LMX	JD	COERBs	0.1352 (0.0456)
Percentile 95% confidence intervals (Lower bound – Upper bound)			0.570–0.2366
H7: The indirect effect of CEEX on COERBs through Job Dedication			
CEEX	JD	COERBs	0.1413 (0.0361)
Percentile 95% confidence intervals (Lower bound – Upper bound)			0.0797–0.2187

From the explained variance of each construct in the modified model in Figure 2 and Table 5, the explained variances of the two endogenous variables were above 30%, with the explained variance for the COERB reaching 32% and employee job dedication reaching 33%. All R^2 values were greater than 0.3, which indicates that the model is significant (Chin, 1998). The significance of the explained variance as new variables were entered was tested by applying Cohen's f^2, which is calculated using the following formula: (R^2 full−R^2 reduced) / (1−R^2 full) (Selya et al., 2012). Values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 are considered small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively (Koo Moon & Kwon Choi, 2014). In

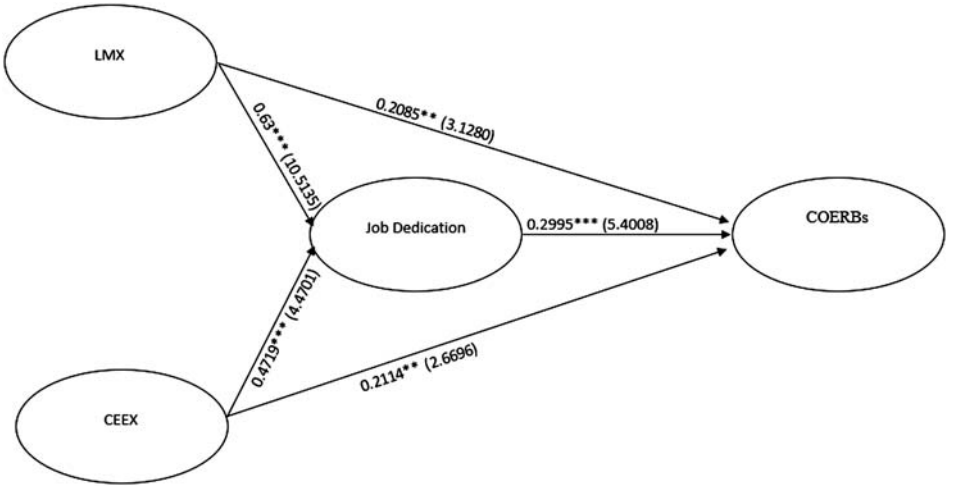


Figure 2. Structural model and path coefficients (*t*-values). Note: $n = 165$. Number of bootstrap samples for bias-corrected confidence intervals = 5.000. The value corresponding to the indirect effect of CEEX and LMX are estimated (β) with *t*-values in parenthesis. CEEX = Customer Employee Exchange; LMX = Leader-Member Exchange; JD = Job Dedication; COERBs = Customer-Oriented Extra-Role Behaviors. * $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$; *** $p<.001$.

Table 5. Main results for effect analyses.

Endogenous variables	Exogenous variables	β	R^2	SE	T	p	LLCI	ULCI	f^2
CEEX	JD	.4719	.1092	.1056	4.4701	.0000	.2634	.6804	0.1226
CEEX	CORB	.2114	.2410	.0792	2.6696	.0084	.0550	.3678	0.3175
JD		.2995		.0555	5.4008	.0000	.1900	.4090	
LMX	JD	.6300	.4041	.0599	10.5135	.0000	.5117	.7483	0.6781
LMX	COERB	.2085	.2528	.0667	3.1280	.0021	.0769	.3402	0.3383
JD		.2146		.0673	3.1906	.0017	.0818	.3475	

our study, Cohen's f^2 value was 0.46 for COERB and 0.49 for employee job dedication, indicating large effect sizes.

Chi-squared tests were used to analyze the relationship between age, gender, marital status, and educational level. Table 6 shows the Chi-squared value was 2.380 for the relationship between gender and education level. The *p*-value was .666, which was greater than 0.05; thus, gender and education level are independent of each other as variables. The Chi-squared value was 27.208 for the relationship between gender and years of experience. The *p*-value was .000, which was less than 0.01. Thus, gender and years of experience are independent of each other as variables. Finally, the Chi-squared value was 21.513 for the relationship between gender and age. The *p*-value was .000, which is less than .001. Thus, gender and age are two dependent variables.

Discussion

This study investigated the relationships between CEEX, LMX, and COERB, and the mediating effect of job dedication on these relationships. The results show that increased LMX

Table 6. Chi-square test results.

		Educational Level						Years of Experiences				Age			
		Primary	Secondary	High school	Associate degree	Bachelor and/or postgraduate degrees	Total	5 years and below	6–10 years	11 years and above	Total	25 years and below	26–35	36 years and above	Total
Gender	Female	1	2	10	18	31	62	32	13	12	57	23	25	10	58
	Male		3	22	30	58	113	18	43	46	107	10	74	21	105
Chi-Square Tests		Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2 Tailed)					Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2 Tailed)		Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2 Tailed)
	Pearson Chi-Square	2.380	4	.666				Pearson Chi-Square	27.08	2		Pearson Chi-Square	21.513	2	.000
	Likelihood Ratio	2.639	4	.620				Likelihood Ratio	26.695	2	.000	Likelihood Ratio	20.861	2	.000
	N of Valid Cases	165						N of Valid Cases	164		.000	N of Valid Cases	163		

and CEEX increase employees' job dedication and COERBs. Job dedication also mediates the direct effects of both LMX and CEEX on employees' COERBs. Li et al. (2012) and Kim et al. (2010) argue that social exchange is an important parameter in employees' relationships with both managers and customers. Drawing on SET, our study empirically confirmed the relationship between customer-employee and LMX, job dedication, and COERB.

Better LMX increases employees' job dedication and COERB. The quality of LMX is an important mediator of employees' behaviors (Radstaak & Hennes, 2017). High-quality exchanges between employees and their managers can increase employee motivation and encourage them to show COERBs. This study demonstrated that LMX is a critical variable in terms of its influence on job dedication and COERB in the hotel service industry.

This study also showed that better CEEXs increases employee job dedication and COERBs. Customers' exchanges with employees can increase the meaning and value the latter attach to their work, which encourages them to show extra COERBs. This study therefore supports the findings of Li and Hsu (2016), who demonstrated the positive effect of customer-employee exchange on employee behaviors. Our findings also support Lee et al. (2012), who reported that when employees feel valued in their exchange relationships with customers, they tend to display extra-role behaviors to increase customer satisfaction.

Finally, this study showed that job dedication mediates the effect of LMX and CEEX on COERBs. That is, if employees in service businesses can establish high-quality relationships with both their leaders and their customers, then their feelings and thoughts are likely to become more positive. This in turn may increase their motivation to meet customer demands and needs. Hence, based on SET (Blau, 1964), this study showed that high-quality leader-member and customer-employee exchanges promote job dedication, thereby enhancing COERBs.

Theoretical implications

The findings of this study conducted on a sample of front office employees supported previous findings about the service industry. The first is the CEEX and LMX model developed by Berg et al. (2017) and Tüzün and Devrani (2008) to explain employee attitudes towards customers. Second, this study has responded to Li and Hsu's (2016) suggestion that further research is essential to investigate the effects of customer-employee and leader-member exchange on employees. The present study thus fills a gap in the literature by providing empirical findings on the reciprocal relationships between customer-employee, leader-member, job dedication, and employees' COERBs.

High-quality social exchange can increase employees' job dedication and COERBs. A small number of studies have investigated how employees are affected by their relationships with their leaders and customers, and what behaviors these changes can cause. Although extra-role behaviors (Alparslan & Can, 2015; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2000) and job dedication (Dalgıç & Akgündüz, 2019; Liu et al., 2013) have been identified as outcome variables, the mediating effect of job dedication had not otherwise been explored. The present study therefore investigated this mediating effect on extra-role behaviors. Drawing on SET, the findings show that the job dedication of hotel business employees who are in contact with customers plays a fundamental mediating role on

the impact of employees' exchanges with managers and customers in their extra-role behavior. This research thus contributes to the current literature by revealing the relationship between hotel employees' exchanges with managers and customers, dedication, and extra-role behaviors. Specifically, it indicates that job dedication may be a key variable in determining how leader-employee-customer exchange affects employees' COERBs.

Practical implications

Our findings provide the opportunity to make many practical suggestions for hotel managers. The first is the importance of increasing the quality of manager-employee exchange in hotel businesses to increase employee commitment and COERBs. The hospitality industry can use a variety of human resources practices to increase this, thereby increasing employee job dedication and COERBs. For example, managers can develop closer relationships with their employees by reducing power distance, understanding their needs and potential, and ensuring that their employees trust themselves in the course of decision making. In addition, they should make their employees feel valued when addressing business goals and assignments, which can improve the quality of LMX. This in turn will increase the employees' job dedication, encouraging more COERBs. Strategically, special attention should be paid to ensuring that employees appointed as managers have both sufficient technical and human relations skills to ensure high-quality LMX. While technical skills can be identified by quantitative criteria, such as experience and educational status, human relations skills can be determined more accurately through observation beyond quantitative criteria. Therefore, manager appointments from outside the organization should take technical skills into consideration. Appointing managers from within the organization provides more information about the candidates' communication skills, which helps ensure high-quality LMX.

Our findings show that customer-employee exchange and job dedication are important factors through which to encourage COERBs. Hotel managers can therefore take the customer focus as a basis for expressing the values of the business to increase the importance that employees assign to customer-employee relations. This can provide a model for the relationships they should establish with their employees.

Within an organizational culture, values that should be shared by all employees include the importance of the customer, customer-employee interactions, and finding solutions to customer problems. In addition, effective employee interactions with customers can be encouraged by including these in performance evaluation criteria. Finally, the effects of training on employees' interactions with customers should not be overlooked. Training employees on communication with customers and problem-solving techniques can increase their success. These practices, which should be carried out by hotel managers, will increase the quality of customer-employee interactions, which will in turn increase job dedication and thereby promote customer-based extra-role behaviors.

Limitations and future research

This study has certain limitations. Firstly, the data were only collected from front office employees from five 4-star and six 5-star hotel businesses in İzmir province in Turkey, so it is difficult to generalize the findings. Future research could attempt to collect data

from other provinces such as Istanbul and Antalya in Turkey. Second, there may be response bias due to the use of self-report measures of leader and customer exchange, job dedication, and COERBs. Thirdly, because this study only focused on front office employees in hotel businesses, the results may not be applicable to other hotel departments and organizations. Therefore, it is important to investigate other front office employees. Future research may thus include categorical variables as control variables in the analysis. Finally, this study focused on how LMX and CEEX affect employees' COERBs through job dedication. Thus, it excluded other variables that may affect employees' behavior, such as employee advocacy, job embeddedness, and personality traits. Adding these variables to the research model in future studies could well provide a better explanation of additional COERBs.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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