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The association between servant leadership and lateness attitude: the mediation effects of career adaptability and job embeddedness

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Abstract
Underpinned by career construction theory and job embeddedness theory, the purpose of this study is to test the effect of servant leadership on lateness attitude through the mediation effects of career adaptability and job embeddedness. In this relation, career adaptability mediates the relationship between servant leadership and job embeddedness and job embeddedness mediates the relation between career adaptability and lateness attitude. Data was gathered from 193 employees in five-star hotels in North Cyprus. The findings prove that servant leaders can endorse career adaptability among front-line employees. Adaptable employees are more embedded in their organisations and they consequently display reduced lateness attitude. Implications for managers, study limitations, and future research directions are also discussed.

Keywords: servant leadership, career adaptability, job embeddedness, lateness attitude, hotel employees

Introduction.

In today's dynamic and competitive market, employees face anxiety, anger, dissatisfaction, and depression (Jensen *et al.*, 2013). It is well-documented that leaders can have a considerable impact to minimize the effects of these emotions at work (Hochschild 1979, 1983). Leaders need to apply the practices that can change values into actions, visions into realities, impediments into innovation, risks into rewards and create the environment in which individuals turn challenging opportunities into outstanding success (Kouzes & Posner, 2006).

In the hospitality sector, employees face numerous challenges at work and due to the nature of the job, and they have to handle extra pressures such as long and anti-social work hours, organisational politics, emotional dissonance, and work-family conflict (Karatepe *et al.*, 2014; Safavi & Bouzari, 2019). Therefore, leaders, in this sector, are among the important actors to create an ambiance that enable employees to deliver excellent customer service (Wu *et al.*, 2013; Brownell, 2010). Among various leadership styles, it is well-warranted that servant leadership is connected with the hospitality firms' mission (Brownell, 2010) in which leaders inspire and persuade their subordinates to perform better in the organisations (Koyuncu *et al.*, 2014). Servant leadership is a promising leadership style for hospitality settings and its positive implications for the tourism and hospitality sector have been debated and supported in numerous previous studies (Bouzari & Karatepe, 2017; Ilkhanizadeh & Karatepe, 2018; Qiu *et al.*, 2020; Safavi & Bouzari, 2020). More than 20% of Fortune magazine top 100 companies, including Starbucks, Southwest Airlines and Ritz Carlton Hotels have pursued guidance from the Greenleaf Center (http://www.greenleaf.org/) for servant leadership style (Parris & Peachey, 2013), which contributed to the rise in their sale since last few years.

Due to the demanding and dynamic work environment, leaders face a critical challenge to adapt employees in the organisations (Uhl-Biena & Arena, 2018). Career adaptability, as one of the most essential positive attitudes (Safavi & Karatepe, 2018) has been defined as "a psychological construct that denotes an individual's resources for coping with current and anticipated tasks, transitions, traumas in their occupational roles" (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012, p. 662). It has been conceptualized as a higher-order, hierarchical construct with several dimensions at the first-order level (Savickas, 1997). In combination, these dimensions reflect an integrative indicator of an employees' overall career adaptability (Zacher, 2014). Although an overview of the existing inquiries noticeably reveals the role of leaders to create adaptability (Chen & Chang, 2013, Martin, 2011, Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018; Zacher & Rosing, 2015), there is still a scantiness of empirical inquiry concerning the linkage between servant leadership and career adaptability in the case of hotel front-line employees.

According to a meta-analysis done by Rudolph, Lavigne, and Zacher (2017), individuals' career adaptability positively influences adaptation results. Hence, adaptable employees are motivated to stay and handle the challenges and difficulties related to their tasks. In such situation, managers should attempt to retain adaptable employees who can encounter challenges and provide better service to customers. Hence, managers should apply a retention strategy for these adaptable employees to stay in the organisation rather than finding new vocational opportunities. Job embeddedness, as a retention strategy, was posited as a construct composed of contextual and perceptual forces that bind people to the location, people, and issues at work (Yao *et al.*, 2004). It enables managers to keep talented employees and help them understand why individuals stay in their job rather than quit (Lee *et al.*, 2004).

Researchers conciliated that embedded individuals try to avoid withdrawal behaviours (Lee *et al.*, 2004; Li *et al.*, 2016; Peltokorpi *et al.*, 2015). Lateness attitude has been recognized as one of the most problematic withdrawal behaviours in the workplace (Bouzari & Karatepe, 2017). Employees' lateness at

work can have irrecoverable costs for the organisation since it reduces employees' productivity. Particularly, if the employee is a vital part of a team and the other members cannot complete the task without his/her participation, the loss of productivity is even more significant (DeLonzor, 2005). In such situation, managers need to put more and extra effort to rearrange unmet plans to achieve organisational goals and other employees have to work harder to compensate for late employee's duties (Blau, 1994; Foust *et al.*, 2006). It similarly has a negative impact on other employees in the same organisation since they need to bear the burden of co-workers' lateness (Elicker *et al.*, 2008). As the studies show, the estimated annual cost for employee lateness in the case of businesses in the United States (US) has been more than 3 billion US dollars (Berry *et al.*, 2012; DeLonzor, 2005). Similarly, as reported by the Independent, in 2020, employee lateness costs the United Kingdom economy 9 billion pound yearly (https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/staff-lateness-costs-the-economy-9-billion-every-year-8191289.html). Therefore, due to the mentioned tangible and intangible costs, inspecting influential factors on employee lateness attitude is encouraged in the current literature and organisations need to understand the factors that govern it (Elicker *et al.*, 2008).

Drawing upon career construction theory (Savikas, 2005) and job embeddedness theory (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001), this study endeavors to expand the knowledge regarding the effect of servant leadership, career adaptability, job embeddedness and lateness attitude. Conferring to career construction "individuals construct their careers by imposing meaning on their vocational behaviour and occupational experiences" (Savickas, 2005, p. 43); while according to job embeddedness theory employees with higher formal and informal connections with their organisations establish deeper social ties with others (Holtom *et al.*, 2006) and enjoy living in community with others.

This study is a response to recent calls and proposed gaps in the extant literature. First, since servant leadership is considered a prominent and persuasive leadership style for hospitality setting (Brownell, 2010; Huang *et al.*, 2016), Miao, Newman and Schwarz (2014) suggested investigating the impact of this leadership style on positive attitude among service employees. Bavik *et al.*, (2017) have also pinpointed the paucity of knowledge regarding the positive consequences of servant leadership in the hospitality context. Subsequently, this study tests the outcomes of servant leadership among hotel front-line staff and adds to the leadership literature by highlighting the importance of servant leadership in the tourism hospitality sector.

Second, a scrutiny of the present literature evidently indicates that our understanding of the antecedents and consequences of career adaptability in the case of hospitality setting is limited and scarce (Safavi & Karatepe, 2018; Safavi & Bouzari, 2019). Third, despite the evidence pertaining to the causes and effects of job embeddedness, a better insight into the probable antecedents and outcomes of job embeddedness is well-encouraged (Chan *et al.*, 2019, Singh, 2019).

Lastly, lateness attitude as a type of withdrawal activity is fundamentally pricey to organisations due to loss of late employee productivity, supervisors' lost time because of disciplining late employees and reorganizing work programs to meet productivity objectives (Foust *et al.*, 2006). Despite the mentioned tangible and intangible costs for the organisations, surprisingly, the lateness attitude has not been scrutinized as much as other withdrawal actions (Bouzari & Karatepe, 2017) like turnover intentions and absenteeism (Bufquin *et al.*, 2017; Pizam & Thornburg, 2000). This is not an exception in the case of hospitality. With this recognition, this study explores the factors that could impact such withdrawal behaviour among hotel frontline staff.

In a nutshell, grounded on the abovementioned propositions, this study is eager to contribute to the body of hospitality literature in various ways and provide hotel managers with implications about the application of servant leadership style in the hospitality setting. More precisely, the study examines the impact of (a) servant leadership on employee career adaptability, (b) career adaptability on job embeddedness, (c) job embeddedness on lateness attitude, (d) the mediation effect of career adaptability in the relationship between servant leadership and job embeddedness, and (e) the mediation effect of job embeddedness in the relationship between career adaptability and lateness attitude.

This research aims to address the following core research questions:
1. Does the application of servant leadership lead to an increased level of career adaptability among hotel front-line employees?
2. Is employee career adaptability related to the level of job embeddedness?
3. Do embedded employees have tendency to attend work on time?
4. Does the application of servant leadership ultimately lead to decreased level of work tardiness through elevated level of career adaptability and job embeddedness?

Literature review
Servant leadership and career adaptability
The term servant leadership was initially introduced by Robert Greenleaf in his seminal work. In his vision "The servant leader is a servant first … It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve … first. Then, conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead …" (p. 27). Servant leadership leads to various desirable individual and team level outcomes (Eva *et al.*, 2019; Wang *et al.*, 2019), as well as positive work-related outcomes in the case of hospitality setting (Bouzari & Karatepe, 2017; Ilkhanizadeh & Karatepe, 2018). The application of leadership is also evident in the airline industry (Smith *et al.*, 2018; Dewan, 2015; Pearce *et al.*, 2014). For instance, as a leading airline company, Southwest airlines has benefited from servant leadership style as a standard ability that enables practitioners and managers to motivate their employees to perform and engage better in their job, which resulted to cut costs and deliver decent customer service (Cote, 2018; Pearce *et al.*, 2014).

As reported by scholars, along with servant leadership, other promising leadership styles for the hospitality industry are authentic leadership (Jacques, *et al.*, 2015; Ling *et al.*, 2016), transformational leadership (Schneider & George, 2011; Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985) and ethical leadership (Brown *et al.*, 2005; Van Direndonck, 2011; Kim & Brymer, 2011). Authentic leadership is a leadership style that emphasizes on building the leader's rightfulness through truthful relationships with followers which value their input drew on an ethical base (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). According to Bass (1991), transformational leadership is a process of building commitment to organisational goals and then authorizing followers to achieve those goals and objectives. As operationalized by Brown *et al.* (2005), ethical leadership presents a leadership style that focuses on the importance of the direct participation of employees, building trust, and showing ethical behaviour. Despite several similarities and overlaps, servant leadership differs from the three mentioned leadership styles.

As reported by Ling, Liy and Wu (2016), one of the most salient characteristics of servant leadership that differentiates it from authentic leadership is the spirit of self-sacrifice which has a higher degree of moral virtue in servant leadership. Moreover, compared to authentic leadership, servant leadership designates broader scope and emphasizes responsibilities towards organisations, customers, society, and other stakeholders whereas authentic leadership mainly focuses on the self-development of leaders and followers (Ehrhart, 2004; Ling *et al.*, 2016; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2010). Additionally, as confirmed by

Geregory Stone, Russell, and Patterson (2004), the emphasis of the leader is the main and crucial point of difference between transformational leadership and servant leadership. To put it simply, as confirmed by Hoch, Bommer, Dulebohn and Wu (2018) servant leaders' principal focus is on their followers; whereas, transformational leaders primarily focus on organisational objectives and inspiring follower commitment toward those objectives. Lastly, according to Van Direndonck (2011), the key dissimilarity between ethical and servant leadership is that the main focus of ethical leadership is on the directive and normative behaviour, while servant leaders focus on the developmental feature of their subordinates.

Confirmed by Lee, Lyubovnikova, Tian and Knight (2020), servant leadership has predictive validity over other mentioned leadership approaches, and consequently, organisations should put more emphasis on applying this leadership style. Despite the massive work regarding servant leadership since its emergence, recent studies still accentuate the necessity for a better understanding of the effects of servant leadership among service workforces (Bouzari and Karatepe, 2017; Karatepe and Talebzadeh, 2016) with the focal focus in hospitality setting (Bavik *et al.*, 2017).

Confirmed by Van Dierendonck, Stam, Boersma, De Windt and Alkema (2014), servant leaders put too much effort to recognize the needs of all individual followers and satisfy them. The existence of servant leadership in organisations can increase employees' proactive customer service performance (Ye *et al.*, 2019), has an impact on their psychological capital (Bouzari & Karatepe, 2017), increases employees' level of customer-oriented organisational citizenship behaviours (Wu *et al.*, 2013; Shim *et al.*, 2016), boosts followers' work engagement (Van Dierendonck *et al.* 2014) and enhances unit performance and individual attitudes and behaviours (Liden *et al.*, 2014).

Since servant leadership is an indispensable style in the hospitality context (Brownell, 2010; Huang *et al.*, 2016), previous empirical inquiries examined the effect of servant leadership in tourism and hospitality settings. Wu *et al.* (2013) found that servant leadership positively influenced customer-oriented organisational citizenship behaviour in China. Karatepe and Talebzade (2016) showed that servant leaders were able to boost flight attendants' psychological capital in private airline companies. Bouzari and Karatepe (2017) similarly verified that servant leadership boosts psychological capital among hotel salespeople, in turn resulting in displaying an elevated level of positive organisational behaviour.

Grounded by career construction theory, this inquiry attempts to test the relationship between servant leadership and career adaptability. Career adaptability is comprised of competencies that permit individuals to successfully handle complicated problems or tasks during their careers (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) known as concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. According to Savickas and Porfeli (2012), an adaptable individual is the one who is "becoming concerned about the vocational future, taking control of trying to prepare for one's vocational future, displaying curiosity by exploring possible selves and future scenarios, and strengthening the confidence to pursue one's aspirations" (p. 663).

According to career construction theory, "individuals construct their careers by imposing meaning on their vocational behaviour and occupational experiences" (Savickas, 2005, p. 43). Accordingly, employees differ in terms of occupational characteristics (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Individuals need certain resources that assist them to adapt to the occupational changes and solve work-related difficulties (Savickas, 2005). Career construction theory contends that interpersonal relationships within the social environment predict career adaptability (Savickas, 2005). Career adaptability would help employees to create their vocational self-concepts (Safavi & Karatepe, 2017). However as argued by

Savickas and Porfeli (2012), depending on the different resources available in different industries, employee adaptability may change.

Propositions based on career construction theory has long been endorsing the importance of resources in the organisations that enable individuals to adapt to the vocational changes and coping with work-related concerns (Savikas & Porfeli, 2012). The application of career construction theory is witnessed in several studies (e.g., Ohme & Zacher, 2015; Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015; Uy, Chan *et al.*, 2015). For instance, conferring to the career construction theory, "individuals can enact change to improve their current circumstances" (Crant, 2000, p. 41), Tolentino *et al.* (2014) stated that proactive personality forecasts career adaptability. Safavi and Karatepe (2018) also posited that the application of high-performance work practices enables employees to boost career adaptability. In a similar approach, grounded by career construction theory, this study proposes that servant leadership is among the influential factors affecting and increasing the level of career adaptability among customer contact employees.

As a people-oriented leadership style (Ilkhanizadeh & Karatepe, 2018), servant leadership seems to make staff appreciate working for the organisation, follow their objectives and advance career adaptability. Employees who work under servant leaders' supervision have freedom and discretion and are motivated to present divergent views (Liden *et al.*, 2008). It looks as if that servant leaders are willing to create an environment that delegate authority to their followers, help them to thrive, display ethical behaviours, understand their needs and make them in priority and even create value for the ones who are outside the organisation (Ehrhart, 2004). In such vocational situation, employees attempt to make planning how to achieve their goals, take responsibility for their actions, look for more opportunities to advance as a person, and do their responsibilities in the best way possible. Consequently, it is proposed that:

Hypothesis 1: *Servant leaders are capable to boost the level of employee career adaptability.*

Career adaptability and job embeddedness
The literature demonstrated that the adaptable individuals show more creativity and extra-role performance (Safavi & Karatepe, 2018), lower level of job content plateau (Jiang *et al.*, 2018), persistence in their career (Amarnani *et al.*, 2018) and have more life satisfaction (Ginevra *et al.*, 2018). However, none of the studies examined the effect of career adaptability on job embeddedness which bears important implications for employee performance. Job embeddedness consists of on-the-job and off-the-job embeddedness (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001). Each of these forms of embeddedness is represented by three underlying facets. *Fit* denotes to "…an employee's perceived compatibility or comfort with an organisation and with his or her environment" (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001, p. 1105). *Link* is "…formal or informal connections between a person and institutions or other people", while *sacrifice* is defined as "…the perceived the cost of material or psychological benefits that may be forfeited by leaving a job" (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001, p. 1105).

Though created to predict job stability, scholars have predicted that job embeddedness has a significant impact on employee performance (Greene *et al.*, 2018). Specifically, greater job embeddedness should increase willingness to perform because highly embedded individuals have a better link, greater fit and sacrifice (Lee *et al.*, 2004). For example, in their study on the effects of job embeddedness on negative shocks, Burton, Holtom, Sablynski, Mitchell and Lee (2010) found that job embeddedness buffered the effect of thoughts of leaving associated with negative events, and help reduce the impact of negative shocks on performance.

Despite the majority of evidence specifying that job embeddedness has a favorable effect on employees' work behaviour, unexpectedly little is known about how organisations can stimulate greater embeddedness amongst employees (Tian *et al.*, 2016; William Lee *et al.*, 2014). To address this void, this study postulates that career adaptability is a predictor of job embeddedness. As such, career adaptability is considered as an important resource that enables employees to demonstrate an elevated level of job embeddedness. Employees high on career adaptability, due to higher levels of capability and psychosocial resources, are capable to manage work- and career-related demands Zacher (2015). More specifically, employees who think about what their future will be like, make a decision by themselves and take responsibility for their actions, explore their surroundings and try to learn new skills feel more attached to their organisations, are strongly attached to their organisations and cannot simply leave the organisation that they are working for. To sum things up, this inquiry recommends that employees with a higher level of career adaptability are more likely to be embedded in their works. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: *Employees with a higher level of career adaptability have a higher level of job embeddedness.*

Job embeddedness and lateness attitude
It is believed that job embeddedness is considered as a significant resource for individuals, since it leads to goal achievement, such as career development or income growth (Halbesleben *et al.*, 2014; Kiazad *et al.*, 2015). The bulk of empirical research has determined the impacts of job embeddedness in organisations. For instance, in a recent inquiry, Coetzer, Inma, Poisat, Redmond and Standing (2018) declared that job embeddedness significantly related to innovation behaviours by staff in organisations operating in various industries. It has also been verified that job embeddedness predicted employee turnover intentions in organisations. However, this research is the first to propose the positive effect of job embeddedness on lateness attitude. Lateness attitude, as a type of withdrawal behaviour in the workplace, has a detrimental impact on organisational and individual performance (Foust *et al.*, 2006). Employees' lateness at work can have irrecoverable costs for an organisation since it reduces employees' productivity. In such situation, managers need to put more and extra effort to rearrange unmet plans to achieve organisational goals and other employees have to work harder to compensate for late employee's duties (Blau, 1994; Foust *et al.*, 2006). It similarly has a negative impact on other employees in the same organisation.

Some studies investigated factors affecting lateness attitude in organisations. Using meta-analytic data, Berry *et al.* (2012) suggested that employee lateness moderately predicted other withdrawal behaviour such as absenteeism and turnover. In a recent inquiry, Karatepe and Kaviti (2016) showed that emotional exhaustion fully mediated the impact of organisation mission fulfilment on lateness attitude among hotel workers in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates. Ozturk and Karatepe (2017) reported that trust in the organisation has a direct effect on lateness attitude among hotel service workers in Russia. Although previous inquiries examined the association between job embeddedness and other withdrawal behaviours such as turnover intentions (e.g.: Coetzer *et al.*, 2017; Sender *et al.*, 2018), this study is the first to propose a direct and significant relationship between job embeddedness and lateness attitude.

Referring to job embeddedness theory, the relationship between job embeddedness and lateness attitude can be justified. Explicitly, highly embedded employees have connections with individuals and groups within the organisation. They are also involved in several duties and have pleasing feelings about their employment affiliation, and are cautious of losing some benefits in case of quitting their job

(Karatepe, 2016; Lee *et al.*, 2004). Job embeddedness does not only present a set of inspirations on an employee's decision to stay on the job (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006) but also it seems to act as a motivational driver that helps employees attend work on time.

One reasonable explanation of such attitude is that employees with a high level of job embeddedness are able to establish deeper social ties with other coworkers, attain better match between his/her values and that of organisational values and appreciate living in community with others (Al-Ghazali, 2020). With this recognition, highly embedded employees are likely to be motivated to attend work on time and spend more time with other colleagues, appreciate organisational values (e.g. punctuality) and perceive any lateness unacceptable; hence, they avoid lateness as much as possible. In view of that, the following hypothesis is developed:

Hypothesis 3: *Frontline employees with a higher level of job embeddedness have a lower level of lateness attitude.*

Career adaptability as a mediator
Career adaptability has been treated as a mediator in several investigations. For instance, in a recent empirical study, Safavi and Karatepe (2018) clearly attested that career adaptability mediated the relation between high-performance work practices and employee positive outcomes. The results emerging from another study suggested that career adaptability partially mediates the association between work social support and turnover intentions (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2017). Chong and Leong (2017) also revealed that career adaptability acted as a mediator construct. In another study, the authors suggested that career adaptability functioned as a significant mediator in the relations between professional identification, career variety, organisational support and human resource managers' strategic competence (Guan *et al.*, 2016).

Backed up by career construction theory, self-regulatory strengths facilitate managing challenges at work for employees (Maggiori *et al.*, 2013). Accompanied by servant leadership, employees would demonstrate positive job performance and response. For instance, servant leaders by emphasizing on followers rather than organisations and bringing the complete potential of the followers will help them to achieve their goals and get ready for the future (concern), make decisions on their own (control) and increase their confidence to overcome barriers (confidence). Such leaders also can boost the sense of curiosity related to employees' career opportunities (curiosity). Put differently, servant leaders are capable to increase the level of career adaptability among employees. In turn, employees with a higher level of career adaptability would have superior links and g*et al*lied to the job and organisation. More precisely, they would feel more attached and connected to the organisation. In line with the aforesaid discussion, the following hypothesis is suggested:

Hypothesis 4: *Career adaptability mediates the relationship between servant leadership and job embeddedness.*

Job embeddedness as a mediator
Although limited, job embeddedness as a mediator construct has been examined in several studies. As such, we may propose a study conducted by Lyu and Zhu (2019). They claimed that the association of workplace ostracism, affective commitment and intention to leave has been mediated by job embeddedness. In another empirical research, job embeddedness act as a mediator construct (Karatepe, 2016). Tian *et al.* (2016) also revealed that job embeddedness mediated the HRM-job performance

relationship. Referring to a study conducted by Sun, Zhao, Yang and Fan (2011), job embeddedness was treated as a partial mediator between psychological capital and job performance.

Since job embeddedness mediates the relation between occupational factors and withdrawal behaviours (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006; Thakur & Bhatnagar, 2017), the current study similarly proposed the mediating impact of job embeddedness in the relationship between career adaptability and lateness attitude as a type of withdrawal behaviour. Coupled with a high level of career adaptability, highly embedded employees would be less likely to be late at work. Employees with these resources are willing to have a contribution in the form of punctuality and attending work at the agreed or proper time. In a nutshell:

Hypothesis 5: Job embeddedness mediates the relationship between career adaptability and lateness attitude.

Methodology
Research model
Figure 1 presents the research model. The model shows the relationship between study constructs. In this study, career adaptability mediates the relationship between servant leadership and job embeddedness. Moreover, Job embeddedness mediates the relationship between career adaptability and lateness attitude.
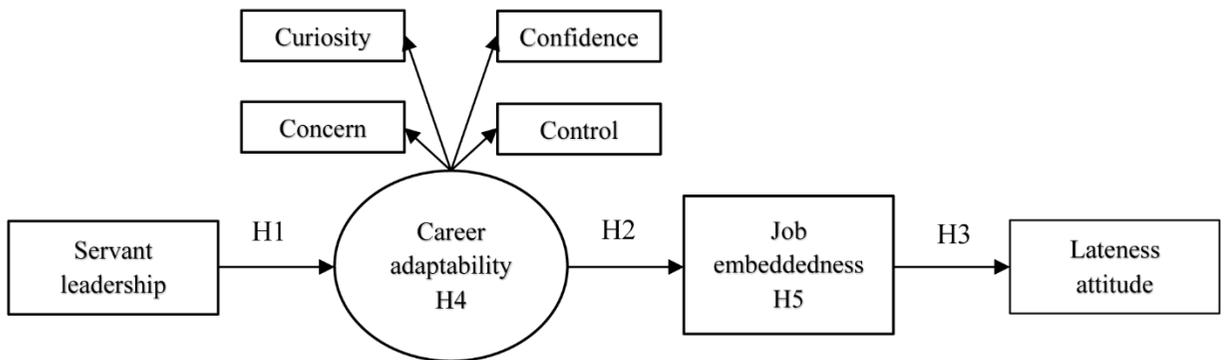

Figure. 1. *Research model*

Data collection
Judgmental sampling from customer-contact employees was used to reach data in Northern Cyprus. Judgmental sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that helps the researchers to determine the sample based on numerous criteria and is considered to characterize the population (Kothari, 2004). Explicitly, full-time employees in customer-contact positions (e.g., front desk agents, food servers, bell attendants, guest relation representatives, door attendants) were selected as the study sample. Such employees have close interactions with customers and help management deal with a number of problems emerging from challenging service encounters (e.g., customer complaints) (Karatepe & Uludag, 2008; Sun *et al.*, 2007). They also represent the organisation to customers and other parties (Robinson *et al.*, 2016).

North Cyprus which is a small island in the Mediterranean has shown substantial growth in the hotel and casino sectors in the last two decades (Katircioglu *et al.*, 2020). In fact, tourism is a fundamental

priority sector for economic development and the central generator of income for North Cyprus where millions of tourists visit this island every year (Katircioglu, 2010). North Cyprus has a population of 351,965 and 14,187 USD per capita income, attracted 1.734 million international tourist arrivals (4.9 times of its overall population), and generated 865 million USD net tourism revenues (almost 22.53% of GDP) in 2017 (State Planning Organisation (SPO), 2017).

The research team directly explained the aim and scope of the study to the hotel managers. Out of 21 five-star hotels, 16 hotel managers agreed to collaborate with the research team. The questionnaires were distributed by the immediate supervisors to the front-line employees during the coffee break with the presence of a member of the research team. To reduce common method bias, a two-week time lag was applied (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012). More specifically, servant leadership questionnaires were distributed in Time I, career adaptability questionnaires in Time II after two-week time lag, and the questionnaires related to job embeddedness and lateness attitude were distributed in the third phase (Time III). This method enabled the research team to decrease common method variance. The research team arranged a list that comprised the employees' names. To guarantee the matter of anonymity, a code was given to each employee. This method is in line with some other similar recent studies (e.g. Safavi & Karatepe, 2018; Bouzari & Karatepe, 2017; Safavi & Bouzari, 2019, 2020).

All three sets of questionnaires were arranged for the back-translation method suggested by McGorry (2000). Each questionnaire was prepared very carefully based on the back-translation technique. For example, the Time I questionnaire (servant leadership items) was first prepared in English and then translated into Turkish using the guidelines of the back-translation technique (e.g., Bouzari, Safavi & Vatankhah, 2020). This was also repeated for the Time II (career adaptability items) and Time III questions (job embeddedness and lateness atittude). A pilot study (five participants) was applied for the understandability of the items. Since employees did not have any difficulty to understand the translated items, there was no convincing reason to make changes in the questionnaire.

Measurement
Six items were used to measure servant leadership from Lytle, Hom and Mokwa (1998) which were rated on a five-point scale. Career adaptability items were taken from Savickas and Porfeli (2012). Answers to the indicators of career adaptability items were rated through a five-point scale via six items. Seven items from Crossley Bennett, Jex, and Burnfield (2007) were used to measure job embeddedness and rated on a seven-point scale. Three items from Foust *et al.*'s (2006) were used to measure lateness attitude, using seven-point.

Data analysis
The hypothesized relationships were assessed through structural equation modeling (SEM). The Sobel test was also employed for the mediation. Model fit was assessed using χ^2, *df*, CFI, PNFI, RMSEA and SRMR. The abovementioned analyses were conducted using LISREL 8.30 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996).

Sample characteristics
Two-hundred sixty questionnaires were distributed in Time I, two-hundred thirty-three questionnaires in Time II and two-hundred questionnaires in Time III. Entirely, one-hundred ninety-three questionnaires were received at the end of the data collection process. The response rate was 74.23%. Most of the participants aged between 38 to 47 (30.1%), female (58.0%), married (64.2%), and 58% had a college degree. Table 1 presents the sample characteristics.

Table 1. *Sample characteristics (n = 193)*

Demographic Variables	Frequency	(%)
Age		
18-27	53	27.4
28-37	48	24.8
38-47	58	30.1
48-57	34	17.7
Gender		
Male	81	42.0
Female	112	58.0
Marital status		
Married	123	64.2
Single or Divorce	70	35.8
Education		
Primary school	0	0
Secondary and high school	0	0
Vocational school	14	7.1
College graduate	111	58.0
Graduate degree	68	34.9

Results

As demonstrated in Table 2, all measures were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis. A two-step approach was applied to analyze the data (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The primary tactic comprises confirmatory factor analysis for the constructs' validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). To assure internal consistency, composite reliability was used for all items (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Due to the results, cross-loaded items have been discarded for further analysis. The results showed an agreeable fit (χ^2=634.73; df=608; χ^2/df=1.044; CFI=0.99; PNFI=0.86; RMSEA=0.015; SRMR=0.044). Furthermore, the KMO values was 0.821 which is the indication of sample adequacy (Cerny & Kaiser, 1977).

The results exposed that all items loaded on their respective constructs, ranging from 0.74 to 0.95. The average variances extracted (AVE) for each construct were above 0.50, which proved convergent validity. According to the guideline proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981), shared variances (Φ_2) between pairs of constructs were lower than the AVE of each construct which proves discriminant validity. Both composite reliability and coefficient alphas reached the accepted level. Consequently, all measures were reliable (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

The results reported in Table 3 disclosed that servant leadership was significantly correlated with concern (0.290[**]), control (0.248[**]) and lateness attitude (-0.202[**]). Concern was significantly correlated with control (0.259[**]), curiosity (0.183[*]) and job embeddedness (0.129[**]). Control was negatively correlated with lateness attitude (-0.265[**]). Curiosity was significantly correlated with confidence (0.276[**]) job embeddedness (0.248[**]) and lateness attitude (-0.296[**]). Confidence was correlated with job embeddedness (0.157[*]) and lateness attitude (-0.363[**]) and job embeddedness was correlated with lateness attitude (-0.172[*]). None of the control variables had a significant relationship with the study construct.

Table 2. *Confirmatory factor analysis*

Items	Standardized loading	Φ^2	t-value	AVE	CR
Servant Leadership		-0.22 – 0.31		0.78	0.94
Management constantly communicates the importance of service.	-		-		
Management regularly spends time "on the floor" with frontline employees.	0.88		15.50		
Management is constantly measuring service quality.	0.87		15.20		
Management shows that they care about service by constantly giving of themselves.	0.90		15.98		
Management provides resources, not just "lip service", to enhance employee ability to provide excellent service.	0.89		15.53		
Managers give personal input and leadership into creating quality service.	0.89		15.63		
Concern		-0.15 – 0.31		0.59	0.89
Thinking about what my future will be like	0.79		12.75		
Realizing that today's choices shape my future	0.77		12.26		
Preparing for the future	0.76		12.06		
Becoming aware of the educational and career choices that I must make	0.79		12.76		
Planning how to achieve my goals	0.77		12.19		
Concerned about my career	0.75		11.73		
Control		-0.29 – 0.32		0.62	0.87
Keeping upbeat	0.80		12.93		
Making decisions by myself	-		-		
Taking responsibility for my actions	0.78		12.45		
Sticking up for my beliefs	0.82		13.35		
Counting on myself	0.78		12.52		
Doing what is right for me	0.78		12.37		
Curiosity		-0.32 – 0.30		0.61	0.88
Exploring my surroundings	-		-		
Looking for opportunities to grow as a person	0.78		12.28		
Investigating options before making a choice	0.82		13.31		
Observing different ways of doing things	0.75		11.71		
Probing deeply into questions I have	0.79		12.51		
Becoming curious about new opportunities	0.79		12.67		
Confidence		-0.39 – 0.30		0.67	0.89
Performing tasks efficiently	0.77		12.47		
Taking care to do things well	0.81		13.30		
Learning new skills	0.82		13.64		
Working up to my ability	0.78		12.68		
Overcoming obstacles	0.82		13.58		
Solving problems	0.91		16.15		
Job Embeddedness		-0.19 – 0.27		0.81	0.96
I feel attached to this hotel	0.87		15.18		
It would be difficult for me to leave this hotel	0.90		16.16		
I am too caught up in this hotel to leave	0.87		15.17		
I feel tied to this hotel	0.90		16.11		
I simply could not leave the hotel that I work for	0.91		16.24		
It would be easy for me to leave this hotel	0.91		16.26		
I am tightly connected to this organisation	0.95		17.57		

Lateness Attitude			-0.39 – -0.15		0.81	0.93
Tardiness to work should be acceptable as long as the work gets finished. *(Reversed)*	0.89			15.62		
Occasional tardiness for work should be acceptable. *(Reversed)*	0.91			16.11		
I find it acceptable to be ten minutes late to work. *(Reversed)*	0.91			16.11		

Notes: Notes: All loadings are significant at the .01 level. Φ = Squared phi correlation. (–) Dropped during confirmatory factor analysis.
KMO measure of sampling adequacy is 0.88. Bartlett's test of sphericity is 5787.85 (p<0.01). The study variables account for 76.39 %of the variance.
Model fit statistics: χ^2=634.73; *df* =608; χ^2/df =1.044; CFI=0.99; PNFI=0.86; RMSEA=0.015; SRMR=0.044.

Table 3. *Means, standard deviations, and correlations of observed variables*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1.Servant Leadership	-											
2. Concern	0.290**	-										
3. Control	0.248**	0.259**	-									
4. Curiosity	0.021	0.183*	0.129	-								
5. Confidence	0.121	0.050	0.132	0.276**	-							
6. Job Embeddedness	0.022	0.219**	0.098	0.248**	0.157*	-						
7. Lateness Attitude	-0.202**	-0.134	0.265**	-0.296**	-0.363**	-0.172*	-					
8. Age	0.232	0.087	0.245	0.288	0.068	0.309	-0.265	-				
9. Gender	0.312	0.084	0.147	0.194	0.112	0.167	-0.174	0.098	-			
10. Marital Status	0.065	0.167	0.331	0.147	0.247	0.128	-0.165	0.127	0.265	-		
11. Education	0.241	0.249	0.169	0.132	0.301	0.209	-0.322	0.149	0.274	0.230	-	
12.Oragnizational Tenure	0.127	0.302	0.098	0.183	0.225	0.176	-0.248	0.217	0.218	0.198	0.088	-
Mean	3.92	3.58	3.53	3.52	3.61	4.56	2.85	2.65	3.36	3.78	2.65	2.98
Standard deviation	1.16	1.01	1.06	1.02	1.07	1.84	1.77	1.09	1.46	1.79	1.17	1.24
Cronbach's alpha	0.94	0.89	0.89	0.88	0.92	0.96	0.93	-	-	-	-	-

Note: Composite score was computed for each variable. *p<0.05, **p<0.01(two-tailed test).

Model Testing
The skewness values which proves normality was below 3.00 (Kline, 2011).
The second step was testing the direct and mediating effects via SEM (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996). Table 4 presents the results of comparing alternative models

Table 4: Results of model comparison

	χ^2	*df*	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	Model comparison
1. Hypothesized model (SL→CA; CA→JE; JE→LA)	232.20	149	-	-	
2. Alternative model I (SL→CA; CA→ JE, LA)	199.32	148	32.88	1	1 and 2
3. Alternative model II (SL→CA, JE, LA; CA→JE, LA)	195.89	146	36.31	3	1 and 3
4. Alternative model III (SL→CA, JE, LA)	213.34	148	18.86	1	1 and 4

Notes: SL=Servant leadership, CA = Career adaptability, JE = Job embeddedness, LA = Lateness attitude.
The hypothesized model appears to yield a better fit to the data than alternative models

The results grounded by the χ2 difference test pointed out the hypothesized model had the greatest fitting model (χ^2=232.20, *df*=149, χ^2/df=1.55; CFI=0.98; IFI=0.98; NFI=0.95; RMSEA=0.054; SRMR=0.097).

According to the results, servant leadership positively affects career adaptability (β_{21}=0.39, *t*=3.43), which supports hypothesis 1. Additionally, career adaptability has a positive influence on job embeddedness (β_{32}=0.37, *t*=3.04). Consequently, hypothesis 2 is also supported. Finally, job embeddedness has a negative effect on lateness attitude (β_{34}=-0.19, *t*=-2.52). Subsequently, hypothesis 3 is similarly supported.

Referring to the Sobel test results career adaptability fully mediates the relationship between servant leadership and job embeddedness (z-score=2.27). Additionally, job embeddedness fully mediates the association between career adaptability and lateness attitude (z-score=1.94).

Table 5. *Main Results*

Research Hypotheses		Path estimate	p-value	*t*-value
H1	Servant Leadership → Career Adaptability (β_{21})	0.39	< 0.001	3.43
H2	Career Adaptability → Job Embeddedness (B_{32})	0.37	< 0.01	3.04
H3	Job Embeddedness → Lateness attitude(B_{43})	-0.19	< 0.001	-2.52
			Z-Score	
H4	Servant Leadership → Career Adaptability → Job Embeddedness		2.27	
H5	Career Adaptability → Job Embeddedness → Lateness attitude		1.94	
		λ		*t*-value
Concern ← Career Adaptability		0.55		-
Control ← Career Adaptability		0.45		3.43
Curiosity ← Career Adaptability		0.38		3.17
Confidence ← Career Adaptability		0.31		2.74
R²:				
Servant Leadership		0.25		
Career Adaptability		0.16		
Job Embeddedness		0.14		
Lateness Attitude		1.12		

Model fit statistics:
χ^2=232.20, *df*=149, χ^2/df=1.55; CFI=0.98; IFI=0.98; NFI=0.95; RMSEA=0.054; SRMR=0.097

Note: T-values are shown in parentheses except for the loading of concern that was initially fixed to 1.00 to set the metric for the underlying career adaptability variable.

Discussion
Key Findings
In this study, we proposed and empirically tested a research model of servant leadership style and its consequences via data gathered from front-line hotel employees in North Cyprus. More specifically, using career construction theory (Savikas, 2005) and job embeddedness theory (Holmton *et al.*, 2006) as a theoretical guideline, we suggested that servant leadership is linked with career adaptability, job embeddedness and lateness attitude. All of the relationships offered in the current study were supported by the empirical data. The research findings propose important insights concerning to the outcomes of the application of servant leadership style and the underlying mechanism through which servant leadership is related to lateness attitude.

The results emerging from this study would give better insight to hotel managers on how to increase employees' career adaptability and job embeddedness and recognize the potential factors that govern lateness attitude among frontline staffs. The key findings of the current study are discussed as follow.

As mentioned earlier, servant leaders invest in their subordinates and try to satisfy their needs (Van Dierendonck *et al.*, 2014). Simultaneously, these servant leaders devote their time and effort to prepare followers to cope with their tasks, changes, and disturbances (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). These efforts make followers more satisfied and they will be ready to handle complex tasks in their organisation. As a result, these employees become more adaptable, that is to say, they have concern, control, curiosity, and confidence in their workplace. The results stated that while servant leaders spend their time and energy to recognize the needs of all individual followers, employees can have better preparation for their future, have the self-confidence to make a decision, try to find new opportunities for their career and overcoming impediments (Savickas, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2013; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Conferring to the results, employees' favourable perceptions of career adaptability lead employees to be embedded in their organisation. This is in line with the previous studies which confirm that adaptability provides individuals to connect strongly with the organisation, community and co-workers (Ferreira *et al.*, 2013; Yao *et al.*, 2004). Embedded individuals perceived compatibility or comfort with an organisation. They have a strong connection between teammates, supervisors or other individuals in the organisation and they evaluate different aspects of their actions (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001).

Additionally, according to the results, employees who are embedded in their workplace have less tendency to show a lateness attitude. In other words, employees who have a better link in their organisation, fit themselves in their institution and make sacrifices for their company, understand the fact that the way they behave in the organisation have consequences. Highly embedded employees are able to establish deeper social ties with other coworkers, attain a better match between his/her values and that of organizational values and appreciate living in community with others (Al-Ghazali, 2020). Therefore, they are likely to be motivated to attend work on time and spend more time with other colleagues, appreciate organisational values (e.g. punctuality) and perceive any lateness unacceptable.

The results also reveal that career adaptability fully mediates the relationship between servant leadership and job embeddedness. Through emphasizing on followers' needs, servant leaders are capable to increase the level of career adaptability among employees. In turn, adaptable employees become more embedded in their job and would feel more attached and connected to the organisation. Besides, in accordance with the study conducted by Holtom and Inderrieden (2006) and Thakur and Bhatnagar (2017) which demonstrated the mediation effect of job embeddedness, this inquiry suggests that job embeddedness mediates the impact of career adaptability on lateness attitude. Employees with a high level of control, curiosity, confidence, and concern feel more attached and connected to their organisations subsequently show less tendency to attend work late.

Theoretical implications
From the theoretical perspective, the current study bears numerous implications that enrich existing knowledge and adds value to the current leadership hospitality literature. To begin with, servant leadership exert a strong positive impact on career adaptability. This seems a significant finding due to the lack of knowledge regarding the positive outcome of servant leadership on employee adaptability in the hospitality setting (Bavik *et al.*, 2017). Specifically, although an overview of the existing inquiries remarkably approves the role of leadership for adaptability (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018), there is not a single indication of empirical research concerning the association between servant leadership and

career adaptability among hotel front-line staffs. Second, despite the majority of evidence that specified that job embeddedness has a favourable impact on employees' work behaviour, unexpectedly little is known about how organisations can stimulate greater embeddedness amongst employees (Tian *et al.*, 2016). To address this gap this study proposes that career adaptability is a predictor of job embeddedness. Additionally, this research examined the significant relationship between job embeddedness and lateness attitude as a type of withdrawal behaviour. This also seems a remarkable finding since the majority of empirical research has inspected the impact of job embeddedness on other withdrawal organisational behaviours, mainly turnover (Afsar & Ur Rehman, 2017; Bambacas & Kulik, 2013). This is a significant finding since employee lateness leads to substantial costs for the company and erodes other employees' morale (Karatepe *et al.*, 2020). Specifically, since most of the tasks are done in the form of teamwork at hotels (Safavi & Karatepe, 2018), late employees would hinder the productivity and other employees need to compensate and cover up the responsibilities of the latecomers. Lastly, referring to the results, career adaptability mediated the association between servant leadership and job embeddedness. Moreover, in the relationship between career adaptability and lateness attitude, job embeddedness acted as a mediator. These findings are so significant as they contribute to the understanding of the application of servant leadership and the probable outcomes with the focal focus on the hospitality setting.

Practical implications

Based on the findings, several useful practical implications for hotel owners and managers and are offered. To begin with, it should be noted that COVID-19 has caused an unprecedented crisis to all industries around the world; specifically tourism and travel businesses (Jun, Jung & Yoon, 2020). One of the most salient management challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic involves adjusting and adapting the employees to severely altered work conditions (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). Based on the results, this is achievable through the successful and effective implementation of servant leadership. To achieve this, organisations need to put emphasis on the application of this leadership styles and encourage all supervisors to act as stewards, give value to all employees and listen to them with respect. This will help employees feel more comfortable, talk openly and discuss the problems that they are experiencing at work, which results in a higher level of career adaptability. What is more, During COVID19 the hotel industry experienced an employment shock with a sharp drop in the number of employees and a dramatic rise in the number on temporary leave (Jun *et al.*, 2020), leading to an increased level of job insecurity among hotel employees. This could jeopardize the sense of job embeddedness and employees might lose their attachment to the organization. Servant leaders are able to revitalize the sense of employee attachment through their actions and behaviour such as leading by example, showing them why their job is important, and caring for their team members personally. This would help motivate them to engage in their work and the organisation and increase the sense of attachment to the organisation.

As discussed previously, due to the importance of career adaptability, managers should apply various methods to increase adaptability among employees. One useful technique to increase employee career adaptability is to provide them with an adaptability certification course. Numerous online courses and seminar occasions can benefit employees to better adjust to organisational change. Managers could host a company-wide presentation or permit individual departments to complete the course at their own pace. As such, employees can get an extra qualification to expand their job responsibilities and have more tools to adapt to change.

Another technique that seems to be useful to make employees more adaptable is to mingle rookies with experts in the same team. Since leaders may not be able to monitor and guide all the employees

individually, newcomers in the organisation need to have a mentor. Consequently, spawning a team consists of both experts and amateurs seem to be practical.

Conferring to the results, embedded employees exhibit lessen the level of lateness attitude. To increase the sense of job embeddedness, the management team should build and create desirable work relationships among team members. They could encourage after-work socializing and try to bring employees together to celebrate special events.

Lastly, as stated earlier, the estimated yearly cost for employee tardiness in the United States businesses (US) has been more than 3 billion US dollars (Berry *et al.*, 2012; DeLonzor, 2005). Sharing these facts and statistics as a sample with employees would lead them to avoid such withdrawal behaviours. They would understand that such behaviours can cause irrecoverable and considerable drawbacks for the organisation. Managers have to remind the employees that their unappreciated actions are costly for the organisation and the imposed cost can have consequences for the employees such as working longer, handling more pressure or even losing his/her job. As one practical method to encourage punctuality, managers could design a system of bonuses or rewards for certain punctuality milestones, for instance being on time 30 days in a row. This can also be done at the team level. For instance, managers could also offer incentives for teams, as they will rely on each other for the reward. For example, if the team shows up to work on time for the whole month, they could offer a team lunch or social outing, which can similarly endorse a culture of teamwork.

Limitation and future research directions

This inquiry bears several limitations that highlights a need for further investigations. First, understanding the impact of different job resources on career adaptability would help to have a better perception of this psychological construct. More specifically, as stated earlier, during the COVID-19 pandemic, employee adaptation and adjustment to severely changing work conditions is one of the most noticeable management challenges (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). Therefore, future research should examine the impact of other management styles such as authentic leadership or ethical leadership on career adaptability during critical conditions. It is also encouraged that future research examines the simultaneous effect of the mentioned leadership styles to identify and rank the most significant style as the determinant of career adaptability by using mix-method approaches. Second, one of the most important factors affecting career development is employees' personality. Understanding the moderating impact of personality traits on the association between career adaptability and other outcome is appreciated. Lastly, this study only concentrated on the lateness attitude as an important withdrawal behaviour. Understanding the effect of servant leadership on other withdrawal behaviours like service sabotage and their underlying mechanism is encouraged.

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