



## Education effects on job-related constructs among front line employees in the hotel industry

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### ABSTRACT

*To make tourism enterprises function harmoniously and in order to achieve good business results, knowledgeable, engaged, service-oriented, and therefore satisfied staff is crucial, because human resources are one of the most important segments of the service quality in tourism and hospitality industry. The study explored moderating effects of education on relationships between service orientation and work engagement on employees' job satisfaction among employees in the hotel industry in Serbia. The moderating effects of education are particularly noticeable between service orientation and job satisfaction. Also, the results indicated that employees who had a high school degree showed the lowest level of job satisfaction, as well as service orientation and work engagement. On the other side, employees who have tourism education indicated less job satisfaction, service orientation and work engagement. Based on the insight into the employees' attitudes and behavior, managers can organize various training programs especially for employees with lower education levels, to remove any obstacles in their work, motivate them more and improve working conditions.*

### KEYWORDS

*Customer orientation; Work engagement; Job satisfaction; Education effect; Hotel employees.*

### RESUMEN

*Para que las empresas turísticas funcionen armoniosamente y para lograr buenos resultados empresariales, es crucial contar con un personal bien informado, comprometido, orientado al servicio y, por tanto, satisfecho, ya que los recursos humanos son uno de los segmentos más importantes de la calidad del servicio en la industria del turismo y la hostelería. El estudio exploró los efectos moderadores de la educación en las relaciones entre la orientación al servicio y el compromiso laboral en la satisfacción de los empleados del sector hotelero en Serbia. Los efectos moderadores de la educación son especialmente notables entre la orientación al servicio y la satisfacción laboral. Asimismo, los resultados indicaron que los empleados que tenían un título de educación secundaria mostraban el nivel más bajo de satisfacción laboral, así como de orientación al servicio y compromiso laboral. Por otro lado, los empleados con estudios de turismo mostraron menor satisfacción laboral, orientación al servicio y compromiso laboral. A partir del conocimiento de las actitudes y el comportamiento de los empleados, los directivos pueden organizar diversos programas de formación, especialmente para los empleados con niveles educativos más bajos, con el fin de eliminar cualquier obstáculo en su trabajo, motivarlos más y mejorar las condiciones laborales.*

### PALABRAS CLAVE

*Orientación al cliente; Compromiso laboral; Satisfacción laboral; Efecto de la educación; Empleados de hotel.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the business world where competitiveness domineers, the main strength of the company is human capital. In tourism and hospitality industry, employees have a very important role when it comes to providing quality service and problem solving, especially if the guest is dissatisfied. Since directly interact with customers, employees' behavior has a significant impact on customers' decision to buy or consume something (Bone and Mowen, 2010; Surucu et al., 2019), as well as the customers' perception of the quality of provided services (Wall and Berry, 2007; Zhang et al., 2021). Therefore, service orientation is a very important organizational element responsible for creating conditions that encourage employees to work, and in turn, provide high quality services. In the hospitality sector, the quality of services is twofold significant. On the one hand, it has an important role in retaining competent employees (Arasli et al., 2017), while on the other is key for the guest's satisfaction and their return visit (Li and Huang, 2017). As a positive result of the service orientation, some authors emphasized job satisfaction as its main consequence (Kim et al., 2005; Bellou and Andronikidis, 2017), and that it is a prerequisite for customer satisfaction, loyalty and positive recommendations. Besides job satisfaction, it was proven that service orientation had a positive impact on employees' outcomes like work engagement (Kosker et al., 2019) and organizational commitment (Li and Huang, 2017). Research done by Lee and Ok (2015) indicated how important it is to have service-oriented employees in the hospitality industry since the authors pointed out that service-oriented employees strive to stay longer in one organization.

Employees in the hospitality sector are expected to possess the necessary knowledge and abilities to deliver both the required and improved service quality. (Tesone and Ricci, 2005; Schneider and Treisch, 2019). Because human resources are one of the most crucial components of service quality in the tourism and hospitality industry, having competent, engaged, service-oriented, and thus satisfied staff is essential for making tourism enterprises work harmoniously and for achieving positive business results.

In the tourism and hospitality industry, human capital can be determined as people with a set of knowledge and skills that are at disposal in the organized sector, while

those knowledge and skills are the results of investments in both formal education and practical expertise (Nickson, 2007; Raj, 2008). The value of education to human resources has been extensively studied in academic literature with the goal of enhancing tourism. Many theories contend that employee education can significantly impact how satisfied and service-oriented employees are in the tourist and hospitality sectors (Verhofstadt et al., 2007; Gonzales et al., 2016; Yen et al., 2016).

While much research provided evidence about the relationship between service orientation, job satisfaction and work engagement, research on this topic in the field of hospitality is rather scarce (Popli and Rizvi, 2015; Johnson et al., 2018). Although numerous studies provided enough evidence about differences and similarities in education related to the different job-related constructs, this link was mostly direct. The moderating effect of education in relation to three crucial job-related constructs (job satisfaction, service orientation, and work engagement) has been noted by the authors of this study. Otherwise, literature has shown that service orientation had an impact on job satisfaction (Kim et al., 2005; Varela Gonzales and Garcia Garazo, 2006; Zou, 2015), as well as work engagement (Lee and Ok, 2016; Alarcon and Edwards, 2011; Popli and Rizvi, 2015). Besides that, the importance of education in the hotel industry has been mainly discussed in relation to the constructs of job satisfaction and service orientation (Petrović et al., 2013). Since job satisfaction and service orientation undermine organizational success together with work engagement (Karatepe et al., 2020), there was a need to examine the influence of education on the relationship between these job-related constructs. The innovative aspect of this study is that we research the moderating role of education in relation to these constructs.

However, the authors of this paper were particularly interested in whether those effects continue to exist if the moderating impact of education were considered when examining these linkages. This is a very important question because recognizing the various effects of education on the relationships among these job-related constructs can provide information to managers on the areas on which to concentrate to inspire and meet the demands of their front-line staff. This is related to Barron's (2008) assertion that one of the aspects that is significant when it comes to the quality of the offered services in the tourism and hospitality sector is employee education. Lillo et

al. (2007) indicated that employee education may have quite a big impact on employee satisfaction, which further influences the strengthening of practical knowledge and the increase of work engagement. Previous research has demonstrated that increasing education levels also increase job satisfaction (Wharton et al., 2000). On the other hand, Mijatov et al. (2018) indicated that there was a link between work engagement and employees' education, especially when employees' education is not tourism related. In that case, current employment could be considered as a passing phase in searching for a better job, so it might happen that employees are not fully engaged.

In light of this, another aim of the study is to ascertain whether front-line employees with tourism-related education and those with diverse educational backgrounds differ in their levels of job satisfaction, work engagement, and service orientation. Previous studies showed that there is no significant difference between employees with tourism-related education and those whose education is not tourism-related (Marjanović, 2020).

The paper is structured as follows. First, relevant literature addressing the relationship between job satisfaction, service orientation and work engagement, as important characteristics of job performance in the hotel industry, were reviewed. Next, the importance of education for the tourism and hospitality industry was discussed, pointing out the effects of education as a moderating factor. Further, collected data were analyzed and the results were discussed. Finally, the paper ends with conclusions regarding the importance and impact of education in the hotel industry and suggestions for future research.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Nowadays, many theorists believe that employees' job satisfaction can strongly affect the entire business. Consequently, job satisfaction is a powerful measure of successful organization progress (Pang and Lu, 2018), which implies that employees who are less satisfied often leave their companies (Alam and Asim, 2019; Zhang et al., 2019). In addition, it was shown that a high level of employees' job satisfaction resulted in increased performance and commitment to the job (Eliyana et al., 2019), while low levels of satisfaction caused a reduction in motivation (Cimbaljević et al.,

2020). In defining the most significant factors for achieving job satisfaction, several theories were used. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is one of the most prevalent theories used in education, psychology, and social sciences, indicating that job satisfaction occurs when job-related preferences are satisfied and people feel pleasant (Liu et al., 2016). It was determined that the degree of satisfaction of each of the basic needs is reflected in the employee's performances (Stefa et al., 2020), and that the impossibility of employment, personal development, or career advancement is related to the failure to meet those needs (Staempfli and Lamarche, 2020).

In the hotel industry, job satisfaction results in a very positive employees' behavior such as providing quality customer service, cooperation with other employees and commitment to the organization (Kong et al., 2018). In hotel industry, the topic of job satisfaction was discussed in many scientific studies (Madera et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2020; Viseu et al., 2020). Research has shown that job satisfaction was affected by wages and job security (Norbu and Wetprasit, 2021), supervisor support (Gordon et al., 2019), and opportunities for career growth (El-Said and Aziz, 2022). Employees' satisfaction research has its advantages because it sends an implicit message that employees are valued and respected in the company, and they certainly recognize it. It is assumed that a satisfied employee is more engaged in the organization because it creates a sense of appurtenance to the organization.

In academic circles, work engagement was first used by Kahn (1990), stating that there were three psychological conditions associated with work engagement and disengagement, such as meaningfulness, safety, and availability. This indicates that employees were more engaged at work in circumstances that offered them considerable psychological security, and when they felt that they were respected for their supervisors. Unlike Rothbard and Patil (2011), who described engagement as a psychological presence consisted of two components (vigor and absorption), many authors engaged with this notion (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Mauno et al., 2007; Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2007; Takawira et al., 2014; Esther, 2015; Decuyper and Schaufeli, 2020; van Tuin et al., 2021) emphasized that work engagement referred to the beneficial job-oriented state of mind distinguished by vigor, dedication and absorption. Absorption implied complete concentration and

commitment to work, whereby employees' time passed quickly, and it was more difficult for them to vacate their work. Vigor was marked by a high degree of energy, mental alertness, and persistence in work. Commitment has been described as a strong involvement in individual's work with an awareness of importance, enthusiasm, pride, creativity, and challenges (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Understanding employees' engagement concept was often associated with traditional concepts of the workplace such as work occupation and job satisfaction (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2010). However, the question has arisen: Does organization can have satisfied employees that are not involved, or vice versa? Given that employees' satisfaction was estimated by how they felt about the current business conditions and did not measure how much effort employees were willing to invest, it was certainly possible that these two concepts can independently create business results.

One of the important research areas, in terms of a company's success, is the concept of service orientation, because regarding service quality perception and client satisfaction, employees' behavior has a key role (Johnson et al., 2018). This was particularly important in the hotel industry where it was required to pay special attention to the provided services, as well as the needs and expectations of guests, since this is the industry characterized by a high interaction with consumers. Hogan et al. (1984) interpreted service orientation as employees' propensity to serve customers in attentive, cooperative, and helpful way. Accordingly, employees that were focused on consumers were characterized as amiable, honest, dedicated, and cooperative personality (Nasurdin et al., 2015). Mhlanga and Tichaawa (2016) indicated that for guests it was more important accessibility and kindness of the staff than the expertise and technology equipment of the organizations. Considering that service delivery takes place in the interaction between the employee and customer, the existence of a good relationship between these two actors, as well as good communication is very important. Božović et al. (2021) also stated that verbal attention was quite important to positively affect customers' behavior.

Relevant education is a prerequisite for successful communication. When personnel are educated and customer-oriented, highly engaged at work and satisfied with their jobs, it inevitably leads to efficient and successful business.

## **2.1) THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION FOR TOURISM BUSINESS**

Education and knowledge are of great importance in all life spheres, including tourism and the hospitality industry. Educated people are properly the ones who initiate changes and contribute to the successful business development and progress of the company. Of course, it is important to emphasize that education should be properly implemented at different levels, continuously combining theory with practice. Studies have shown that elementary education increased the working capacity by 30-40%, higher by 100% while university education can increase the working capacity by 300% (Kovačević, 2012). Educated people have broad views that enable them to adapt to the organizational value system, creating a desire to continuously learn and develop. Jacobs et al. (2022) emphasized that due to the additional skills and talents that employees got through education, educated employees are more productive than their comparably qualified coworkers in similar positions. Also, other researchers stated that overqualified individuals compare their own performances to others, and if they are in the same position, it does not affect their job satisfaction, or does not reduce their work engagement (Rasheed and Wilson, 2020). Also, vice versa, if they reach out that they are at a lower position, it can lead to lower job satisfaction which can be reflected towards lower engagement.

In the field of tourism, it was expected that human resources had an adequate formal education with vocational training (Hsu et al., 2017). It was proven that educated and dedicated employees have a strong influence on the development of a destination and its competitiveness (Coll Ramis, 2021). Even though employees' service orientation to some extent depended on their education (Petrović et al., 2013) overeducated employees are not always satisfied to serve their customers. In order to have content employees that serve customers properly and guarantee their satisfaction, it is important to provide rewards and benefits to employees through pay, recognition, personal growth, etc. (Alzoubi et al., 2020). It can be said that education is not the only guarantee for job satisfaction and the treatment of other people. In fact, personality traits such as conscientiousness and openness stood out as traits that significantly contribute to enhancement of customer-oriented behavior (Johari and Choon Hee, 2013).

Given that this economic sector was characterized by very rapid development and change, the development of tourism education was viewed through the spread of different education profiles and raised level of education. Therefore, education in tourism should be viewed in the context of tourism as an economic activity. It is the human factor that plays a major role in raising service quality as a differentiating factor in the tourism and hospitality industry.

## **2.2) MODERATING ROLE OF EDUCATION**

Previous research has shown that there were different effects of education on job characteristics concerning behavior that highly correlated one with another. In his study Gurbuz (2007) stated that there was a beneficial relationship among educational level and job satisfaction in the work-related context. Given that job satisfaction was measured by several criteria (working conditions, managers, management, income, development opportunities, collaborators), the study pointed out that if these criteria were appropriate/inappropriate, job satisfaction will be increased/decreased among highly educated employees. Also, some research highlighted that if the employees' education is matched with their job, it will have a positive reflect on job satisfaction and its performances (Lee and Sabharwal, 2016).

In tourism, employees directly interact with customers, and their behavior has a significant impact on customers' decision-making process, as well as the customers' perception about the provided services quality. This clearly showed that employees' treatment from the company, on one side, and adequate employees' education level, on the other side, are very important determinants for job satisfaction (Belias et al., 2022). Petrović et al. (2013) found that the service orientation of hotel employees to some extent depended on their education. The relationship between these two variables was often important to determine whether some external factor contributed to the impact of one variable to another. Education level was a strong basis upon which the communication and employees' service orientation is based on. A positive interconnection exists among education level, customer orientation and job satisfaction (Shaju and Subhashini, 2017). Employees and customers personal characteristics and education level had positive impact on customer-employee

satisfaction relationship and maintaining this connection has proven to be significant for employees' productivity and reduction of customer turnover intentions (Al Kurdi et al., 2020; Choi and Joung, 2017).

As many studies showed that employees' education affected their satisfaction and service orientation, it was quite possible that such effects existed, even though work engagement was involved as a third job-related construct. It can be assumed that when educated employees are more engaged in the emotionally challenging job, their psychological traits, like self-confidence and hopefulness, can come to the forefront, which will make them feel satisfied with more respect to customers.

Based on the above mentioned, the moderating effect of education on the relationships among these job-related constructs was examined. Work engagement was included in this model since employees who were service-oriented tend to exhibit much more effort and willingness for customer needs (Babakus et al., 2017; Lee and Ok, 2016). It indicated how much an individual was engaged and committed to his/her work. Given that the service delivery takes place in the employee-customer interaction, a good relationship between these two participants is very important. This means that to employees who are constantly in contact with consumers, effective communication and education are very important. Therefore, service orientation was included in the analysis. In this regard, the following research hypotheses were set:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Service orientation significantly predicts job satisfaction depending on employees' education.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: Work engagement significantly predicts job satisfaction depending on employees' education.*

To define the differences between differently educated employees in terms of their job satisfaction, work engagement and service orientation the next hypothesis is defined:

*H<sub>3</sub>: There is a statistically significant difference in the experience of job satisfaction, service orientation and work engagement depending on employees' education level.*

According to the aforementioned and taking into account the importance of properly educated and professional tourism personnel, authors were particularly interested if there is an incompatibility regarding job satisfaction, work engagement and service orientation between tourism educated employees and those who have a different educational profile. Marjanović (2020) in his study investigated the relationship between service orientation and satisfaction of employees in travel agencies and examined the influence of education on these variables. Research has shown that there was no significant difference between employees with tourism-related education and those whose education is not tourism-related. Based on that, the next hypothesis was defined:

*H4: Among the group of employees that have tourism education and those with different educational backgrounds there are not significant differences in the variables of service orientation, job satisfaction and work engagement.*

Since in the hotel industry the frontline employees have to frequently interact with the customers, it occasionally happens that they become emotionally weary when they feel unable to meet guests' requirements due to a lack of job or educational skills (Babakus et al., 2009). These circumstances frequently lead to individual distress and compromise the frontline employees' output, such as work engagement or service orientation (Sampson and Akyeampong 2014). On the other hand, employees that do not interact directly with customers are referred to as the "back-office." Based on the above, we explored whether there is a difference regarding these job-related constructs and job position.

*H5: Among the front office and back-office employees there are significant differences in the variables of service orientation, job satisfaction and work engagement.*

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1) PARTICIPANTS**

The data used in the study were collected among employees in the hotel industry in Serbia. The sampling procedure was done in August and September 2021. The official document of the Association of the Hotel and Hospitality Industry, HORES, served as the foundation for the database of hotels to which questionnaires were sent. Out of 380 hotels registered in Serbia (<https://hores.rs/>), 32 hotels responding favorably to our request. An email was sent to managers inviting them to take part in the research by sending a link to the survey to all their employees. The data was collected according to the sampling method, which is based on full-time employees from different sectors. Due to the uneven number of hotel personnel, the distribution of answers was therefore unbalanced. Finally, a total of 346 questionnaires were collected. All the responses were collected via a web-based survey.

Descriptive statistics is shown in Table 1. Based on the research, it can be concluded that there were much more women (57.8%) compared to male (42.2%) participants. More than half of employees had between 26 and 35 years. Regarding the level of education, most of the respondents (43%) finished high school, while 31.2% completed an MA and PhD studies. Almost 66% of employees had education related to the field of tourism and hospitality. Among the participants, 23.4% worked in a hotel for less than one year, while most respondents had working experience between 1 and 10 years (68.4%). Among the respondents, half of them (50.8%) worked at the front desk, then the sales and marketing (17.2%) sector.

	<b>Category</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>	male	42.2
	female	57.8
<b>Age</b>	25 and below	20.1
	26-35	59.4
	36-45	12.3
	46-55	8.2
<b>Education level</b>	High school	43
	Bachelor's degree	25.8
	MA and PhD studies	31.2
<b>Sector of work</b>	accounting / finance	5.7
	reception	50.8
	food and beverage	9.8
	housekeeping	6.6
	administration	3.3
	sales and marketing	17.2
	human resources	6.6
<b>Years of working experience</b>	up to a year	23.4
	1-10 years	68.4
	over 10 years	8.2
<b>Education related to tourism</b>	Yes	65.6
	No	34.4

Table 1. Respondents' socio-demographic characteristics

### 3.2) **MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENTS**

Each question in the survey was developed using scales from earlier studies that matched the needs of our study. Each variable's items were measured using a five-point Likert scale. The first part refers to the service orientation, work engagement and job satisfaction scale (Appendix 1).

*Service orientation* scale (Licata et al., 2003) consisted of two dimensions (*Enjoyment dimension* and *Needs dimension*) with four statements. Responses were taken on 5-point scales ranging from 1 - strongly disagree to 5 - strongly agree.

*Work engagement* scale (Schaufeli et al., 2002) was adapted from Utrecht Work Engagement Scale and had three dimensions (vigor, dedication, and absorption) including 17 statements. A five-point scale measuring feelings about the job from 1 (never) to 5 (always-daily) was used for collecting the responses.

*Job satisfaction* scale (Karatepe et al., 2006) had eight statements, while a four-step scale from 1 (completely unsatisfied) to 5 (completely satisfied) was used to collect responses from the respondents.

*Socio-demographic characteristics.* *Ad hoc* questions were created for gender, age, educational level, workplace position, years of working experience and education related to tourism, allowing respondents to choose one of the proposed answers.

### **3.3) DATA ANALYSIS**

The analyses of the collected data were carried out in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 23.0. Analysis was based on descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient, hierarchical multiple regression, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and independent t-test. Descriptive statistics was applied for displaying the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, while Pearson correlation coefficient was applied in measuring direction and strength of the proposed variables. Hierarchical multiple regression was employed to foresee the impact between variables by introducing education as a moderator of these influences. Potential differences among the respondents regarding job satisfaction, service orientation and work engagement, depending on the educational level and educational profile, were determined by using a t-test and ANOVA. Finally, for measuring reliability, coefficient alpha was applied.

#### **4. RESULTS**

Reliability analysis (Cronbach alpha) was carried out to validate the internal reliability of variables. The minimum acceptable merit of Cronbach alpha was  $\geq 0.70$ . As shown in Table 2, the reliability of the variables had a value over 0.95. This confirmed that research outcomes had a high level of reliability.

A closer look at Table 2 displayed that relations between all variables were significant. As expected, service orientation had a positive correlation with work engagement ( $r = .862^{**}$ ) and job satisfaction ( $r = .756^{**}$ ). The results also showed that work engagement was positively correlated with job satisfaction ( $r = .939^{**}$ ).

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. deviation</b>	<b>Service orientation</b>	<b>Job satisfaction</b>	<b>Work engagement</b>
Service orientation	12	3.73	.40			
Job satisfaction	8	2.82	.79	.756**		
Work engagement	17	3.91	.96	.862**	.939**	

Note: \*\*  $p < 0.01$  level

Table 2. Mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficient for all variables

Hierarchical multiple regression was applied to validate the moderating role of employees' education in the relationship between job satisfaction, service orientation and work engagement. The analysis was based on two hierarchical interactions that pointed out the moderating role of education regarding the proposed job-related constructs. In the first hierarchical regression analysis, dependent variable was job satisfaction, and the predictor variables were service orientation and education. The interaction of education and service orientation as a moderator variable in the regression analysis was introduced into a second set of variables. Both regression models were shown to be statistically significant ( $F=322.25$ ,  $p<0.01$ ;  $F=186.77$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Modification in explanation of dependent variable was statistically significant, indicating that a moderating effect contributed to the explanation of the

dependent variable ( $R^2=.780$ ). Service orientation and education, as predictors in the first step, significantly predicted job satisfaction. By including the moderator influence, predictor power was changed while explaining the dependent variable. Table 3 represents standardized regression coefficients that described the contribution of predictor variables in the explanation of criteria.

		Standardized coefficients Beta	t	Significance
Model 1	Service orientation	.756	-8.795	.000
Model 2	Service orientation	.974	15.930	.000
Interaction: service orientation and education		.290	4.751	.000

Model 1:  $R^2=.756$ ; Model 2:  $R^2=.780$

Table 3. Hierarchical regression analyses - moderating effects of education on the relationship among service orientation and job satisfaction

Service orientation predicted job satisfaction positively and significantly, while education as a predictor also contributed significantly to the explanation of criteria. The moderating effect of education on service orientation in the explanation of job satisfaction was significant. Respectively, education was the mediator between service orientation and job satisfaction.

Another assumption stated that education will evince a moderating influence on the relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction. A hierarchical regression analysis was used to analyze that assumption. The dependent variable was job satisfaction, while in the first step predictors were education and work engagement, and predictor in the second step was a moderator variable, the interaction of engagement and education. The results showed that both regression models were statistically significant ( $F = 1795.17, p < 0.001$ ;  $F = 952.36, p < 0.01$ ). After turning the moderator effect, the percentage of explained variance was increased where it was noted that the change was small but still significant ( $R^2=.780$ ). Table 4 represents standardized regression coefficients that described the contribution of predictor variables in the explanation of criteria.

		Standardized coefficients Beta	t	Significance
Model 1	Work engagement	.939	42.369	.000
Model 2	Work engagement	.986	39.361	.000
Interaction: Work engagement and education		.093	3.728	.000

Model 1: R<sup>2</sup>=756; Model 2: R<sup>2</sup>=780

Table 4. Hierarchical regression analyses - moderating effect of education on the relationship among work engagement and job satisfaction

Standardized  $\beta$  coefficients suggested that the work engagement's effect on job satisfaction was explained in a positive direction. Education level also predicted job satisfaction in a positive direction. The moderating influence of education level on the relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction was statistically significant but was much lower than the direct impact of engagement, as shown in Model 1. It could mean that education does not have a major effect on the relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction. This may be consistent with the idea that when individuals experience economic and socio-emotional happiness at work, they feel compelled to engage more deeply in the organization. On the other hand, according to Bin Shmailan (2016), when an organization fosters engagement, it succeeds in achieving success in terms of job satisfaction.

One of the objectives of the study was to define whether there are statistically significant differences between employees of different education levels in terms of job satisfaction, service orientation and work engagement. ANOVA test was used for this analysis. The respondents were divided into three groups (High school, bachelor's degree, MA and PhD studies) by education level. The analysis of variance determined a statistically significant difference on the level  $p < 0.01$  in job satisfaction ( $F = 38,463$ ; sig  $< 0.01$ ), work engagement ( $F = 61.700$ ; sig  $< 0.01$ ) and service orientation ( $F = 47,992$ ; sig  $< 0.01$ ) for three educational groups. The value of F statistics, in this case, indicated that there was higher variability between groups than within each group.

Given that there were observed differences among employees in experiencing job satisfaction, service orientation and work engagement depending on the education level, the Scheffe test was applied to determine differences among employees with different education levels. Results for the work engagement question revealed discrepancies between respondents with high school and those with higher education levels (Table 5). It revealed that people with a lower level of education were less engaged in their job.

Dependent variable	(I) Educational level	(J) Educational level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig
Work engagement	High school	Bachelor's degree	-1.38549*	.12524	.000
		MA and PhD studies	-1.11774	.11757	.000
	Bachelor's degree	MA and PhD studies	.76501*	.13405	.000

\* p<0.05 level.

Table 5. Scheffe test for education level (work engagement)

As far as job satisfaction, differences between High school - bachelor's degree, High school – MA and PhD, as well as between bachelor's degree - MA and PhD were determined (Table 6). Concerning job satisfaction, it was noted that higher educated employees were much more satisfied with their work than those with lower education levels.

Dependent variable	(I) Educational level	(J) Educational level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Job satisfaction	High school	Bachelor's degree	-.92932*	.10974	.000
		MA and PhD studies	-.55952*	.10316	.000
	Bachelor's degree	MA and PhD studies	.36980*	.11746	.008

\* p<0.05 level.

Table 6. Scheffe test for education level (job satisfaction)

In terms of service orientation, it was found that there were statistically significant differences between respondents with different educational levels (Table 7). In particular, the largest difference was observed between employees with high school and bachelor's degrees. The results indicated that employees with higher education were much more service-oriented than those with lower education levels.

Dependent variable	(I) Educational level	(J) Educational level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Service orientation	High school	Bachelor's degree	-.49528*	.05402	.000
		MA and PhD studies	-.34397	.05078	.000
	Bachelor's degree	MA and PhD studies	.15132*	.05782	.034

\* p<0.05 level.

Table 7. Scheffe test for education level (service orientation)

In support of hypothesis 4 and with the aim to determine the differences between independent (service orientation, job satisfaction, work engagement) and dependent variables (tourism education), a t-test was used. The results were given in Table 8.

An independent sample t-test was used to compare the results in service orientation, job satisfaction and work engagement among employees who have an education related to tourism and those who have a different educational background.

Tourism education	Service orientation		Job satisfaction		Work engagement	
	Mean (M1)	p	Mean (M2)	p	Mean (M)	P
Yes	3.61	.000	2.47	.000	3.51	.000
No	3.98		3.51		4.67	

Table 8. Comparison of measuring variables by education profile

The results pointed out that among the groups with tourism education (M1 = 3.61, M2 = 2.47, M3 = 3.51), and those with another education background (M1 = 3.98, M2 = 3.51, M3 = 4.67) there was a statistically significant difference in the results (p = 0.000 for all three variables).

Finally, to compare the point of view of the front office and back-office staff concerning job-related constructs an independent sample t-test was applied (Table 9).

Job sector	Service orientation		Job satisfaction		Work engagement	
	Mean (M1)	p	Mean (M2)	p	Mean (M)	p
Front office	3.72	.000	3.32	.000	4.89	.000
Back office	2.84		2.65		3.57	

Table 9. Comparison of measuring variables by employees' job position

The results of the independent samples t-tests examine that there is a significant difference between front office and back-office staff on the job-related constructs variables. In light of this finding, one might conclude that front- and back-office hotel staff appear to have distinct levels of job satisfaction,

service orientation, and work engagement. Regarding this, hypothesis 5 was confirmed.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

The results indicated that there is a statistically significant relationship between service orientation and job satisfaction. The obtained results confirmed previous research stating that between these two variables, there was a significant relationship that had an impact on financial performance, and more importantly on customer satisfaction (Eren et al., 2013; Bin Shmailan, 2016; Arasli et al., 2017). Further, employees' education had a moderating effect on the relationship between service orientation and job satisfaction ( $R^2=.780$ ). It means that when education is included in the relationship between these two variables, the impact of service orientation on job satisfaction is much higher, compared to their independent relationship (Hypothesis 1). In addition, it was verified that there was a positive relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction and that work engagement was one of the satisfaction drivers. As stated in previous research (Garg et al., 2018; Lu et al., 2016), employees were significantly more content with their jobs when they were highly involved in their work, inspired, and challenged, and proud of the organization in which they worked. By including moderator interaction, the percentage of explained variance was increased ( $R^2=.780$ ), but this change was not so significant. It means that education does not have a large impact on the relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction (Hypothesis 2).

The following analysis sought to ascertain whether staff members varied in terms of job satisfaction, service orientation, and work engagement, depending on their education level (Hypothesis 3). Among employees with different education levels there was a statistically significant difference. Employees who had a high school degree showed the lowest level of job satisfaction, as well as service orientation and work engagement. If we consider the fact that individuals with advanced degrees in tourism and hospitality had a strong desire to advance the industry and achieve more success, then to some extent, their work engagement, service orientation, and pleasure were comprehensible. Previous studies indicated that this could be

explained by the fact that people with higher education often earn more money, advance in their careers more rapidly, have better employment, and are consequently more satisfied and engaged with their jobs (Wharton et al., 2000).

According to the fourth hypothesis, there was a statistically significant difference between employees with tourism-related education and those with other educational backgrounds. This finding differs from previous research (Marjanović, 2020). Therefore, hypothesis 4 was rejected. The results indicated that employees with tourism education showed less service orientation, job satisfaction and work engagement, unlike employees who have a different educational background. Since they had prior managerial experience in the tourism industry, it may be expected that they would have much higher expectations for their working environment, level of authority over tasks, etc. Also, front office employees tend to change their jobs frequently (Ahmad and Scott, 2014), therefore as stated by Mijatov et al. (2018) current employment could be considered as a passing phase in searching for a better job, so it might happen that employees are not fully engaged or even satisfied.

The last analysis has focused on differences among the front office and back-office employees regarding service orientation, job satisfaction and work engagement. The results indicate that there was a significant difference between these two groups of employees (Hypothesis 5). This may be due to the fact that frontline staff and back-office staff may not react to particular job conditions in the same way (not everyone interacts with clients equally) and as a result, there may be variances in their levels of engagement, satisfaction, and service orientation (Babakus et al., 2009; Sampson and Akyeampong, 2014). Also, the organization's increasingly diverse role expectations, poor communication among coworkers, etc., can be some of the factors that may affect employees' satisfaction or service orientation, which, as a result, can contribute to bad performance ratings. In such an environment, corporate culture and workplace stress have been found to be indicators that affect employees' productivity (Putra et al., 2020).

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The aim of the study was to support the fact that education had a moderate effect on the relationship between service orientation, work engagement and job satisfaction. Regression analysis was used as the basic method for examining causal relationships between dependent and independent variables. It was established that education had some pattern when it comes to moderating effects in the relationship among these three job-related constructs. Additionally, differences across employees according to their educational backgrounds were examined using these three constructs as a basis. Finally, research presented differences in perceiving service orientation, work engagement and job satisfaction between employees who have tourism education and those who have a different education background, as well as between front- and back-office hotel staff.

The obtained results can encourage the human resources management sector to develop, maintain, achieve, and pay more attention to the potential skills of educated employees. Educational programs that trained and specialized staff focused on tourism have been launched worldwide over the last two decades in both high schools and faculties. Making customers happy is an organization's primary goal, and this is mostly a result of service-minded staff members who are satisfied with their jobs because long-term customer satisfaction depends on them. For this reason, it is very important to establish adequate standards in order to accomplish control over employees and enhance the quality of services.

The study's findings might provide a significant contribution to the theory regarding the effects of education. This research may be significant not only for managers in the tourism sector but also for those in other sectors. Based on the insight into the employees' attitudes and behavior, managers can organize various training programs especially for employees with lower education level, in order to remove any obstacles in their job, to motivate them more and improve working conditions. As a result, it is crucial to pay attention to employees' education and training since they are in contact with consumers frequently, and staff has a big impact on how tourists perceive their services. This can reduce the barriers that may potentially violate any of these three elements.

## **6.1) LIMITATION AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

The study has a few limitations that can be the basis and suggestions for some future research. First, all hotel categories were included in the research, but the allocation of the questionnaires was not uniform by category. In order to identify potential differences in employee views regarding their service orientation, engagement, and job satisfaction, it is recommended that comparable research be conducted in hotels with lower and higher categorizations in the future. Another limitation refers to the generalization of research results. It would mean that research should be applied to some other countries, which differ from Serbia in terms of the development of the hotel industry and economic development.

The last limitation refers to the fact that only three constructs were included in the research (service orientation, engagement, and satisfaction). However, in order to gain a complete understanding of human resource management, behavior and attitudes, it will be significant to encompass a construct related to the employees' turnover intention. In this regard, it would be especially important to examine whether education has an impact on employee turnover, since employees can expect higher wages, or want to advance in line with their level of education, therefore, these circumstances may affect the decision to shift employment frequently. As employee turnover intentions are often a notable issue in the hotel industry, it would be significant to consider which strategies can have a positive impact on employee retention.

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