



# The Influence of Soft Skills and Perceived Job Security on the Job Performance of Tourism and Hospitality Workers Along Thailand's Andaman Coast: Mediating Role of Employee Engagement

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## Abstract

In the current environment, soft skills are now viewed as one of the key attributes to be considered when recruiting people into organizations because of their perceived relationship to driving and supporting organizational success. This quantitative research aimed to examine the effects of soft skills and perceived job security on job performance and investigate the mediating role of employee engagement among tourism and hospitality workers. Quantitative research and snowball sampling methods were used and PLS-SEM was used to test the statistical model. The participants were 354 tourism and hospitality workers from along Thailand's Andaman Coast. Results revealed a positive influence by soft skills and perceived job security on job performance and a significant mediating effect by employee engagement. This research fills an academic knowledge gap regarding these attributes' effects and engages in practical discussions about the findings and the related implications for organizations and their stakeholders.

**Keywords:** Job Performance, Soft Skills, Job Security, Employee Engagement, Tourism and Hospitality Worker

## Introduction

Initiating the search for employees that possess the additional, desirable characteristics known as "soft skills" plays a greater role in the selection steps in searches for candidates for various positions now days. Many industries have begun paying substantial attention to applicants' soft skills, which are now viewed as one of the key attributes which drive and support organizational success, when recruiting people into their organizations. These soft skills also play promote an employee's ability increase their potential to adapt and cope with changing situations when are constantly confronted by new problems and challenges. For example, the efficiency of the workforce in the hospitality sector is characterized on employing appropriate skills during while providing customer care (Singh & Jaykumar, 2019). Prior research has shown that soft skills, such as the willingness to meet customers' needs, communication skills, and flexibility, are highly valued among the employers' in the hospitality industry (Glińska-Neweś et al., 2020). Although employees view soft skills and job security as complementing or improving their job performance, their performance also depends on other factors related to job performance, such as trust between leaders and subordinates (Kim et al., 2018), work pressure and career advancement opportunities (Deeb et al., 2020), and factors related to their specific job, organization, and environment (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2019). The expectancy theory provides a conceptual perspective to determine how motivation works and also explains how specific outcomes are generated by an individual's actions (Luo & Chea, 2018). In practical terms, good job performance depends on the assumption that an employee is motivated to put forth their best effort. Another element related to the concept of expectancy theory is employee engagement, which is a critical priority for organizations, particularly in the tourism and hospitality business. Employee engagement is a workplace concept for encouraging the workers' sense of collaboration with their organizations to reinforce their commitment to meeting organization's goals and values. This is both a physical and psychological phenomenon which enhances



the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of workers to improve job performance from the human resources perspective (Satata, 2021).

Prior research has shown that having good soft skills can augment individuals' interaction and communication skills and job performance, are the foundation of an employee's career progression (Singh & Jaykumar, 2019). In terms of job security, soft skills are crucial element employees use when engaging with the organization that reflects their level of job stability. Previous studies have revealed that employees substantial levels perceived job security tended to contribute more (Newman et al., 2019). Whereas the benefits of soft skills and perceived job security on work outcomes and organizations have been confirmed in previous research, it is still unclear whether soft skills related to perceived job security can enhance job performance among workers in the tourism and hospitality context. In addition, it is also unclear whether the level of the influence that employee engagement has an effect on the soft skills and perceived job security of tourism and hospitality workers' or their job performance. These are the primary research gaps addressed in this research.

The objectives of this research were to 1) examine the affect of soft skills on job performance, 2) examine the effect of perceived job security on job performance, and 3) investigate the mediating role of employee engagement on these affects. This research proposes that tourism and hospitality workers' job performance depends on their level of soft skills, their perceived level of job security, and their engagement. This would infer that employees who possessed high level soft skills, or who perceived a high level of job security, would enhance their job performance. In addition, the depth of engagement with the organization may influence their job performance, as well. This research will also generate managerial implications for tourism and hospitality workers and organizations regarding which soft skills and aspects of perceived job security are related to enhancing employees' performance and what elements of engagement boost employees' workplace performance.

## Literature Review

### The Effect of Soft Skills on Job Performance

From a purely organizational perspective, job performance refers to how workers perform their assignments and this is usually based on the organization's overall outcome, which is the direct result of the cumulative performance of each employee (Howladar et al., 2018). Basically, employees who perform better in the workplace will have a greater chance of being hired and promoted compared to those who do not perform as well at their jobs. The concept of job performance has existed in various forms for a long time. For example, one well thought out definition of job performance conceives it as a function of individual ability, skill, and effort in a given set of circumstances (Lawler & Porter, 1967). In the contexts of the hospitality sector, the job performance of employees is related to all the activities related to achieving the organization's goals, especially with regard to front-office and back-office support jobs which require employees to apply specific knowledge and skills to efficiently conduct their tasks while adhering to the procedural standards the organization (Phuong & Vinh, 2020). Additionally, organizations attempt to recruit and hire quality workers who have an established history of excellent workforce performance and can who work well under pressure as part of the organization's plans to respond to and cope with a crisis (Sun et al., 2022). Thus, job performance is comprised of all the actions taken, and contributions made, by employees towards achieving organizational goals.

There is increasing emphasis on soft skills by employers which expect high levels of job performance from their employees, especially within the tourism and hospitality sector, which has a tremendous demand, and presents



an excellent opportunity, for well educated, qualified professionals (Singh & Jaykumar, 2019). The development of soft skills has also become a crucial issue facing tourism and hospitality employers that require workers who have the interpersonal and personal skills to work with teammates (Weber et al., 2020). There are many important reasons that good soft skills are required for employees, including the dynamics of tourism and hospitality industry regarding tourist behavior, market globalization, growth of technology and innovation, and cultural diversity (Francis et al., 2020; Stylos et al., 2021). Soft skills are one of the two primary categories of abilities (the other being hard skills) that employers consider when hiring personnel. Soft skills enable employees to carry out their duties successfully and efficiently while utilizing their technical expertise and knowledge (“hard skills”) to enhance their social interactions.

In this study we propose that soft skills have a beneficial impact on how well tourism and hospitality employees perform work. Job performance is influenced by many different factors, including environmentally-related factors, job-related factors, and employee-related factors (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2019). Soft skills have been proposed as a predictor of employee work performance because, when employees acquire or improve their soft skills, it leads to an improvement in their overall work performance (Ibrahim et al., 2019). In other words, once employees attain good soft skills, they tend to perform their jobs better. These abilities may also aid them in resolving issues they encounter at work. Considering all these contributions of soft skills, the following hypothesis is presented:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Soft skills positively influence the job performance of tourism and hospitality workers.

#### **The Effect of Perceived Job Security on Job Performance**

The degree to which employees believe that their firms provide job security is a crucial component in respect to employment relationships (Bartol et al., 2009), especially during the COVID-19 outbreak that has made organizations’ and employees’ concerns about employees’ job security a top priority because of business reorganization and labor expenses (Vo-Thanh et al., 2022). According to Meltz (1989), job security exists when a person continues to work for the same company without having their seniority, compensation, pension rights, or other benefits reduced. Perceived job security represents an employee’s subjective anticipation the stability and continuity their position within an organization (Probst, 2003). Job security was described by Kraimer et al. (2005) as the multiple psychological aspects related to employees expectations for continued employment continuity with that company. In tourism and hospitality, an employee’s job security is an important component which helps them ensure their working conditions, such as working hours, salary, and benefits. Additionally, it is challenging for tourism and hospitality employers to guarantee job security to all their employees for several reasons, such as changes in technology, disaster crises, and, especially, the seasonal context of tourism (Keim et al., 2014).

In this study, job security for tourism and hospitality employees focused on their perceptions regarding employment stability and work continuity in the organization and its effect on employee engagement and job performance. Job security for tourism and hospitality employees is the feeling that their current job and organization reflects their perspectives related to the stability of their position. Thus, when employees in the tourism and hospitality sectors perceive that their jobs are secure, it may help enhance employees’ engagement and job performance. For example, the perceived job security of international hotel employees effects their work engagement (Altinay et al., 2019). In this study, we propose that perceived job security has a positive influence on the performance of tourism and hospitality workers. Job performance is influenced by worker’s a positive perception of job security (Kraimer et al., 2005). Perceived job security is proposed as a predictor of employee



work performance because, when employees perceived they have job security, it leads to an improvement in their work performance. Therefore, the following hypothesis arises from the enumerated concepts and empirical evidence:

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Perceived job security positively influences the job performance of tourism and hospitality workers.

**The Mediating Effect of Employee Engagement**

In addition to the previously proposed direct effect of soft skills and perceived job security on job performance, this research suggests that their association can be mediated by the employee engagement that tourism and hospitality workers have in their workplaces. Employee engagement refers to the overall combination of workers’ attitudes and behaviors (Iddagoda et al., 2016), including vigor, dedication, absorption, etc. (Villegas–Puyod et al., 2022). Employee engagement in turn drives the process of organizational operation through the actions of the employees which eventually leads to the employees’ level of performance and ultimately, the organization’s performance. Therefore, it is vital to investigate whether there is a connection between employee engagement and job performance in order to determine the mediating role of employee engagement. Many researchers who have studied the influences of employee engagement on job performance have found strong evidence of a positive association between employee engagement and the job performance (Jagannathan, 2014; Iddagoda & Opatha, 2020). The employees deliver higher levels of performance when they find meaning in their work and engagement plays a role in encouraging employees to be more strongly involved in their work (Srivastava & Madan, 2016). Thus, we propose that employee engagement will help tourism and hospitality workers improve their work performance.

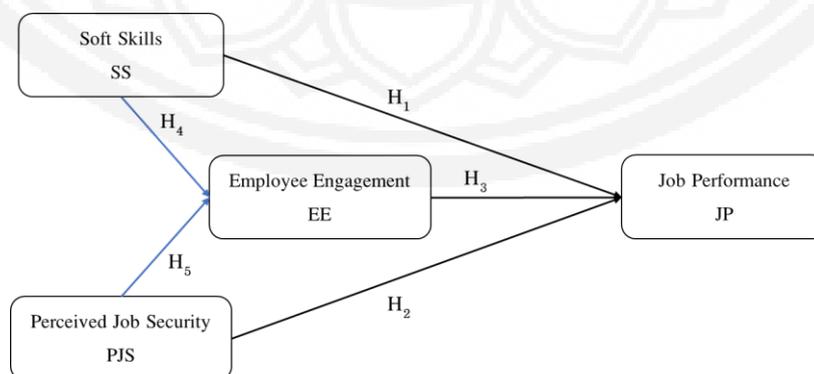
Generally, the role of employee engagement is that it helps create more positive attitudes and behaviors among workers regarding work culture, workplace experiences, and the employees’ job performances. It works as a mechanism to explain how the antecedent affects employee job performance. When viewed from a relationship-based perspective, the effect of employee engagement functions as a mediator which enhances and increases the work performance of employees (Iddagoda & Opatha, 2020; Riyanto et al., 2021). In this study, we propose that the influences of soft skills and perceived job security on the job performance of tourism and hospitality workers will be mediated by employee engagement. Based on this perspective, the following hypotheses are presented:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Employee engagement positively influences the job performance of tourism and hospitality workers.

**H<sub>4</sub>:** Employee engagement mediates a positive relationship between soft skills and the job performance of tourism and hospitality workers.

**H<sub>5</sub>:** Employee engagement mediates a positive relationship between perceived job security and the job performance of tourism and hospitality workers.

The conceptual model for the study is presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** Conceptual Model.



## Methodology

### Research Design

This project employed quantitative research methods to examine the proposed hypotheses. First, the influences of soft skills and perceived job security on job performance were explored using partial least squares structural modeling (PLS-SEM) because the effects of independent variables on dependent variables can be determined. Secondly, PLS-SEM was also used to test the statistical model in order to examine the mediating role of employee engagement. Furthermore, the usual set of descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample demographics.

### Sample Selection and Data Collection Procedures

This study's data was acquired from employees in tourism and hospitality industry based along Thailand's Andaman Coast that were carefully chosen based on the following criteria: a) working in a tourism and hospitality businesses along Thailand's Andaman Coast, and b) having passed at least one performance evaluation. Using these criteria, an appropriate sample size could not be exactly fixed due to the lack of accurate information on the number of individuals in the targeted population. Due to this, a sample size of 354 participants was established because it would generally be seen as adequate for a PLS-SEM analysis as it exceeds the minimum threshold of 100 participants identified by other studies (Reinartz et al., 2009). Thus, a sample of 354 was concluded to be adequate for this study. The snowball sampling technique was used to cover all the criteria that represent the tourism and hospitality industry and because it is an excellent method for recruiting participants for data collection, as well as being the preferred technique when it is difficult for researchers to access the targeted participants (Nardi, 2018) by 1) identifying the three targeted unit sectors in the tourism and hospitality industry, and 2) using these units' connections to find potential participants iteratively until the required sample size is met.

Before collecting the data, the plan and questionnaire for this research was granted ethics approval (No. PSU IRB 2021-LL-CM 014) (Internal) from the center for social and behavioral sciences institutional review board. After receiving approval, online questionnaires were distributed between the months of January and March 2022. The team reached-out to the directors of 148 business' human resources departments and requested them to facilitate access to their employees and to allow us to collect data from them using an online questionnaire. Of that number, 114 human resources directors agreed to our request and allowed us to distribute the questionnaire. The researchers distributed the online questionnaire to 536 participants via having their respective HR departments forward a URL and QR code along with the details about the questionnaire, such as the main research objective, details about each section, and instructions for completing the questionnaire, to them. Before filling out the questionnaire, the participants were requested to sign an online consent form stating that the participants understood the relevant information and that were fully aware of their right to stop participating without having to provide any justification at any point before data collection. After signing the consent forms, the participants were requested to complete and return their questionnaires directly to the researchers. At the conclusion of data collection period, 354 fully completed surveys were returned, which represents a 66.04% response rate and is presented the demographic profile in Table 1.

**Table 1** Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N = 354)

Demographic Factors	Items	n	%
Gender	Male	102	28.8
	Female	252	71.2
Educational Level	Below Bachelor' Degree	79	22.3
	Bachelor' Degree	250	70.6
	Above Bachelor' Degree	25	7.1
Type of Career	Hotel	141	39.8
	Airline	93	26.3
	Tourism and Service	120	33.9
Type of Work	Freelance	50	14.1
	Part Time	18	5.1
	Full Time	286	80.8

### Measures

Job performance was assessed as reflective construct using scales adapted from Wang et al. (2021). They each contained four items. Examples of the items include: “*I can achieve my goals for my work*” and “*The quality of my performance is related to customer relationships*”. All items were measured using a five–point Likert scale ranging from 1 (least) to 5 (most).

The soft skills in this research were measured as reflective construct using a five–point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (least) to 5 (most). Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they reflected the soft skills in their self–evaluations, which consisted of 8 items adapted from previous studies (Deale & Lee, 2021). Sample questions include: “*I am committed to providing the best service and benefits for customers*”, “*I can understand my emotions, strengths, weaknesses, and needs very well*” and “*I always have a new approach to solving problems*”.

Perceived job security was assessed as reflective construct using scales adapted from Wang et al. (2021). They each contained three items. Examples of the items include: “*I can work at my current job for as long as I want*” and “*I am confident that I will be able to work for my organization for as long as I need to*”. All items were measured using a five–point Likert scale ranging from 1 (least) to 5 (most).

Employee engagement was assessed as reflective construct using scales adapted from Altinay et al. (2019). They each contained four items. Examples of the items include: “*I am proud to tell others that I work at my organization*” and “*Working for my current organization has been great and meaningful to me*”. All items were measured using a five–point Likert scale ranging from 1 (least) to 5 (most).

### Data Analysis Method

This study used the SmartPLS algorithm for partial least squares structural modeling (PLS–SEM) to analyze the data and complete the research objectives. Soft skills and perceived job security were the independent variables, while employee engagement was the mediator for the influence of soft skills and perceived job security on job performance. PLS–SEM technique covers various statistical tools for analyzing data, such as factor loading analysis, path analysis, and composite reliability (Suthatorm & Charoensukmongkol, 2023). PLS–SEM is appropriate for estimating statistical models with non–normal data because it helps the researchers to reduce bias by providing more robustness than other SEM estimations (Hair et al., 2017). Due to the conceptual model, PLS–SEM was employed as it is the most appropriate approach for estimating a model with a mediating variable.



Before assessing the structural model, the quality of the data was evaluated to ensure the internal consistency of the study (see Table 2). First, the convergent validity was checked using factor loadings, ensuring they met the threshold of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2021). To determine the study's internal consistency, the factor loadings were determined and we found that all indicators had values greater than 0.70. Second, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to measure the reliability, with a threshold of 0.70 set as the minimum requirement (Nunnally, 1975). The findings revealed the values for all indicators passed the 0.70 limit. Thus, the model's reliability was confirmed. Third, the results show the value of CR and AVE in this study, which reached a significance level of 0.70 and 0.50 respectively, achieved an acceptable level based on the threshold of convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010). Finally, the results show the values of MSV and ASV in this study, which were lower than the AVE for all variables, achieved an acceptable level based on the aforementioned threshold (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Therefore, the model's convergent validity was confirmed.

Thereafter, the discriminant validity was tested employing the Fornell-Larcker criterion and each latent variable's square root of AVE exceeded the correlations they were involved with (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), as presented in Table 3. In addition, we examined the cross-loading values of the constructs to evaluate the discriminant validity which revealed a suitable level of discriminant validity with all items having loadings which were high on their variables. Regarding the results reported in Table 4, the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), which requires that the 0.90 HTMT threshold is not exceeded, was also employed to ensure the discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). The results revealed that the discriminant validity of this study was acceptable, as all scores met the HTMT criterion of 0.90 or less. Moreover, multicollinearity was analyzed in this study to ensure the full VIF ranges were between 1.660 and 3.253 indicating they were no high-level correlations and the expected values did not exceed 3.3 (Petter et al., 2007). Thus, it was confirmed that multicollinearity an issue in this study.

**Table 2** Convergent Validity

Items	Loading	CA	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)	AVE	MSV	ASV
<b>Soft Skills</b>		<b>0.946</b>	<b>0.949</b>	<b>0.955</b>	<b>0.728</b>	<b>0.386</b>	<b>0.276</b>
SS_1	0.810						
SS_2	0.857						
SS_3	0.882						
SS_4	0.796						
SS_5	0.868						
SS_6	0.848						
SS_7	0.843						
SS_8	0.917						
<b>Perceived Job Security</b>		<b>0.845</b>	<b>0.851</b>	<b>0.907</b>	<b>0.764</b>	<b>0.355</b>	<b>0.278</b>
PJS_1	0.904						
PJS_2	0.896						
PJS_3	0.821						
<b>Job Performance</b>		<b>0.869</b>	<b>0.871</b>	<b>0.910</b>	<b>0.717</b>	<b>0.436</b>	<b>0.376</b>
JP_1	0.858						
JP_2	0.853						
JP_3	0.821						
JP_4	0.855						



**Table 2** (Cont.)

Items	Loading	CA	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)	AVE	MSV	ASV
<b>Employee Engagement</b>		<b>0.926</b>	<b>0.927</b>	<b>0.947</b>	<b>0.818</b>	<b>0.438</b>	<b>0.355</b>
EE_1	0.865						
EE_2	0.914						
EE_3	0.923						
EE_4	0.916						

**Abbreviations:** CA = Cronbach’s Alpha; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; SS = Soft Skills; PJS = Perceived Job Security; JP = Job Performance; EE = Employee Engagement

**Table 3** Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Variables	Soft Skills	Perceived Job Security	Job Performance	Employee Engagement
Soft Skills	0.853			
Perceived Job Security	0.412	0.874		
Job Performance	0.621	0.555	0.847	
Employee Engagement	0.522	0.596	0.662	0.905

**Notes:** The value on the top in each column shows the square root of AVE.

**Table 4** Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Variables	Soft Skills	Perceived Job Security	Job Performance	Employee Engagement
Soft Skills	-			
Perceived Job Security	0.459	-		
Job Performance	0.682	0.848	-	
Employee Engagement	0.555	0.673	0.733	-

## Results

### Hypotheses Testing Results

The hypothesis testing examined the influence of soft skills and perceived job security on the job performance of tourism and hospitality workers as shown in Table 5 and Figure 2. Hypothesis 1 proposed that soft skills would positively influence the job performance of workers in the tourism and hospitality industry. Based on results of the hypothesis testing, the results indicated that workers’ soft skills have a statistically significant positive influence on their job performance. Therefore, H<sub>1</sub> is supported. Regarding hypothesis 2, which suggested that the perceived job security of tourism and hospitality workers would increase their work performance, the model’s results showed that the perceived job security of tourism and hospitality workers had a positive influence on the workers’ job performance. Thus, H<sub>2</sub> is also supported. Hypothesis 3 proposed that employee engagement would positively influence workers’ job performance. The results indicated that the tourism and hospitality workers’ engagement had a statistically significant positive influence on their job performance. Therefore, H<sub>3</sub> is supported.

Regarding hypothesis 4, which suggested that employee engagement would mediate the influence of soft skills on job performance, the results revealed that employee engagement had a significant mediating effect on the positive influence of tourism and hospitality workers’ soft skills on their job performance. In the respect to the mediating effect, soft skills exerted a significant indirect effect on the workers’ job performance, so it can be concluded that employee engagement partially mediates the influence of soft skills on job performance. Additionally, soft skills had a positive direct effect on the workers’ job performance in the same direction as the indirect effect. Therefore, it can be concluded that employee engagement played role as a complementary mediator



in the positive influence of tourism and hospitality workers' soft skills on their job performance. Thus, H<sub>4</sub> is supported. Hypothesis 5 proposed that employee engagement would mediate the influence of perceived job security on job performance. The results revealed that employee engagement had a significant mediating effect on the positive influence of perceived job security on job performance. In this context, the mediating effect of perceived job security exerted a positive indirect effect on the workers' job performance. Therefore, it can be concluded that employee engagement partially mediates the influence of perceived job security on their job performance. Additionally, perceived job security had a positive direct effect on the workers' job performance in the same direction as the indirect effect between perceived job security and job performance. Thus, it can be concluded that employee engagement plays a role as a complementary mediator in the positive influence of perceived job security on workers' job performance. Therefore, H<sub>5</sub> is also supported.

**Table 5** Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing (n = 354)

No	Hypothesis	Coefficient	Std Error	t-value	R <sup>2</sup>	f <sup>2</sup>	B	Confidence Interval (Bias-Corrected)		Decision
								LL	UL	
<b>Direct Effect without Including the Mediator Variables in the Model</b>										
H1	SS > JP	0.473	0.044	10.791***	.495	.368	-0.000	0.386	0.557	Supported
H2	PJS > JP	0.361	0.049	7.348***		.214	0.002	0.263	0.453	Supported
<b>Indirect Effect with Including the Mediator Variables in the Model</b>										
	SS > JP	0.121	0.023	5.163***			-0.001	0.081	0.175	Supported
	PJS > JP	0.167	0.034	4.941***			0.001	0.107	0.240	Supported
<b>Total Effect with Including the Mediator Variables in the Model</b>										
	SS > JP	0.473	0.044	10.656***	.566	.203	-0.000	0.384	0.558	Supported
	PJS > JP	0.360	0.050	7.196***		.054	0.002	0.260	0.454	Supported
H3	EE > JP	0.363	0.055	6.594***	.447	.168	-0.001	0.259	0.475	Supported
	SS > EE	0.332	0.052	6.373***		.166	-0.001	0.230	0.432	Supported
	PJS > EE	0.459	0.049	9.411***		.316	0.002	0.361	0.551	Supported
<b>Mediating Effect of Employee Engagement</b>										
H4	SS > EE > JP	0.121	0.023	5.163***			-0.001	0.081	0.175	Mediation
H5	PJS > EE > JP	0.167	0.034	4.941***			0.001	0.107	0.240	Mediation

Notes: \*\*\* p ≤ .001

B = Bias; SS = Soft Skills; PJS = Perceived Job Security; JP = Job Performance; EE = Employee Engagement

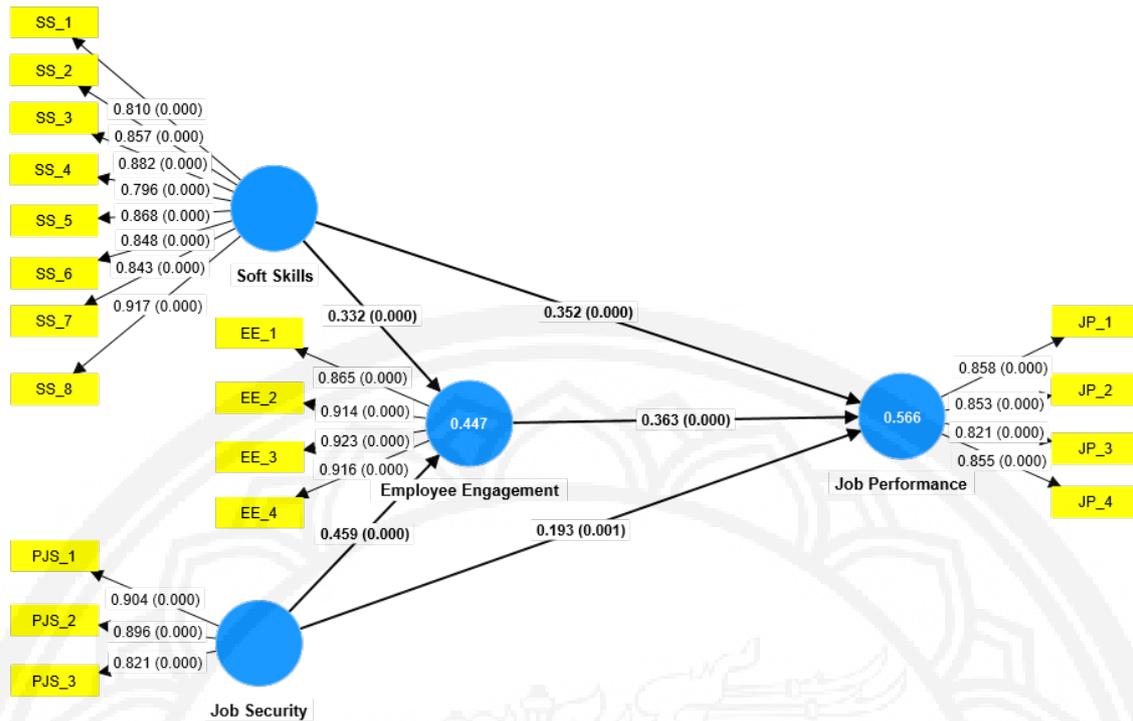


Figure 2 PLS-SEM Model.

## Discussion and Conclusions

### Discussion of the Findings and Research Contributions

This research focused on examining the influences of soft skills and perceived job security on job performance and investigating the role of employee engagement of tourism and hospitality workers. The PLS-SEM analysis confirmed soft skills' positive effects on the job performance of workers in the tourism and hospitality industry. The findings suggested that workers who possess a higher level of soft skills could improve their job performance. Soft skills reflected the abilities of workers to utilize their emotions during work, create new approaches to problem solving, and exhibit good behaviors when interacting with their customers, which generated a positive influence on job performance among tourism and hospitality workers. Soft skills' influences on job performance in the context of this research seems correlate with prior studies which confirmed the positive effects of soft skills on job performance (Akla & Indradewa, 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2019).

In respect to the influence of perceived job security, it had a positive influence on workers' job performance. The findings suggest that tourism and hospitality workers having a higher level of perceived job security can enhance their ability to improve their work performance. These findings also seem align with the prior studies demonstrating the effect of perceived job security on job performance (Kraimer et al., 2005; Newman et al., 2019). In the context of tourism and hospitality, job security was used to explain and predict the performance of workers. For example, perceived job insecurity of hotel workers had a negative impact on their job performance (Aguir-Quintana et al., 2021; Vo-Thanh et al., 2021). In addition, workers' job performance is also influenced by employee engagement and the findings suggest that tourism and hospitality workers who had a higher level of engagement are more able to enhance their job performance. Employee engagement's role in the context of this study closely correlates with prior studies which have demonstrated that employee engagement enhances job performance (Bhardwaj & Kalia, 2021; El-Sherbeeney et al., 2023).



In terms of the effects of employee engagement, the analysis found sufficient evidence that employee engagement plays a mediating role in the influence of workers' soft skills and perceived job security on job performance in tourism and hospitality businesses. Firstly, when workers in the tourism and hospitality sector possess a high level of the soft skills which are desirable in their workplace, it increases their ability to perform their jobs. This relationship can be partially explained by the employee's engagement because the workers' soft skills can enhance their engagement in workplace. This increase in employee engagement caused their higher-quality soft skills can boost the workers' ability to perform their jobs. Secondly, having high levels of perceived job security also helps workers improve their ability to perform their jobs. This can be partially explained by employee engagement because when workers perceive they are secure in their jobs, they will feel more comfortable and be more engaged in their work. The increased employee engagement helps motivate and enable the workers to improve their performance as well. These findings suggest that workers who have good soft skills and perceived that they have a higher level of job security can improve their performance more when they also have a higher level of engagement in their work environment. This also correlates with prior research supporting the mediating role of employee engagement (El-Sherbeeney et al., 2023; Iddagoda & Opatha, 2020; Riyanto et al., 2021).

#### **Recommendations for Management**

An employee's job performance is one of the key success factors for building sustainable growth within an organization. Managing employees' performance has become even more of a challenge in today's intensely competitive business environment. Therefore, organizations should implement effective strategies to enhance improvements in employee performance. In view of the findings, the managerial implications of this study suggest that organizations in the hotel, airline, tourism and service industries must provide adequate support to develop their employee's soft skills and promote perceived job security and employee engagement in order to improve their employees' job performance.

First, organizations can encourage employees to improve their soft skills by 1) establishing personalized soft skill development plans to suit individual needs and offering employees opportunities to continuously train on useful soft skills, 2) recognizing and rewarding employees with high-level soft skills, as importance as employees with high-level hard skills, in order to motivate others to consistently develop their soft skills, and 3) creating a more open organizational culture of learning and sharing knowledge and skills to enable employees to perform their assigned tasks better. Second, organizations can enhance employee engagement by strategically 1) encouraging employee participation to build a sense of belonging and an inclusive organizational culture, 2) acknowledging and celebrating employee achievements, both at an individual and team level, to maintain engagement at work, and 3) offering proper compensation and benefits programs and career development for employees to feel they are receiving value in exchange for their effort. Finally, to increase employee perception of job security, organizations should 1) implement effective two-way communication to ensure clear understanding in the workplace and make employees feel comfortable to exchange information, and 2) provide opportunities for employees to enhance their abilities and assigning them meaningful tasks or projects to make the employees feel that they are valued as part of the team and organization.

#### **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

There are some limitations that need to be acknowledged in this research. First, the findings may not be relevant to hotel, airline, and tourism and service business workers Thailand's other regions, or in other countries, due to the sample of workers only being based along the Andaman Coast in Thailand. Additionally, some sampling bias



may arise from using a non-probability sampling technique in this study. For future research, we recommend examining the moderating roles of additional characteristics of workers in these business sectors and the mediating roles of other variables (such as trust in leaders and supervisor support) that may influence the associations among the variables in this study. Additionally, the influence of soft skills and perceived job security on other dependent variables, such as turnover intention, and employment, should be examined to determine their importance in human resource management.

### Funding

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