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ISLAM, Md Asadul, ADEKOYA, Olatunji <<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4785-4129>> and OLAWOYIN, Femi

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Team Reflexivity for Employee Engagement and Retention During Market Turbulence: A Moderated Mediation Study

Asadul Islam¹  | Olatunji David Adekoya²  | Femi Stephen Olawoyin²

¹Sunway Business School, Sunway University, Subang Jaya, Malaysia | ²Sheffield Business School, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK

Correspondence: Olatunji David Adekoya (o.adekoya@shu.ac.uk)

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on social exchange theory and job demands-resources theory, this study examined the relationship between team reflexivity and employee retention through the lens of employee engagement. Furthermore, based on contingency theory, this study explored the moderating role of market turbulence in this relationship. The study employed a quantitative survey method, collecting data from 418 employees across from 1- to 5-star hotels in Malaysia. Data was analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling to assess relationships and mediation effects. The results indicate that team reflexivity is significantly and positively related to components of employee engagement (vigor, dedication, and absorption) and employee retention. Additionally, these components of employee engagement mediate the relationship between team reflexivity and employee retention. However, no moderating effect of market turbulence was observed, suggesting that the positive effects of team reflexivity on employee engagement and retention are robust and not significantly influenced by market conditions.

1 | Background of the Study

The tourism industry has emerged as one of the sectors most adversely affected by recent global crises. Events such as the COVID-19 pandemic led to substantial job losses due to lockdowns and a drastic decline in tourist arrivals, particularly impacting the hotel sector (American Hotel & Lodging Association 2020; Statista 2023a). Additionally, geopolitical conflicts, such as the Russia-Ukraine war, and economic challenges, including inflation and currency volatility, have further strained tourism businesses worldwide (Lu et al. 2016; Li et al. 2022; UNWTO 2023). These external shocks have contributed to increased job insecurity, prompting many employees to consider leaving the industry altogether (European Commission 2022; ILO 2022; Stockland et al. 2023). Given that the tourism and hospitality industry is highly labor-intensive, organizations must prioritize employee engagement and retention to maintain service quality and competitiveness.

While research on employee engagement and retention has expanded, studies have predominantly explored financial incentives (Jeha et al. 2022), job security (Guarnaccia et al. 2018), and work environment (Setiyani et al. 2019) as key determinants. However, the role of team reflexivity (TR) in influencing these outcomes remains underexplored (Wang et al. 2021). Team reflexivity, defined as the collective process of discussing, evaluating, and adapting team objectives, strategies, and processes (West 2000), has been linked to improved psychological well-being (Chen et al. 2018), innovative work behavior (Wang et al. 2021), and enhanced performance (Hadi and Chaudhary 2021). Given its potential benefits, TR may play a significant role in fostering employee engagement and retention, particularly in turbulent market conditions (Wang et al. 2022).

Employee engagement, often used interchangeably with work engagement, refers to a positive psychological state—including vigor, dedication, and absorption—that enhances

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positive experiences among employees, contributing to superior outcomes in the workplace (Schaufeli et al. 2002). However, despite the recognized importance of engagement in shaping retention outcomes, limited research has examined how TR influences engagement and how engagement, in turn, mediates the relationship between TR and employee retention (Chen et al. 2018; Memon et al. 2020; Hadi and Chaudhary 2021). Addressing this gap is important, particularly under conditions of market turbulence, to enhance our understanding of these relationships (Leblanc et al. 2024; Liu et al. 2025). Additionally, this study is important given that recent studies suggest that younger employees, particularly from Generations Y and Z, exhibit a heightened tendency toward frequent job changes and lower long-term organizational commitment (Popa et al. 2023). This shift underscores the need to understand how TR can enhance engagement and retention, especially in industries like tourism, where workforce stability is crucial (Voorhees et al. 2020; Zainal et al. 2022). This present study's context, the Malaysian tourism industry, provides a relevant research setting, given its substantial contribution to the national economy, attracting over 10.07 million tourists annually and generating billions in revenue (Zhang et al. 2021; Statista 2023b). However, the sector faces declining employee engagement and rising turnover rates, necessitating further investigation (Islam et al. 2023).

This study draws on Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau 1964) to propose that TR fosters reciprocal positive behaviors among employees, encouraging long-term commitment (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005). Employees in reflexive teams may perceive greater support, collaboration, and adaptability, prompting them to engage more deeply in their work and remain with their organizations. Furthermore, while previous studies have explored predictors and outcomes of work engagement (Lu et al. 2016; Yulita et al. 2022; Sánchez-Cardona et al. 2023), there remains a gap in understanding how vigor, dedication, and absorption mediate the link between TR and retention (Martinescu et al. 2022). Additionally, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory provides a useful framework for analyzing the impact of TR on employee engagement and retention. This model posits that workplace resources—such as supportive team dynamics—can buffer job demands and enhance engagement (Bakker and Demerouti 2017). In the JD-R theory, job resources are most effective for increasing work engagement when job demands are high, allowing employees to buffer the negative effects of those demands and maintain motivation (Bakker et al. 2014). In tourism and hospitality, job resources like team support and leadership enhance engagement, buffering high job demands (e.g., workload, long working hours, emotional labor) and improving retention (Radic et al. 2020). Furthermore, this study integrates Contingency Theory (Donaldson 2001) to examine how market turbulence (MT) moderates these relationships. External market conditions can significantly impact organizational dynamics, influencing employee experiences and engagement levels (Wang et al. 2015). Prior research has indicated that MT can shape relationships between human capital, organizational practices, and sustainability (Rhee et al. 2020; AlQershi et al. 2023). However, its role in moderating the indirect effect of TR on retention via engagement components remains unexplored, representing a critical research gap.

Against this backdrop, this study aims to (1) examine the direct relationship between team reflexivity and employee retention, (2) investigate the mediating role of engagement components (vigor, dedication, and absorption) in this relationship, and (3) assess the moderating effect of market turbulence. Our study makes several contributions. First, it contributes to team reflexivity literature by identifying TR as a key driver of employee retention, highlighting its role beyond performance and innovation. Second, it advances research on employee engagement by demonstrating how vigor, dedication, and absorption act as mediators, providing a nuanced understanding of engagement's influence on retention. Third, it challenges assumptions about market turbulence, revealing that strong internal team dynamics can buffer external instability. Lastly, it offers practical insights for managers, emphasizing TR-driven strategies to enhance engagement, reduce turnover, and build resilient workplaces in dynamic market environments.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The next section reviews the literature on team reflexivity, employee engagement, employee retention, and market turbulence, along with the development of hypotheses. The methodology section outlines the study's design, data collection, and analytical approach. The results and discussion sections present key findings and their theoretical and practical implications. Finally, the study concludes with limitations and future research directions.

2 | Literature Review

2.1 | Team Reflexivity and Employee Retention

Team reflexivity (TR) is characterized by the extent to which team members openly communicate and review their working processes, goals, strategies, and procedures with one another, making necessary adjustments as needed (West 2000). A key distinction between individual reflexivity and team reflexivity lies in the fact that TR is a visible behavior, allowing each team member to observe and reflect upon the observations of others (Konradt et al. 2016; Schippers et al. 2015). Thus, TR goes beyond merely being an activity where team members can offer their opinions; it encompasses essential aspects of planning, reflection, and adaptation (Marks et al. 2001). According to Wang et al. (2021), TR serves two main purposes, each facilitating beneficial social exchanges and motivating reciprocal actions. The first purpose is to review and articulate the team's accomplishments (Schmutz et al. 2018), enabling employees across various teams to gain a clearer and more effective understanding of work processes. This shared understanding helps reduce ambiguity regarding their duties, goals, and roles, which are known work stressors (Eatough et al. 2011). Reducing or clarifying these stressors encourages employees to reciprocate through behaviors and contributions that benefit the team, leading to enhanced employee retention as team members support one another and commit to long-term collaboration (Kundu and Lata 2017). The second purpose relates to future planning, requiring the presence of strong, supportive relationships to foster a climate of open discussion, idea sharing, and reflection, which, in turn, results in greater satisfaction and retention among employees (Wang et al. 2021). Moreover, team reflexivity empowers teams to effectively self-monitor, identify areas for

improvement, and assign tasks based on each member's role or skill set, ultimately supporting their long-term retention within the organization (Tjosvold et al. 2004).

Anchored in Social Exchange Theory (SET), we contend that team reflexivity can significantly predict enhanced employee retention (Ren et al. 2021). SET suggests that employees engage in mutual interactions that is, social exchanges, with the expectation of reciprocal benefits (Blau, 1964). This principle is applicable to team reflexivity because team members engage in reflective processes to understand various strategies and processes necessary for performing their individual duties and collective responsibilities (Schley and van Woerkom 2014; Wang et al. 2021). Consequently, they contribute to their individual and collective that is, team and performance development. Hence, trust and commitment, based on these exchanges of ideas and opinions, foster gratitude among team members. This gratitude may encourage them to remain within the organization for a prolonged period (Li et al. 2022).

From the JD-R perspective, job demands require physical or psychological effort, while job resources help employees manage these demands, ultimately influencing employee retention (Bakker and Demerouti 2017; Sánchez-Cardona et al. 2023). These interactions determine whether employees remain engaged or experience burnout, shaping their intentions to stay or leave (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004). Moreover, job demands are categorized as challenge or hindrance demands (LePine et al. 2005), where challenge job demands are demands that require efforts but can foster an employee's personal development and achievement, while hindrance job demands are work conditions that include unfavorable or excessive restrictions that make it difficult for a person to accomplish valuable goals. Within this framework, TR can function as a challenge demand, as it requires employees to engage in strategic discussions, process evaluations, and problem-solving, promoting personal and team development (Schley and van Woerkom 2014; Duan et al. 2023). Additionally, TR can also serve as a job resource, enhancing team cohesion, communication, and decision-making. These benefits buffer job demands, fostering higher engagement and retention, as employees feel more supported and empowered in their roles. In sum, previous research has demonstrated that team reflexivity positively influences team performance (Dayan and Basarir 2009), team innovation and work demand (Schipper et al. 2015) and teamwork and communication (McHugh et al. 2020). Based on these findings, we postulate that:

H1. *Team reflexivity has a positive relationship with employee retention.*

2.2 | Team Reflexivity and Work Engagement

Team reflexivity facilitates employees in planning for future work processes (LePine et al. 2005; Wang et al. 2021). Research has demonstrated that effective goal-setting contributes to creating a conducive work environment for employee engagement, as clear objectives provide a detailed blueprint for effort expenditure, leading to improved performance (Patel et al. 2012). This is achieved through TR, which fosters open communication

where team members continuously review and adapt to changes in both internal and external environments, forces, and stakeholders (Schipper et al. 2015). Work engagement (WE), particularly in the hospitality industry, is a desirable and crucial form of reciprocation from team members to their respective teams and departments, given that most organizations delegate tasks through team-based processes (Kanjakan et al. 2023). Therefore, it is logical to posit that TR effectively cultivates employee work engagement within organizations.

The positive impacts of TR are well-established in contemporary literature. For instance, Chen et al. (2018) demonstrated TR's effectiveness in enhancing employees' psychological well-being, while Wang et al. (2021) identified TR as a significant predictor of innovative work behavior. Furthermore, Hadi and Chaudhary (2021) highlighted TR's crucial role in improving team performance. Consequently, TR has emerged as a significant predictor of employee-related outcomes (Gupta et al. 2022), suggesting a likely positive correlation with WE. Employee work engagement comprises three components: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor reflects the enthusiasm and energy devoted to activities. Dedication signifies a deep level of engagement, characterized by a clear sense of purpose, enthusiasm, motivation, and a source of pride and fulfillment. Absorption describes a state of complete immersion in one's duties, leading to contentment and occasionally making it challenging to disengage (Schaufeli et al. 2002). Recent studies advocate for developing these three aspects among employees in the tourism and hospitality industry. For instance, Karatepe et al. (2020) found that work engagement among hotel employees reduced nonattendance behaviors and intention to be late for work or leave work early. Additionally, in the context of teamwork in a restaurant setting, Guchait (2016) argues that team engagement, propelled by shared mental models and transactive memory systems—key elements of TR (Schipper et al. 2014) – is important for team performance and team satisfaction. Given this context, we propose that TR could significantly influence the development of employee vigor, dedication, and absorption in hotel organizations, where teamwork is crucial. Consequently, we hypothesize that:

H2. *Team reflexivity has a positive relationship with employees' vigor in hotel organizations.*

H3. *Team reflexivity has a positive relationship with employees' dedication in hotel organizations.*

H4. *Team reflexivity has a positive relationship with employees' absorption in hotel organizations.*

2.3 | Work Engagement and Employee Retention

Work engagement (WE) fosters a mindset that appreciates fulfilling work efforts, generating positive states of mind and feelings among employees (Schaufeli et al. 2002). Previous research, particularly in the tourism and hospitality industry, has established a positive link between WE and employee retention (ER), demonstrating that engaged employees exhibit more positive work-related behaviors and attitudes (Karatepe et al. 2014; Lu et al. 2016).

However, studies like Caesens et al. (2016) have found a curvilinear relationship between WE and turnover intentions, arguing that increased WE does not always lead to additional positive outcomes. Likewise, in the hospitality industry, Oh et al. (2023) observed that high work engagement has a stronger negative impact on employee turnover intention than low work engagement.

Furthermore, while positive perceptions of the employer can decrease turnover intentions and increase work engagement (Saks 2006), safety, meaningfulness, and availability are essential for work engagement (Kahn 1990; Byrne et al. 2016). This aligns with the JD-R theory, which proposes that balancing job demands and resources is crucial for employee well-being (Bakker and Demerouti 2017). Employees who perceive organizational investments or initiatives as readily available resources feel valued and integral to the organization. This fosters a sense of meaningfulness and safety (resources), which ultimately enhances work engagement and employee retention (Yulita et al. 2022; Sánchez-Cardona et al. 2023). Consequently, employees are less likely to seek alternative employment and are more inclined to remain with the organization for an extended period. Furthermore, WE is known to elevate job satisfaction and organizational commitment among employees, particularly in the hospitality sector (Lee and Ok 2016). Interestingly, Lu et al. (2016) found that supervisors with high WE have lower turnover intentions than line-level employees in hotels. Ampofo and Karatepe (2022) also noted that job engagement is inversely related to employees' turnover intentions. Thus, it is logical to assert that WE positively correlates with ER. However, despite extensive evidence supporting the positive relationship between WE and ER, there is a noticeable lack of research on the relationship between the components of WE and ER. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H5. *There is a positive relationship between employees' vigor and retention in hotel organizations.*

H6. *There is a positive relationship between employees' dedication and retention in hotel organizations.*

H7. *There is a positive relationship between employees' absorption and retention in hotel organizations.*

2.4 | Mediating Role of Work Engagement

Team reflexivity fosters a positive work environment that motivates team members to reciprocate through increased work engagement (Schippers et al. 2015; Schmutz et al. 2018). Social Exchange Theory (SET) suggests that when employees are part of supportive teams where discussions lead to a clear understanding of work processes, they feel valued and are likely to respond by becoming more engaged in their work (Wang et al. 2021). Contemporary literature supports the notion that enhanced work engagement is linked to higher employee retention (Memon et al. 2020; Karatepe et al. 2020). Previous studies have explored work engagement as a pathway through which various factors impact employee and organizational outcomes (Kundu and Lata 2017; Xiong and Wen 2020). Agarwal et al. (2012) found that work engagement mediates the relationship between Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and innovative work behavior.

Chen (2019) reported its mediating role between job resourcefulness and job crafting among hotel employees. According to SET, a positive work environment and enriching work experiences encourage employees to remain with an organization longer. Team reflexivity enables team members to acknowledge and share information about each other's contributions, potential opportunities, and support needs (Fu et al. 2021). It also enhances the visibility and recognition of supportive behaviors within teams. By increasing awareness and facilitating support, team members can distribute their resources to assist those in need, thereby reducing the burden on any single team member. This collaborative effort leads to a positive work atmosphere where employees are more engaged and inclined to stay longer with the organization (Uddin et al. 2018). Thus, team reflexivity can create an optimal work environment that boosts employee engagement and significantly enhances employee retention. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H8. *Employees' vigor mediates the relationship between team reflexivity and retention in hotel organizations.*

H9. *Employees' dedication mediates the relationship between team reflexivity and retention in hotel organizations.*

H10. *Employees' absorption mediates the relationship between team reflexivity and retention in hotel organizations.*

2.5 | Moderating Role of Market Turbulence

Market turbulence (MT) refers to disruptions in economic and commercial activities, leading to fluctuations in supply and demand and increased uncertainty for businesses (Pudjiarti and Hutomo 2020; Senbeto and Hon 2020). It often arises from unforeseen crises, such as geopolitical conflicts or pandemics, which impair market stability and responsiveness (Wang et al. 2015; AlQershi et al. 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic exemplified how MT can trigger drastic operational changes, causing significant losses and widespread job insecurity across industries (Voorhees et al. 2020).

A turbulent market is defined by its unpredictability, requiring businesses to anticipate shifting consumer preferences and adjust accordingly (Alghamdi and Agag 2024). In such conditions, organizations depend on their workforce to navigate crises, yet MT also exacerbates employee uncertainty, particularly in industries like tourism and hospitality, where job security is highly volatile (Voorhees et al. 2020). From the perspective of contingency theory, effective management requires adaptability, where firms must tailor their strategies to specific market conditions rather than relying on fixed management approaches (Luthans and Stewart 1977). Scholars have advocated for the contingency approach as a means for hospitality organizations to remain agile and resilient during crises (Kelly and Fairley 2018; Sigala et al. 2023). Encouraging TR in hospitality organizations can foster a culture of learning and adaptation, equipping businesses with the flexibility needed to respond effectively to market disruptions.

Although market turbulence can strain employee morale, we posit that it may also strengthen collegial support and

engagement as employees collaborate to maintain performance. However, research following the Brexit referendum found that market instability could also lead to decreased engagement and increased turnover intentions (Martinescu et al. 2022). Prior studies have demonstrated MT's moderating influence on key organizational relationships, such as its impact on human capital and business sustainability (AlQershi et al. 2023) and the link between knowledge sharing and innovation performance (Wang et al. 2021). Building on this, we postulate that higher MT could strengthen the indirect relationship between TR and ER through WE components.

Given this gap, our study aims to investigate the moderating role of market turbulence on the indirect relationship between team reflexivity and employee retention, mediated by employee engagement. This exploration is crucial for understanding how organizations can leverage team dynamics and employee engagement to navigate the challenges posed by market turbulence. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H11. *Market turbulence moderates the indirect relationship between team reflexivity and employee retention through vigor, such that the indirect relationship is stronger under high levels of market turbulence compared to under low levels of market turbulence.*

H12. *Market turbulence moderates the indirect relationship between team reflexivity and employee retention through dedication, such that the indirect relationship is stronger under high levels of market turbulence compared to under low levels of market turbulence.*

H13. *Market turbulence moderates the indirect relationship between team reflexivity and employee retention through absorption, such that the indirect relationship is stronger under high levels of market turbulence compared to under low levels of market turbulence.*

Based on the above-mentioned literature and theoretical arguments, the following research framework was developed (Figure 1).

3 | Methodology

3.1 | Instrumentation

Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire survey strategy. The first section of the questionnaire includes 35 statements measuring six variables on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Likert scale (1–5) was employed to quantify and analyze data using statistical tools like SmartPLS (Alabi and Jelili 2023). It offers response options ranging from 1 'strongly disagree' to 5 'strongly agree,' capturing the intensity of opinions rather than just a binary choice (Jebb et al. 2021; Alabi and Jelili 2023). This scale was chosen to validate responses, consistent with prior studies using similar instruments (Yulita et al. 2022; Sánchez-Cardona et al. 2023).

The items of the variables in this study were sourced from current literature; however, some modifications were made to better align with our research objectives. The components of work engagement were divided into three categories: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Team reflexivity was measured using six items adopted from Monks et al. (2016). Five items each to measure vigor and dedication, and six items to measure absorption were adapted from Schaufeli and Bakker (2004). Similarly, six items to measure market turbulence were adapted from Senbeto and Hon (2020) and Peters et al. (2019). Finally, seven items were adopted from Kyndt et al. (2009) to measure employee retention. The second section of the questionnaire contained four questions regarding the demographic information of the participants. A pilot study with 40 respondents was conducted before distributing the questionnaires to hotel employees to ascertain content validity. Feedback from respondents in the pilot study was incorporated into the questionnaire to enhance its clarity.

Common method bias (CMB) may arise in a self-reported survey that includes both independent and dependent variables and data collected from the same respondents. Since we collected data from the same respondents, there is a potential issue, specifically the risk of common method bias, which may compromise the validity of our study. Therefore, to check for and ensure the absence of bias, we assessed the inner variance inflation factor (VIF) values. In this regard, if the VIF values are more than 3.3,

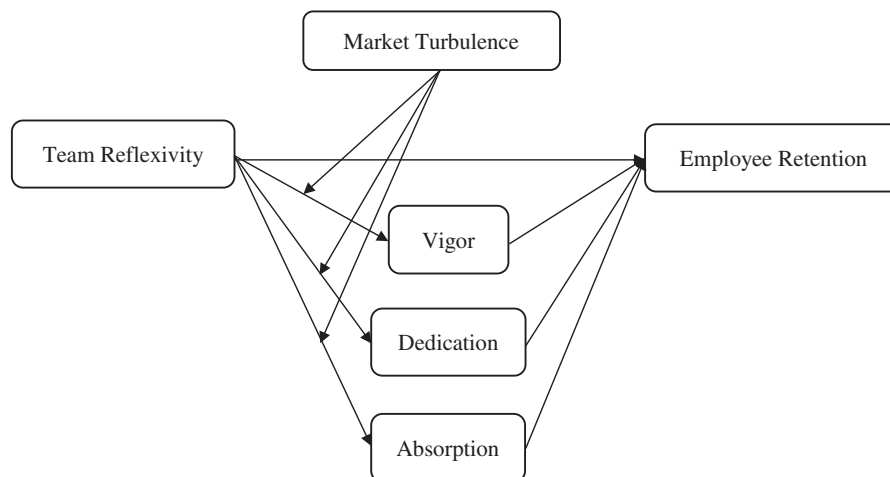


FIGURE 1 | Research framework. Source: Authors' computation.

it could show the potentiality of a CMB issue (Kock et al. 2021). However, the highest VIF found in our result is 2.322, which is presented in the structural model assessment Table 4. Since our VIF is less than the maximum threshold of 3.3, we conclude that this study is free from CMB. Furthermore, we also considered social desirability bias issues during the questionnaire preparation and distribution. We mitigated these issues by ensuring the confidentiality of the respondents through anonymous survey questionnaires and using neutral words in the survey questionnaire (Ried et al. 2022). Additionally, we included validated scales used in previous literature to minimize socially desirable response effects in our study (Lanz et al. 2022).

3.2 | Data Collection

For data collection, we used a convenience sampling approach to access respondents from 1 to 5 star hotels. This method involves gathering information from readily available participants and is often employed to quickly and economically gather large amounts of data. Additionally, while it is used by several studies, it is suitable for examining hypotheses rather than generalizing about a population (Reisinger et al. 2019; Stratton 2021). Initially, we engaged with hotel managers, explaining the research objectives, sharing the questionnaire, and emphasizing the anonymity of the hotels and strict confidentiality for participants' responses. Out of 650 distributed questionnaires, we received 472 responses, but 54 responses had problematic issues (i.e., incomplete, zig-zag and straight-line responses) and had to be dropped. However, following Hair et al.'s (2012) recommendation, the sample size of 418 usable cases is large enough for partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) (> 300 usable cases).

3.3 | Data Analysis

This study employed structural equation modeling (SEM) as the analytical technique to analyze and validate the research framework. SEM was chosen for its capability to perform simultaneous analysis of multiple dependent relationships and to assess latent constructs (Hair et al. 2012), which aligns well with the objectives of our research. The first step involved assessing the measurement model to ensure the validity and reliability of the study's constructs. Reliability refers to the consistency of measurement, indicating that the results are stable over time. Validity ensures that the constructs accurately measure what they are intended to. By validating the measurement model, we confirmed that the observed variables effectively represent their respective underlying constructs. Following this, we proceeded to analyze the structural model that is, to test the study's hypotheses. Moreover, we conducted a multi-group analysis to further explore the findings of the study to examine differences between genders (males and females).

4 | Results

4.1 | Demographic Information

The demographic distribution among the 418 participants included 64.6% males and 35.4% females, while 38.5% were married, and the rest, 61.5%, were single. Educational qualifications

of the participants were varied: 33.3% held a diploma, 54.5% had an undergraduate degree, 11.5% possessed a master's degree, and a mere 0.7% held a PhD or DBA degree. There were 14.1% participants from 1 Star hotel, 12.9% were from 2 Star hotel, 18.9% were from 3 Star hotel, 35.2% were from 4 Star hotel, and 18.9% were from 5 Star hotel.

4.2 | Measurement Model

The measurement model was evaluated for reliability, discriminant validity, and convergent validity. The Cronbach's alpha (CA) values exceeded 0.7, indicating a reliable measurement model, as detailed in Table 1 and Figure 2. Furthermore, convergent validity was confirmed as satisfactory, with composite reliability (CR) values above 0.7 and average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeding 0.5. Additionally, all item factor loadings were greater than 0.7. Discriminant validity was assessed by verifying that the square root of the AVE for each variable was greater than its correlations with other variables. This condition was met, as evidenced by the square root values surpassing the off-diagonal values in the correlation matrix, detailed in Tables 2 and 3. These methodologies and findings are supported by the works of Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Hulland (1999).

4.3 | Structural Model

4.3.1 | Model Fit

Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and Normed Fit Index (NFI) are the indicators to examine model fit to ensure the absence of misspecification in the model (Hair et al. 2012). The model fit facilitates the process of comparison between the actual correlation matrix on the basis of real observations and the predicted one using the model. However, the recommended threshold of SRMR is 0.08. Therefore, the SRMR value from the result should not exceed this value while the NFI value ranges from 0 to 1; the closer the NFI is to 1, the better fit (Hair et al. 2012). In our study, the SRMR value is 0.061, less than 0.08, which outlines a good fit. Moreover, the results show that the NFI value is 0.826, which indicates an acceptable fit for the research model (Hair et al. 2012; Sleimi and Emeagwali 2017).

4.3.2 | Assessment of Structural (Inner) Model

We have also assessed collinearity with the structural model by evaluating critical indicators, including the coefficient of determination (R^2) and effect size (f^2). The inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) in Table 4 confirms the absence of significant collinearity issues.

4.3.3 | Hypotheses Results

The analysis results, presented in Table 5 and Figure 3, indicate that all hypotheses were accepted based on their statistical significance and t values. The first hypothesis (H1), which examined the relationship between team reflexivity (TR) and employee

TABLE 1 | Measurement model.

Construct	Item	FL	CA	CR	AVE
Team reflexivity (TR)			0.916	0.935	0.705
	My co-workers and I often review our objectives.	0.839			
	The methods used by my co-workers and I to get the job done are often discussed.	0.856			
	My co-workers and I regularly discuss whether we are working effectively.	0.829			
	My co-workers and I often review whether we are getting the job done.	0.834			
	My co-workers and I often modify our objectives in the light of changing circumstances.	0.863			
	We often discuss how well we communicate information.	0.818			
Vigor (VIG)			0.860	0.899	0.641
	At my work, I feel bursting with energy.	0.797			
	At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.	0.795			
	When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.	0.813			
	I can continue working for very long periods at a time.	0.788			
	At my job, I am very resilient mentally.	0.808			
Dedication (DED)			0.897	0.924	0.708
	I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.	0.848			
	I am enthusiastic about my job.	0.867			
	My job inspires me.	0.810			
	I am proud of the work that I do.	0.828			
	To me, my job is challenging.	0.853			
Absorption (ABS)			0.919	0.937	0.711
	Time flies when I am working.	0.816			
	When I am working, I forget everything else around me.	0.862			
	I feel happy when I am working intensely.	0.850			
	I am immersed in my work.	0.844			
	I get carried away when I am working.	0.854			
	It is difficult to detach myself from my job.	0.834			
Market turbulence (MT)			0.901	0.924	0.669
	The tourism industry is changing rapidly.	0.759			
	It is very difficult to predict any customer changes in this industry.	0.821			
	There are many diverse market events that impact our business's operations.	0.838			
	There are many diverse technological events that impact our work operations.	0.813			
	It is very difficult to predict any changes in who might be our future competitors.	0.821			
	There are many diverse competitor initiatives that impact our business working processes.	0.851			

(Continues)

TABLE 1 | (Continued)

Construct	Item	FL	CA	CR	AVE
Employee retention (ER)			0.926	0.940	0.693
	Within this company my work gives me satisfaction.	0.818			
	I see a future for myself within this company.	0.839			
	The work I'm doing is very important to me.	0.831			
	If I wanted to do another job or function, I would look first at the possibilities within this company.	0.835			
	I'm planning on working for another company within a period of 3 years.	0.849			
	I love working for this company.	0.800			
	If it were up to me, I will definitely be working for this company for the next 5 years.	0.853			

Source: Authors' computation.

retention (ER), was accepted, as it showed a significant relationship with a p value of 0.000, well below the 0.05 threshold, and a t value of 4.191, exceeding the critical threshold of 1.96. This result is consistent with the previous studies, where TR was found to have positive organizational outcomes, such as team performance (Dayan and Basarir 2009), teamwork and communication (McHugh et al. 2020) and long-term retention (Li et al. 2022).

Moreover, the second hypothesis (H2) regarding the relationship between TR and vigor was also accepted, with a p value of 0.000 and a t value of 19.124, indicating a significant correlation. The third hypothesis (H3), which pertained to the relationship between TR and dedication, was accepted with a p value of 0.000 and a t value of 14.897, demonstrating a significant association. The fourth hypothesis (H4), exploring the relationship between TR and absorption, was also accepted, with a p value of 0.000 and a t value of 18.495, outlining a significant and positive relationship. These results are also in line with the previous studies where TR was reported to have a significant and positive influence on employee satisfaction and performance that could eventually lead to work engagement that is, vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al. 2002; Schippers et al. 2014; Guchait 2016).

Additionally, the fifth hypothesis (H5) concerning the relationship between vigor and retention was accepted, with a p value of 0.001 and a t value of 3.396, indicating a significant relationship. The sixth hypothesis (H6), which examined the relationship between dedication and retention, was also accepted ($p=0.000$, t value = 3.910), as was the seventh hypothesis (H7) regarding the relationship between absorption and retention, both showing significant relationships with a p value of 0.000 and a t value of 6.065. The positive relationship between work engagement and employee retention is also similar to previous studies (i.e., Karatepe et al. 2014; Lu et al. 2016; Ampofo and Karatepe 2022; Oh et al. 2023). Consequently, this study's findings further emphasize the importance of work engagement in retaining employees, particularly within the hotel industry.

The analysis results supported the acceptance of our eighth hypothesis, which proposed the mediation effect of vigor in the relationship between team reflexivity and employee retention, evidenced by a p value of 0.000 and a t value of 4.260.

Additionally, employee dedication was found to significantly mediate the relationship between team reflexivity and retention, with a p value of 0.000 and a t value of 4.332, leading to the acceptance of H9. Furthermore, the mediating role of employee absorption in the relationship between team reflexivity and retention was also significant, indicated by a p value of 0.000 and a t value of 6.242. Therefore, the results confirm the significant mediating role of absorption in the relationship between team reflexivity and employee retention, and H10 was accepted. The results on the mediation of work engagement dimensions, such as vigor, dedication, and absorption, are also consistent with the previous studies (e.g., Kundu and Lata 2017; Xiong and Wen 2020). Moreover, the findings of this study are consistent with the results of Agarwal et al. (2012) where work engagement was found to have a mediation role in the relationship between leader-member exchange and innovative work behavior.

However, contrary to our expectations, market turbulence did not moderate the indirect relationship between TR and ER through the components of employee engagement that is, vigor, dedication, and absorption. As a result, H11, H12, and H13 were rejected. These outcomes are different from the previous studies where market turbulence was reported to have a moderating influence (Senbeto and Hon 2020; Alghamdi and Agag 2024). However, the findings align with the recommendations of Kelly and Fairley (2018) and Sigala et al. (2023), who suggest that hospitality organizations can effectively leverage a contingency approach during market turbulence and crises. Specifically, our findings support the notion that fostering a continuous learning and improvement culture through TR can enhance employee retention, even in turbulent environments.

4.3.4 | Multigroup Analysis Results

This analysis was done to examine if there are any potential perceptual differences in the study results due to control variables that is, gender differences (i.e., male and female) of the respondents. The findings outlined in Table 6 below show that there are no significant perceptual differences between male and female respondents in this study. This finding implies that gender differences do not influence the outcomes of the study.

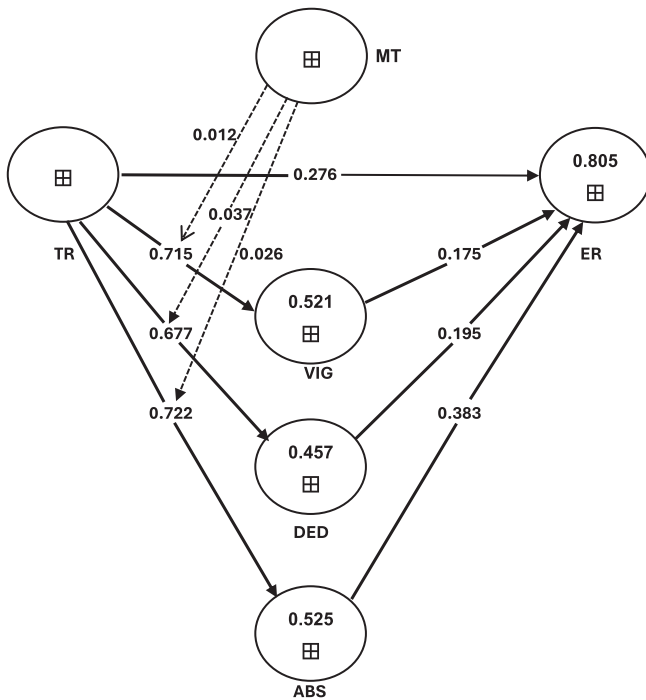


FIGURE 2 | Measurement model. Source: Authors' computation.

TABLE 2 | Heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT).

	ABS	DED	ER	MT	TR	VIG
ABS						
DED	0.645					
ER	0.880	0.786				
MT	0.063	0.030	0.043			
TR	0.786	0.743	0.877	0.042		
VIG	0.737	0.727	0.836	0.119	0.803	

TABLE 3 | Fornell and Larcker.

	ABS	DED	ER	MT	TR	VIG
ABS	0.843					
DED	0.586	0.841				
ER	0.812	0.718	0.832			
MT	0.043	−0.005	0.014	0.818		
TR	0.723	0.675	0.81	0.018	0.84	
VIG	0.658	0.644	0.75	0.105	0.716	0.8

Source: Authors' computation.

5 | Discussion

This study examined the relationship between team reflexivity (TR) and employee retention (ER) through the mediating role of work engagement (WE) components (vigor, dedication, and absorption) and the moderating role of market turbulence (MT)

within the Malaysian context. The findings confirm that TR significantly influences all three components of WE, which, in turn, enhance ER. Additionally, WE components partially mediate the relationship between TR and ER. However, contrary to expectations, MT did not moderate the indirect relationship, suggesting that TR's positive effects on WE and ER remain stable regardless of external turbulence.

Our study contributes to the existing literature on team reflexivity by offering insights into TR's long-term effects on employee retention, an area that has received limited attention in previous research. While TR has been widely associated with improved team communication, innovation, and adaptability (Schipper et al. 2015; Hadi and Chaudhary 2021), its potential as a mechanism for fostering sustained organizational commitment has remained underexplored. By empirically demonstrating that TR strengthens employee engagement (vigor, dedication, and absorption), which in turn reduces turnover intentions, this study underscores the strategic role of TR in employee retention efforts, particularly in labor-intensive industries like hospitality. Moreover, this study moves beyond the traditional view of TR as a short-term problem-solving mechanism and highlights its function as a long-term enabler of workplace stability and resilience. Corroborating previous studies (e.g., Dayan and Basarir 2009; Schippers et al. 2014; Kondert and Marcus 2025), employees who engage in reflexive practices are not only better equipped to navigate workplace challenges but also develop a stronger sense of belonging and alignment with organizational goals. This perspective adds depth to the current understanding of TR by demonstrating that its benefits extend beyond immediate performance outcomes to sustained employee commitment.

Additionally, by focusing on the hospitality sector, this study fills an important contextual gap in TR research. Given the industry's high turnover rates and fluctuating work conditions (Lu et al. 2016; Islam et al. 2023), our findings suggest that TR can serve as a retention strategy by fostering a supportive and adaptable team culture. This insight provides practical value for organizations seeking to enhance employee loyalty through team-based interventions, rather than relying solely on traditional retention measures such as financial incentives. Consequently, this study advances TR literature by demonstrating its pivotal role in shaping employee experiences, strengthening team cohesion, and reducing voluntary turnover, thereby expanding its theoretical and practical significance beyond performance-oriented outcomes.

5.1 | Theoretical Implications

This study extends theoretical perspectives by evaluating how team reflexivity influences engagement and retention while addressing the unexpected non-significance of market turbulence as a moderator. Our findings underscore the theoretical significance of employee engagement components (vigor, dedication, and absorption) as mediators in the relationship between TR and ER, particularly providing insights into how engagement mechanisms translate team-based resources into long-term employee commitment (Pluut et al. 2014). Vigor acts as a psychological energizer (Schaufeli et al. 2002),

TABLE 4 | Assessment of structural (inner) model.

R^2	Endogenous variables	R^2		R^2 adjusted		0.26: Substantial, 0.13: Moderate, 0.02: Weak (Cohen 1988)
	ABS	0.525		0.522		
	DED	0.457		0.453		
	ER	0.805		0.804		
	VIR	0.521		0.517		
Effect size (F^2)	Exogenous variables	ABS	DED	ER	VIG	0.35: Substantial, 0.15: Medium effect, 0.02: Weak effect (Cohen 1988)
	ABS			0.325		
	DED			0.095		
	MT	0.002	0.000		0.018	
	TR	1.095	0.843	0.132	1.063	
	VIG			0.065		
Collinearity (inner VIF)	Exogenous variables	ABS	DED	ER	VIG	VIF \leq 3.30 Kock et al. (2021)
	ABS			2.322		
	DED			2.060		
	MT	1.010	1.010		1.010	
	TR	1.002	1.002		1.002	
	VIG					

Abbreviations: ABS, absorption; DED, dedication; ER, employee retention; MT, market turbulence; TR, team reflexivity; VIG, vigor.

TABLE 5 | Hypotheses testing results.

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	t statistics (O/STDEV)	p	Decision	Mediation
TR \rightarrow ER	0.276	0.274	0.066	4.191	0.000	Supported	
TR \rightarrow VIG	0.715	0.713	0.037	19.111	0.000	Supported	
TR \rightarrow DED	0.766	0.674	0.045	14.897	0.000	Supported	
TR \rightarrow ABS	0.722	0.721	0.039	18.495	0.000	Supported	
VIG \rightarrow ER	0.175	0.173	0.051	3.396	0.001	Supported	
DED \rightarrow ER	0.195	0.193	0.050	3.910	0.000	Supported	
ABS \rightarrow ER	0.383	0.387	0.063	6.065	0.000	Supported	
TR \rightarrow VIG \rightarrow ER	0.125	0.123	0.037	3.396	0.001	Supported	Partial mediation
TR \rightarrow DED \rightarrow ER	0.132	0.131	0.036	3.632	0.000	Supported	Partial mediation
TR \rightarrow ABS \rightarrow ER	0.277	0.28	0.051	5.394	0.000	Supported	Partial mediation
MT \times TR \rightarrow VIG \rightarrow ER	0.002	0.002	0.006	0.341	0.733	Not supported	
MT \times TR \rightarrow DED \rightarrow ER	0.007	0.008	0.011	0.651	0.515	Not supported	
MT \times TR \rightarrow ABS \rightarrow ER	-0.010	-0.011	0.021	0.466	0.641	Not supported	

Source: Authors' computation.

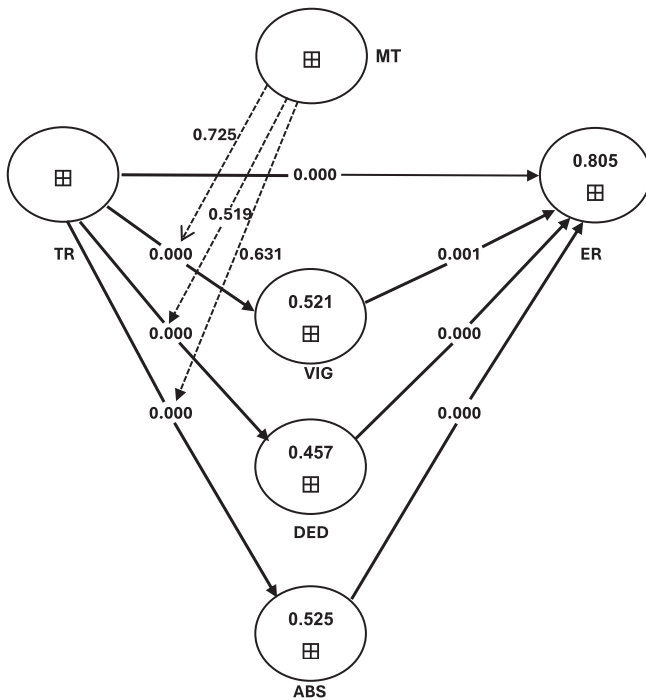


FIGURE 3 | Structural model. Source: Authors' computation.

TABLE 6 | Multigroup analysis results.

Hypotheses	Male–Female	
	β diff	<i>p</i>
TR → ER	−0.080	0.580
TR → VIG	−0.016	0.808
TR → DED	−0.010	0.876
TR → ABS	0.055	0.574
VIG → ER	−0.079	0.444
DED → ER	0.081	0.414
ABS → ER	0.082	0.539
TR → VIG → ER	−0.060	0.427
TR → DED → ER	0.053	0.456
TR → ABS → ER	0.079	0.453
MT × TR → VIG → ER	0.001	0.988
MT × TR → DED → ER	−0.005	0.854
MT × TR → ABS → ER	−0.037	0.508

Abbreviations: ABS, absorption; DED, dedication; ER, employee retention; MT, market turbulence; TR, team reflexivity; VIG, vigor.

demonstrating that TR not only enhances work motivation but also sustains employees' physical and emotional resilience. Its mediation suggests that TR fosters a work climate where employees feel empowered to invest high levels of energy in their tasks, reinforcing its role in employee well-being and sustained organizational commitment. Dedication highlights the value-alignment process within teams. Its mediation

underscores that TR strengthens employees' emotional and cognitive investment in their work, making them more likely to internalize organizational goals and develop a deeper sense of belonging, thus reducing turnover. Absorption emphasizes the flow state and immersive engagement facilitated by TR. Its mediating role suggests that reflexive teams create structured, yet adaptable work environments that enhance deep concentration and job immersion, strengthening long-term retention by increasing job satisfaction and reducing disengagement risks. Consequently, our study provides support for the social exchange theory (SET) by illustrating that TR fosters a reciprocal exchange of ideas, support, and psychological safety, strengthening employee commitment (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005). Thus, employees who experience a reflexive, adaptable team environment feel valued, engaged, and less inclined to leave, reinforcing TR as a key predictor of retention.

From a JD-R perspective, the model posits that job resources improve employee engagement and well-being while buffering the negative effects of job demands (Bakker and Demerouti 2017). The present study responds to calls to expand the JD-R theory beyond individual levels by incorporating team-based resources to capture the complexity of organizational phenomena (Bakker and Demerouti 2017; Urien et al. 2021). Our study enhances the understanding of the JD-R model at the team level. This is particularly important because the socially constructed nature of team dynamics means that the same variable (i.e., TR) can serve as either a resource or a demand depending on the team's prevailing environment. Corroborating existing studies (Chen et al. 2018; Fu et al. 2021), we suggest that TR is an underexplored job resource that enhances employee engagement by creating a supportive and adaptive work environment. Unlike conventional job resources, TR is team-driven rather than individually assigned, meaning it fosters collective decision-making, strategic adjustments, and adaptive resilience (Schipper et al. 2015). The partial mediation of WE components (vigor, dedication, and absorption) further reinforces that TR triggers an engagement process that ultimately enhances retention.

Furthermore, the non-significant moderation effect of market turbulence presents a critical challenge to prevailing assumptions that external instability directly undermines employee engagement and retention (AlQershi et al. 2023). Prior research posits that employees facing job insecurity due to market disruptions become disengaged and are more likely to exit their organizations (Sembeto and Hon 2020). However, our findings reveal that in environments with high TR, employees maintain strong engagement and commitment, regardless of market conditions. This unexpected result suggests that internal organizational dynamics, particularly a reflexive team culture, may act as a buffer against external shocks. Rather than reacting to market turbulence with disengagement, employees in reflexive teams likely perceive their workplace as a stable and adaptive environment, mitigating the uncertainty associated with external fluctuations. This challenges the contingency theory perspective (Donaldson 2001), which emphasizes the need for organizations to frequently adjust their structures in response to external volatility. Instead, our findings imply that organizations with strong TR may require fewer reactive strategic shifts, as employees in such environments already experience a sense of psychological security, shared problem-solving, and proactive adaptation. Nevertheless, future research may explore whether TR

serves as a resilience mechanism across industries and varying levels of turbulence.

Notably, our findings have broader implications for organizational behavior, particularly in team dynamics and workplace resilience. Having highlighted that TR fosters psychological safety and collective problem-solving, it reinforces its role in knowledge-sharing cultures beyond the hospitality sector, such that organizations in other industries (e.g., technology, healthcare, and education) could benefit from embedding reflexive practices to enhance collaboration, innovation, and crisis adaptability. The results regarding external market forces highlight the importance of internal team processes as stabilizing factors, indicating a potential shift in organizational behavior research toward employee-driven adaptability (Cullen et al. 2014; Ramesh et al. 2023), where engaged teams function as self-regulating systems, minimizing the necessity for constant top-down strategic changes.

6 | Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality industry. Specifically, by recognizing the importance of fostering a reflexive team culture as a long-term strategy for employee engagement and retention, industry managers must move beyond traditional top-down leadership models and cultivate a team-based, adaptive approach. To achieve this, structured team reflection sessions should be institutionalized, allowing employees to collectively assess work processes, identify inefficiencies, and propose improvements (Hartmann et al. 2023). These sessions must foster deep reflections with a greater focus on quality rather than quantity (or frequency), ensuring that reflections translate into meaningful workplace changes (Otte et al. 2018). Fostering open dialogue and peer feedback can also create an environment where employees feel valued, reducing turnover risks. However, this requires managers and team leaders to be trained in reflexive facilitation, equipping them to encourage constructive discussions while maintaining team cohesion (Wei 2024).

Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of designing engagement strategies that specifically enhance vigor, dedication, and absorption. Managers should implement effective job rotation, particularly in repetitive or high-stress tourism and hospitality positions, to stimulate employees' enthusiasm and prevent burnout (Al-Romeedy 2019). In addition to better employee remuneration, organizations must understand the value of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (e.g., clear career advancement pathways) to promote employee engagement in the industry (Putra et al. 2017), particularly given the increase in turnover intentions in the tourism and hospitality industry (Stockland et al. 2023). Moreover, to deepen absorption, organizations should redesign job roles to foster autonomy and task ownership (Knight and Parker 2021), ensuring employees are fully engaged in meaningful, skill-enhancing work rather than monotonous, transactional tasks.

Finally, while the study finds market turbulence does not significantly moderate TR's effects, it remains essential for organizations to proactively prepare for economic uncertainties and empower their employees to leverage TR as a crisis-management tool, where teams engage in real-time problem-solving exercises

to develop rapid responses to industry disruptions. This may be achieved by investing in long-term employment contracts, internal training programs, and career development initiatives that can stabilize workforce morale during periods of external instability.

7 | Conclusion, Limitations, and Future Research

In conclusion, this study contributes to the team reflexivity literature and organizational behavior research by demonstrating the crucial role of TR in fostering employee engagement and retention. The findings underscore that TR not only enhances work engagement components—vigor, dedication, and absorption—but also strengthens long-term employee commitment, even amid external uncertainties. By embedding TR-driven adaptability, organizations can reduce turnover, improve team collaboration, and build psychologically safe work environments. Furthermore, this study challenges assumptions about market turbulence's moderating role, emphasizing that strong internal team dynamics can buffer external instability. These insights offer valuable guidance for creating resilient, engaged workplaces across industries.

However, the study also presents several limitations. The cross-sectional design restricts causal inferences, necessitating longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of TR on engagement and retention. Additionally, cultural and sectoral variations should be considered, as our findings are based on Malaysia's hotel industry. Future research should investigate TR in other service sectors (e.g., healthcare, retail) and different geographical contexts. Given the non-significant moderation effect of market turbulence, future studies could explore alternative boundary conditions, such as economic downturns, leadership adaptability, or crisis communication strategies, to refine our understanding of external influences on EE and ER. Additionally, researchers should examine how TR interacts with digital transformation and hybrid work environments, as these factors increasingly shape modern workplace dynamics.

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Ethics Statement

Ethical approval was obtained from the ethics committee at BRAC University.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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