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THE EFFECT OF JOB CHARACTERISTICS ON EMPLOYEE LOYALTY: THE MEDIATION ROLE OF VERTICAL TRUST AND PERCEIVED SUPERVISORY SUPPORT

Although the effects of job characteristics on employee motivation and commitment are broadly researched, questions remain to the extent that job characteristics influence perceived specific attitudes and behaviours of employees. It is particularly interesting to what extent the process is reinforced by supervisors, namely through their support perceived by employees and vertical trust. Survey data were collected from 550 front-line employees across a variety of industries in Poland. A structural equation modelling analysis was performed to delineate the relationship between job characteristic and employee loyalty with the mediating influence of perceived supervisory support and the trust between the supervisor and employee, which is labelled as vertical trust. We confirmed that employees who have a strong job-role fit with the characteristics of their job will have a higher level of employee loyalty than those employees who lack a strong job-role fit. Furthermore, this relationship is enhanced by the perceived supervisory support and vertical trust. Few studies have been devoted so far to the relationship between job characteristic and loyalty, and even less have been conducted in Central and Eastern European countries. The findings of our study offer new perspectives to examine loyalty dimension. We propose to distinguish a construct labelled employee loyalty, that is oriented on both the organization and co-workers, and as such, it may be treated as a supplementary construct to OCBs' organizational loyalty. Our study is one of a few that investigates the mediating role of vertical trust and perceived supervisory support in the relationships between job characteristics and loyalty. In the literature, the need to explore the mediating mechanisms between the effects of job characteristics and loyalty on employee behaviors has been repeatedly stressed, which we address with this research study.

Keywords**:** employee, employee loyalty, supervisory support, management, vertical trust.

Introduction. This research study draws on literature from job characteristics theory, social exchange theory, and organizational support theory to describe the direct and indirect relationship between job characteristics and employee loyalty. In addition, this research considers how both perceived supervisory support and vertical trust between the supervisor and employee have influenced the association between

job characteristics and employee loyalty.

The social-exchange theory involves several constructs; however, as the name of the theory indicates, social-exchange includes exchanges between parties in a reciprocal manner to repay either good or bad acts (positive or negative hedonic) (Blau 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017; Gouldner, 1960). The relationship between the parties is interdependent and influences the quality of the exchanges (Blau 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Stronger relationships are apt to have more open, flexible, and trustful interactions (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005; Organ 1988, 1997). These interactions are fluid and open-ended in contrast to the transactional exchanges of economic exchanges, which involve less trust with more of a quid pro quo intent (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Cropazano and Mitchell 2005; Organ 1988, 1997). Although perceived supervisory support and perceived organizational support have foundations from Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986), social exchange theory explicates the interactions of these support constructs in addition to actions associated to organization citizenship behaviors (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Organ 1988, 1990). Even though social exchange theory explains the exchanges driven by good or bad interactions, this research focuses on the positive hedonic aspects involved with social exchanges such as perceived supervisory support, vertical trust, and employee loyalty.

Specifically, this research study posits employees who have a strong job-role fit with the characteristics of their job will have a higher level of perceived supervisory support and trust than those employees who lack a strong job-role fit. Ultimately, the increase in employees' perceived supervisory support and vertical trust will have a positive increase in employee loyalty. Thus, the purpose of this research is two-fold. First, the research seeks to bridge the gap between job characteristics and job-role fit and the influence jobs have on supervisor-employee relationship toward increasing employee loyalty. Second, this research highlights the importance of continuing to enrich jobs with specific job characteristics to foster employee loyalty (Niehoff et al., 2001).

This research seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent does the job-role fit of an employee influence the employee loyalty?

2. Is the relationship between job characteristics and employee loyalty mediated by the perception of supervisory support and to what extent?

3. Is the relationship between job characteristics and employee loyalty mediated by vertical trust and to what extent?

Answers to these research questions are important for practitioners to have information on how job design and job-role fit influence behaviours that create positive outcomes such as perceived supervisory support, vertical trust, and employee loyalty. As explained by social exchange theory (Blau 1964) and organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986), those positive outcomes lead to increases in organizational performance (cf. Collins 2017: DeConinck 2010; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Kurtessis et al., 2017; Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002) and competitive advantage (Buch et al., 2015; Tansky and Cohen 2001). Subsequently, supervisors will receive insights on the value to facilitate and promote behaviours that build positive supervisor-employee relationships.

A review of the extant literature provides the theoretical basis to address these research questions and build the hypotheses this study explores. First, we describe the literature on job design and job-role fit with a review of the job characteristics theory. The remaining theoretical review focuses on the constructs of perceived supervisory support, vertical trust, and employee loyalty, which includes not only in-role but also, an extra-role behaviour found in organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB).

Literature Review. Job Characteristic Theory. Increased job and organizational performance result from employees who have the best job-role fit (Hackman and Oldham, 1975, 1976; May et al., 2004). Practitioners design jobs to attract those employees who have the skills, talents, and abilities to achieve job goals, which ultimately lead to an increase in organizational performance and competitive advantage

(Albrecht, et al., 2015). Job characteristics theory (JCT) explains the setting where employees who have the best job-role fit are intrinsically motivated to engage at work (Hackman and Oldham 1975, 1976, 1980; May et al., 2004). JCT describes how practitioners can boost a positive work environment and encourage employees to increase the quality of their work by enhancing five core job characteristics (Hackman and Oldham 1975, 1976, 1980). These five job characteristics drive three positive psychological states resulting in positive outcomes for organizations, employees, and their supervisors (Hackman and Oldham 1975, 1976, 1980). The job characteristics are skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. Skill variety includes differing job activities that require a jobholder to possess multiple talents and abilities to accomplish the work. Task identity is highest when a jobholder remains involved throughout the entire work process with visible outcomes. Task significance occurs when the job substantially affects the physical or psychological well-being of others. This affect applies to stakeholders within or outside the organization. Autonomy is about jobholders' freedom to plan and complete the job without interference, which provides a sense of control. Lastly, feedback is about sharing quality knowledge on the results of the job through specific, detailed, and actionable information. The quality of the information enables the jobholder to understand what and how to improve their performance for increased productivity. Figure 1 provides a visual for the Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham 1976).

Figure 1 – **Job Characteristics Model** (Hackman and Oldham, 1975, 1976)

The core job characteristics provide a means for an employee to experience positive work outcomes through one of up to three psychological states, meaningfulness, responsibility, and knowledge of results (Hackman and Oldham 1976). That positive employee and organizational outcomes include increased work motivation, increased performance, increased job satisfaction, reduced absenteeism, and reduced turnover. The first three job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance) match to the psychological state where employees experience work meaningfulness (Hackman and Oldham 1976). The job characteristic of autonomy creates the psychological state of responsibility. That is where employees experience the feeling of knowing how their efforts resulted into the outcomes of their work. Lastly, feedback helps create the psychological state where an employee gains knowledge about their work results. Scholars posit that the JCT psychological states are the drivers for employees' and the organizations' positive outcomes (Hackman and Oldham 1976). Overall, the premise behind JCT is designing jobs for employees to have the highest motivational potential to engage when employees experience all three psychological states (Albrecht et al., 2015; Hackman and Oldham 1976).

The term engaged describes employees who positively express and participate at work in a physical, psychological, and emotional manner while performing their job (Kahn 1990). Employees are likely to engage when they experience work conditions that positively affect psychological well-being, which includes psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability (Kahn 1990). As a result, those psychological conditions lead to an increase in employees' positive perceived supervisory support and are more likely to engage in extra-role behaviours and experience employee loyalty (Albrecht et al., 2015).

The combination of the five core job characteristics provide the structure of the formal job description to determine job-role fit; however, the feedback aspect of job characteristics fosters social interaction between the supervisor and employees whereas task significance and autonomy promote an additional level of perceived supervisory support as well as trust (Albrecht et al., 2015; Seibert et al., 2011). Ultimately, employees are likely to engage in behaviours going beyond the call of duty, such as employee loyalty (Albrecht et al., 2015; Cropanzano et al., 2017; Seibert et al., 2011). The social-exchange theory describes how and explains why employees are apt to engage in positive behaviours such as employee loyalty (Blau 1964; DeConinck 2010; Cropanzano et al., 2017).

Perceived Supervisory Support. Overall, prior research explains how positive actions by organizations and supervisors motivate employees to behave positively and often secure a sense of obligation to reciprocate in kind (cf. Konovsky and Pugh 1994; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Shore and Wayne 1993). One such positive action is perceived supervisory support (Settoon et al., 1996; Eisenberger et al., 2002; Neves 2011; Shanock and Eisenberger 2006).

Perceived supervisory support occurs when employees believe their supervisor values their work and cares about their well-being (Shanock and Eisenberger 2006; Eisenberger et al., 2002). We define perceived supervisory support as the level to which employees form views that their supervisors are supportive generally and toward their work-related endeavours and contributions, as well as caring about their well-being (Dawley et al., 2008; Eisenberger et al., 2002). Perceived supervisory support fosters positive supervisor-employee relationships, which result in an increase in the level of employee loyalty to both the supervisor and the organization (Neves 2011; Rhoades et al., 2001; Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe 2003; Glinska-Newes and Karwacki 2018). Subsequently, the emotional bond, known as loyalty, produces positive outcomes such as an increase in job satisfaction, in-role and extra-role behaviours, and reduces turnover intentions (Rhoades et al., 2001; Neves 2011). Understandably, as described within the norm or reciprocity, the positive employee behaviour reciprocates the support received from supervisors (Gouldner 1960; Neves 2011). Ultimately, employees' willingness to remain loyal strengthens as the level of perceived supervisory support increases (Settoon et al., 1996; Gouldner 1960; Neves 2011).

However, we propose that the perceived supervisory support-loyalty relationship does not exist without recognizing the part employees' job-role fit with job characteristics has with the construct of vertical trust, the trust relationship between employees and their supervisor (Lewicka and Krot 2015), plays in the overall relationship. Perceived supervisory support and vertical trust have a positive relationship and we argue that both mediate the relationship between job characteristics and employee loyalty.

Vertical Trust. Trust is fundamental for every relationship, particularly in an organization where members' cooperation and contribution to common goals is crucial for its success (Ferris et al., 2009; Poon 2013). Trust is a state of mind connected with expectations of positive intentions of a partner accompanied by a readiness to stay interconnected, regardless of any risk (Blomqvist 2002; Krot Lewicka 2016). There are two basic components of trust: affective and cognitive. The affective component refers to feelings and emotions towards a partner while the cognitive component is related to previous experience and knowledge about the partner (McAllister 1995; Costigan et al., 1998). In management studies, three types of trust in organizational relationships are indicated. The first type is vertical trust, i.e. trust in a supervisor-subordinate relationship. The second is horizontal trust, i.e. trust in a peer-to-peer relationship. The third type is impersonal trust, which is trust involved with an organization (Lewicka and Krot 2015).

The supervisor-subordinate relationship is characterized by an asymmetry, which results from differences in status, power, access to information, and the ability to control the actions of others (Nienaber et.al, 2015). It causes a state of subordinate's dependence referring to such aspects of work as a promotion, pay rise or employment safety (Sitkin and Roth 1993). Also it creates anxiety in mutual relationships (Nienaber et.al, 2015). That is why trust is essential in vertical relationships. Loss of trust to

a supervisor may lead to significant negative consequences for both the quality of mutual relationships and a relationship with the organization (Nienaber et al., 2015). Those consequences include a reduction in employee commitment and cooperation, as well as an increase in employee misbehaviour (Wicks et al., 1999; Lewicka and Rakowska 2017).

Conversely, trust with a supervisor positively correlates with employee behaviours that are positive for the organization. Those behaviors include: OCB (Appelbaum et al., 2004), reduced employee turnover (Brashear et al., 2005), high work performance (Burke et al., 2007), job satisfaction (Pillai et al., 1999; Mulki et al., 2006), and innovative behaviors (Tam and Tam 2000; Ellonen et al., 2008, Lewicka 2011; Glinska-Newes et al., 2017). Yang and Mossholder (2010) proved that effective trust in vertical relationships influenced subordinates effectiveness and their extra-role behaviours. The vertical trust also has an impact on other important employee feelings toward work, such as identification with goals set by supervisors, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Mayer et al., 1995), willingness and ability for autonomous work and initiative (Costigan et al., 2006). Moreover, it increases willingness in taking risks (Colguitt et al., 2007) and participating in strategic decision-making (Pappas and Flaherty 2008). In addition, a higher level of trust reduces the level of stress (Liu et al., 2010) and tensions at work (Lau and Tan 2006).

Research results show that employees are willing to be much more engaged in their tasks accomplishment if they establish relationships based on trust with their superiors (Zhang et al., 2008). Engagement behaviours are reciprocated by management as indicated with Tzafrir and Eitam-Meilik (2005) who found that managers who expressed high trust with their employees, would more often invest in them by encouraging employees to develop a professional career, giving them promotions, and empowering them. As the result, employees feel obliged to reciprocate with higher engagement, commitment, and a similar level of trust, which is explained through the social exchange theory.

The reciprocal behaviours tend to be additive as there is evidence, for instance, that empowerment has a positive impact on trust in a supervisor-subordinate relationship (Brashear et al., 2005). In addition, vertical trust also increases when employees experience perceived supervisory support (DeConinck 2010), receive feedback regarding their performance, and have the opportunity to develop their competencies (Podsakoff et al., 1996). Perceived employee autonomy is also correlated with vertical trust (Cho and Park, 2011).

Employee and organizational loyalty. In our research, we have chosen to research the relationship between job characteristics and employee loyalty. A reason for this is that job characteristics have been proven to reduce turnover and absenteeism (Albrecht *et al.,* 2015; Hackman and Oldham, 1976), which are behavioural manifestations of employee loyalty (Świątek-Barylska 2013). At the same time, employers undertake purposeful activities aimed at shaping a work environment conducive to this type of attitudes and behaviours (Świątek-Barylska 2013), which may take a form of designing appropriate job characteristics. On the ground of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; DeConinck 2010), we may say that an employer expecting employees' loyalty must also be loyal to them. According to Krupski and Piorkowska-Wojciechowska (2005), attributes of a loyal employer include treating employees fairly, showing trust and appreciation of employees' efforts, as well as displaying interest in employee development.

In our study, we differentiate employee loyalty from organizational loyalty, following Niehoff's et al., (2001) view of the necessity of distinguishing loyalty from organizational commitment. Loyalty and organizational commitment are similar as both can be considered an attitude about an organization (Jaros et al, 1993; Niehoff et al., 2001). "Employees can feel loyalty or commitment to an organization, and they also can be loyal or committed to it" (Niehoff et al., 2001, p. 95). Employee loyalty is different as it is associated with a deep emotional attachment to the object or person without any need to be associated with a strongly held belief system. In contrast, organizational commitment includes a strong emotional attachment to the organization and its value system as well as a desire to remain with the organization

(Niehoff et al., 2001).

Although there are many definitions of employee loyalty, a common view is that the loyalty exists when employees make a long-lasting commitment toward their organization's success (Morrow, McElroy 1993; Jiang et al. 2008; Gill 2011). Employees demonstrate this commitment by showing a sense of pride and support for the organization (cf. Pina e Cunha 2002; Niehoff et al., 2001; Jacoby and Chestnut 1987). Examples of employee loyalty include defending the company from critical statements, highlighting positive aspects of the organization, and refraining from complaining about the company publicly (Niehoff et al., 2001). Yet, some researchers view the construct of loyalty in organizations as unfounded because their view is that organizations exist for profit, which indicates the relationship between the employer and employee is only economical (Duska 2007). We argue that loyalty is a valued construct due to the mutual bond that brings about positive organizational outcomes, such as increased job satisfaction increase in job satisfaction, in-role and extra-role behaviours, and reduces turnover intentions (Rhoades et al., 2001; Neves 2011).

Loyalty is considered as a multilevel construct including cognitive, affective, and behavioural components (Bohner et al., 2015), with the behaviour as either active or passive (Withey and Cooper 1992). An employee demonstrating active loyalty rejects job offers from other companies, expresses positive opinions about the organization or cares about the employer's property. In contrast, employees display passive loyalty by not searching for alternative employment and not publicly criticizing the company (Świątek-Barylska 2013). In addition, loyalty can be analyzed in reference to its objects, i.e. loyalty to an organization, its members, values, and to a profession (Powers 2000). The latter two are less relevant to our study: loyalty to values stands for acting in line with core values respected by an individual, and loyalty to a profession refers to developing a professional career in various organizations, but within only one profession. Loyalty to an organization and to its members is definitely more appropriate in the study regarding the effects of job characteristics on employee attitudes and behaviours. Interestingly, though the two loyalty types are not equivalent, there are many connections between these two. Loyalty to an organization is based on the extent that employees identify with that organization (Świątek-Barylska 2013), which according to the self-categorization theory (Turner 1999) depends on perceiving the organization members as an in-group. A study of Kramer and Brewer (1982) proved that the degree of identification with a group predicts the degree to which an individual will be willing to satisfy the group interests. According to van Vugt and Hart (2004), loyalty is defined as the willingness to stay in a company even when receiving better job offers and was observed more often among employees who identified with a group within their organization. In this respect, loyalty to an organization based on group identification relates to loyalty in interpersonal relationships, which is defined as remaining in a relationship regardless of any difficult and/or challenging situations (Świątek-Barylska 2013). That is why in our study we define employee loyalty as the attitude manifested with active or passive behaviour aimed at supporting the organization understood as the group of people through performance going beyond the call of duty. Such understanding of loyalty is close to the OCB dimension, however, it is more people-oriented than the dimension identified within the OCB construct (Podsakoff et al., 2000).

OCB is defined as "individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization" (Organ, 1988, p. 4). In order to distinguish OCBs from other extra-role concepts such as prosocial organizational behaviors (Brief and Motowidlo, 1986), organizational spontaneity (George and Brief, 1992) or contextual performances (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993) have been redefined as "contributions to the maintenance and enhancement of social and psychological context that supports task performance" (Organ 1997, p. 91). OCBs may be aimed at both individual coworkers (OCB-I) and the whole organization (OCB-O) (Williams and Anderson, 1991; Organ, 1997).

The most widespread categorization of OCBs is the one proposed by Podsakoff et al., (2000) including

the following components: (1) altruism or helping behavior, (2) sportsmanship, (3) organizational loyalty, (4) organizational compliance, (5) individual initiative, (6) civic virtue, and (7) self-development. The manifestations of organizational loyalty include promoting an organization in the environment, protecting it against external threats, and showing unflagging loyalty and commitment to the organization in hardship. The organizational loyalty dimension of OCB still needs additional work to improve the measurement (Podsakoff et al., 2000), which was an additional motivation for our study to distinguish the concept of employee loyalty from organizational loyalty.

Hypotheses development. The present study examines the relationships among job characteristic, vertical trust, perceived supervisory support, and employee loyalty. The selection of variables was dependent on the following:

− According to JCT, an employee whose tasks are characterized by more skill variety, identity, significance, autonomy, and feedback experiences a mental state of meaningfulness, responsibility, and knowledge of results, which leads to an increase in job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, higher performance, and a decrease in absenteeism and turnover (Hackman and Oldham 1976). These positive outcomes of job characteristics and employee job-role fit result in an increase in employee loyalty (Niehoff *et al.,* 2001). For instance, autonomous work groups are more attached to their organizations than low-autonomy traditional work groups and their attachment increases together with their seniority in the organization (Colder *et al.,* 1991). In turn, Niehoff *et al.* (2001) proved the direct effect of job characteristics on employee loyalty within a downsizing environment. We treat employee loyalty as the extra-role construct, which is why OCBs' antecedents identified in the literature are valid for our study. For instance, Podsakoff *et al.* (2000) analyze four categories of OCBs' antecedents including employee characteristics, task characteristics, organizational characteristics, and leadership behaviours. Their comprehensive study reveals that the strongest antecedents of OCBs are job attitudes, task variables, and leadership behaviours. Among task variables, task feedback and intrinsically satisfying tasks have a greater positive influence on OCBs, while routine tasks are negatively related to such behaviours. Many studies confirmed positive links between job characteristics and extra-role behaviours (cf. Piccolo and Colquitt 2006).

− Research proves there is a positive relationship between vertical trust, the supervisor-employee trust relationship, and OCB extra-role behaviours, which includes employee loyalty (Holmes 1981; Wech 2002; Singh and Srivastava 2009). Hence, we argue that vertical trust influences employee loyalty. In addition, there are a few studies on perceived supervisory support, leader-follower exchange, transformational leadership behaviours, and OCB, which showed that employees who perceive more support from their supervisor are more likely to conduct OCB, including employee loyalty (Podsakoff *et al.,* 2000; Ladebo 2008; Wang 2014). On this basis, we assume positive links among the aforementioned constructs, i.e. perceived supervisory support, vertical trust, and employee loyalty. This view is particularly supported by the social exchange theory indicating that organizational activities beneficial for employees create positive employee attitudes and behaviours, such as employee loyalty (Zellars and Tepper 2003).

Therefore, there is a question if job characteristics influence employee loyalty directly or indirectly through a vertical trust and perceived supervisory support. Based on prior research, results indicate that job-role fit is positively related to employee loyalty; however, prior research has not verified whether this impact is directly or indirectly (mediated) related.

Hence, based on the literature review, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H1: Job characteristics have a positive and direct influence on employee loyalty.

H2: Job characteristics have a positive and direct influence on vertical trust.

H3: Job characteristic has a positive and direct influence on perceived supervisory support.

H4: There is an indirect relationship between job characteristics and employee loyalty as mediated by vertical trust.

H5: There is an indirect relationship between job characteristics and employee loyalty as mediated by

perceived supervisory support.

Methodology. Procedure and research sample structure. The project was funded by the National Science Centre, Poland, on the decision number DEC-2016/23/B/HS4/00861. We adopted a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire to test the hypotheses. The questionnaire consisted of 137 statements investigating various types of attachment to the organization, job characteristics, and variables characterizing the work environment, including organizational trust and perceived supervisory support. The constructs and items were adopted from sources indicated in Table 2. Five-point Likert scale was used in the survey. The research study sample of 550 respondents reflects the Polish national employment sector, which primarily represents two sectors of the Polish economy: services and industry. In 2015, 29.7 percent of the sample population was employed within the industry, 59.9 percent was within services, and seven percent in public administration (*Employment, wages and salaries in the national economy in 2015*, Central Statistical Office, Warszawa 2016, http://www.stat.gov.pl/). We conducted the research study in 2014-2017. Table 1 contains the structure of the research sample.

Table 1 – **Research sample structure**

	Number	%		Number	%
Sector of the economy			*Type of employment*		
Industry	151	27	Contract for unspecified period	320	58
Services	368	67	Contract for specified period	142	26
Public administration	12	2	Other	67	12
Other/Missing data	19	4	Missing data	21	4
Company's status			*Education*		
Private sector	459	83	Higher	286	52
Public sector	91	17	Engineer	33	6
Size of company			Secondary	192	35
Up to 10 ppl.	46	8	Vocational	23	4
11-50 ppl.	67	12	Missing data	16	3
50-250 ppl.	166	30	*Position held*		
251-500 ppl.	114	21	Managerial staff	113	20
More than 500 ppl	155	28	Non-shop floor staff	70	13
Missing data	2	<1	shop floor staff	76	14
Company's registered Office			Specialist	253	46
Village	64	12	Missing data	38	7
Town up to 50 thousand	104	19	*Seniority in the company*		
50-250 thousand	47	8	Up to 3 years	264	48
250-500 thousand	42	8	4-8	149	27
More than 500 thousand	257	47	9-13	50	9
Missing Data	36	6	14-18	31	6
Sex			19+	31	6
Women	221	40	Missing data	25	4
Men	317	58			
Missing data	12	2			
N=550					

Table 2 – **Sources of constructs and items used in the study**

Mark	Construct/Latent variable	Sources	Cronbach alpha
JCH	Job Characteristics	Hackman & Oldham, 1980	0.691
VT	Vertical Trust	Tzafrir and Dolan (2004); Lewicka and Krot (2015)	0.914
PSS	Perceived Supervisory Support	Eisenberger *et al.* (2002)	0.920
EL	Employee loyalty	McFarlane-Shore *et al.* (1990); Foote and Tang (2008); Guillon and Cezanne (2014)	0.748

Results. A four-step data analysis process was adopted. First, the factor analysis (FA) and

confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used. Later, structural equations models (SEM) were developed for testing the hypotheses relationships in the study. The CFA and SEM were estimated using robust weighted least squares estimation (robust WLS) in the R program.

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis are reported in Table 3 and Table 4. Table 3 shows the mean, standard deviation (SD) of items and the unstandardized factor loadings for the CFA while Table 4 shows the goodness of fit evaluation and validity examination results for the measurement constructs.

Table 3 – **Descriptive statistics and factor analysis of items used in the survey**

Item No.	Item	Mean	S.D.	JCH	VT	EL	PSS
132	To what extent can you decide on the way the work is done (you have the freedom to plan and complete the job without interference)?	3,78	0,996	1.000			
133	To what extent does your work concern a holistic task (you are involved throughout the entire work process with visible outcomes)?	3,70	0,913	0.665			
134	To what extent does your job require multiple skills and abilities to accomplish the work?	3,84	1,074	0.835			
135	To what extent do you consider your work to be significant and important (affects the physical or psychological well-being of others)?	3,81	0,951	0.815			
136	To what extent do you receive feedback on specific, detailed, and actionable information enabling you to improve your performance?	3,72	0,953	0.752			
31	I believe my supervisor acts in my interest.	3,35	1,226		1.000		
22	My supervisor keeps his/her promises.	3,61	1,152		0.852		
24	I believe that my supervisor makes the right decisions.	3,60	1,090		0.851		
25	If I had any problems with anything regarding work, I could safely talk about my fears with management.	3,71	1,129		0.899		
26	My supervisor is a moral authority for me	3,11	1,200		0.906		
68	I know that colleagues count on me and that is why I would not leave my work from day to day at the moment important for the company and the team.	3,61	1,189			1.000	
64	I am convinced that one must always be loyal to his or her organization.	4,00	0,935			0.625	
69	I feel the internal duty of doing good work every day, so as not to disappoint my colleagues.	4,06	0,932			0.666	
71	I would not decide to go on sick leave for no apparent reason in a situation where the company needs me.	3,86	1,163			0.880	
85	My supervisor is a moral authority for me.	3,39	1,083				1.000
84	My supervisor is interested in my opinion.	3,55	1,033				0.901
6	My supervisor is kindly interested in my affairs.	3,41	1,149				0.974

As shown in Table 3, all of the items used load significantly on their intended factors. In Table 4, the sub-diagonal entries show the factor intercorrelations. There are two observations to note about the correlations. First, individual tests of the correlations showed that all are significantly less than 1.00, thus suggesting that all of the constructs are distinct. In spite of this, it is also important to note that the correlations between VT and PSS were quite high (r=0.691).

As clear from table 4 showing results related to validity examination for all the constructs the three conditions for assessing the convergent validity (1. Composite Reliability (CR) being greater than 0.7; 2. Composite Reliability (CR) being greater than Average Variance Extracted (CR>AVE), and 3. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) being greater than 0.5) were found to be fulfilled.

The χ^2 for CFA model is 210.698 (df=98), and the goodness of fit indexes, which are a measure of how well the model accounts for the sample variances and covariance, are greater than 0.99 (TLI=0.991, CFI=0.992, GFI=0.999). The χ^2 is significant, while the goodness of fit indices an excellent fit. It is well documented that with large samples, even small deviations from well-fitting models will be statistically significant (Joreskog and Sorbom 1986; Marsh, Balla, and McDonald 1988). The χ^2 divided by the

numbers of degrees of freedom is less than 3, which is considered acceptable. The value of root means square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) is less than 0.05, and thus, the structural model was accepted to be fit for testing the hypotheses.

Table 4 – **Validity examination results for the measurement constructs and goodness of fit evaluation for CFA model**

|	CR	AVE	JCH	VT	PSS	EL
JCH	0,816	0,527	0.380			
VT	0,936	0,745	0.251	0.857		
PSS	0,95	0,864	0.314	0.691	0.846	
EL	0,843	0,574	0.255	0.468	0.524	0.739
χ^2	p-value	CFI	TLI	GFI	RMSEA	SRMR
210.698	<0.001	0.995	0.994	0.999	0.026	0.033

CR – Composite Reliability; AVE – Average Variance Extracted; CFI – Comparative Fit Index; TLI – Tucker-Lewis Index; GFI – Goodness of Fit Index; RMSEA – Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR – Standardized Root Mean Square Residual.

The direct influence of job characteristics on employee loyalty. Table 5 presents structural estimates of direct effects for job characteristics and employee loyalty. It shows that job characteristics significantly influence employee loyalty (β=0.424, p-value=0.000).

Table 5 – **Structural estimates of direct effects for job characteristics and employee loyalty**

Description	B	Std.Err B	p-value	β
JCH EL	0.598	0.098	0.000	0.424
Goodness of Fit	df	df	p-value	RMSEA
	19	40.907	0.002	0.033
	CFI	TLI	GFI	SRMR
	0.988	0.982	1.000	0.034

Single mediation model: mediation of perceived supervisory support. Figure 2 presents the model of mediation of perceived supervisory support on the link between job characteristics and employee loyalty. Table 6 presents structural estimates of mediation of perceived supervisory support on the link between job characteristics and employee loyalty.
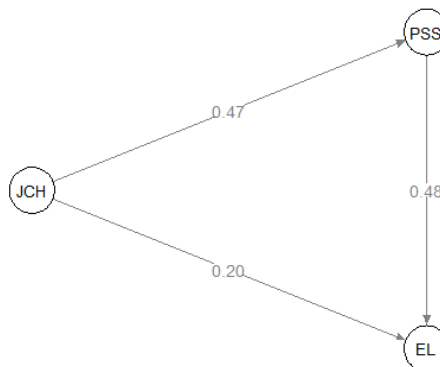
Figure 2 – **Model of mediation of perceived supervisory support on the link between job characteristics and employee loyalty**

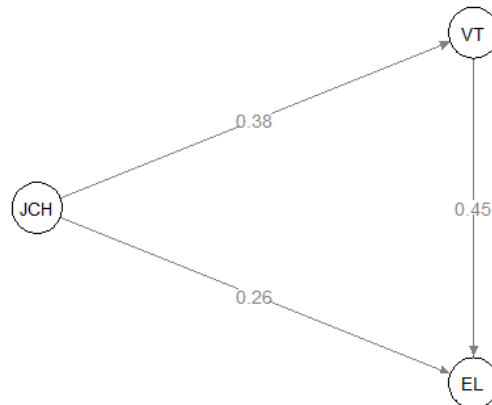All relations are statistically significant, i.e. PSS EL, JCH EL, JCH PSS. Job characteristics have an

impact on employee loyalty, both directly (β=0.202) and indirectly (β=0.223, p-value=0.000) through PSS. The total impact of JCH on EL (0.425) is slightly larger than in the case of the model without PSS (see table 6). Hence, we conclude that PSS serves as a partial mediator in the relationship between JCH and EL.

Table 6 – **Structural estimates of mediation of perceived supervisory support on the link between job characteristics and employee loyalty**

Description	B	Std.Err B	p-value	β
PSS EL	0.432	0.062	0.000	0.476
JCH EL	0.273	0.092	0.003	0.202
JCH PSS	0.698	0.108	0.000	0.469
Goodness of Fit	df	df	p-value	RMSEA
	41	84.489	<0.001	0.028
	CFI	TLI	GFI	SRMR
	0.993	0.990	1.000	0.033

B – unstandardized parameter; β – standardized parameter; CFI – Comparative Fit Index; TLI – Tucker-Lewis Index; GFI – Goodness of Fit Index; RMSEA – Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR – Standardized Root Mean Square Residual.

Single mediation model: mediation of vertical trust. Figure 3 presents the model of mediation of perceived supervisory support on the link between job characteristics and employee loyalty. Table 7 presents structural estimates of mediation of vertical trust on the link between job characteristics and employee loyalty.

Figure 3 – **Model of mediation of vertical trust on the link between job characteristics and employee loyalty**

All relationships are statistically significant, i.e. VT EL, JCH EL, JCH VT. Job characteristics (JCH) has a positive impact on employee loyalty, both directly (β=0.261) and indirectly (β=0.168, p-value=0.000) through virtual trust. The total impact of JCH on EL (0.429) is slightly larger than in the case of the model without VT (see table 7). Hence, we conclude that VT serves as a partial mediator in the relationship between JCH and EL.

Table 7 – **Structural estimates of mediation of vertical trust on the link between job characteristics and employee loyalty**

Description	B	Std.Err B	p-value	B
VT EL	0.373	0.054	0.000	0.446
JCH EL	0.328	0.087	0.000	0.261
JCH VT	0.568	0.104	0.000	0.376
Goodness of Fit	df	df	p-value	RMSEA
	62	136.212	<0.001	0.029
	CFI	TLI	GFI	SRMR
	0.992	0.991	0.999	0.035

B – unstandardized parameter; β – standardized parameter; CFI - Comparative Fit Index; TLI – Tucker-Lewis Index; GFI – Goodness of Fit Index; RMSEA – Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR – Standardized Root Mean Square Residual.

Full model. Figure 4 presents the full model of the link between job characteristics and employee loyalty with two mediators, i.e. perceived supervisory support and vertical trust. Table 8 presents structural estimates of links among job characteristics, employee loyalty, perceived supervisory support and vertical trust.
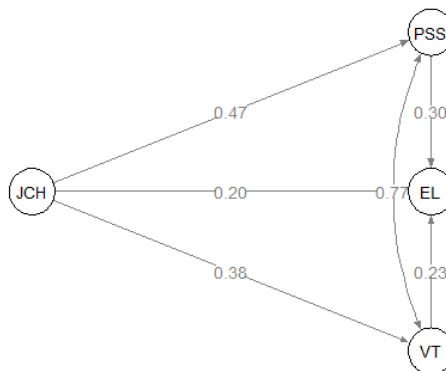
Figure 4 – **Full model of links among job characteristics, employee loyalty, perceived supervisor support and vertical trust**

Table 8 – **Structural estimates of links among job characteristics, employee loyalty, perceived supervisory support and vertical trust**

Description	B	Std.Err B	p-value	β
VT EL	0.188	0.085	0.027	0.228
PSS EL	0.256	0.098	0.009	0.295
JCH EL	0.248	0.085	0.004	0.202
JCH VT	0.562	0.103	0.000	0.378
JCH PSS	0.666	0.108	0.000	0.470
PSS VT	0.677	0.066	0.000	0.772
Goodness of Fit	Df	df	p-value	RMSEA
	98.000	210.698	<0.001	0.026
	CFI	TLI	GFI	SRMR
	0.995	0.994	0.999	0.033

B – unstandardized parameter; β – standardized parameter; CFI – Comparative Fit Index; TLI – Tucker-Lewis Index; GFI – Goodness of Fit Index; RMSEA – Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR – Standardized Root Mean Square Residual.

All relationships are statistically significant. Job characteristics have an impact on employee loyalty, both directly (β=0.202) and indirectly (β=0.225, p-value=0.000) through vertical trust and PSS. The total impact of JCH on EL (0.427) is slightly larger than in the case of the model without VT and PSS (see table 5) and it is slightly less than in the case of the model with VT only (see table 7).

VT and PSS constructs are strongly correlated (see table 4) and that is why the full model includes a correlation between VT and PSS (β=0.772, p-value=0.000). Results presented in tables 5-7 are similar regarding the overall effect of JCH on EL, and they differ in the size of the direct and indirect impact. Both PSS and VT are partial mediators, i.e. they take over some of JCH's influence on EL by slightly increasing it. To summarize, all model paths presented in Table 8 are statistically important and confirm all five hypotheses.

Discussion. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between job characteristics and employee loyalty, and the role of vertical trust and perceived supervisory support within the supervisor-employee dynamic. We showed that vertical trust and perceived supervisory support mediates the positive influence of job characteristics on employee loyalty and explains about 50% mediated direct influence.

Additionally, vertical trust and perceived supervisory support convey very similar and partly duplicative information indicated by the high correlation between them (cf. DeConinck 2010). In addition, the analysis showed that perceived supervisory support explain a slightly higher value of variance than vertical trust. Perceived supervisory support in relation to vertical trust is, in turn, more oriented on fulfilling individual subordinate' needs and highlights the role of benevolence involved with perceived supervisory support. Thus, perceived supervisory support's connection with emotional components is more meaningful (Yang and Mossholder 2010). Trust, except for benevolence, is built on the basis of rational premises, especially if we consider its components such as superior' credibility and competences. However, this issue needs further intense research.

Based on our study we propose to include employee loyalty within the OCB construct (Podsakoff et al., 2000), however, employee loyalty within OCB also needs further research to elaborate on this concept. Based on our results, namely the factor analysis, we state that employee loyalty is an extra-role organization-oriented behaviour, supporting not just the employees' immediate in-group members such as co-workers, but the organization as a whole. Thus, employee loyalty is both organizational and people oriented.

Subsequently, practitioners should encourage supervisors to display consistent supportive behaviours to strengthen employee loyalty. Notably, the results of this research study indicate that vertical trust and especially perceived supervisory support have a slightly stronger impact on employee loyalty than on any single job characteristic. Previous research supports this result and indicates that supervisors' roles are more significant in shaping employees' attitudes than organizational approaches and norms (Cheng 2001).

To summarize, our study contributes to knowledge in the following ways:

– Firstly, both supervisors' attitude (described by two variables -- vertical trust and perceived supervisory support) and job characteristics similarly affect the shaping of employee loyalty. Although there has been limited research on these relationships, the results of our research are convergent with research of other authors (cf. Cheng 2001; Piccolo and Colquitt 2006).

– Secondly, a factor analysis confirmed our notion of employee loyalty as oriented on both the organization and co-workers. This factor clarifies the content of the loyalty dimension that may be treated as a supplementary construct to OCBs' organizational loyalty. Employee loyalty encompasses items, which seem to connect strongly with both individual and organizational results. This analysis inspires further investigations within the framework of the OCB concept, which is also confirmed by other researchers. (Guillon and Cezanne 2014).

– Thirdly, to our knowledge, our study is one of a few that investigates the mediating role of vertical trust and perceived supervisory support in the relationships between job characteristics and employee. In

the literature, the need to explore the mediating mechanisms between the effects of job characteristics on employee behaviour has been repeatedly stressed (Organ et al., 2006; Chen, Chiu 2009).

Managerial implications. The results of this research may serve as a source of successive guidelines for managers. Firstly, finding that vertical trust and perceived supervisor support mediates the relationship between job characteristic and employee loyalty provides some clarification to research on antecedents of employees' attitudinal attachment to the organization. Building loyalty apparently involves more than just managerial support in supervisor-subordinate relationships. Loyalty-oriented behaviours from employees emerge from the perception of job characteristics such as autonomy and task identity. This is important because a lack of effort in job enrichment may lead to the loss of employees' attachment and devotion (Niehoff et al., 2001).

Contemporary organizations face the problem of talent shortage (Ewing et al., 2002). Hence, in order to attract individuals for employment, organizations should make efforts to strengthen employee attitudes including their willingness to proactively engage and conduct extra-role behaviours. Hence, practitioners should support employee loyalty in a purposefully and enhanced manner throughout organizations.

In addition, cultivating loyalty binds the employee and the organization and makes the employee less sensitive to possible intra-organizational crises, employers' errors, and alternative job offers. In this context, organizations should take planned actions that build and foster employee loyalty, which may protect the organization against future difficulties and crises.

Limitation of the study and future research. The quantitative research in the sample group of 550 people supplements the present knowledge about the influence of the job characteristic on employee loyalty with the mediating influence of vertical trust and perceived supervisory support. There are some limitations, however.

In this research, a five-item Likert scale was used to test job characteristics. It is necessary to continue the research with the use of a more elaborate scale, which will enable researchers to investigate the impact of every single dimension in the job characteristic scale on employee loyalty. Moreover, we did our study on the research sample reflecting the national economy sectors' structure. Thus, in future research, the next step that seems essential is to investigate particular industries or companies' types to grasp their specificity, which we assume specificity does exist.

Future research should be based on other research design to reduce the effect of common method bias. For example, a longitudinal method could be used to measure the relationships between job characteristic and employee loyalty with mediation influence of perceived supervisor support and vertical trust. The use of different sources would give another possibility (i.e., employees and their supervisors) to measure independent and dependent variables in a more objective way.

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Корпоративна поведінка працівників залежно від умов праці: роль вертикальної довіри та підтримки

Питаннями впливу умов правці на мотивацію персоналу та його рівень відданості роботі присвячено низку наукових праць. Не дивлячись на значний науковий доробок у цьому напрямі, залишаються не визначеними питання оцінки ступеню впливу тих чи інших характеристик праці на поведінку працівника. У цьому контексті доцільним є визначення сили впливу дій (підтримка та вертикальна довіра) менеджменту на поведінку працівника. У статті автори розглядають вертикальну довіру як довіру у системі взаємовідносин керівник-працівник. Для аналізу були зібрані дані шляхом опитування 550 польських працівників різних галузей промисловості. З метою визначення взаємозалежності між поведінкою працівника та вертикальною довірою автори використовували модулювання структурних рівнянь. На основі отриманих результатів можна зробити висновок про тісний взаємозв'язок вертикальної довіри та рівнz відданості працівника своїй справі. Отримані результати показали, що працівники, які обіймають керівні посади, мають вищий ступінь відданості роботі, аніж інші працівники. Автори наголошують, що отримані результати дають поштовх розвитку нових досліджень щодо аналізу факторів впливу на відданість працівника своїй роботі. Так, автори пропонують розглядати систему взаємовідносин керівник-працівник не лише з точки зору цілей організації, а й задоволення потреб співробітників, що тим самим призведе до підвищення рівня його довіри та відданості совій справі. Подальшого дослідження та опису потребують механізми комплексного впливу характеристик праці на рівень відданості працівника роботі. У роботі наголошується на необхідності проведення подібного аналізу з урахуванням специфіки функціонування компанії. Окрім цього, у подальших дослідженнях автори пропонують використовувати лонгітюдний метод з метою зменшення дії суб'єктивних факторів.

Ключові слова: працівник, довіра працівників, підтримка керівництва, управління, вертикальна довіра.