

## **Organizational Politics Perception and Work Engagement in Five-Star Hotels and Travel Agencies: Does Social Capital Matter?**

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### **Abstract**

This study explores how social capital (SC) dampens the relationship between organizational politics perception (OPP) and work engagement (WE) in five-star hotels and category-A travel agencies in Egypt. WarpPLS 7.0 software was used to analyze 389 valid responses using PLS-SEM. The results showed that the perception of organizational politics negatively impacts work engagement. Additionally, SC negatively impacts OPP and positively impacts WE. Furthermore, results revealed that SC has a negative moderating role in the relationship between OPP and WE, this means that SC dampens the negative effect of OPP on WE. The study reveals that organizational politics significantly influences work engagement, potentially acting as an explanatory variable in JD-R theory, and social capital also significantly influences this impact. This study provides a comprehensive understanding of work engagement dynamics in the hotel and tourism industry, highlighting organizational politics and social capital, and enabling HR practitioners to improve strategies and policies.

**Keywords:** Organizational politics perception, work engagement, social capital, five-star hotels, travel agencies.

### **Introduction**

There is no doubt that service organizations, such as hotel and tourism businesses, are significantly impacted by strong and positive relationships between employees and the organization. Hotel and tourism business success is significantly influenced by employees, who work under demanding and highly stressful conditions (Karatepe, 2013; Park et al., 2019). Bakker et al. (2008) assert that engaged employees are enthusiastic about their jobs and fully absorbed in their work. Work engagement is crucial for workforce motivation, productivity, and competitiveness, leading to higher job satisfaction, customer satisfaction ratings, and improved performance (Saks and Gruman, 2014). Schaufeli et al. (2006) assert that work engagement is a positive and fulfilling mental state characterized by vitality, effort, and absorption. Employees with work engagement also exhibit extra-role behavior leading to increased contextual performance in their jobs (Demerouti et al., 2015). Consequently, as noted by Jaiswal and Tyagi (2019) and Dai et al. (2021), highly engaged employees are crucial for maintaining good service. Therefore, hotel and tourism operators must hire employees who are committed to high work engagement to enhance the organization's smooth operation.

However, the insufficient engagement of employees in work is likely due to a high perception of organizational politics. Organizational politics remain an integral part of modern organizations, including hotel and tourism organizations, despite constant changes in structures and processes to optimize cost and profitability (Arefin et al., 2020). Organizational politics is prevalent in organizations where individuals prioritize their short-term or long-term self-interest over others,

whereas, perceived organizational politics refers to actions directed towards self-interest without considering others' well-being or the organization's well-being (Kacmar & Baron, 1999). Perceived organizational politics is common in the hospitality and tourism industry (Khairy, 2019; Khairy et al., 2023) as it frequently presents labor-intensive workplaces with significant job demands for employees (Liang et al., 2017).

Individuals and organizations can gain a competitive edge by investing in social relationships for mutual benefit (Pillai et al., 2017). Sözbilir (2018) defines social capital as a network of mutual trust among employees that improves efficiency. Individuals and organizations benefit from social capital in dispute resolution “i.e. resulting from organizational politics” and performance improvement (Lange, 2015). Over the past three decades, researchers have explored the physical, psychological, and behavioral impacts of organizational politics perception, but there is still a gap in understanding its impact on employee outcomes (Zhu & Li, 2015; Arefin et al., 2020). Additionally, studies on the relationship between organizational politics and employee work engagement are still limited, with few studies exploring perspectives on social capital (Asrar-ul-Haq et al., 2019). To fill these research gaps, the current study aims to investigate the effect of organizational politics perception on employees' work engagement with a specific focus on social capital as a moderator. This research provides a thorough knowledge of work engagement dynamics in the hotel and tourism sector, including hindrances to "organizational politics" and promoters of "social capital," allowing human resources practitioners in hotel and tourism institutions to improve their strategies, policies, and support systems.

### **Literature review and hypotheses development**

Organizational politics is “actions by individuals directed toward furthering their self-interests without regard for the well-being of others within the organization” (Kacmar & Baron, Citation1999, p. 4). According to Ferris et al. (1989), politics adds to stress by creating employee strain reactions and increasing political behavior inside an organization, which has an indirect influence on work outcomes. Research consistently reveals political behaviors as harmful power use for personal gain, even in areas violating organizational rules and interests, encouraging individuals to work against formal authority for personal gain (Child et al., 2010). Politics in an organization can lead to individuals disregarding the organization's goals and interests (Asrar-ul-Haq et al., 2019). Self-centered individuals often use destructive power to achieve personal goals, leading to negative outcomes (Elbanna et al., 2015). Organizations often experience conflicts and lower job satisfaction due to this issue (Khuwaja et al., 2020).

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory describes how job demands and resources affect employee well-being, including engagement, and how individuals adopt proactive and reactive work behaviors to alter these elements (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). The theory provides a useful explanation for the relationship between work engagement and organizational politics. According to the theory, job demands can lead to undesirable outcomes such as depression and burnout and, therefore, have a negative influence on engagement. Furthermore, stress caused by organizational politics depletes employee energy levels, resulting in decreased engagement (Byrne et al., 2017). In specific words, organizational politics has been suggested to decrease engagement (Landells and Albrecht, 2017, 2019). Consequently, the following hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H1: Organizational politics perception negatively impacts work engagement.

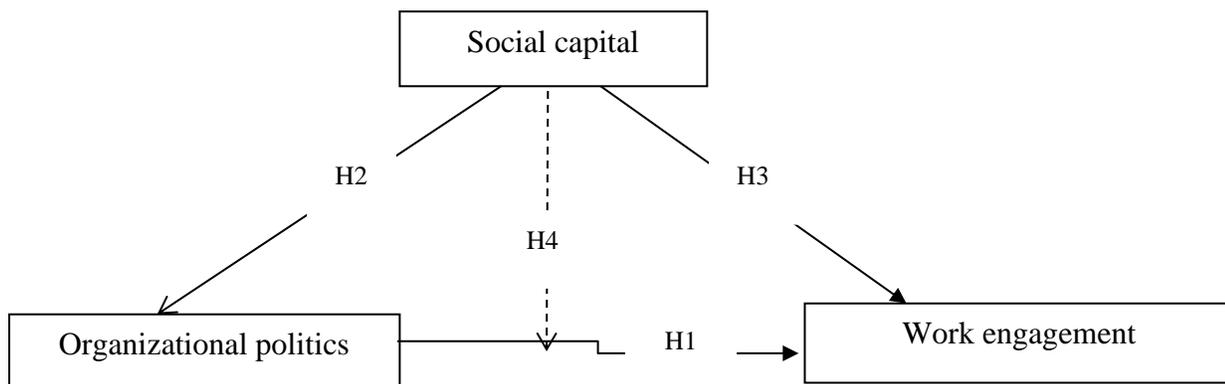
In today’s business environment, organizations are increasingly realizing the significance of integrating social capital with their intellectual capital to improve their performance (Berraies, 2019; Bontis et al., 2018). Social capital, which encompasses strong relationships, mutual understanding, shared values, goals, friendship, and trust, is a crucial factor in leveraging valuable resources "i.e., human resources" within organizations (Ganguly et al., 2019). Employee well-being is much greater in organizations or teams with strong social interactions and higher levels of trust (Requena, 2003; Berraies et al., 2020). According to Read (2014), social capital generates healthy work environments, which improves employee well-being and happiness. Ehsan et al. (2019) added that social capital and social resources have a substantial influence on affecting subjective well-being. Social ties have a major influence on employee well-being by providing access to social support, guidance, and collaboration (Agneessens & Wittek, 2008). The quality of the workplace environment is influenced by the satisfaction of basic needs through work. Social capital, consisting of connections, trust, and shared values, fulfills these needs (Sirgy et al., 2001; Hanet al., 2020; Ko, 2021). Increased social relationships lead to shared understanding, collective goal orientation, psychological safety, and meaningfulness, esteem among employees (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Ko, 2021), resulting in increased work engagement (Asrar-ul-Haq et al., 2019). Further, social capital promotes cooperation and coordination for shared gain (Putnam, 2015). It is made up of networks, norms, and trust and provides people and organizations with collectivity-owned capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Ganguly et al., 2019), resulting in a decrease in perception of organizational politics. In specific words, according to Asrar-ul-Haq et al. (2019), social capital modifies the link between perceived organizational politics and employee outcomes. Consequently, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H2: Social capital negatively affects organizational politics perception.

H3: Social capital positively affects work engagement.

H4: Social capital has a moderating effect on the relationship between organizational politics perception and work engagement.

Figure (1) below presents the conceptual framework of the study.



**Figure (1):** The conceptual framework of the study.

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Measures and Instrument Development**

The study used a self-administered questionnaire to examine organizational politics perception, work engagement, and social capital. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, measuring latent variables and addressing the characteristics of the sample. This study referred to the 12-item scale developed by Kacmar and Ferris (1991) to assess organizational politics perception. Sample items include: “In an institution, there is an influential group no one crosses” and “In an institution, some people build themselves up by tearing others down”. In addition, work engagement was measured using a 5-item scale proposed by Jung et al. (2021). For instance, “I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose” and “I am enthusiastic about my work”. Furthermore, social capital was evaluated using the 12-item scale adapted from Berraies et al. (2020). For example, “I maintain close social relationships with my colleagues” and “My colleagues share the same value that helping others is pleasant”. Appendix (A) provides a comprehensive list of the scale items.

### **Sampling and Data Collection**

The study model was tested using data from full-time staff in five-star hotels and category-A travel agencies in Egypt, which dominate the hospitality and tourist industries and both deal with international visitors. Egypt has 158 five-star hotels and 2222 travel agencies (The Egyptian Ministry of Tourism, 2018). The study utilized a convenience sample strategy due to the large population and limited resources of the researchers. For sample size, Hair et al. (2010) suggestion was used. Determining the appropriate sample size based on the number of variables studied, with ten responses for each variable in the measurement scale. After contacting human resources department to have a permission to distribute the questionnaire forms in their premises, the research involved distributing 750 questionnaires to various organizations in the Greater Cairo region, but only 389 were valid, resulting in a 51.9% response rate. The sample consisted of 212 surveys (54.5%) from 20 five-star hotels and 177 surveys (45.5%) from 40 travel agencies.

### **Data Analysis**

Using WarpPLS software version 7.0, the study employed the PLS-SEM approach and multigroup analysis (MGA) to analyze the study's measurement and structural model, testing hypotheses, and assessing significant differences among employees in hotel or travel agency workplaces.

## **Results**

### **Participant profile**

The study involved 389 participants, with 85.3% males and 14.7% females, with 37.5% respondents aged 30-40 and 48.1% under 30. The majority of the respondents (79.4%, n=309) held a bachelor's degree. Furthermore, the employment experience of the respondents was divided into four categories: less than two years, two to five years, six to ten years and more than ten years, representing 142 (36.5%), 120 (30.8%), 51 (13.1%), and 76 (19.5%), respectively. 212 were employed at hotels, whereas, 177 were employed at travel agencies.

**Table 1.** Employees’s profile (N=389).

		Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	332	85.3
	Female	57	14.7
<b>Age</b>	< 30 years	187	48.1
	30 : < 40 years	146	37.5
	40 : < 50 years	47	12.1
	50 and above	9	2.3
<b>Education</b>	High schools/institute	48	12.3
	Bachelor	309	79.4
	Master/PhD	32	8.2
<b>Experience</b>	< 2 years	142	36.5
	2 to 5 years	120	30.8
	6 to 10 years	51	13.1
	> 10 years	76	19.5
<b>Workplace</b>	Hotels	212	54.5
	Travel agencies	177	45.5

**Reliability and validity**

According to Table (2), item loadings are acceptable if they are greater than 0.50, and Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values are strong since they are higher than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010). Scale validity is demonstrated by AVE values greater than 0.5, and variance inflation factors (VIF) are  $\leq 3.3$  (Hair et al., 2020; Kock, 2015).

**Table 2.** Factor loadings, Cronbach’s, CR, AVE, and VIF

	loading	CA	CR	AVE	VIFs
<b>Organizational Politics Perception (OPP)</b>	-				
OPP.1	0.838	0.945	0.935	0.595	1.095
OPP.2	0.879				
OPP.3	0.767				
OPP.4	0.734				
OPP.5	0.501				
OPP.6	0.736				
OPP.7	0.692				
OPP.8	0.638				
OPP.9	0.836				
OPP.10	0.875				
OPP.11	0.817				
OPP.12	0.861				
<b>Work Engagement (WE)</b>	-				
WE.1	0.752	0.895	0.853	0.632	1.317
WE.2	0.818				
WE.3	0.852				
WE.4	0.742				

WE.5	0.804				
<b>Social Capital (SC)</b>	-				
SC.1	0.709				
SC.2	0.843				
SC.3	0.832				
SC.4	0.863				
SC.5	0.796				
SC.6	0.706	0.946	0.937	0.597	1.309
SC.7	0.641				
SC.8	0.595				
SC.9	0.701				
SC.10	0.839				
SC.11	0.823				
SC.12	0.860				

Furthermore, the discriminant validity of the study model has been achieved, as indicated by the results presented in Table 3. In their paper, Franke and Sarstedt (2019) said that "to ensure discriminant validity, the correlation between two latent variables must be less than unity, and the AVE value for each variable must be greater than the greatest common value".

**Table 3.** Discriminant validity

	<b>OPP</b>	<b>SC</b>	<b>WE</b>
<b>Organizational Politics Perception (OPP)</b>	0.771	-0.229	-0.135
<b>Social Capital (SC)</b>	-0.229	0.772	0.455
<b>Work Engagement (WE)</b>	-0.135	0.455	0.795

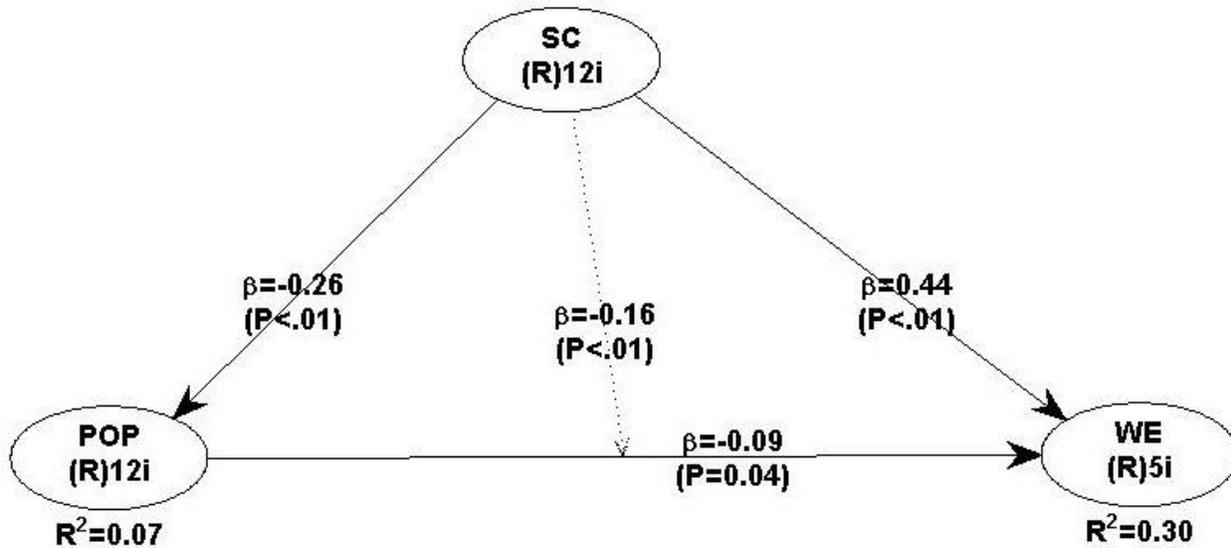
**The research model’s fit**

The study satisfied each of the ten model fit recommendations proposed by Kock (2021), which are outlined in Appendix B.

**The results of testing hypotheses**

The Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) was first conducted and found no significant differences in path coefficients between employees of five-star hotels and travel agencies ( $P > 0.05$ ).

According to Figure (2), the results of the hypotheses test show that organizational politics perception (POP) negatively impacts work engagement (WE) ( $\beta = -0.09$ ,  $P = 0.04$ ), indicating that an increase in POP leads to a decrease in WE, therefore, H1 is supported. In addition, social capital (SC) negatively impacts POP ( $\beta = -0.26$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ) and positively impacts WE ( $\beta = 0.44$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ), this means that when SC increases, OPP decreases and WE increases, thus, H2 and H3 are supported.



**Figure 2:** results of the hypotheses test

Figure 2 also reveals that SC explained 7% of the variance in POP ( $R^2=0.07$ ). Furthermore, SC and POP collectively represented 30% of the variance in WE, with an  $R^2=0.30$ . Furthermore, the results revealed that SC has a negative moderating role in the relationship between POP and WE ( $\beta=-0.16$ ,  $P<0.01$ ), this means that SC dampens the negative effect of POP on WE, therefore, H4 is supported.

### Discussion

This study aims to explore the effect of organizational politics perception on employees' work engagement with a considerable focus on social capital as a moderator. The findings demonstrated that organizational politics perception has a negative effect on employees' work engagement. This finding is consistent with previous research results conducted by Landells and Albrecht (2017, 2019) who argued that organizational politics has been suggested to decrease engagement. The way that people perceive politics has a big effect on how they feel, which affects how they behave personally and professionally (Saleem, 2015). Organizational political behaviors have a detrimental influence on individual attitudes and behavior, leading to stress and anxiety (Rosen & Levy, 2013). Organizational politics considerably contributes to workplace stress because individuals regard organizational decision-making as self-serving to defend their interests (Abbas et al., 2014). Organizational politics, which is inherent in organizational functioning, can result in negative outcomes such as stress, poor commitment, higher turnover intentions, reduced job satisfaction (Chang et al., 2009), and hence lower levels of work engagement.

The findings also demonstrated that social capital has a negative effect on organizational politics perception, has a positive effect on employees' work engagement, and has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between organizational politics perception and employees' work engagement. These findings are consistent with previous research results conducted by Asrar-ul-Haq et al. (2019), Ehsan et al. (2019), and Ko (2021) who claimed that social capital could modify perceived organizational politics and employee outcomes. The quality of the workplace environment is influenced by meeting basic needs through work, and social capital, including connections, trust, and shared values, fulfils these needs. In addition, social capital, composed of

networks, norms, and trust, fosters cooperation and coordination for shared gain, reducing organizational politics perception and providing collectivity-owned capital to individuals and organizations.

### **Implications**

The study reveals that organizational politics significantly impacts engagement, suggesting that it could be a significant explanatory variable in JD-R research models. The study also indicates that social capital plays a significant role in influencing organizational politics, adding to its potential impact on work engagement. This study offers a comprehensive understanding of work engagement dynamics in the hotel and tourism industry including hindrances to "organizational politics" or promoters' "social capital", enabling HR practitioners to enhance their strategies, policies, and support systems. This research shows that politics negatively affects work engagement, but social capital can mitigate this effect. Managers should focus on the social aspect to understand employee attitudes and motivation. Managers should address organizational politics deficiencies by giving unambiguous feedback, minimizing employee participation in political activities, and matching individual and organizational goals. In addition, to counteract the risk of firing politically inclined employees, it is suggested that human resource departments develop competency models that discourage political activities and incentivize managers to create non-political work environments. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of social capital in enhancing employee work engagement in hotel and tourism organizations, highlighting the need for hotel and tourism managers to foster a collaborative social environment. Managers should enhance social network formation to enhance work engagement, fostering a collaborative, trust-based environment and using incentives to instill shared values.

### **Limitations and further research**

The study's limitations include its focus on organizational politics perception as a hindrance to work engagement and social capital as a supporter, highlighting the need for further research. Future studies may investigate other hindrance factors such as distributive injustice and other supporters such as leadership style and organizational support to determine whether they yield different outcomes. In addition, the study findings should be replicated in various cultural and tourism contexts, such as Eastern or Western countries, restaurants, and airline companies, to confirm or dispute its conclusions.

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<b>Appendix (A): Measurement scales</b>	
<b>Organizational Politics Perceptions</b>	<b>Kacmar and Ferris (1991)</b>
OPP.1. In an institution, one group always gets its way.	
OPP.2. In an institution, there is an influential group no one crosses.	
OPP.3. In institutions, policy changes help only a few.	
OPP.4. In an institution, some people build themselves up by tearing others down.	
OPP.5. In an institution, favoritism not merit gets people ahead.	
OPP.6. In an institution, I don’t speak up for fear of retaliation.	
OPP.7. In an institution, promotions go to top performers.	
OPP.8. In an institution, rewards come to hard workers.	
OPP.9. In an institution, I am encouraged to speak out.	
OPP.10. In an institution, there is no place for ayes man.	
OPP.11. In an institution, pay and promotion are based solely on merit.	
OPP.12. In an institution, pay and promotion decisions are consistent with policies.	
<b>Work Engagement</b>	<b>Jung et al. (2021)</b>
WE.1. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	

WE.2. I am enthusiastic about my work.
WE.3. My work inspires me
WE.4. At my work, I feel bursting with energy
WE.5. I get carried away when I am working
<b>Social capital</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Berraies et al. (2020)</b></span>
SC.1. I maintain close social relationships with my colleagues.
SC.2. I know some of the members of my organization.
SC.3. I have frequent communication with my colleagues.
SC.4. I spend a great deal of time interacting with my colleagues.
SC.5. My colleagues will not take advantage of others even when the opportunity arises.
SC.6. My colleagues will always keep their promises to one another.
SC.7. My colleagues would not knowingly do anything to disrupt a conversation.
SC.8. My colleagues behave consistently.
SC.9. My colleagues are truthful in dealing with one another.
SC.10. My colleagues share the vision of helping others to solve their professional problems.
SC.11. My colleagues share the same goal of learning from each other.
SC.12. My colleagues share the same value that helping others is pleasant.

**Appendix B. Model fit and quality indices**

	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Supported/Rejected</b>
Average path coefficient (APC)	0.240, P<0.001	P<0.05	Supported
Average R-squared (ARS)	0.187, P<0.001	P<0.05	Supported
Average adjusted R-squared (AARS)	0.183, P<0.001	P<0.05	Supported
Average block VIF (AVIF)	1.144	acceptable if $\leq 5$ , ideally $\leq 3.3$	Supported
Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF)	1.200	acceptable if $\leq 5$ , ideally $\leq 3.3$	Supported
Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)	0.363	small $\geq 0.1$ , medium $\geq 0.25$ , large $\geq 0.36$	Supported
Sympson's paradox ratio (SPR)	1.000	acceptable if $\geq 0.7$ , ideally = 1	Supported
R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)	1.000	acceptable if $\geq 0.9$ , ideally = 1	Supported
Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)	1.000	acceptable if $\geq 0.7$	Supported
Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)	0.875	acceptable if $\geq 0.7$	Supported

## إدراك السياسة التنظيمية والارتباط بالعمل في فنادق الخمس نجوم ووكالات السفر: هل رأس المال الاجتماعي مهم؟

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تستكشف هذه الدراسة كيف يضعف رأس المال الاجتماعي العلاقة بين إدراك السياسة التنظيمية والارتباط بالعمل في فنادق الخمس نجوم ووكالات السفر من الفئة "أ" في مصر. تم استخدام برنامج WarpPLS 7.0 لتحليل 389 استجابة صالحة باستخدام PLS-SEM. وأظهرت النتائج أن إدراك السياسة التنظيمية يؤثر سلباً على الارتباط بالعمل. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يؤثر رأس المال الاجتماعي سلباً على إدراك السياسة التنظيمية ويؤثر بشكل إيجابي على الارتباط بالعمل. علاوة على ذلك، كشفت النتائج أن رأس المال الاجتماعي له دور معدل سلبي في العلاقة بين إدراك السياسة التنظيمية والارتباط بالعمل، وهذا يعني أن رأس المال الاجتماعي يخفف من التأثير السلبي لإدراك السياسة التنظيمية على الارتباط بالعمل. تكشف الدراسة أن السياسة التنظيمية تؤثر بشكل كبير على الارتباط بالعمل، ومن المحتمل أن تعمل كمتغير تفسيري في نظرية JD-R، كما يؤثر رأس المال الاجتماعي بشكل كبير على هذا التأثير. توفر هذه الدراسة فهماً شاملاً لديناميكيات الارتباط بالعمل في صناعة الفنادق والسياحة، مع تسليط الضوء على السياسة التنظيمية ورأس المال الاجتماعي، وتمكين ممارسي الموارد البشرية من تحسين الاستراتيجيات والسياسات.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** إدراك السياسة التنظيمية، الارتباط بالعمل، رأس المال الاجتماعي، فنادق الخمس نجوم، وكالات السفر.