

## Article

# How to Alleviate Hotel Employees' Job Stress in the Associations between Job Stressors and Its Consequences

Dong Yoon Yoo

School of Hotel and Tourism Management, Youngsan University, Busan 48015, Korea; dy@ysu.ac.kr

**Abstract:** This study investigates the relationship between job insecurity, job stress, and the psychological well-being of hotel employees, and the moderating effect of emotional regulation control on the causal relationship between job stress and psychological well-being. A valid sample of 428 employees was used from three five-star hotels and two four-star hotels in Seoul and Busan, South Korea, for hypothesis testing. After confirming the construct validity and reliability of all measurements, a structural equation modeling and multi-group analysis examine the postulated hypotheses. The findings are as follows: (1) the positive effect of job insecurity on job stress is significant; (2) job stress negatively and significantly mediates the linkage between hotel employees' job insecurity and psychological well-being, while the direct effect of job insecurity on psychological well-being is not significant; (3) the negative relationship between hotel employees' job stress and psychological well-being is dramatically alleviated by the seeking support strategy; (4) hotel employees' active coping strategy also has a palliative negative effect of job stress on psychological well-being; (5) however, avoidance is not an effective strategy for stress relief in the context of hotel employees' job stress and well-being due to the COVID-19 and job insecurity.

**Keywords:** emotional regulations; hotel employees; job insecurity; job stress; psychological well-being



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## 1. Introduction

As the COVID-19 situation persists, the hospitality industry is at risk of an economic crisis. According to the country's travel restriction policies and regulations, travel is arbitrarily restricted due to immigration issues and mandatory self-quarantine. In the context of limited cross-border movement, the business crisis of the hospitality industry, which has a high proportion of face-to-face work, has surfaced, such as airlines, hotels, duty-free stores, MICE, and travel agencies, which are closely related to travel [1,2]. Hotel profitability was also affected by the decrease in travel demand, leading to a reduction in the number of employees in the hotel industry [3]. In particular, in the case of employees working in companies threatened by the continuity of job performance due to COVID-19, it appears that job stress increases mental health, worsens job insecurity, and decreases job commitment [4].

The traditional hotel industry is a service industry and corresponds to a labor-intensive industry. It can be concluded that the dependence on human resources is relatively high and that the role of industrial workers is critical [5]. Therefore, the threat to human resources in the service industry due to the pandemic can lead to a decline in the quality of services, which may eventually affect the hotel's corporate productivity [6]. In other words, companies must solve job insecurity or manage job stress to improve corporate productivity. Rather than resolving the inevitable job insecurity due to the pandemic situation, the ability to manage employee job stress should be developed to cope with future endemic situations. A representative method of managing job stress is the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which can be seen as a result of increasing the corporate productivity of companies that have introduced the EAP, resulting from increasing corporate productivity if job stress is lowered [7].

Due to rapid globalization, job insecurity has caused many companies worldwide to face global competition. As business difficulties intensify due to the economic downturn caused by crises such as the financial crisis or the spread of virus epidemics, many companies are inducing business normalization by restructuring to reduce costs and enhance competitiveness due to organizational changes, such as restructuring and layoffs, and employee insecurity increases [8]. In particular, as the employment environment changes, such as a reduction of the workforce through multifunctional work performance or job integration and an increase in outsourcing excluding core parts and mergers, employment insecurity and job insecurity of employees are emerging as the most significant issues for service companies [9].

As income and living standards have improved in recent years, individual values and attitudes have changed remarkably and employees have become more interested in a pleasant life, working environment, and working conditions than salaries [10]. Furthermore, while recognizing the workplace as a basis for life by the concept of work, it became recognized as a place where one can find the reward or meaning of life and realize one's vision [8]. If members of the organization continuously perceive and experience job stress or job insecurity, their passion for the job decreases, their workability decreases, and they lose interest in others [11]. Additionally, increasing the turnover rate of organization members causes substantial losses to the company. It can even decrease well-being by causing psychological or physical sacrifices to organizational members [12]. Consequently, companies have recently become critical of the health and well-being of employees. Therefore, the topic of well-being has become a subject of great interest; not only in the field of psychology, but also in the field of organizational behavior [13]. Therefore, this study selected well-being as a result variable of the job stress and job insecurity factors.

We found that it would be a meaningful research task to navigate the negative factors that affect the well-being of hotel employees in this study. Additionally, it is essential to find ways to reduce the negative impact of job stress factors and job insecurity on individuals and organizations. Previous studies that sought ways to reduce or weaken adverse effects were limited to several variables. On the other hand, although it is already a well-known fact that job insecurity of hotel service contact employees causes job stress and hinders well-being, hotel companies have not found an answer to how to handle it. It is impossible for hotel service employees to reduce job insecurity by themselves because external factors cause it. In other words, job insecurity is part of job stress, and if it is an inevitable problem, it can be resolved with a control strategy that can effectively and efficiently cope with it. In previous studies on emotional labor for hotel employees, only the phenomenon of job insecurity and job stress has been investigated, and few studies have been conducted on how to solve this problem based on empirically verified data. Therefore, the search for regulatory variables that relieve job insecurity and do not affect job stress and well-being can be helpful in the field of hotel management, a representative service industry.

The current study employs emotional regulation, a potential variable to alleviate the negative relationship between job stress and psychological well-being. Furthermore, it is intended to investigate whether negative results related to well-being can serve as a buffer. By synthesizing the above discussion, the following research questions were derived. The objectives of this research are threefold: (1) to examine the negative consequences for hotel employees who experience job stress or job insecurity; (2) to look at how it will affect the well-being of hotel employees who experience job stress or job insecurity; (3) to examine what mitigation effect emotional regulation has as a factor that can lower job stress and increase well-being.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Job Insecurity and Psychological Well-Being

Job insecurity is a sense of helplessness that arises from the perception that it is impossible to maintain the current job in a threatening employment situation [14]. Therefore, it appears as fear or stress of losing one's job, which negatively impacts individuals and

organizations. Moreover, job insecurity is the opposite concept of job security and has been treated as an aspect of job security until the late 1970s. Efforts to clarify the impact on members began in earnest, as conceptual definitions were systematically established by Lazarus and Folkman [15] and Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt [14,15]. Based on psychological stress theory, Lazarus and Folkman [16] argued that job insecurity is 'a perceived helplessness because job continuity cannot be maintained when a job is threatened by an individual's subjective assessment of the risk and outcome of future job loss'. Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt [14] expanded Porter's concept of job insecurity [17], including variables such as invasion of personal life and technology and pointed to errors of job insecurity in previous studies. Furthermore, they showed how significant personal differences were and how people experienced and responded to job insecurity and investigated responses [14,16].

Psychological well-being is a state of discovering one's potential as a member of society and finding pleasure in life [17]. Ryff presented the concept of subjective well-being and differentiated psychological well-being in the study. Psychological well-being defines a state in which not only joy is gained in life as a member of society, but also the discovery of an individual's potential [17]. Later, Ryff emphasized the necessity of well-being considering various psychological perspectives and emotional perspectives and suggested the concept of psychological well-being, consisting of self-acceptance, positive interpersonal relationships, autonomy, control over the environment, the purpose of life, and individual growth [18].

Job insecurity factors were found to affect not only mental illness, but also physiological variables, such as physical symptoms and various physical fatigue [19,20]. In addition, it is confirmed that job insecurity has a negative relationship with psychological well-being, such as job enthusiasm and life satisfaction [21–24]. In this research, in the field of hotel organization management, well-being was selected, in which the job insecurity factor is a result variable. According to the above discussion, it can be expected that job insecurity factors will negatively affect the well-being of organizational members. On the basis of the prior studies, the following hypothesis was established.

**Hypothesis 1.** *Job insecurity of hotel employees will have a significant effect on psychological well-being.*

## 2.2. Role of Job Stress in the Insecure Job Situation

Job stress refers to a state in which psychological and physical conditions change and deviate from normal functions through the interaction of job-related factors and organizational members [25]. Typically, it is a condition that changes, destroys, and promotes the psychological or physiological conditions of the worker so that the job-related factors are correlated with the worker and deviate from the individual's growth potential. It can be defined as emotions, such as tension and worry, in the process of performing a job [26]. On the other hand, job stress is defined as a positive and negative phenomenon in a characteristic physical response to demand. Other scholars have also commented on the ambivalence of job stress because individuals tend to anticipate self-efficacy at work [27,28]. The findings of these researchers imply that stress does not necessarily play a negative role in an organization. Since the appropriate level of stress helps to improve organizational efficiency, controlling the level may be the key to organizational performance. However, job stress is generally known to have the most significant impact on the mental health of modern people, and stress caused by work overload, role conflict, and lack of work autonomy threatens the physical and mental health of workers [29].

Employees who perceive that they are likely to lose some or all of their jobs feel helpless if they do not know how to cope with these threats to their jobs, which causes them to experience stress while performing their jobs. Psychological tensions, such as anxiety, nervousness, low morale, and anger, increase [30]. Bies and his colleagues discussed that employees' experiences of job insecurity can impact their out-of-role behavior and formal job roles [31]. In addition, job insecurity refers to a state of incapacity and anxiety that

organizational members may lose their jobs in specific situations that are threatening to their jobs [32–35]. Accordingly, job stress and job insecurity are receiving much attention, mainly in the fields of organizational behavior and psychology, emerging as important social issues, and are being studied in various ways by scholars [36]. These previous studies support the hypothesis that hotel employees' job stress will significantly affect well-being. Moreover, as described above, since job insecurity can also affect job stress, it supports the hypothesis that job stress will eventually mediate the relationship between job insecurity and the well-being of hotel employees. Therefore, in this study, the following two hypotheses were established on the basis of these preceding studies.

**Hypothesis 2.** *Job insecurity of hotel employees will have a significant effect on job stress.*

**Hypothesis 3.** *Job stress of hotel employees will have a significant effect on psychological well-being.*

### 2.3. Emotional Regulations as Stress Alleviation Strategies

Emotional regulation refers to “processes to maximize pleasant emotions and minimize unpleasant emotions [37].” The concept of emotional regulation has been developed mainly in psychology to develop the ability to regulate children's emotions [38]. Traditionally, it has been applied to adults and children and has been expanded to coping behavior strategies for various stress situations in modern people. According to studies related to emotional regulation, people try to control their emotions through various regulatory responses to negative emotional triggers. The concept of emotional control began with a study by Rippere, who, as a result of his research, found that individuals engage in various types of behavior, such as meeting people, taking walks, or listening to music, to control negative emotions [39]. Several follow-up studies also support this study, and various emotional regulation strategies have been proposed to cope with negative emotional triggers [40,41]. Assuming existing psychological arguments related to emotional regulation, emotional experience varies from person to person [40]. Emotional regulation can have different effects depending on an individual's behavior to relieve unpleasant emotions, such as experienced stress [38]. Previous studies also show that individuals consciously act to control their emotions [38] and increase positive emotions [42].

According to the above discussion, emotional regulation can be significantly applied in positive and negative emotional situations. However, this study aimed to discuss the mitigation of negative emotional induction situations, such as job stress caused by job insecurity of hotel employees. In a study by Thayer et al., individuals control negative emotions through active or manual emotional regulation, attention distribution, emotional avoidance, emotional delivery, and drug use [43]. Totterdell and Parkinson argued that various individual emotional regulation strategies are primarily divided into cognitive coping, behavioral coping, and avoidance or distribution [44].

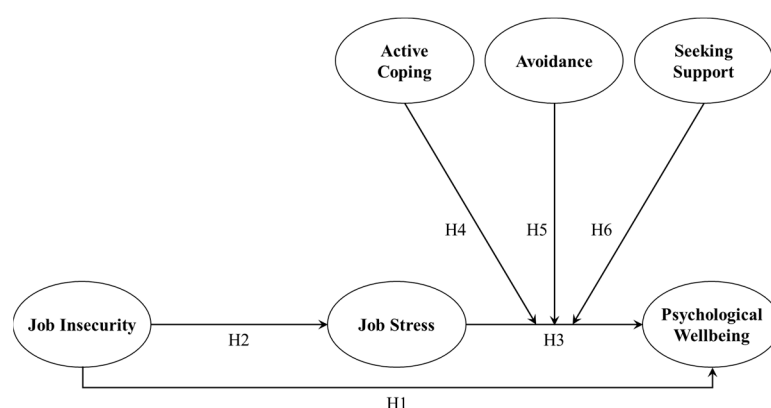
Additionally, people are exposed to various situations that induce emotions and respond in various ways according to emotional experiences. Because the appropriate response to emotional experience is directly related to personal adaptation and interpersonal success, people always feel the need for emotional regulation and ask how to deal with it [40]. In other words, job insecurity in hotel companies is not a property that hotel companies and organizational members can directly change, and this cannot leave the decline in psychological well-being caused by job insecurity as it is. However, as described above, if hotel workers' job insecurity indirectly affects job stress rather than directly affecting well-being, it can be inferred that hotel employees are reducing their effect on well-being through emotional regulation strategies that can alleviate the relationship between job stress and well-being. Although there are differences in the number and name of emotional regulation modalities among researchers, they generally follow the distinction between an active coping method and avoidance. Furthermore, many researchers have suggested that efforts to seek social support and escape negative emotional states should be divided into separate modalities from the previous two modalities. Therefore, it can

be concluded that emotional regulation strategies are divided into three categories: active coping, avoidance, and seeking support [45]. The following hypotheses were established to study which of these emotional control strategies can best alleviate job stress and increase the well-being of hotel employees due to job insecurity. In addition, the current study displays the hypothesized research model in Figure 1.

**Hypothesis 4.** *Active coping will have a significant moderating effect on the causal relationship between job stress and psychological well-being.*

**Hypothesis 5.** *Avoidance will have a significant moderating effect on the causal relationship between job stress and psychological well-being.*

**Hypothesis 6.** *Seeking support will have a significant moderating effect on the causal relationship between job stress and psychological well-being.*



**Figure 1.** Theoretical framework.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1. Subjects (Participants) and Procedures

This study defined the research population of employees working in hotels in South Korea. The researcher employed five managers as the survey investigators, each of whom works for the targeted hotels. They distributed a total of 500 questionnaires to their employees in three five-star hotels (300 copies) and two four-star hotels (200 copies) located in Seoul and Busan, South Korea. The participants assessed the paper-based questionnaire by the self-report method, and then they received the gift cards valued at approximately 5.00 USD. Out of 447 responses, 22 copies were excluded due to their insincerity and severe missing values. Finally, statistical analysis was performed with a valid sample of 428 copies (85.6%).

Regarding the demographic characteristics of the respondents, the gender distribution is 171 men (40.0%) and 257 women (60.0%), indicating that the proportion of men and women was slightly higher in the 5-star and 4-star hotels in Busan and Seoul, South Korea. Marital status distribution is 322 unmarried (75.2%), 105 married (24.5%), and 1 other (0.2%). Age distribution is 252 in their 20s (58.9%), 125 in their 30s (29.2%), 38 in their 40s (8.9%), and 13 in their 50s (3.1%), and 377 (88.1%) in their 20s and 30s accounted for the majority of hotel service workers. Educational background distribution is 13 (3.0%) that were less than high school graduates, 150 (35.0%) community college graduates, 241 (56.3%) college graduates, and 24 (5.6%) who had completed graduate school or higher. The educational level of the four-star and five-star hotels was relatively high. The years of service distribution is 181 with less than 5 years (42.3%), 106 with 6–10 years (24.8%), 46 with 11–15 years (10.7%), 17 with 16–20 years (4.0%), 15 with 21–25 years (3.5%), and 63 with over 26 years (14.7%). Monthly income distribution is 15 earning below 2000 USD (3.5%), 276 earning 2001–3000 USD (64.5%), 97 earning 3001–4000 USD (22.7%), 30 earning 4001–5000 USD (7.0%), and 10 earning over 5001 USD (2.3%). The distribution of current



positions is 304 clerks (71.0%), 48 supervisors (11.2%), 15 assistant managers (3.5%), and 61 above manager level (14.3%). Lastly, the distribution of work terms were 307 (71.7%) permanent workers and 121 (28.3%) non-permanent workers.

### 3.2. Questionnaire Development and Measures (Instruments)

In order to assess job insecurity, a unidimensional scale with four items was adopted from the four-item job insecurity scale in Darvishmotvali and Ali's study [46]. The representative questions are *"I will lose my job very soon, and it makes me angry"* and *"I am not sure I will be able to keep my job."* The job insecurity scale in the current study was anchored by a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 being *"strongly disagree"* and 5 being *"strongly agree."* Job stress was measured by a one-dimensional four-question scale derived from Bolino and Turnley [47], which was originally developed by Motowildlo [48]. Two of these questions were asked in a positive direction and reverse grading was conducted, and the representative questions were *"Very few stressful things happen to me at work"* and *"I am very stressed at work."* The job stress questions were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 being *"strongly disagree,"* and 5 being *"strongly agree."* To measure psychological well-being, the unidimensional scale with five items was adopted from the WHO-5 well-being scale that was validated in the study of Sischa et al. [49]. Ryff and his co-workers [17] originally developed the WHO-5 well-being scale, which covers positive psychology, vitality, and universal interest. The response was on Likert's 5-point scale (0 = *"at no time;"* 4 = *"all the time"*). The higher the score for the response, the higher the psychological well-being. Representative questions of psychological well-being include, *"I have felt powerful and in good spirit"* and *"I have woken up feeling fresh and restored."* For emotional regulations, the researcher used the 12-item scale used in the study by Min et al. [45], which is divided into three types: seeking support (4 questions), avoidance (4 questions), and active coping (4 questions). A typical question of seeking support is *"When I feel stressed at work, I seek help or advice from others,"* and the avoidance is *"When I feel stressed at work, I think of other unrelated things or focus on other things."* Active coping is represented by *"When I feel stressed at work, I do specific things to solve problems or improve situations."* Emotional regulation in this study was measured on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 being *"strongly disagree,"* which means that the emotion regulation method is rarely used in stressful situations, and 5 means that the emotion regulation method is used a lot [45].

### 3.3. Data Analysis

The researcher applied PLS-SEM to examine the theoretical framework and used Smart PLS 3.0 for data analysis [50]. The researcher specified the PLS model using six constructs and twenty-five reflective indicators in the first step. In the second step, the researcher evaluated the measurement model. This process diagnosed how much variance in the method contaminated the results, and the reliability and validity of the construct were confirmed. In the third step, the researcher performed PLS-SEM to examine the hypothesis. Furthermore, the researcher evaluated the mediating effect of job stress and the moderating effect of the three different styles of emotional regulation between job stress and psychological well-being. More detailed analysis procedures are provided in each result section.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Measurement Model Examination

#### 4.1.1. Diagnosis of Common-Method Variance

A common method variance is essential in a self-assessed investigation in a cross-sectional research approach [51]. As the current study mentioned in the above Methods section, procedural remedies were undertaken to mitigate the potential common method variance contamination. In an explicit way, the current study assured participants that the questions do not have correct answers and that their private information is not collected or recorded to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality of respondents. Furthermore, the

researcher separated each section of the questionnaire to eliminate the psychological connections of the respondents between the sections. In order to diagnose the possible method variance, a full collinearity examination was conducted. The results showed that the variance inflation factor ( $1.044 \leq VIF \leq 1.906$ ) meets the criterion of Kock's recommendation [52], which implies that the severe method variance is not diagnosed in the current study.

#### 4.1.2. Reliability and Construct Validity

In this study, all CFAs are conducted to evaluate the validity of individual measurement items, and reliability is evaluated by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which means internal consistency. The results are shown in Table 1. The factor load of all items is greater than 0.5 in the CFA results. In addition, the calculation of Alpha (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ), rho\_A (Dijkstra and Henseler's rho\_A coefficient), and construct reliability (CR) show that Alpha is at least 0.828 to a maximum of 0.908, rho\_A is at least 0.856 to a maximum 0.923 and CR is at least 0.824 to a maximum of 0.919. This result satisfies the reliability evaluation criteria proposed by Fornell and Larcker ( $CR > 0.7$ ) [53]. In addition, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  is found to be at least 0.828 to a maximum of 0.919. Therefore, the reliability of the research scales is evaluated as reliable. In addition, for the convergent validity, all outer loadings are at least 0.703 to a maximum 0.938 and average variance extracted (AVE) is at least 0.540 to a maximum of 0.741, which indicates that all measures are convergently validated (see Table 1). For the discriminant validity, the researcher compared the correlation coefficient and the square root of AVE. As displayed in Table 2, the minimum value of the square root of AVE (0.735) is larger than the largest absolute value of the correlation coefficient (0.559), which clearly confirms that the discriminant validity of the measurement model is established. Moreover, the appropriate range of the heterotrait-monotrait ratio ( $0.043 \leq HTMT \leq 0.559$ ; the cut-off value of 0.85) strengthens the confirmation of the discriminant validity [54]. The results of the measurement model evaluation obviously confirm that there is no severe issue concerning the reliability and construct validity of the measures.

**Table 1.** Reliability and convergent validity of measures.

Constructs	Indicators	Loadings	t-Values	Alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE
Job insecurity				0.850	0.856	0.851	0.590
	JI01	0.759	13.748 ***				
	JI02	0.715	14.442 ***				
	JI03	0.733	12.601 ***				
	JI04	0.857	18.322 ***				
Job stress				0.895	0.896	0.895	0.682
	JS01	0.787	23.778 ***				
	JS02	0.850	24.373 ***				
	JS03	0.811	25.841 ***				
	JS04	0.853	33.619 ***				
Psychological well-being				0.908	0.909	0.908	0.665
	PW01	0.825	21.470 ***				
	PW02	0.808	20.273 ***				
	PW03	0.784	15.285 ***				
	PW04	0.859	26.274 ***				
	PW05	0.799	23.734 ***				
Active coping				0.886	0.890	0.885	0.660
	AC01	0.841	15.460 ***				
	AC02	0.895	16.884 ***				
	AC03	0.753	12.120 ***				
	AC04	0.751	12.566 ***				

Table 1. Cont.

Constructs	Indicators	Loadings	t-Values	Alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE
Avoidance	AV01	0.795	4.793 ***	0.828	0.826	0.824	0.540
	AV02	0.733	6.362 ***				
	AV03	0.703	6.042 ***				
	AV04	0.704	5.305 ***				
Seeking support	SS01	0.883	11.513 ***	0.919	0.923	0.919	0.741
	SS02	0.938	13.790 ***				
	SS03	0.828	9.885 ***				
	SS04	0.786	9.206 ***				

Notes. Alpha stands for Cronbach's alpha coefficient; rho\_A stands for Dijkstra and Henseler's rho\_A coefficient; CR stands for composite reliability; AVE stands for average variance extracted. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

Table 2. Discriminant validity of measures.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
A. Job Insecurity	<b>0.768</b>	0.466	0.339	0.314	−0.115	0.075
B. Job Stress	0.466	<b>0.826</b>	0.559	0.262	0.043	0.142
C. Psychological Well-being	−0.338	−0.559	<b>0.815</b>	0.137	0.062	0.068
D. Active Coping	0.314	0.261	0.137	<b>0.812</b>	0.092	0.088
E. Avoidance	0.115	0.090	0.088	0.094	<b>0.735</b>	0.241
F. Seeking support	−0.074	−0.143	0.056	0.088	0.243	<b>0.861</b>

Notes. The boldfaced figures in the diagonal line are the square root of AVE. The lower triangular matrix includes the correlation coefficients between the constructs. The upper triangular matrix represents the heterotrait-monotrait ratio.

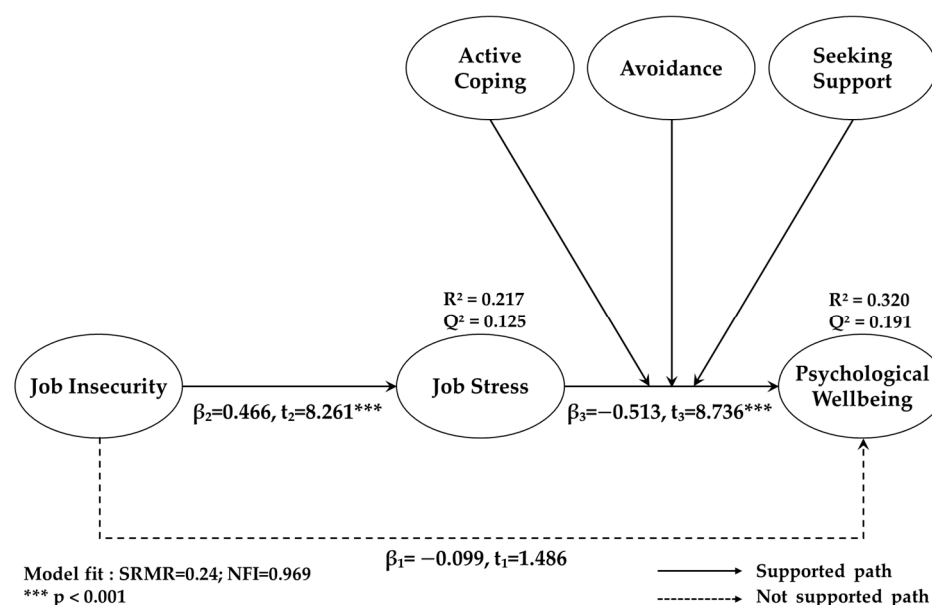
## 4.2. Structural Model

### 4.2.1. Individual-Parameter Estimate

PLS-SEM examined the posited hypotheses. Specifically, a consistent PLS algorithm tested the parameters, and 5000 bootstrap samples, bias-corrected within a 95% confidence interval, were evaluated for statistical significance. Prior to hypothesis testing, the researcher confirmed the prerequisites for PLS-SEM. The results of the tests for Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 using a PLS-SEM are shown in Figure 2. Standardized root mean square residual (SRMR = 0.24) and normal fit index (NFI = 0.969) demonstrate that the data fit the structural model well. Regarding the model's explanatory power, 21.7% of the total variance of job stress is explained by job insecurity, while both job insecurity and stress account for 32.0% of the total variance of psychological well-being. Regarding the predictive relevance, both Q-squared (job stress = 0.125, psychological well-being = 0.191) values are greater than 0, which represents that both antecedents are appropriate in terms of the prediction relevance to the outcomes [54].

Figure 2 displays the result of testing the hypotheses regarding the path coefficients among the constructs (job insecurity, job stress, and psychological well-being). The negative effect of job insecurity of hotel staff on well-being ( $\beta = -0.099$ ) is not significant ( $t = 1.486$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is not supported. However, the results reveal that hotel staff's perception of job insecurity has a positive ( $\beta = 0.466$ ) and significant ( $t = 8.261$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) influence on job stress. Hence, Hypothesis 2 is supported. In addition, the results show that hotel staff's job stress negatively ( $\beta = -0.513$ ) and significantly ( $t = 8.736$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) affects psychological well-being. Thus, Hypothesis 3 is also supported.





**Figure 2.** Path coefficients and significances from results of PLS-SEM.

#### 4.2.2. Mediation Effects

PLS-SEM examined the statistical significance of a mediating effect of job stress in the linkage between job insecurity and psychological well-being. The results found that hotel employees' job stress completely mediates the relationship between job insecurity and well-being. Specifically, Table 3 demonstrates the mediating effect of job stress between job insecurity and psychological well-being is found to be  $-0.239$  ( $t = 5.680$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In addition, no zero is included within the 95% confidence intervals, which clearly indicates that the null hypothesis regarding the mediating effect of job stress is not supported.

**Table 3.** Mediating effect of job stress.

Mediation	Effects	t-Values	L	U
Job insecurity => Job stress => Psychological well-being	$-0.239$	$5.680^{***}$	$-0.324$	$-0.160$

Notes. L is for the lower bound and U is for the upper bound within 95% confidence intervals. Absolute values are applied to t-values. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

#### 4.2.3. Moderation Effects of Emotional Regulations

Hypotheses 4, 5, and 6 indicate the moderating effect of three different emotional regulations (active coping, avoidance, and seeking support). A multi-group analysis (MGA) was performed to analyze the moderating effects of emotional regulation strategies on the causal relationship between job stress and well-being of hotel staff. The researcher conducted the prerequisite to examine the moderating effects of emotional regulations. Specifically, standardized scores for each type of emotional regulation were employed to categorize each moderator into the high and low groups. The positive groups, named "high active coping group ( $z = 0.820$ ;  $SD = 0.586$ ;  $n = 209$ )," "high avoidance group ( $z = 0.699$ ;  $SD = 0.635$ ;  $n = 243$ )," and "high seeking support group ( $z = 0.846$ ;  $SD = 0.649$ ;  $n = 202$ )" have the positive z-scores, while the negative groups, named "low active coping group ( $z = -0.783$ ;  $SD = 0.609$ ;  $n = 219$ )," "low avoidance group ( $z = -0.918$ ;  $SD = 0.546$ ;  $n = 185$ )," and "low seeking support group ( $z = -0.756$ ;  $SD = 0.552$ ;  $n = 226$ )" have the negative z-scores. The independent sample t-test identified the preciseness of the categorization between the two groups for the corresponding variables. The results demonstrated that each group of the highs and lows were evaluated to have a significant difference, which indicates that the groups are well-categorized. Then, the equivalences of outer loadings were confirmed

as a prerequisite of the MGA. The results identified that all outer loadings do not have significant differences between the two groups for each moderator.

The results of MGA for moderating effects of emotional regulations are shown in Table 4. In regards to the active coping strategy, the negative path coefficient ( $\beta = -0.735$ ) between job stress and psychological well-being is found to be statistically significant ( $t = 10.540$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) in the low active coping group. Simultaneously, the negative path coefficient ( $\beta = -0.464$ ) between the constructs is also statistically significant ( $t = 4.541$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) in the high active coping group. Additionally, the difference ( $-0.271$ ) between these two path coefficients indicates that the effect of job stress on well-being is significantly ( $t = 2.210$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) lesser in the high active coping group. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is supported. Regarding the avoidance strategy, the negative ( $\beta = -0.473$ ) and significant ( $t = 6.716$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) impact of job stress on psychological well-being in high avoidance group is lesser than the one ( $\beta = -0.583$ ;  $t = 5.494$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) in the low group. However, the difference ( $-0.110$ ) between such two coefficients is not statistically significant ( $t = 0.896$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). Accordingly, Hypothesis 5 is not supported. From the perspective of seeking support strategy, job stress negatively and significantly influences psychological well-being in both groups of low ( $\beta = -0.805$ ;  $t = 5.494$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) and high ( $\beta = -0.243$ ;  $t = 2.753$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) seeking support. In particular, the results highlight that psychological ill-being due to the job stress in the high seeking support group is dramatically alleviated rather than that in the low group because the difference ( $-0.562$ ) of the path coefficients between the low and high groups of seeking support is revealed as significant ( $t = 5.538$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). Consequently, Hypothesis 6 is strongly supported. In sum, by analyzing the moderating effects of the emotional regulation strategies via the MGA, the emotional regulations of seeking support and active coping are found to be effective alleviators to decrease the unfavorable results from job stress in the COVID-19 situation, while the avoidance strategy is not.

**Table 4.** Moderation effects of coping strategies between job stress and psychological well-being.

Types of Emotional Regulation	Low Group		High Group		Moderation Effect	
	Beta	t-Values	Beta	t-Values	Difference	t-Values
Active Coping	−0.735	10.540 ***	−0.464	4.541 ***	−0.271	2.210 *
Avoidance	−0.583	5.494 ***	−0.473	6.716 ***	−0.110	0.896
Seeking support	−0.805	14.666 ***	−0.243	2.753 **	−0.562	5.538 ***

*Notes.* Active coping (low = 219; high = 209), avoidance (low = 185; high = 243), seeking support (low = 226; high = 202); absolute values are applied to t-values; differences are the values of the high group subtracted from the low group. \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

### 5.1. Findings and Theoretical Contributions

In this study, the researcher investigated the effect of hotel employee job insecurity on job stress and well-being, the effect of job stress on well-being, and the moderating effect of emotional regulation strategies. A number of previous studies have identified the relationship between job insecurity and job stress, job stress and psychological well-being, or job insecurity and psychological well-being in the context of various customer environments, such as hotels and restaurants. Nevertheless, these studies have neglected to explore the role of job stress, which may provide insight in understanding the phenomena associated with stressors. The primary contribution of this study is not only to investigate the mediating role of job stress between job insecurity and psychological well-being, but also to examine the effect of three types of emotional regulation strategies on the relationship between job stress and psychological well-being. As a result, four hypotheses are adopted on the basis of these results. Moreover, a discussion of the theoretical implications for learning related to hotel organizational behavior and human resource management follows.

First, the findings of this study highlight that job insecurity does not directly affect psychological well-being, while it indirectly influences employee psychological well-being through job stress. These results provide a new insight that employees who perceive higher

insecurity at their job tend to experience psychologically lower well-being because they feel higher job stress. The current study delivers differentiated findings from some of the previous studies on job insecurity, which have omitted job stress as an essential mediator in the association between job insecurity and psychological well-being [19–21]. These findings also support the previous literature that claims that job insecurity is indirectly related to psychological well-being through job stress [30–32]. In other words, job insecurity can be a leading factor among various causes of job stress for hotel employees, and the well-being of hotel employees is eventually caused by stress accumulated due to continued job insecurity. This proposition is meaningful in that it revealed a more specific psychological process by adding a dimension of job stress to the results of several studies that examined the relationship between the two variables, which have been found to hinder well-being. Therefore, it can be more effective for the psychological well-being of employees to think about ways to manage stress, so that job stress does not decrease or hinder well-being due to job stress, rather than trying to reduce job insecurity.

Second, as a result of the verification of the moderators in this study, it can be inferred that the relationship between job stress and well-being varies depending on which emotional regulation strategy employees use in stressful situations. In particular, seeking support and active coping responses were highly effective in reducing the causal relationship between job stress and well-being, while avoidance was not as highly effective. Several previous hotel-related studies that examined the relationship between job insecurity and well-being only suggested that hotel employees were struggling due to job insecurity because they were analyzed from a phenomenological point of view, but did not provide research results on managing and improving it. However, the analysis of the moderating effect on emotional regulation can be said to differ from previous studies in this respect.

### 5.2. Practical Suggestions

To minimize anxiety about the organization due to job insecurity of hotel employees and improve the employee recruiting environment, hotel companies should develop various educational programs related to emotional regulation strategies and improve their relationships with colleagues. In particular, it is necessary to suggest ways to develop programs related to seeking support and improving relationships with colleagues, which are the most effective mediating strategies. Furthermore, hotel employees' lukewarm attitudes toward emotional regulation strategies can worsen job stress, directly affecting well-being. Therefore, to reduce employee job stress, it is expected that if side effects from job insecurity are minimized and managed as an emotional regulation strategy using human resource management measures, employee well-being can be induced, and the organization's desired goal can be achieved. Consequently, it is necessary to make employees aware of the goals pursued by the organization and actively collect opinions or suggestions from employees about the work to make them feel homogeneous.

Among emotional regulation strategies, this study indicates a stronger relationship between job stress and well-being than the group that used lower active measures. This result implies an emotional regulation strategy that alleviates the relationship between job stress and well-being. In other words, it means that, in a stressful situation, humans recognize the causes and problems in this situation and make efforts to solve them on their own, gradually escaping from the stressful situation and approaching well-being. Therefore, in a situation where it is cost-effective to place the psychotherapy experts mentioned above in a hotel to receive psychological counseling in case of conflict, regular education should be included in actively coping with job stress. This study suggests that self-psychological control training methods, such as meditation, may be effective in these specific measures.

### 5.3. Conclusions

The current study has important implications for the body of knowledge on job insecurity and psychological well-being by adopting emotional regulation on job stress of hospitality front-line staff. The main theoretical meaning of this study in the hospitality

management literature is unique in that it is one of the few attempts to investigate emotional regulation strategies that have an impact on moderating the consequences of job insecurity, mainly on alleviating job stress and psychological well-being. These implications can attract and have led hospitality scholars to better understand job stress and well-being management and further investigate this issue. Additionally, despite extensive research on job insecurity, some questions remain, such as how job insecurity affects job insecurity behavioral strategies and outcomes. How can hotel front-line staff handle job insecurity and manage stress and well-being effectively? By bringing up these questions, this study reinforces the theory as it fills the knowledge gap and adds to the growing literature on job insecurity, job stress, and psychological well-being in the hospitality field.

In the modern hospitality industry, the recognition of the importance of sustainability and efforts to maintain it present a great purpose and direction for companies to move forward. Ultimately, to create an employment environment for sustainable management of the hospitality industry, efforts should be made to clearly understand and solve the causes, impacts, and mitigation effects of hospitality employees.

#### 5.4. Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

This study has several limitations in deriving the following factors and outcome factors for the moderating effect of job insecurity, job stress, well-being, and emotional regulation for hotel employees. Although an efficient management plan for hotel employees is proposed, it has limitations in proposing generalizations similar to previous studies. If these limitations are supplemented, research can be conducted that can contribute more to the hotel industry and academia in the future. First, although this study may vary depending on the demographic, regional, and hotel-specific characteristics of the survey aimed at job security, job stress, and well-being perceived by hotel employees, generalization problems can arise. Therefore, in future studies, an investigation design should be carried out, taking into account various research subjects. Second, to measure job insecurity, job stress, and well-being, the study results of the subjective perception of respondents may be distorted because respondents are directly evaluated by self-report. Therefore, it is necessary to apply objective data, such as individual interviews, participant observation, and performance management systems to the research in future studies. Third, hotel employees were set as a sample and analyzed without dividing the survey subjects into permanent and non-permanent workers, so in future studies, various studies should be performed to analyze job insecurity, job stress, and well-being.

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