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The Hospitality Stress Matrix: Exploring Job Stressors and Their Effects on Psychological Well-Being

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Abstract: This research examines the role of job stressors in the hospitality industry and their impact on front-line employees' job stress and psychological well-being. Unique stressors identified include job insecurity, interpersonal conflict, and emotional labor, each of which pose a significant influence on job stress. This study utilized Smart PLS 3.0 for analysis. Using a judgmental sampling method, questionnaires were given to service touchpoint department employees with over a year's experience. The self-reported survey took place from 25 to 30 March 2023. Interestingly, while these factors significantly contribute to job stress, their direct effect on psychological well-being was found to be statistically insignificant. Instead, job stress emerged as a significant mediator between these job stressors and psychological well-being. Consequently, the research uncovers the need for hospitality organizations to devise effective stress management and mitigation strategies, rather than solely focusing on reducing the presence of job stressors. Practical recommendations for industry management, encompassing strategies for reducing job insecurity, managing interpersonal conflicts and emotional labor, and the implementation of stress management programs, are provided. These insights have potential implications not only for enhancing employee well-being but also for fostering a more resilient and thriving hospitality sector.

Keywords: hospitality employees; interpersonal conflict; emotional labor; job insecurity; job stress; psychological well-being



Citation: Yoo, D.Y. The Hospitality Stress Matrix: Exploring Job Stressors and Their Effects on Psychological Well-Being. *Sustainability* **2023**, *15*, 13116. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151713116>

Academic Editors: Kittisak Jermsittiparsert, Petra Heidler, Roy Rillera Marzo and Ahmad Harakan

Received: 7 August 2023

Revised: 27 August 2023

Accepted: 30 August 2023

Published: 31 August 2023



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1. Introduction

Front-line employees in the hospitality industry operate in a work environment teeming with unique stressors. Characterized by its fast-paced and demanding nature, the hospitality sector often places intense demands on employees, such as extensive working hours and high-performance expectations, which can elevate job stress levels [1]. Alongside these factors, this type of role often involve grappling with unclear responsibilities and conflicting job demands, known as role ambiguity and role conflict, adding to the stress quotient of these roles [2]. The presence of such stressors can make work in the hospitality industry particularly challenging, affecting not just the employee's well-being but also the quality of service delivered [3]. This dynamic creates a compelling need for thorough research and investigation into the specific stressors faced by hospitality employees, to help the industry devise effective stress management and mitigation strategies.

The inherent stressors of the hospitality industry underscore the critical roles of interpersonal conflict, emotional labor, and job insecurity, particularly in this service-oriented sector. Interpersonal conflict is particularly prominent due to the industry's high degree of teamwork and customer interaction, leading to elevated job stress levels, impacting job satisfaction, productivity, and service quality [4,5]. Emotional labor, fundamental to hospitality roles with continual customer interaction, can precipitate emotionally taxing situations and increased job stress, particularly during challenging customer service scenarios [6–8]. Lastly, job insecurity, exacerbated by sector-specific characteristics such as seasonal employment, contractual work, and high turnover rates, can amplify job stress [9,10]. In sum, these

factors present a unique set of challenges for hospitality employees, contributing to high levels of job stress within the industry.

The rapidly growing hospitality industry, often characterized by a high-stress environment, significantly impacts the psychological well-being of its employees [11]. As a service-oriented sector, hospitality demands its workforce maintain consistently high levels of customer satisfaction, which can translate into potentially stressful scenarios [12]. Job-related stressors vary from job insecurity and long working hours to low pay and high levels of emotional labor [13], all contributing to a challenging work environment [14]. The role of these stressors and their subsequent impact on the psychological well-being of hospitality service employees emerge as crucial research areas [15]. This study delves into the multiple stress factors inherent in the hospitality sector and examines their impact on employees' mental health. It underscores the importance of establishing robust coping strategies and fostering a supportive work environment [16].

Building on the aforementioned discussion, we distilled the following research inquiries. This research has three primary aims: (1) to investigate the adverse outcomes that hospitality front-line employees may encounter due to job stressors or job stress; (2) to explore the potential impact of these job stressors on the well-being of hotel employees; and (3) to scrutinize the potential mediating effect between job stressors and psychological well-being.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Role of Job Stressors in Job Stress Situation

Job stress, or occupational stress, refers to the physical and emotional responses that occur when the demands of a job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of an employee. This definition recognizes job stress as an interactional phenomenon, contingent on the relationship between the individual and the conditions of his or her work [17].

Interpersonal conflict in the hospitality industry refers to the discord or disagreement that occurs between two or more individuals in the workplace, primarily resulting from differences in personal or professional viewpoints, interests, or values [4]. It can be categorized into relationship conflict, which revolves around personal incompatibilities and disagreements, and task conflict, which refers to differences in viewpoints and opinions about task-related issues [18]. In the high-pressure environment of the hospitality industry, such interpersonal conflicts often escalate, contributing significantly to job stress [19]. Interpersonal conflicts can induce stress responses such as increased anxiety, frustration, and decreased job satisfaction [20]. Moreover, prolonged exposure to such conflicts can lead to burnout, a chronic psychological syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional efficacy, further adding to the stress experienced by hospitality service workers [21]. Addressing interpersonal conflict and its relation to job stress in the hospitality sector is crucial to ensure the psychological well-being of employees, enhance team cohesion, and maintain high service quality [22].

Emotional labor in the hospitality industry is the process whereby employees manage their emotions to fulfill the emotional requirements of their jobs. These requirements often involve expressing socially desired emotions during interpersonal transactions with customers [6]. The dimensions of emotional labor can be categorized into two strategies: surface acting, which involves modifying one's observable emotional expressions to meet job expectations without changing one's inner feelings, and deep acting, where one tries to modify their inner feelings to match the required emotional expressions [23]. The exertion of emotional labor in the hospitality industry has been closely linked to job stress. The constant regulation of emotions and feelings to meet job requirements can be mentally and emotionally exhausting [24], leading to heightened levels of stress [8]. This psychological strain often manifests as burnout, emotional exhaustion, and decreased job satisfaction, consequently impacting employees' overall well-being and work performance [15]. Understanding the dynamics of emotional labor and its relationship with job stress in the hospitality industry is essential. It allows for the creation of strategies to mitigate the

negative impacts on the psychological health of the workforce, thereby enhancing their job satisfaction and service quality [25].

In the hospitality sector, job insecurity pertains to the perceived vulnerability regarding job stability, defined by an individual's sense of limited control over the future prospects of their position [26]. This can manifest in various forms, such as the fear of job loss, uncertainty about future employment conditions, or the unpredictability of job tasks and roles [27]. The relationship between job insecurity and job stress has been widely studied and confirmed in various sectors, including the hospitality industry [28]. Job insecurity can trigger various mental stress reactions, including anxiety, sadness, and irritability, negatively impacting an individual's mental well-being [29]. Additionally, the persistent worry and ambiguity stemming from job insecurity can elevate job stress levels. This increased stress can subsequently influence job contentment, allegiance to the organization, and intentions to leave the job [30]. Addressing job insecurity and understanding its link to job stress is crucial in the hospitality industry. Such understanding can provide insights into creating effective strategies for managing job insecurity and reducing job stress, thereby improving employees' overall well-being and productivity. Based on our preceding discourse, it seems plausible to predict that factors causing job stress can indeed influence the level of job stress among employees within an organization. Building upon prior scholarly research, we have formulated the subsequent hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. *Interpersonal conflict experienced by hospitality employees is likely to have a significant effect on job stress.*

Hypothesis 2. *Emotional labor experienced by hospitality employees is likely to have a significant effect on job stress.*

Hypothesis 3. *Job insecurity experienced by hospitality employees is likely to have a significant effect on job stress.*

2.2. Impacts of Job Stressors on Mental Health

Psychological well-being pertains to how an individual perceives and experiences positive aspects of their existence. It includes dimensions such as self-appreciation, individual development, having a sense of life's purpose, mastery over one's surroundings, independence, and maintaining positive interpersonal relationships. This holistic understanding extends beyond mere emotions of joy or satisfaction, probing further into a person's perception of self-realization and their interactions within individual and collective contexts [31].

Interpersonal conflict within the hospitality industry has been considered a significant stressor influencing employees' psychological well-being [6]. In this setting, interactions between customers and employees are frequent and intense, often leading to disputes that negatively impact the mental well-being of staff. Conflicts can stem from a variety of sources, including customers' unrealistic expectations, unmet needs, or dissatisfaction with services, and dealing with such conflicts can lead to emotional exhaustion, job dissatisfaction, and reduced commitment to the organization [16]. Moreover, conflicts among team members, often stemming from work overload, lack of clear roles, and poor communication, may also contribute to a detrimental work environment [11]. Such conflicts have been found to lower employees' job satisfaction, negatively impacting their overall psychological well-being [14]. In order to maintain a healthier working environment and enhance employees' psychological well-being, it is critical to address interpersonal conflict through effective communication, clear role definitions, and supportive management [32]. Furthermore, fostering an organizational culture that encourages mutual respect and understanding among employees can also help to reduce the occurrence of interpersonal conflicts and, in turn, reduce the negative impact on employees' psychological well-being.

The hospitality industry is a sector characterized by high levels of emotional labor, a factor that has significant implications for employees' psychological well-being [15]. Emotional labor, as defined by Hochschild [6], involves regulating one's emotions to align

with the expectations of the organization or job role, which is especially pertinent in the service-focused hospitality sector. Staff members are typically required to display a friendly and approachable attitude irrespective of their true emotions [33]. This can create emotional discord, potentially leading to burnout, characterized by emotional, psychological, and physical fatigue [34]. This emotional discrepancy can be highly stressful and lead to diminished psychological well-being, reduced job satisfaction, and increased intention to leave the job [16]. Given the high-stakes nature of the hospitality industry where customer satisfaction is paramount, the stress of managing emotions can be particularly taxing, contributing to negative psychological outcomes [35]. As such, organizations need to provide adequate support to employees to cope with the emotional demands of their roles. This support can come in the form of training in emotion management strategies, the promotion of an emotionally healthy work environment, and efforts to reduce the emotional demands placed on employees [36].

The hospitality industry, particularly impacted by external market dynamics and economic fluctuations, often exposes its employees to considerable levels of job insecurity [29]. Job insecurity is characterized by the perceived threat of job loss and the concerns related to the continued existence of the job in the future [26]. Such perceived insecurity can lead to substantial stress among employees, potentially damaging their psychological well-being. Previous research has identified job insecurity as one of the primary stressors in the hospitality sector [16,37]. Sustained job insecurity can lead to detrimental health outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, reduced job satisfaction, and decreased life satisfaction [38]. Furthermore, the fear of potential job loss can also foster a climate of uncertainty that may enhance employee disengagement and reduce organizational commitment [39]. Given the high-stakes and often unpredictable nature of the hospitality industry, managing job insecurity becomes crucial [40]. Effective communication and supportive HR practices can potentially alleviate some of the detrimental impacts of job insecurity on employees' psychological well-being [41]. Drawing on the preceding analysis, it is reasonable to conjecture that stressors at the workplace could indeed impact the psychological well-being of employees within an organization. Using existing research as a foundation, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

Hypothesis 4. *Interpersonal conflict experienced by hospitality employees is likely to have a significant effect on psychological well-being.*

Hypothesis 5. *Emotional labor experienced by hospitality employees is likely to have a significant effect on psychological well-being.*

Hypothesis 6. *Job insecurity experienced by hospitality employees is likely to have a significant effect on psychological well-being.*

2.3. Linkage between Job Stress and Well-Being

Job stress in the hospitality industry is a substantial contributor to employees' diminished psychological well-being. As a sector characterized by intense customer interaction, service demands, and irregular work schedules, hospitality exposes its workers to high levels of stress, inevitably impacting their psychological health [1]. Job stress can manifest in various ways, including emotional exhaustion, job dissatisfaction, and decreased life satisfaction, significantly impinging on individuals' psychological well-being [42]. Moreover, research shows that chronic exposure to job stress can lead to severe health outcomes, such as depression, anxiety, and burnout, significantly impacting individuals' overall psychological state [43]. In light of this, addressing job stress in the hospitality industry is crucial. Understanding its impacts on employees' psychological well-being can inform the development of supportive policies and interventions, contributing to improved health outcomes and job satisfaction among hospitality workers. Informed by the previous assessment, we can make an informed hypothesis that job-induced stress could indeed have substantial effects on the psychological well-being of employees within an organizational setting. This

hypothesis has been formulated based on a careful examination of the existing body of research (Figure 1).

Hypothesis 7. *Job stress experienced by hospitality employees is likely to have a significant effect on psychological well-being.*

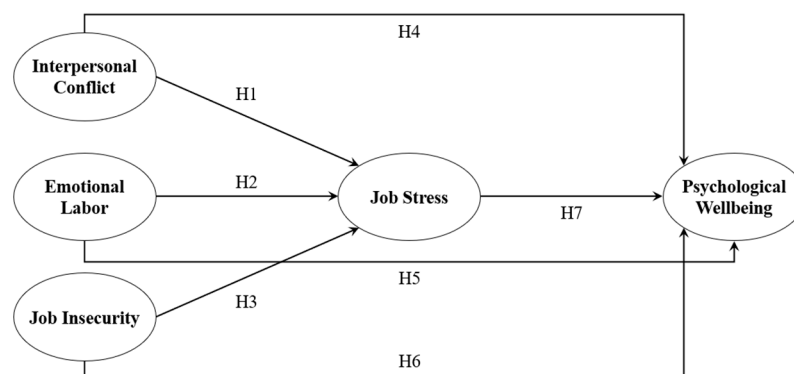


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework.

3. Methods

3.1. Subjects and Procedures

The research population for this study was composed of employees serving in the hospitality industry's service sector in South Korea. Four managerial personnel, each operating across five distinct hospitality areas including hotels, F&B, airlines, tourism, and MICE, among others, were tasked with administering the surveys. Additionally, the questionnaire was distributed to employees working in departments that could represent service touchpoints, specifically targeting those who had worked for more than one year, based on a judgmental sampling method. The survey was administered through self-reporting. It was conducted over five days, from 25 to 30 March 2023. The researcher personally visited the respective company for both distribution and collection. They disseminated a total of 500 questionnaires across 52 different companies in Seoul and Busan. The participants were asked to self-assess using paper-based questionnaires and were subsequently rewarded with gift cards worth approximately USD 5.00. Out of the 411 responses received, 204 were excluded from the final analysis for various reasons: 9 due to disagreement, 34 because they were incomplete, 160 perceived as insincere, and 1 disqualified directly from the survey. This left 207 valid responses, after considering issues such as perceived dishonesty and significant missing values, which were then used for statistical analysis.

Concerning demographic data, the gender split showed 91 males (44.0%) and 116 females (56.0%), suggesting a slight female dominance in the hospitality sector of Busan and Seoul. Marital status showed 164 (79.2%) unmarried, 42 (20.3%) married and 1 (0.5%) in other categories. Age demographics revealed 90 individuals in their 20s (43.5%), 80 in their 30s (39.1%), 27 in their 40s (13.0%), and 9 in their 50s (4.3%). The majority of the respondents, 172 (82.6%), were in their 20s and 30s. Regarding education, there were 7 (3.4%) with less than a high school education, 34 (16.4%) community college graduates, 143 (69.1%) college graduates, and 23 (11.1%) with post-graduate degrees, indicating a relatively high level of education among hospitality front-line employees. Years of service distribution was as follows: less than 5 years 157 (75.8%), 6–10 years 23 (11.1%), 11–15 years 4 (1.9%), 16–20 years 3 (1.4%), 21–25 years 4 (1.9%), over 26 years 1 (0.5%). The respondents' current work domains were: 21 in hotels (10.1%), 8 in F&B (11.2%), 3 in airlines (1.4%), 152 in tourism (73.4%), 3 in MICE (1.4%), and 23 in other fields (11.1%). The type of employment was split between 155 (74.9%) permanent employees and 52 (25.1%) temporary employees.

3.2. Questionnaire Development and Measures

The researcher structured the survey into multiple sections. The initial section introduced the survey, delineating the research goals, processes, voluntary participation, assurance of anonymity and confidentiality, and acknowledgment of informed consent. The subsequent part of the survey individually presented each scale designed to gauge the constructs, each accompanied by its unique instructions. All the metrics employed a 5-point Likert scale (1 = “Strongly disagree”; 5 = “Strongly agree”). The third portion was used to sift out responses lacking sincerity through honesty checks. The final section gathered information on the respondents’ demographics and details related to their employment. The measurement of interpersonal conflict was performed using a one-dimensional, six-item scale borrowed from Jehn’s research [44]. Examples of these queries include, “In our team (department), members often have conflicts or disagreements during the decision-making process.”, and “In my team, frequent disputes arise among members regarding work”. To assess emotional labor, a three-item sub-scale adapted from the emotional labor scale by Brotheridge and Lee [35] was used. The researcher modified some item phrases to suit the context of hotel service settings. For instance, “I suppress my genuine emotions when serving customers”, and “I endeavor to genuinely feel the emotions that I need to display to customers”. The perception of job insecurity was evaluated using a single-dimensional, four-item scale borrowed from the study by Darvishmotevali and Ali [45]. The illustrative questions include, “I fear that I will soon lose my job, which angers me”, and “I am uncertain about retaining my current job”. All items on the job stressor scale were evaluated on a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Job stress was evaluated using a unidimensional scale consisting of six questions adapted from Cohen’s study [46]. The representative queries include, “In the past month, how frequently have you been troubled due to unexpected events?” and “In the last month, how frequently have you managed to keep your irritations under control?” These items were evaluated on a Likert scale of 1 (mostly never) to 5 (almost every day). To gauge psychological well-being, a single-dimensional five-item scale was derived from the WHO-5 well-being scale validated by Sischka and colleagues [47]. This scale, originally developed by Ryff [31], encapsulates positive psychology, vitality, and general interest. The responses were measured on a Likert scale from 0 (“at no time”) to 4 (“all the time”), with higher scores indicating greater psychological well-being. Example questions include, “I have felt strong and spirited” and “I have woken up feeling rejuvenated and refreshed”.

3.3. Data Analytics

By utilizing the Covariance-based Structural Equation Modeling methodology (CB-SEM), the researcher critically evaluated the study’s theoretical foundation and employed the Smart PLS 3.0 tool for in-depth data interpretation [48]. The initial phase involved setting up the CB model, integrating five constructs, and incorporating twenty-four reflective indicators. These constructs were chosen based on their relevance and significance to the study’s focus on stress factors in the hospitality sector. Each construct was associated with reflective indicators that mirrored its underlying concept, ensuring that each construct’s variation was accurately captured by its indicators. This configuration was imperative for capturing the intricacies of the relationships and drawing robust conclusions. This provided a robust basis for the investigation. Subsequently, an extensive analysis of the measurement model was conducted. This important stage helped ascertain the extent of method variance affecting the outcome and simultaneously validated the construct’s reliability and dependability. It ensured that the conclusions drawn were both precise and reliable. In the final stage, the CB-SEM was effectively employed to test the study’s hypothesis. This method illuminated the connections and interplay between different factors in the realm of the hospitality sector. Each section of the results provides a more granular description of the analytical procedures used. This comprehensive approach underpins the rigor and depth of the study.

4. Results

4.1. Measurement Model Examination

Reliability and Construct Validity

In this study, the legitimacy of each measurement item was verified through a series of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFAs), and their consistency was gauged using the measure of Cronbach's alpha. Table 1 presents these findings. The CFA results show that every item had a factor loading surpassing 0.5. Furthermore, the assessment of Alpha (Cronbach's α), Dijkstra–Henseler's Rho–A coefficient (Rho A), and Composite Reliability (CR) indicates that Alpha spans from 0.881 to 0.941, Rho A varies between 0.880 and 0.940, and CR ranges from 0.881 to 0.941. These values conform to the reliability benchmarks established by Fornell and Larcker, advocating for a CR above 0.7 [49]. Similarly, Cronbach's α values span from 0.828 to 0.919, emphasizing the trustworthiness of the research scales. In the realm of convergent validity, all outer loadings fluctuate between 0.713 and 0.883, and the average variance extracted (AVE) lies between 0.568 and 0.727. This suggests a robust validation of all the measures, as detailed in Table 1. Regarding discriminant validity, a comparison between the correlation coefficient and the square root of AVE was made. Table 2 illustrates that the smallest square root of AVE value (0.754) is larger than the highest absolute value of the correlation coefficient (0.737), solidly establishing the measurement model's discriminant validity. Furthermore, the heterotrait-monotrait ratio, with values lying between 0.079 and 0.735 (and a threshold of 0.85), further supports this validity [48]. In summary, the evaluations of the measurement model clearly indicate that the reliability and validity of the used measures are unproblematic.

Table 1. Reliability and convergent validity of measures.

Constructs	Indicators	Loadings	t-Values	Alpha	Rho_A	CR	AVE
Interpersonal conflict	IC01	0.761	n/a	0.887	0.887	0.887	0.568
	IC02	0.757	10.930 ***				
	IC03	0.752	10.831 ***				
	IC04	0.765	11.146 ***				
	IC05	0.713	10.260 ***				
	IC06	0.773	11.289 ***				
Emotional labor	EL01	0.845	n/a	0.881	0.880	0.881	0.711
	EL02	0.839	13.722 ***				
	EL03	0.846	13.528 ***				
Job insecurity	Ji01	0.829	n/a	0.896	0.896	0.896	0.684
	Ji02	0.843	14.379 ***				
	Ji03	0.803	13.173 ***				
	Ji04	0.833	14.195 ***				
Job stress	JS01	0.866	n/a	0.941	0.940	0.941	0.727
	JS02	0.803	14.739 ***				
	JS03	0.869	17.116 ***				
	JS04	0.811	14.965 ***				
	JS05	0.879	17.574 ***				
	JS06	0.883	17.524 ***				
Psychological well-being	PW01	0.814	n/a	0.895	0.893	0.893	0.632
	PW02	0.800	12.813 ***				
	PW03	0.843	13.550 ***				
	PW04	0.744	11.502 ***				
	PW05	0.770	12.160 ***				

Notes. 'Alpha' is used to denote the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. 'Rho–A' refers to the Dijkstra–Henseler's Rho–A coefficient, while 'CR' is an abbreviation for composite reliability, and 'AVE' signifies the average variance extracted. The notation '***' is used to indicate a highly significant p -value, specifically, $p < 0.001$.

Table 2. Discriminant validity of measures.

	A	B	C	D	E
A. Interpersonal conflict	0.754	0.219	0.648	0.715	0.349
B. Emotional labor	−0.221	0.843	0.398	0.113	0.079
C. Job insecurity	0.642	−0.404	0.827	0.735	0.243
D. Job stress	0.712	−0.078	0.737	0.853	0.439
E. Psychological well-being	0.348	−0.009	0.240	0.430	0.795

Notes. The prominent numbers seen on the diagonal are the square roots of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The coefficients that display the correlation among constructs can be found in the lower triangular matrix. Conversely, the upper triangular matrix showcases the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio.

4.2. Structural Model

4.2.1. Individual-Parameter Estimate

The hypotheses put forward were examined using CB-SEM. Particularly, a consistent CB algorithm was employed to test parameters, and statistical significance was evaluated using 5000 bootstrap samples, bias-corrected within a 95% confidence interval. Before testing the hypotheses, the researcher ensured that the prerequisites for CB-SEM were met. Figure 2 presents the outcomes of the tests for hypotheses 1 through 7 using CB-SEM. The data's compatibility with the structural model is confirmed to an acceptable level (SRMR = 0.051; Chi-square = 325.180 with $p < 0.001$; GFI = 0.888; NFI = 0.912; CFI = 0.976). In particular, the fit indices of SRMR and RMSEA were all met with the cutoff standard. As for the explanatory power of the model, job stressors account for 69.1% of the total variance in job stress, whereas job stressors and job stress together explain 20.7% of the total variance in psychological well-being.

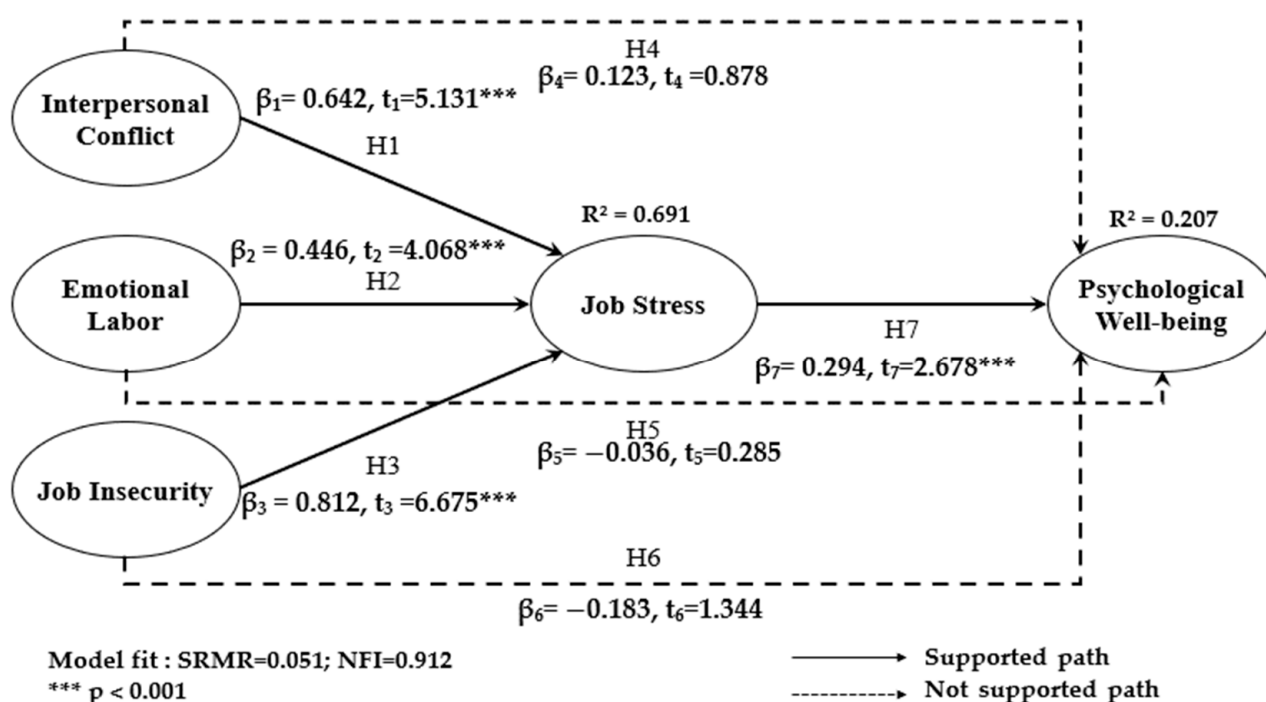


Figure 2. Interpretations and implications of path coefficients derived from CB-SEM results. Notes. A continuous arrow symbolizes a statistically significant path, while a dotted or dashed arrow indicates a path that lacks statistical significance. The values of SRMR and NFI stand at 0.051 and 0.912, respectively. $*** p < 0.001$.

Figure 2 illustrates the outcomes of the hypothesis testing, which explored the path coefficients among the studied variables: interpersonal conflict, emotional labor, job insecurity, job stress, and psychological well-being. Interpersonal conflict's notable positive

effect on job stress, with a coefficient of $\beta = 0.642$ and a t -value of 5.131 ($p < 0.001$), validates [Hypothesis 1]. The findings also highlight a significant positive link between emotional labor and job stress ($\beta = 0.446$, $t = 4.608$; $p < 0.001$), affirming [Hypothesis 2]. Job insecurity also demonstrated a meaningful positive impact on job stress ($\beta = 0.812$, $t = 6.675$; $p < 0.001$), backing [Hypothesis 3].

In contrast, the anticipated positive association between interpersonal conflict and psychological well-being was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.123$, $t = 0.123$; $p > 0.05$), thus negating [Hypothesis 4]. The projected adverse effect of emotional labor on psychological well-being ($\beta = -0.036$, $t = 0.285$; $p > 0.05$) was also not substantiated, leading to the dismissal of [Hypothesis 5]. Similarly, the assumed negative link between job insecurity and psychological well-being ($\beta = -0.183$, $t = 1.344$; $p > 0.05$) was not significant, leading to the rejection of [Hypothesis 6]. Lastly, the considerable positive effect of job stress on psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.294$, $t = 2.678$; $p < 0.001$) stands verified, endorsing [Hypothesis 7].

4.2.2. Mediation Effects

The use of CB-SEM provided insights into the potential mediating role of job stress in linking job stressors and psychological well-being. The results suggest that job stress acts as a complete mediator between job stressors and the well-being of those in the hospitality sector. As outlined in Table 3, the mediation effects of job stress bridging job stressors and psychological well-being are quantified as 0.196 ($t = 2.431$, $p < 0.05$), 0.124 ($t = 2.024$, $p < 0.05$), and 0.295 ($t = 2.472$, $p < 0.05$), respectively. Moreover, the absence of zero in the 95% confidence intervals indicates that the null hypothesis, which posits no mediating role for job stress, is not tenable.

Table 3. Mediating effect of job stress.

Mediation	Effects	t-Values	L	U
Interpersonal conflict => Job stress => Psychological well-being	0.196	2.431 *	0.049	0.354
Emotional labor => Job stress => Psychological well-being	0.124	2.024 *	0.028	0.284
Job insecurity => Job stress => Psychological well-being	0.295	2.472 *	0.065	0.448

Notes. 'L' denotes the lower limit, while 'U' signifies the upper limit in the context of 95% confidence intervals. The t -values are taken in absolute terms. $p < 0.05$ *.

5. Discussion

5.1. Findings and Theoretical Contributions

In the exploration of the influence of various stressors on job stress and psychological well-being among hospitality employees, this study presented seven distinct hypotheses. The findings have consequential theoretical implications for understanding organizational behavior and human resource management within the hospitality sector.

The study's first key finding pertains to the influence of interpersonal conflict, emotional labor, and job insecurity on job stress ([Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3]). The results indicate that all three factors significantly contribute to increased job stress levels among hospitality employees. Specifically, it was revealed that interpersonal conflict, emotional labor, and job insecurity all lead to job stress, highlighting the importance of these factors in hospitality work environments. These results further elucidate the intricate relationship between workplace stressors and job stress, offering a comprehensive insight into the sources of stress in the hospitality industry.

Contrarily, the study found no significant direct impact of interpersonal conflict, emotional labor, and job insecurity on psychological well-being ([Hypotheses 4, 5, and 6]). This implies that while these stressors contribute to job stress, their direct influence on psychological well-being is statistically insignificant. A salient contribution of our study is the identification of job stress as a significant mediator between job stressors and psychological well-being. This nuanced insight suggests that the direct relationship between job stressors and well-being might be more intricate than previously understood, emphasizing the role

of job stress in this equation [50]. This finding augments the existing body of knowledge, suggesting that interventions aimed at improving psychological well-being should perhaps be less focused on the direct mitigation of these stressors and more on the management of the resulting job stress.

Lastly, a significant positive relationship was found between job stress and psychological well-being ([Hypothesis 7]). This finding indicates that as job stress increases, it detrimentally impacts the psychological well-being of employees. Thus, while job insecurity, interpersonal conflict, and emotional labor might not directly impact well-being, they indirectly do so by increasing job stress. This underscores the necessity of effective stress management strategies in the hospitality sector to ensure that job stress does not diminish employee psychological well-being.

This research has yielded insightful findings regarding the varying impacts of interpersonal conflict, emotional labor, and job insecurity on job stress in the hospitality sector. Of the three primary stress factors, job insecurity stood out as the predominant source of job stress, succeeded by interpersonal conflicts, with emotional labor coming in last.

These findings reinforce the existing body of knowledge that job insecurity, often manifesting as fear of job loss or lack of career progression, significantly contributes to job stress [9]. Additionally, the impact of interpersonal conflict further elucidates the importance of healthy workplace relationships in the hospitality industry [51]. Meanwhile, the relatively lesser contribution of emotional labor suggests that while it indeed plays a role in inducing job stress, its impact may be overshadowed by other, more immediate stressors [34].

The current study's academic contributions are multifold. Firstly, it enhances our understanding of the differential impacts of various job stressors in the hospitality industry, a sector marked by a high prevalence of these stressors. Secondly, it underscores the pivotal role of job stress as a mediator in the relationship between job stressors and psychological well-being, thereby prompting a shift in focus from direct relationships to more complex mediated relationships.

5.2. Practical Suggestions

Drawing from these findings, a range of practical recommendations surface for management within the hospitality sector. Primarily, organizations should place emphasis on strategies targeting the reduction of job stressors, given its significant correlation with job stress. This could entail transparent communication about job roles, future prospects, and organizational changes, as well as ensuring fair and clear criteria for promotions and lay-offs [39]. Another imperative is to establish initiatives that minimize interpersonal conflict. Effective measures could include conflict resolution training, the development of an open and respectful communication culture, and the promotion of supportive management practices [51]. A third recommendation centers on emotional labor. Despite its less pronounced contribution relative to job insecurity and interpersonal conflict, it continues to play a role in job stress. Thus, concerted efforts to manage emotional labor, such as granting employees greater autonomy in customer interactions and offering training to cope with emotional demands, could serve to alleviate job stress [34]. Given the identified role of job stress as a mediator, it would also be advantageous to introduce effective stress management programs. These could take various forms, from workshops educating employees on stress management techniques to the provision of counseling services and initiatives promoting a work–life balance. Furthermore, an enriched working environment that offers a fair work schedule, ensures employees' welfare, and fosters a supportive organizational culture could further lessen job stress and promote psychological well-being [52]. Collectively, these recommendations aim to create a psychologically healthier and less stressful work environment, contributing to the enhancement of both employee well-being and organizational productivity, ultimately fostering a more resilient and thriving hospitality sector.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

As valuable as the present study on job stressors and psychological well-being among hospitality industry employees may be, it inevitably comes with certain limitations that future research should address. A potential limitation might be the geographic concentration of the research sample, which limits the generalizability of the findings across different cultural contexts [53]. Additionally, the cross-sectional design of the research provides a snapshot of the issue but might overlook changes over time, which could be addressed in future studies through longitudinal designs. Potential bias introduced through the reliance on self-reported measures could also be mitigated in future research by incorporating objective measures such as performance evaluations [54]. Moreover, future research could expand on the range of job stressors considered, incorporating factors such as work overload or lack of autonomy [55], as well as examining additional aspects of well-being, including physical health and job satisfaction [56]. Ultimately, addressing these limitations in future studies would contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the dynamics between job stressors and psychological well-being in the hospitality industry.

Funding: This work was supported by Youngsan University Research Fund of 2022.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were waived for this study due to using pre-surveyed data before funded.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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