

Employee Burnout During COVID-19 in the Hotel Industry

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Received: Jan. 31, 2022 Accepted: Mar. 2, 2022 Online published: Mar. 15, 2022

doi:10.5296/ijhrs.v12i2.19526

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijhrs.v12i2.19526>

Abstract

Employee emotions and feelings are often overlooked in the hotel industry, this could not be more true since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. This is mainly due to the hotels having to make drastic cutbacks in order to survive owing to the massive decline of guests due to the closing of the international borders. Therefore, this has had a huge impact on employees working from within the hotel industry. The purpose of this study is to examine the burnout of hotel employees. A quantitative approach was taken by distributing questionnaires to hotel employees working in the heavily tourist-dependent island of Phuket, Thailand. As a result, 420 valid responses were collected which were then uploaded and analysed by using SPSS. The results showed that burnout has increased drastically among hotel employees during the COVID-19 crisis. The results also indicate different demographic and job characteristics that have been found to have significantly high burnout values. The hotel industry needs to focus on employee welfare to avoid employees burning out, human resource strategies and initiatives should be implemented.

Keywords: hotel employee, employee burnout, emotional exhaustion, covid-19

1. Introduction

Many hospitality organisations are seeking and making use of strategies to improve their performance and provide excellent quality service to satisfy and exceed their guests' expectations to hold a competitive success. J. Willard Marriott (cited in Hostage, 1975), the creator of the Marriott Corporation concluded that unhappy service industry employees cannot make happy customers. It is essential that the employees are happy and feel good when they are working. If this occurs, then the happiness will pass through the interaction with the customers of the organisation producing a satisfactory service. By the nature of the hospitality industry, jobs require customer contact around the clock, 7 days a week. The customers' point of contact is often the moment of truth during service interactions with frontline employees (Ustrov, Valverde & Ryan, 2016). However, stress can build when working in a shift work job and interacting with difficult customers.

A common result of this round the clockwork can be a significant increase in stress. (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Matias, Ferreira, Vieira, Cadima, Leal & Mena Matos, 2017). After prolonged exposure to this, this can then lead to the employee burning out. Burnout is the feeling of extreme psychological and emotional exhaustion due to the work that the employee is undertaking. This strain can, of course, lead to a dramatic decline in mental health as well as other serious health deteriorations, both mentally and physically (Jackson & Schuler, 1983; Bianchi, Schonfeld & Laurent, 2015). Feeling burnt out can have a significant effect on an employee's ability to deliver quality service, especially, in the case of frontline employees who are expected to provide competency, accessibility, courtesy and coherence that transforms the organisation into something desirable for the customer (Berry, 1995; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). It could also be harmful to a firm in terms of repeat patronage and unfavourable word-of-mouth advertising (Blodgett, Granbois & Walters, 1993). Unfortunately, hospitality workers are most at risk to experience burnout due to the environmental factors associated with the job. This can be due to the long unsociable working hours, low pay, high stress dynamic with tight schedules, split shifts, understaffing, high expectations and sometimes a hostile working environment often has a bearing on damaging mental health and prevents them not having an adequate work-life balance. Which has been found to help reduce the potential burnout of an individual (Heenan, 2016).

Many previous studies have tried to investigate variables that cause employee burnout. However, few studies have been conducted to investigate employee burnout in the hotel industry which has had a significant negative impact from the COVID-19 crisis. Nevertheless, it is predictable that the burnout levels will increase due to the added stress faced by the employees. Especially a pandemic which has meant that all international tourism has ceased. This research hopes to advise employers on the effects that these uncertain times are having on their employees and possibly advise them on how best to handle staff that show signs of burnout. It is also hoped that organisations can use this research to better understand the pressures and effects they have on employees in the hotels in Phuket. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to compare hotel employee burnout before and during the COVID-19 crisis and investigate the impact of demographic characteristics and job characteristics on hotel employee burnout during the COVID-19 crisis.

2. Literature review and hypothesis

2.1 COVID-19 Pandemic in Phuket and Its Effect on Hotel Employee Burnout

When COVID-19 forced the governments of the world to close their borders and go into lockdown to contain the spread of the virus, tourism was affected the most. Phuket is an example of a destination in the world that was heavily reliant on tourism for its economy. A staggering 80% of the province's economy relies on tourism (Chuenniran, 2020). Most of which came from international tourism. Due to this steep decline during and after the lockdown, around 70% of tourism businesses have closed, most of them just temporarily, but some have shut down permanently (Ashworth, 2020). It is clear to see that a lot of employees around the island have, are and will be made redundant because of the businesses closing. This will then have the knock-on effect of putting more strain on the finances of the family that the employee is trying to support, which will therefore lead to heightened tension at home, leading to possible conflicts and burnout. However, it is also interesting to take a look at the other end of the spectrum, a rising number of companies in sectors hit by the Covid-19 pandemic are turning to pay reductions instead of sacking their employees to decrease their labour expenses, this is done in the hope that it will give the company a quicker recovery by not having to fill the positions left vacant (Cleeland, 2020).

Although the employees who were not made unemployed still have a job, they are being made to multitask in their departments, and even other departments. Of course, this will place a strain on the individual. Multiple reports have expressed that people who have to multitask extensively have greater difficulty completing key and complex assignments, much greater difficulty in successfully memorizing new material, struggle with learning, and heightened tension levels (Peifer & Zipp, 2019). Another stressor that can contribute to this can be the lack of information the employees have about their futures at the organisation. This unknown factor can play a serious part in an employees' stress levels (Dirani, Abadi, Alizadeh, Barhate, Garza & Gunasekara et al, 2020). Combining the reduction in salary, benefits, incentive programs, unknown job security and having to work harder in different jobs that an individual may have not done before will dramatically increase the stress levels. With the stress levels increased, the employee may experience some form of burnout.

Research done shows that COVID-19 increases employee anxiety (Trogakos, Chawla & McCarthy, 2020; Novitasari, Sasono & Asbari, 2020; Karakose, Yirci & Papadakis, 2021). Which is a significant factor in contributing to stress and leading the employee to become burnt out. Other factors that are playing an ever more increasing role during the pandemic are high-level workloads (James, Kotzé & Van Rooyen, 2005), heightened time pressure (Rabatin, Williams, Baier Manwell, Schwartz, Brown & Linzer, 2015), lack of supplies or staff (Puleo, 2011) and role conflict (Yip & Rowlinson, 2009; Kilfedder, Power & Wells, 2001). All these stressors can compound on top of each other and cause employee burnout (Schaufeli, Maslach & Marek, 1993; Moss, Good, Gozal, Kleinpell & Sessler, 2016).

2.2 Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Its Effect on Employee Burnout

Socio-demographic characteristics can be classified as being different variables that can

categorize people into varying cohorts. The main ones that have been studied in terms of demographics and work-related stress are age and marital status (Gjonça & Calderwood, 2004; Ahmed, Donepudi, Rahman, Chowdhury, Islam, Tohfa & Kader, 2020). Studies have pointed out that there is a strong correlation between socio-demographic characteristics and stress that can be derived from the workplace. Evidence has shown that these factors can strongly influence an employee into whether they experience stress and determine the varying level of stress that the employee will feel when at work or anything that links into the individuals' work (Sampson, 2016; Leka & Jain, 2010; Ahmed et al, 2020).

2.3 Age

Starting with baby boomers, these people tend to place work as possibly the most important thing in their lives. A study found that younger employees are more susceptible to becoming burnt out than their older colleagues. One possibility for this could be due to the older employees having more experience and having already developed coping tactics to deal with any stress that may occur to them (Sánchez-Pujalte, Mateu, Etchezahar & Gómez Yepes, 2021). This is reinforced in another study; older employees are more experienced at juggling and dealing with short notice changes. Additionally, being much more resilient to the stresses which the job may involve (Vagni, Giostra, Maiorano, Santaniello & Pajardi, 2020).

2.4 Marital Status

Marital status has also been known to play a significant part in whether an employee suffers from burnout or not. A study found that employees who are single, widowed or divorced and have no children had a higher chance of suffering from burnout (Cañadas-De la Fuente, Ortega, Ramirez-Baena, De la Fuente-Solana, Vargas & Gómez-Urquiza, 2018). Other studies also indicated that being married or in a relationship did not affect the levels of burnout for an employee. (Al-Qaryoti & Al-Khateeb, 2006; Zhang, Miao, Tang, Su, Aung, Pi & Sai, 2020). However, another study conducted showed that marital status does not play a significant role in whether an employee becomes burnt out. The results of the study showed that married and single employees both shared the same emotions with no significant differences (Asgari, 2012).

As a result of these findings, the research conducted in this paper will focus on the variables of age and marital status, as it is evident to see that a majority of researchers have used these variables and can find results of significance.

2.5 Job Characteristics and Their Effect on Employee Burnout

The job characteristics have been determined to be a considering factor in whether an employee will experience differing levels of stress. This is due to the job characteristics otherwise known as the job profile being an essential part of any employee's job when at work. As an example of this, it has been determined that front-line staff otherwise known as the front of the house staff have one of the top ten most stressed induced jobs in the US, which in turn might be brought home by the employee in a spillover effect. This may cause burnout (Syazreena Azmi, Shahid & Alwi, 2016).

2.6 Job Function

A study has shown that front of house employees, otherwise known as front-line staff in the hotel sector have higher amounts of multitasking jobs, high demands, and targets to complete with low resources. These are all very well-known stressors that can potentially trigger the employee burning out. (O'Neill & Davis, 2011). Another study has also suggested that the working environment can be a very stressful and tense one, especially when dealing with difficult guests. Due to this, front of house employees are more prevalent to burnout than their back of house colleagues (Wen, Zhou, Hu & Zhang, 2020). However, a different study implies that there is a balance between the levels of burnout that the front and back of house employees suffer from (Shapoval, 2019).

2.7 Job Position

According to Anthony-McMann, Ellinger, Astakhova & Halbesleben (2016), managers tend to be the key employees who have the potentially highest chance of suffering from burnout, even though they tend to have the most resources at their disposal. One potential reason for this may be due to managers not feeling like they can fulfil their self-expectations and goals (Pines, 2011). The most common example of this could be managers being tied down by time-consuming administrative bureaucracy (Rabenu, Shkoler, Lebron & Tabak, 2019). Although, it has been noted from another study that the operational staff members have high stress-induced positions in the hotel industry as well. However, the most stressed induced position was given to the supervisors who work in the front of the house. This is because these two positions have the highest contact with the guests and therefore deal with the most complaints or difficult situations on a daily basis (Ahmad, Barakbah & Majdi, 2021; Wang, Lv, Qian & Zhang, 2019).

2.8 Amount of Work Hours

According to research, work hours have a high potential to trigger burnout for an employee, especially when working in a hotel. This is because hotel employees tend to work long hours, at a high tempo which must be maintained throughout the shift sometimes and in questionable working conditions (Demirdağ, Aydın & Özdemir, 2020). However, it has been concluded that work hours alone do not determine whether an employee will be exposed to burnout, other factors such as working conditions can also play an extensive part in whether an employee will suffer from burnout or not (Nishimura, Miyoshi, Obika, Ogawa, Kataoka & Otsuka, 2019).

3. Methodology

A quantitative research method has been used, using questionnaires to collect data. This has given a good range of data on how employees are suffering from burnout before and after the COVID-19 outbreak.

3.1 Population, Sampling Size and Sampling Method

The target of this study was full-time hotel employees. The site of this study was Phuket, one of the most famous tourist destinations in Thailand. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Phuket

tourism has received a huge negative effect from this crisis. This is because a staggering 80% of the province's economy relies on tourism (Chuenniran, 2020). As to be expected the pandemic has taken a huge toll on businesses on the island. Around 70% of tourism businesses have closed, most of them just temporarily, but some have shut down permanently (Ashworth, 2020). On top of this 95% of hotels in Phuket reported having made a loss during the first lockdown that Thailand implemented (Anantamongkolkul, 2020). As a consequence of this, the hotels made significant cutbacks, one being the termination of foreign staff members. Phuket was the only province in the country and region to open its doors for international travellers in July 2021 with the Phuket Sandbox program. This program allows international tourists who have a negative RT-PCR test result to enjoy travelling and participate in leisure activities throughout Phuket without a mandatory quarantine, but they must stay in Phuket for at least 7 nights and will then be allowed to visit other destinations in Thailand (Zhang, Raza, Khalid, Parveen & Ramírez-Asís, 2021). However, any hotel companies that decided to still operate during this period had to implement many human resources management strategies to survive, such as downsizing, pay reduction, hiring freeze, etc (Kraus, Clauss, Breier, Gast, Zardini & Tiberius, 2020; Wenzel, Stanske & Lieberman, 2020). Therefore, the current number of hotel employees remains unknown. To calculate the sample size, Cochran's sample size formula has been applied because the population size is large and unknown (Cochran, 1963).

3.2 Measurements

This questionnaire contains two parts:

Part 1: The employee characteristics in term of gender, education, income, job function, position, occupation, work experience, working hours per week, marital status and how often does the employee take leave.

Part 2: Burnout. 9 attributes were benchmarked from Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. (1981), Freudenberger, H. (1974), Guedes, D. and de Souza, R. (2016), Campos, J., Carlotto, M., & Marôco, J. (2012). A 4-point scale was made from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Each question requires an answer on this scale from before the COVID crisis to during the COVID crisis. This scale was chosen because it will force every participant to give an opinion on the question that they are being asked from before and during COVID when completing the questionnaire (Brown, 2001). It also allows for a simpler answering method as the answers are reduced to only 4 possible answers, providing less confusion for the participant (Chang, 1994).

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Data has been collected from 420 hotel employee participants from hotels across Phuket, Thailand. A convenience sampling method was used to distribute the questionnaires, this will represent the opinions and feelings of the entire workforce in the hotel industry. The questionnaires were only given to employees who have been working for the chosen organisation from before the COVID-19 pandemic up until the research was carried out. This is so the research can indicate the variations of employee burnout from during a normal

situation to a crisis situation. This has shown how the effects of a crisis can impact employee burnout.

3.4 Data Analysis

Since the questionnaire had two parts to fill out, 'Before Covid' and 'During'. The researcher was able to use a paired sample T-test to analyse to develop statistical results. This was done to show how hotel employees' feelings have fluctuated in terms of employee burnout.

The researcher also implemented the use of a one-way ANOVA, which allowed for the analysis of a variable that contains multiple potential answers. One such example would be 'Job Position', which contained three potential answers which were operational staff, supervisor, and manager/assistant manager. After viewing which instruments in the questionnaire showed a significant difference, with a p-value over 0.05. The researcher continued to run a post-hoc analysis using the LSD program to show more specifically which answers were shown to be giving off the significant difference.

4. Results

The demographic information of the respondents is shown in table 1. In total, the sample consisted of 420 valid responses. Of those respondents, 181 (43.1%) were male and 239 (56.9%) were female. 203 (48.3%) of the respondents were between 31-40 years old, which made up the majority of the respondents, followed by 102 (24.3%) in the age of 21-30. Marital status saw the majority of the samples as being Single/Divorced/Widowed at 229 (54.5%). This was closely followed by Married/In a relationship which had a response rate of 181 (43.1%). In terms of educational background, the majority of respondents hold a Bachelor's degree at 225 (53.7%), followed by High School or equivalent Certificate at 80 (19.1%).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Characteristics		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	181	43.1
	Female	239	56.9
Age	20 or younger	17	4
	21-30	102	24.3
	31-40	203	48.3
	41-50	86	20.5
	51-60	12	2.9
Marital Status	Single/Divorced/Widowed	229	54.5
	Married/In Relationship	181	43.1
	Single Parent	10	2.4
Nationality	Thai	409	97.4
	Foreigner	11	2.6
Education	Primary School Certificate	11	2.6
	Secondary School	16	3.8
	High School or equivalent Certificate	80	19.1
	Diploma	58	13.8
	Bachelor's Degree	225	53.7
	Higher than bachelor's degree	29	6.9

The job profile of the respondents is shown in table 2. Of those respondents, 296 (71.2%) work in the back of the house and 120 (28.8%) work in the front of the house. Just over half of the respondents hold operational employee status at 224 (53.8%), with the second most common position being Manager/Assistant Manager at 119 (28.6%). The majority of respondents have worked in their current position for 1-3 years at a response rate of 132 (31.7%) with the second highest being 4-5 years at a response rate of 109 (26.2%). The majority of respondents work 43-60 hours a week with a response rate of 242 (58.2%) followed by 35-42 hours a week at 105 (25.2%). In terms of taking leave in the last 6 months, most respondents answered they had taken 10 or more days at a rate of 191 (45.9%), followed by 7-9 days at a rate of 87 (20.9%). 205 (48.9%) have a salary of 9,001-20,000 THB which was the most popular answer, with the second most popular being 9,000 or lower at 73 (17.4%).

Table 2. Job Profile

Job Profile		Frequency	Percent
Job Characteristics	Front of House	120	28.8
	Back of House	296	71.2
Job Position	Operational Staff	224	53.8
	Supervisor	73	17.5
	Manager/Assistant Manager	119	28.6
Number Of Years Working In Position	<1	28	6.7
	1-3	132	31.7
	4-5	109	26.2
	6-9	88	21.2
	>10	59	14.2
Working Hours Per Week	<20	24	5.8
	21-34	28	6.7
	35-42	105	25.2
	43-60	242	58.2
	>61	17	4.1
Voluntary Leave In The Last 6 Months	10 or more days	191	45.9
	7-9 days	87	20.9
	4-6 days	35	8.4
	1-3 days	63	15.1
	Never Take Leave	40	9.6
Average Monthly Income	9 000 or lower	73	17.4
	9 001-20 000	205	48.9
	20 001-30 000	62	14.8
	30 001-40 000	30	7.2
	40 001-50 000	15	3.6
	50 001 and above	34	8.1

A paired sample t-test was used to compare hotel employees' burnout before and during the COVID-19 crisis. The results were shown below:

Table 3. A paired sample t-test on the effect of COVID-19 crisis on employee burnout

Burnout	Before Covid		During Covid		t-value	p-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
I feel emotionally exhausted at the end of the work day	2.42	0.87	2.60	0.91	-3.39	0.00**
I find it very hard to wake up for work	1.97	0.82	2.13	0.90	-4.54	0.00**
I find it hard to motivate myself to go to work	1.81	0.74	2.01	0.88	-5.71	0.00**
If I was offered another job in another company I would accept it without hesitation	1.94	0.83	2.15	0.96	-5.58	0.00**
I feel physically exhausted after my shift ends	2.24	0.87	2.39	0.95	-3.57	0.00**
All I want to do when I get home is to go to bed	2.39	0.99	2.56	1.00	-4.25	0.00**
I feel I work too hard in this job	1.97	0.78	2.11	0.86	-3.71	0.00**
I feel more irritable at work and at home	1.77	0.69	2.01	0.87	-6.53	0.00**
I feel burnt out	2.03	0.86	2.29	1.00	-6.68	0.00**
Overall Employee Burnout (Grand Mean)	2.06	0.58	2.25	0.69	-6.76	0.00**

Remark: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

The paired sample t-test was also used to evaluate the level of hotel employee burnout before and during the COVID-19 crisis. Table 3 shows that all nine employee burnout variables received a p-value of <0.01 . The overall mean values also show a significant difference (p-value <0.01). This reveals that employees before the COVID-19 crisis had less burnout than during the COVID-19 crisis.

Table 4. A One-way ANOVA of respondents' age on employee burnout during COVID-19 crisis

Burnout	≤ 30		31-40		>40		p-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
I feel emotionally exhausted at the end of the work day	2.68	0.88	2.63	0.96	2.39	0.85	0.04*
I find it very hard to wake up for work	2.28	0.94	2.14	0.90	1.91	0.82	0.01*
I find it hard to motivate myself to go to work	2.06	0.88	2.05	0.92	1.82	0.79	0.06
If I was offered another job in another company I would accept it without hesitation	2.21	0.94	2.20	0.98	1.98	0.94	0.14
I feel physically exhausted after my	2.44	0.95	2.47	0.97	2.13	0.87	0.01*

shift ends							
All I want to do when I get home is to go to bed	2.71	1.00	2.62	1.02	2.18	0.96	0.00**
I feel I work too hard in this job	2.13	0.90	2.14	0.89	1.99	0.77	0.35
I feel more irritable at work and at home	2.05	0.84	2.07	0.91	1.82	0.80	0.05
I feel burnt out	2.34	0.99	2.35	0.99	2.04	1.01	0.03*
Overall Employee Burnout (Grand Mean)	2.32	0.68	2.29	0.72	2.02	0.66	0.01*

Remark: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 4 indicates that there are five instruments out of the nine total questions that showed a significant difference with a p-value lower than 0.05. Three questions show a sizable gap between employee ages which are “I find it very hard to wake up for work” (p-value <0.01), “I feel physically exhausted after my shift ends” (p-value <0.01) and “All I want to do when I get home is to go to bed” (p-value <0.01). The final two variables “I feel emotionally exhausted at the end of the work day” and “I feel burnt out” also have a significant p-value (p-value <0.05). The overall mean also shows that there is a significant difference between all of the overall means for each category (p-value <0.05).

As to gain a greater insight into the results, post hoc analyses (LSD) were also conducted. The results are shown below:

Table 4.1. Post-Hoc analysis for burnout age variables

Dependent Variable	(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
I feel emotionally exhausted at the end of the work day	≤ 30	31 - 40	0.05	0.11	0.63
		>40	0.29	0.13	0.02*
	31 - 40	≤ 30	-0.05	0.11	0.63
		>40	0.24	0.11	0.03*
	>40	≤ 30	-0.29	0.13	0.02*
		31 - 40	-0.24	0.11	0.03*
I find it very hard to wake up for work	≤ 30	31 - 40	0.14	0.10	0.19
		>40	0.37	0.12	0.00**
	31 - 40	≤ 30	-0.14	0.10	0.19
		>40	0.23	0.11	0.04*
	>40	≤ 30	-0.37	0.12	0.00**
		31 - 40	-0.23	0.11	0.04*
I feel physically exhausted after my shift ends	≤ 30	31 - 40	-0.03	0.11	0.82
		>40	0.31	0.13	0.02*
	31 - 40	≤ 30	0.03	0.11	0.82
		>40	0.33	0.12	0.00**
	>40	≤ 30	-0.31	0.13	0.02*
		31 - 40	-0.33	0.12	0.00**
All I want to do when I	≤ 30	31 - 40	0.08	0.12	0.48

Dependent Variable	(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
get home is to go to bed		>40	0.52	0.14	0.00**
	31 - 40	≤ 30	-0.08	0.12	0.48
		>40	0.44	0.12	0.00**
	>40	≤ 30	-0.52	0.14	0.00**
31 - 40		-0.44	0.12	0.00**	
I feel burnt out	≤ 30	31 - 40	-0.01	0.12	0.95
		>40	0.30	0.14	0.03*
	31 - 40	≤ 30	0.01	0.12	0.95
		>40	0.31	0.12	0.01*
	>40	≤ 30	-0.30	0.14	0.03*
		31 - 40	-0.31	0.12	0.01*
Overall Employee Burnout (Grand mean)	≤ 30	31 - 40	0.02	0.08	0.76
		>40	0.29	0.10	0.00**
	31 - 40	≤ 30	-0.02	0.08	0.76
		>40	0.27	0.09	0.00**
	>40	≤ 30	-0.29	0.10	0.00**
		31 - 40	-0.27	0.09	0.00**

Remark: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Multiple comparisons (LSD) were conducted. Table 4.1 reveals the same pattern of differences among all of the variables. It shows that employees over the age of 40 years old feel less emotionally exhausted at the end of the work day, find it easier to wake up for work, less physically exhausted after their shift ends, less of an urge to go to bed when they get home, and less burnt out when compared to the other ages (p -value < 0.05). However, there were no significant differences for all of these employee burnout variables between employees aged 30 and lower and employees aged between 31-40 (p -value < 0.05). Also, the overall burnout mean values show that employees aged over 40 have a mean value significantly less than both other ages ranges (p -value < 0.01).

Table 5. An independent sample t-test on the effect of marital status on employee burnout during COVID-19 crisis

Burnout	Single/Divorced/ Widowed/Single parent		Married/In a relationship		t-value	p-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
I feel emotionally exhausted at the end of the work day	2.66	0.91	2.50	0.92	1.77	0.08
I find it very hard to wake up for work	2.20	0.89	2.02	0.91	2.11	0.04*
I find it hard to motivate myself to go to work	2.05	0.88	1.93	0.89	1.35	0.18
If I was offered another job in another company I would accept it	2.21	0.94	2.07	0.98	1.55	0.12

Burnout	Single/Divorced/ Widowed/Single parent		Married/In a relationship		t-value	p-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
without hesitation						
I feel physically exhausted after my shift end	2.42	0.94	2.33	0.97	1.01	0.31
All I want to do when I get home is to go to bed	2.63	1.01	2.43	1.02	1.98	0.05
I feel I work too hard in this job	2.11	0.84	2.08	0.90	0.37	0.71
I feel more irritable at work and at home	2.00	0.84	2.01	0.90	-0.02	0.99
I feel burnt out	2.33	1.00	2.21	1.01	1.19	0.24
Overall Employee Burnout (Grand Mean)	2.29	0.69	2.17	0.72	1.66	0.10

Remark: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

From Table 5, out of nine, only one variable which is “I find it very hard to wake up for work” shows a significant difference between the two different factors. It is clear to see that employees who are Single/Divorced/Widowed/Single Parent have greater difficulty waking up to go to work (2.20 vs 2.02) than employees who are Married/In a relationship with a p-value of <0.05 . Therefore, when looking at the grand mean, it shows that there is no significant difference.

Table 6. The independent sample t-test on the effect of job function on employee burnout

Burnout	Front of house		Back of house		t-value	p-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
I feel emotionally exhausted at the end of the work day	2.64	0.94	2.57	0.91	0.76	0.45
I find it very hard to wake up for work	2.30	0.96	2.05	0.87	2.37	0.02*
I find it hard to motivate myself to go to work	2.18	0.96	1.93	0.84	2.42	0.02*
If I was offered another job in another company I would accept it without hesitation	2.34	0.94	2.07	0.96	2.61	0.01*
I feel physically exhausted after my shift	2.49	0.92	2.34	0.96	1.47	0.14

Burnout	Front of house		Back of house		t-value	p-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
ends						
All I want to do when I get home is to go to bed	2.66	1.02	2.49	1.01	1.49	0.14
I feel I work too hard in this job	2.23	0.92	2.05	0.84	1.83	0.07
I feel more irritable at work and at home	2.23	0.88	1.94	0.86	2.53	0.01*
I feel burnt out	2.41	0.98	2.23	1.01	1.70	0.09
Overall Employee Burnout (Grand Mean)	2.38	0.72	2.18	0.69	2.61	0.01*

Remark: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 6 shows the different burnout results between the front of house and back of house employees. When looking at the results, all of the variables show that the front of the house employees always have a higher mean value than the back of the house employees. However, when an independent sample t-test was used, the results show that four of the burnout variables have a significant difference (p -value < 0.05). Front of the house employees find it harder to wake up and motivate themselves to go to work than the back of house employees (mean score 2.30 vs 2.05 and 2.18 vs 1.93 respectively). Additionally, it also shows that the front of house employees have a much deeper inclination to leave the organisation and work elsewhere (mean score 2.34 vs 2.07) and feel more irritable at work and at home (mean score 2.18 vs 1.94). The overall burnout mean for this category is also indicated to have a significant difference between the values, with the front of the house having a significantly higher mean value than the back of the house (p -value < 0.05).

Table 7. A One Way ANOVA on the effect of job position on employee burnout during COVID-19 crisis

Burnout	Operational		Supervisor		Manager/Assistant Manager		p-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
I feel emotionally exhausted at the end of the work day	2.62	0.92	2.79	0.92	2.40	0.89	0.01*
I find it very hard to wake up for work	2.11	0.89	2.41	0.90	1.98	0.91	0.01*
I find it hard to motivate myself to go to work	2.01	0.88	2.24	0.91	1.85	0.83	0.01*

Burnout	Operational		Supervisor		Manager/Assistant Manager		p-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
If I was offered another job in another company I would accept it without hesitation	2.15	0.95	2.33	1.01	2.05	0.94	0.14
I feel physically exhausted after my shift ends	2.41	0.91	2.51	0.98	2.24	1.00	0.18
All I want to do when I get home is to go to bed	2.71	0.95	2.65	1.08	2.15	1.01	0.00**
I feel I work too hard in this job	2.12	0.84	2.25	0.88	1.97	0.91	0.08
I feel more irritable at work and at home	2.00	0.81	2.19	0.93	1.92	0.93	0.10
I feel burnt out	2.37	0.97	2.49	1.01	1.99	1.00	0.00**
Overall Employee Burnout (Grand mean)	2.27	0.65	2.43	0.76	2.06	0.73	0.00**

Remark: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 7 shows the impact of job positions on employee burnout. Five of the variables show a significant difference. There are “I feel emotionally exhausted at the end of the work day” (p -value < 0.05), “I find it very hard to wake up for work” (p -value < 0.05), “All I want to do when I get home is to go to bed” (p -value < 0.05), “I find it hard to motivate myself to go to work” (p -value < 0.01), “All I want to do when I get home is to go to bed” and “I feel burnt out” (p -value < 0.01). The overall mean values also indicate that there is a significant difference between the overall mean value for the different categories (p -value < 0.01).

Table 7.1. Post-Hoc analysis for employee burnout job position variables

Dependent Variable	(I) Job Position	(J) Job Position	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
I feel emotionally exhausted at the end of the work day	Operational Staff	Supervisor	-0.17	0.12	0.17
		Manager/Assistant Manager	0.22	0.10	0.04*
	Supervisor	Operational Staff	0.17	0.12	0.17
		Manager/Assistant Manager	0.39	0.14	0.00**
	Manager/Assistant	Operational Staff	-0.22	0.10	0.04*

Dependent Variable	(I) Job Position	(J) Job Position	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
	Manager	Supervisor	-0.39	0.14	0.00**
I find it very hard to wake up for work	Operational Staff	Supervisor	-0.30	0.12	0.02*
		Manager/Assistant Manager	0.12	0.10	0.22
	Supervisor	Operational Staff	0.30	0.12	0.01*
		Manager/Assistant Manager	0.43	0.13	0.00**
	Manager/Assistant Manager	Operational Staff	-0.12	0.10	0.22
		Supervisor	-0.43	0.13	0.00**
I find it hard to motivate myself to go to work	Operational Staff	Supervisor	-0.23	0.12	0.06
		Manager/Assistant Manager	0.16	0.10	0.11
		Supervisor	0.23	0.12	0.06
	Supervisor	Operational Staff	0.23	0.12	0.06
		Manager/Assistant Manager	0.39	0.13	0.00**
	Manager/Assistant Manager	Operational Staff	-0.16	0.10	0.11
Supervisor		-0.39	0.13	0.00**	
All I want to do when I get home is to go to bed	Operational Staff	Supervisor	0.05	0.13	0.70
		Manager/Assistant Manager	0.55	0.11	0.00**
		Supervisor	-0.05	0.13	0.70
	Supervisor	Operational Staff	-0.05	0.13	0.70
		Manager/Assistant Manager	0.50	0.15	0.00**
	Manager/Assistant Manager	Operational Staff	-0.55	0.11	0.00**
Supervisor		-0.50	0.15	0.00**	
Overall Employee Burnout (Grand mean)	Operational Staff	Supervisor	-0.16	0.09	0.09
		Manager/Assistant Manager	0.21	0.08	0.01*
	Supervisor	Operational Staff	0.16	0.09	0.09
		Manager/Assistant Manager	0.38	0.10	0.00**
	Manager/Assistant Manager	Operational Staff	-0.21	0.08	0.01*
		Supervisor	-0.38	0.10	0.00**

 Remark: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

From Table 7.1, the post-hoc (LSD) analysis shows that manager/assistant manager feel less emotionally exhausted at the end of the workday and less likely to go to bed when they get home than operational staff and supervisors. But there is no significant difference between operational staff and supervisors in these aspects. On the other hand, it is harder for supervisors to wake up and motivate themselves to go to work than operational staff and manager/assistant manager. But there are no significant differences between operational staff and manager/assistant manager in these aspects. The overall mean for this category also showed a significant difference between the manager/ assistant manager with a much lower value than both operational and supervisor staff members.

Table 8. A One Way Anova on the effect of Working Hours Per Week on employee burnout during COVID-19 crisis

Burnout	<20		20-42		>42		p-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
I feel emotionally exhausted at the end of the work day	2.92	0.83	2.76	0.93	2.47	0.90	0.00**
I find it very hard to wake up for work	2.57	0.66	2.20	0.91	2.05	0.91	0.02*
I find it hard to motivate myself to go to work	2.46	0.83	2.05	0.92	1.94	0.86	0.02*
If I was offered another job in another company I would accept it without hesitation	2.75	0.85	2.14	0.95	2.10	0.96	0.01*
I feel physically exhausted after my shift ends	3.00	0.78	2.40	0.96	2.31	0.95	0.00**
All I want to do when I get home is to go to bed	2.75	1.07	2.54	1.05	2.52	0.99	0.57
I feel I work too hard in this job	2.46	0.98	2.02	0.87	2.10	0.85	0.08
I feel more irritable at work and at home	2.63	0.82	1.93	0.81	1.99	0.88	0.00**
I feel burnt out	2.63	0.92	2.27	1.02	2.26	1.00	0.22
Overall Employee Burnout (Grand mean)	2.72	0.67	2.26	0.68	2.20	0.71	0.00**

Remark: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 8 shows the results for the burnout variables in relation to the working hours per week.

Six out of the nine variables are shown to have a significant difference which is “I feel emotionally exhausted at the end of the work day” (p-value <0.01), “If I was offered another job in another company I would accept it without hesitation” (p-value <0.01), “I feel physically exhausted after my shift ends” (p-value <0.01), “I feel more irritable at work and at home” (p-value <0.01), “I find it very hard to wake up for work” (p-value <0.05) and “I find it hard to motivate myself to go to work” (p-value <0.05). On top of that, the overall employee burnout mean values also show a significant difference (p-value <0.01).

Table 8.1. Post-Hoc analysis for employee burnout working hours per week variables

Dependent Variable	(I) HoursPerWeek	(J) HoursPerWeek	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
I feel emotionally exhausted at the end of the work day	≤20	21-42	0.16	0.20	0.43
		>42	0.45	0.19	0.02*
	21-42	≤20	-0.16	0.20	0.43
		>42	0.29	0.10	0.00**
	>42	≤20	-0.45	0.19	0.02*
		21-42	-0.29	0.10	0.00**
I find it very hard to wake up for work	≤20	21-42	0.37	0.20	0.07
		>42	0.52	0.20	0.01*
	21-42	≤20	-0.37	0.20	0.07
		>42	0.15	0.10	0.12
	>42	≤20	-0.52	0.20	0.01*
		21-42	-0.15	0.10	0.12
I find it hard to motivate myself to go to work	≤20	21-42	0.41	0.19	0.03*
		>42	0.52	0.19	0.01*
	21-42	≤20	-0.41	0.19	0.03*
		>42	0.11	0.09	0.25
	>42	≤20	-0.52	0.19	0.01*
		21-42	-0.11	0.09	0.25
If I was offered another job in another company I would accept it without hesitation	≤20	21-42	0.61	0.21	0.00**
		>42	0.65	0.20	0.00**
	21-42	≤20	-0.61	0.21	0.00**
		>42	0.04	0.10	0.67
	>42	≤20	-0.65	0.20	0.00**
		21-42	-0.04	0.10	0.67
I feel physically exhausted after my shift ends	≤20	21-42	0.16	0.21	0.00**
		>42	0.45	0.20	0.00**

Dependent Variable	(I) HoursPerWeek	(J) HoursPerWeek	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
	21-42	≤20	-0.16	0.21	0.00**
		>42	0.29	0.10	0.37
	>42	≤20	-0.45	0.20	0.00**
		21-42	-0.29	0.10	0.37
I feel more irritable at work and at home	≤20	21-42	0.37	0.19	0.00**
		>42	0.52	0.18	0.00**
	21-42	≤20	-0.37	0.19	0.00**
		>42	0.15	0.09	0.54
	>42	≤20	-0.52	0.18	0.00**
		21-42	-0.15	0.09	0.54
Overall Employee Burnout (Grand mean)	≤20	21-42	0.46	0.16	0.00**
		>42	0.52	0.15	0.00**
	21-42	≤20	-0.46	0.16	0.00**
		>42	0.06	0.07	0.40
	>42	≤20	-0.52	0.15	0.00**
		21-42	-0.06	0.07	0.40

Remark: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 8.1 shows a detailed post-hoc analysis (LSD) of all the variables that show a significant difference. The first variable “I feel emotionally exhausted at the end of the work day” reveals that <20 and 21-42 both are significantly different with 42> with them having higher mean values. The second variable “I find it very hard to wake up for work” is only shown to have a significant difference between <20 and 42>, with the latter having a higher mean value. However, there are no significant differences found with 21-42 with any of the other answers. As for the remaining variable, a strong pattern has developed where employees who work <20 a week have significantly greater means than both of the other categories. The post-hoc analysis also shows that the overall employee burnout mean values are different between employees working <20 is significantly higher than employees who work 21-42 and >42 hours a week.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on every industry and employee all around the world. However, one of the industries that have sustained massive losses is the hotel industry, mainly due to the restrictions to travel and tourism as countries all over the world closed their borders. A great example of a heavily dependent tourist destination is Phuket, Thailand where around 80% of the economy was tourist-dependent (Chuenniran, 2020). Since hotels have been trying to save money, they have let staff go and not hired new employees, this has put

more strain on employees who still retain their employment status due to them doing more work. For these reasons, this is a good chance to gain an insight into how the employees' burnout status has fluctuated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Employee burnout has increased significantly during the COVID-19 crisis. This result corresponds with the factors that are well known to have increased during the pandemic mentioned in other sources. The main factors are high-level workload (James et al, 2005), heightened time pressure (Rabatin et al, 2015), lack of supplies or staff members (Puleo, 2011) and role conflict (Yip et al, 2009; Kilfedder et al, 2001). These factors are known to be prevalent during the COVID-19 crisis in the hotel industry and significantly contribute to increases in stress which increases the chances of employee burnout.

Previous studies show that older generations can deal with stress much better and are therefore less likely to become burnt out than younger generations (Sánchez-Pujalte et al, 2021; Vagni et al, 2020). This study revealed that employees aged over 40 suffered the least burnout when compared to their younger colleagues. This, therefore, confirms that as in the literature review older employees are less susceptible to burnout than younger employees. A reason for this could be as mentioned in past research that older employees have more experience in changes and have gotten used to quick schedule changes (Vagni et al., 2020).

Marital status has been known to be a contributing factor to whether an employee will suffer from burnout or not. A previous study found that employees who are single, widowed or divorced and have no children had a higher chance of suffering from burnout (Cañadas-De la Fuente et al, 2018). However, Asgari (2012) concluded that marital status does not significantly impact the burnout of an employee. This research found that hotel employees who are Single/Divorced/Widowed/Single Parent have a greater difficulty waking up for work. This supports the conclusion made by Cañadas-De la Fuente et al, 2018). However, it also supports Asgari (2012) in the fact that only one variable out of the nine was found to be significantly different.

This study also supports Wen, Zhou, Hu & Zhang (2020) and O'Neill & Davis (2011) who found that front of the house employees have experienced more burnout than the back of house employees. A possible reason for this could be that the front of house employees have a higher amount of multitasking jobs, high demands, and targets to complete with much lower resources which are all known to be contributing factors to burnout.

When looking at burnout and job positions, it has been found that managers stand the highest chance of suffering from burnout (Anthony-McMann et al, 2016). However, when refining the scope to the hotel industry, past research indicates that the supervisors in the front of the house have the highest chance of suffering from burnout, closely followed by operational staff members. In contrast, this study found that operational staff and supervisors have been suffering more from burnout than managers. A possible reason for this could be these are the two positions with the highest contact with the guests in the hotel (Stutts & Wortman, 2006). They also have to deal with the most complaints and are expected to handle difficult situations (Ahmad et al, 2021; Wang et al, 2019).

The number of working hours has also been attributed to employee burnout in the hotel industry. This is because of the long hours, high tempo and usually less than satisfactory working conditions that the employees work in the industry (Demirdağ et al, 2020). However, this study shows that the employees who work >42 hours per week have less burnout than the employees that work <20. This study supported Nishimura, Miyoshi, Obika, Ogawa, Kataoka & Otsuka (2019) who found that working hours alone are not enough to fully burnout an employee.

5.1 Practical Implications

After reviewing the results above, it can be seen that the COVID-19 crisis has had a significant impact on hotel employees. This study provides a clear insight into how employee burnout levels have increased due to the COVID-19 crisis. In addition, the study looks at the different demographic and job characteristics and compares them to the burnout of the employees within them. The results from this study can show managers in hotels that more attention is needed to employees' feelings and thoughts when a crisis occurs.

This research hopes to provide a clear insight into how hotel employees have been feeling during the COVID-19 crisis. Moreover, how the effects and turmoil of the crisis have contributed towards them suffering from burnout. Owners, managers, and Human Resources managers should be aware of the additional strain the crisis has incurred to staff members and how the stress of the crisis is reducing staff productivity. If left unchecked, will cause the organisation to lose potential revenue and clientele. However, more importantly, will cause employees to suffer from significant mental strains which could potentially lead to physical deterioration. To tackle this, managers should firstly allow their staff to express how they feel about ongoing changes to the organisation and their potential future at the organisation. This is important as future job security is known to be a big potential stressor. Managers should also take into consideration and closely monitor younger employees working in the front of the house. Due to them having less experience in the industry through challenging times and would be expected to work harder than others. Managers should ensure that they listen to the thoughts of these employees and make sure all work is distributed fairly in terms of quantity and shift scheduling. The research also found that the supervisors also have the highest burnout, managers should be aware of the increased stress placed upon their supervisors and should try not to overburden them with increased workloads and ensure that they have adequate time off. Surprisingly, the research has shown that employees who work below 20 hours a week have experienced higher burnout. Managers should be aware that employees working less hours actually have a higher amount of stress. This is due to them receiving a reduced amount of pay, this, in turn, can lead the employee to become insecure about their job and promote emotional exhaustion. A possible solution to this issue could be to expand the business target market to attract domestic customers, this would provide revenue for the hotel and give the staff members more working hours and money.

Burnout is very interesting to investigate especially during COVID-19. For future studies, it is also very interesting to look at the different factors affecting burnout such as work-life balance, work-family conflict, and work-family facilitation. This study collected data from

hotel employees in Phuket which was the only province in Thailand to welcome international tourists during the COVID-19 outbreak. Any future study should be conducted in other provinces or other countries. Also, other industries could be compared to the hotel industry, most notably the tourism industry.

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