Tourism and Recreation

A qualitative case study on the evaluation of work-related depression in hotel workers: Kuşadası sample

Otel çalışanlarında işe bağlı depresyonun değerlendirilmesi üzerine nitel bir vaka çalışması: Kuşadası örneği

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ABSTRACT

Work-related depression is a state of inactivity, inability to future, uncertainty about what to do in the future, and giving up trying. Depression both harms the individual and poses an economic risk for the workplace. This study is an interdisciplinary study that aims to examine the problems experienced in the tourism sector in terms of mental health. The study aims to evaluate work-related depression symptoms, risk factors, and protective factors in hotel employees. The study was conducted in 5-star hotels in Kusadasi, one of the major tourism centers in Turkiye. Interviews were conducted with 15 volunteers working in different positions in six hotels determined by a purposive sampling method. The data obtained were analyzed by content analysis. Research findings were categorized under two themes: risk factors and protective factors. The findings suggest that factors such as workplace injustice, stress, and negative relationships (with customers, other employees, and family members) can be risk factors for workplace depression in hotel employees, whereas positive personality traits, social relationships, and economic security are protective factors. In addition, positive and negative future career expectations were found to be workplace-related variables.

ÖZET

İşe bağlı depresyon, işyerinde bireylerde görülen hareketsizlik, gelecekte ne yapacağına dair belirsizlik ve denemekten vazgeçme durumudur. Depresyon, hem bireyin kendisine zarar vermekte hem de işyeri açısından ekonomik bir risk oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışma, turizm sektöründe yaşanan sıkıntıları ruh sağlığı açısından incelemeyi amaçlayan disiplinler arası bir çalışmadır. Araştırmanın amacı; otel çalışanlarında işe bağlı depresyon belirtilerini, risk faktörlerini ve koruyucu faktörleri değerlendirmektir. Araştırma, Kuşadası'nda faaliyet gösteren 5 yıldızlı otellerde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Amaçlı örnekleme yöntemiyle belirlenen, otellerde farklı pozisyonlarda çalışan 15 gönüllü ile bireysel görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Elde edilen veriler içerik analiziyle analiz edilmiştir. Analiz sonucuna göre; risk faktörleri ve koruyucu faktörler olmak üzere iki tema ortaya çıkmıştır. Bulgular; işyerindeki adaletsizlik, stres gibi etmenlerin, müşteriyle, diğer çalışanlarla ve aile üyeleriyle negatif ilişkilerin otel çalışanlarında işyeri depresyonu için birer risk faktörü olabileceğini; öte yandan olumlu kişilik özellikleri, sosyal ilişkiler ve ekonomik güvencenin koruyucu faktörler olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca kariyere yönelik olumlu ve olumsuz gelecek beklentilerinin işyeri depresyonuyla ilişkili değişkenler olduğu görülmüştür.

1. Introduction

Tourism plays an important role in the economic development of countries, with effects such as the supply of foreign currency, the creation of new jobs, and the reduction of unemployment (Dwyer & Forsyth, 2010). The development of tourism in recent years has enabled the development of the accommodation industry (Kuo et al., 2020). In addition, the accommodation industry is one of the most stressful and demanding occupations, making workers vulnerable to mental disorders, particularly depression (Lei & Chen, 2020). Frontline service employees in the accommodation industry play an important role in ensuring service quality and building long-term relationships with customers (Karatepe & Zargar Tizabi, 2011). The system and changing environment of the accommodation industry create pressures and demands that can cause stress for front-line employees. As hotel

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management is a service-oriented industry, supervisors and employees feel obliged to face the needs, manage the process, and cope to meet the demands of guests (Ahmad et al., 2021). On the other hand, the emotional states of employees are crucial in accommodation facilities and customer satisfaction. It is stated that the negative emotional state of the employee decreases customer satisfaction. (Boz et al., 2016).

Many mental disorders, especially depression, occur in hotel employees who work under high pressure and interact emotionally with customers (Karatepe & Zargar Tizabi, 2011; Lei & Chen, 2020; Shani & Pizam, 2009). Job insecurity in the tourism sector has also been defined as a negative factor for the psychological health of employees experiencing job insecurity (Etehadi & Karatepe, 2019; Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2022). Due to the potential threats that all these factors pose to the mental health of employees, studies on the mental health and protective factors of employees in the tourism sector have come to the fore (Kalargyrou et al., 2023).

The intense competitive environment forces companies to find ways to improve the products and services they offer while reducing costs (Hodari et al., 2014). The quality of employee-customer interaction has a profound impact on customer satisfaction and positive feedback about the organization. The mental state of employees at work plays a critical role in the employee-customer interaction process (Lei & Chen, 2020). The time and energy that employees spend at work is a significant part of their day. The work environment plays an undeniable role in the well-being of individuals, and the workplace is a rich environment for collecting data on occupational health and illness (Murphy et al., 2006).

In hotels, employees in most departments are required to work in shifts to meet the needs of guests around the clock. These unstable working hours create physiological and psychological stress for workers (Kuo et al., 2020). Lack of time, physical challenges, and stress are major issues in the hospitality industry (Zhang et al., 2020). Furthermore, there is evidence that depression in the workplace impairs employee behavior and performance (Niesen et al., 2018). Considering that some psychosocial hazards at work can be triggers for depression (Vearing & Mak, 2007), it is of great importance to identify these variables (Netterstrøm et al., 2008) and for organizations to be aware of the characteristics and negative effects of workplace depression (Hall et al., 2013).

Although there are studies in the literature investigating general depression among hotel workers (Aguiar-Quintana et al., 2021; Boz et al., 2016; Kalargyrou et al., 2023; Lei & Chen, 2020; Moon et al., 2015; Ruiz-Palominoet al., 2022; Shani & Pizam, 2009), the limited number of studies directly addressing work-related depression (Karatepe & Zargar Tizabi, 2011), which is an important risk factor in the workplace, has influenced the emergence of this research. From this perspective, there is a need to investigate organizational depression, which negatively affects working life, significantly reduces work success and productivity, and decreases organizational commitment and motivation, in the context of hotel employees.

The fact that this study was carried out jointly by researchers in the fields of tourism and mental health, and has an interdisciplinary character, shows the richness of the research. The findings of this study are intended to provide a perspective on how tourism professionals experience work-related depression, the risk factors that indicate work-related depression, and the protective factors that support the mental health of employees. Thus, this study is expected to guide in reviewing the working conditions of tourism workers and in planning and implementing preventive and developmental mental health services for these individuals. The aim of this research is to evaluate the characteristics, risk factors, and protective factors of work-related depression in tourism workers. To this end, we will try to find answers to the following questions:

➢ How is work-related depression observed among hotel employees?

➢ What are the risk factors and protective factors for work-related depression among hotel employees?

2. Literature Review

In addition to emotional symptoms such as sadness, hopelessness, pessimism, and reluctance, cognitive symptoms such as negative thoughts, impaired concentration, poor memory, and confusion; physical symptoms such as changes in appetite and sleep patterns, fatigue, and increased pain are associated with depression (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2009). In addition to harming the individual's physical health and quality of life, depression leads to many negative work-related outcomes such as job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, low work productivity, turnover intentions, burnout, and poor job performance (Baba et al., 1999; Boz et al., 2016; Kessler et al., 2008; Murphy et al., 2006; Shani & Pizam, 2009). Depression is a strong predictor of declining job performance (Kessler et al., 2008). Work-related depression is an organization-wide state of inactivity, stuckness, often an inability to plan, a lack of vision of what individuals in the organization will do in the future, and giving up trying (Bilchik, 2000). Unrecognized and untreated depression is a major contributor to lost productivity, causing great harm to the individual and a loss of money to the workplace (Thanem & Elraz, 2022).

Literature studies show that work-related depression is associated with variables such as organizational loneliness (Aslan & Kayar, 2023; Khan et al., 2021; Mishra et al., 2018), organizational trust resistance (Doo & Choi, 2022), supervisor leadership (Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2022), social support (Netterstrøm et al., 2008), job satisfaction (Yan et al., 2021), burnout and reduced productivity (Murphy et al., 2006), workplace bullying and work-family interaction (Machado et al., 2021). On the other hand, there is evidence that hotel workers experience high levels of work-related depression (Karatepe & Zargar Tizabi, 2011; Shani & Pizam, 2009). Research shows that job insecurity and resilience (Aguiar-Quintana et al., 2021), working hours and shift patterns (Moon et al., 2015), turnover intentions (Boz et al., 2016), organizational support (Lei & Chen, 2020), positive affect and intrinsic motivation (Karatepe & Zargar Tizabi, 2011) cause depression in hotel and service workers.

Reducing and preventing work-related depression is extremely important both in terms of increasing productivity in the tourism industry and in terms of employees' mental

health and quality of life. Therefore, preventive interventions for employees based on career management group interventions (Ahola et al., 2012; Vuori et al., 2012), workplace stress reduction (Tsutsumi et al., 2009), stress management (Limm et al., 2011; Mino et al., 2006), and behaviour change (Atlantis et al., 2004) are being implemented by organisations. To disseminate and enrich such preventive studies, it is important to evaluate hotel workers' opinions about work-related depression, to take the necessary mental health measures in the work environment, and to increase protective factors.

3. Methods

For the application part of the research, Ethical Approval was obtained from Manisa Celal Bayar University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee dated 02.05.2023 and numbered 2023/05. This study is an example of case study design, one of the qualitative research designs. Qualitative research is a research method that uses qualitative data collection techniques such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, and aims to examine events, phenomena, and situations in a realistic and holistic manner in their natural environment (Creswell, 2007). A case study is a methodological approach that involves an in-depth examination of a limited system using multiple data collection methods (Chmiliar, 2010; Subasi & Okumus, 2017). Qualitative research, which is widely used to understand people's experiences and express their perspectives, primarily follows the exploratory scientific method (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). In this direction, an exploratory case study was applied in the research.

The study group consists of 15 tourism employees working in different positions in 5-star hotels located in the Kuşadası tourism region of Turkiye. A total of six hotels took part in the study. In qualitative research, reaching data saturation is an important criterion (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After the 12th interview, the statements of the participants were repeated, and 15 participants' data were considered sufficient for the study due to the saturation of the data (Robinson, 2014). The participants in this study used the maximum variation method from purposive sampling methods.

Maximum variation sampling ensures the diversity of the individuals studied, enabling the investigation of common patterns within this diversity (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2014). Participants were professionals with at least three years of experience in the tourism sector, working in different positions in hotels, who reported feeling depressed at work in the last six months. All participants were fully informed that they could withdraw from participation at any point during or after the interview.

The research data were obtained from hotel staff working in 5-star hotels in Kusadasi in 2023. Data was obtained with a semi-structured interview form, which included the participants' demographic information and interview questions. Participants were first asked whether they had felt depressed in the workplace, such as unhappiness, pessimism, hopelessness, and reluctance to work, for the last six months. Participants with these characteristics were included in individual interviews lasting 40-50 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded for data loss prevention. The interview form primarily included personal information and interview questions about the participants' age, gender, educational status, working position, and how many years they have been working in the tourism field.

The interview questions were prepared by the researcher, who is an expert in the field of psychology and who took part in the study, after a comprehensive literature review. The questions were finalized with feedback from academicians who are experts in qualitative research. The questions asked of the participants in the interviews are as follows: 1) Are there any situations at work that negatively affect your mood? What are these? 2) Are there times when you feel sad, pessimistic, and reluctant at work? When do you feel this way? 3) Are there times when you feel hopeless about the future of your tourism career? When have you ever felt this way? 4) What do you do to deal with negative emotions you experience about your job? 5) What factors in your life help you feel better?

The content analysis method was used to analyze the data obtained by transcribing the voice recordings. The purpose of this analysis is to reach the meanings from the data and to create a systematic presentation (Patton, 2014). During the analysis, two researchers independently coded the data. Then, the codes put forward by the two researchers were brought together and examined, and the codes with and without consensus were determined, and a code book was created. Coding was conducted separately by two researchers. Consequently, the categories and themes of the research were obtained.

There are several strategies different from quantitative research to increase trustworthiness in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). In this research, the triangulation technique was used to ensure credibility (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To determine the inter-researcher credibility percentage, the formula of Miles and Huberman was used. After the open coding, a code list was created, and selective coding was used to improve the consistency between coders. Unrelated codes were removed, and similar codes were combined. Consistent (26) and inconsistent (5) codes were identified between the two coders. The agreement rate between coders was 84%. This level indicated adequate reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

To ensure the transferability of the research, participants were selected using the maximum variation method, one of the purposeful sampling types, and the questions to be asked of the participants were clearly defined. To ensure dependability in the research, while preparing a semi-structured interview form containing the questions to be asked in the interviews, the relevant literature was examined, and a conceptual framework on the subject was created. The material was anonymized to remove any identifying data from the transcripts of the interviews. The researcher who conducted interviews was known in the hotels as a student coordinator and had long-term interactions with the employees, which increased the credibility of the study and enabled the participants to express their ideas freely. Additionally, a summary was made at the end of the interviews, and participant confirmation was requested.

4. Results

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that the participants work in four different departments (food and beverage, front office, housekeeping, and animation) of accommodation establishments, and their age ranges between 19-54. In terms of educational level, it is seen that 8 participants are university graduates, 5 participants are high school graduates, 1 participant is a secondary school graduate, and 1 participant is a primary school graduate. Five of the participants work in a managerial position (P1, P3, P6, P8, P10). Only 1 in 15 participants are woman. The majority of participants are male employees, as women are less likely to participate because they have more responsibilities outside work, making it difficult to find time for interviews. In terms of marital status, 8 participants are single and 7 are married. Experience of the participants in the sector varies from 3 to 32 years. As a result of the qualitative data analysis, tourism employees' views on work-related depression were grouped into two themes: risk factors and protective factors (Table 2).

4.1. Risk Factors

Four categories emerged under the theme of risk factors: workplace, customer, staff, and family.

4.1.1. Workplace-related risk factors

Injustice: Participants stated that having to do someone else's job and not working in the deserved position, because not all staff do their job with the same dedication, creates an unfair working environment. On the other hand, they stated that their supervisors were sometimes unfair by not treating employees equally. *"I was not promoted to the position I deserved where I worked. There should be no injustice; everyone should work as hard as I work. We must get the salary and promotion we deserve; otherwise, it becomes an injustice."* P15

Long working hours: Participants stated that long working hours in the tourism sector are tiring, and this situation negatively affects their mood in the work environment. *"I worked as a chef in Russia. The working hours were short. People earned little money, but they were happy. Here, we work very long hours at a very intense pace, and this affects us psychologically."* P4

Technical glitches: It was stated that technical disruptions in the hotel both reduce work efficiency and increase customer satisfaction and are therefore a challenging factor in the workplace. *"Equipment is also important; if the oven is not good, if the heaters are not heating well, if the coolers are not cooling, our work efficiency decreases. We are not providing enough services, and this is a major problem for us."* P4

Work intensity and stress: It was stated that a busy and stressful environment at work negatively affects not only the work environment but also their general mood and social relationships. *"The intensity and stress of work in the tourism sector are extremely high. This stress negatively affects both our mood in the work environment, our family-friend relationships, and our general mood."* P6

Insufficient budget: Participants stated that the quality of service decreased due to insufficient budget and that being embarrassed towards the customer created desperation and pressure on them. *"When the budget is insufficient, we feel helpless. The customer pays money, but when I don't give the customer the service they want, I get upset and feel helpless."* P7

Job insecurity: Participants stated that they experienced intense stress and anxiety due to the economic difficulties brought about by the uncertainties in the tourism sector and seasonal working style. *"The boss has not been making money in recent years. I am worried about if my salary paid. Uncertainty about the future is so exhausting that we lose our health."* P7

Participants, especially in managerial positions, stated that when payments to hotel staff are disrupted, this creates psychological pressure and stress on managers. A manager expressed his situation as follows: *"Some organizations pay the hotel irregularly, and we are struggling to pay the salaries and insurances of our employees, and this causes a lot of pressure and stress for me."* P2

Career prospects: Working in a position below the qualifications of the personnel and not meeting career expectations are defined as factors that negatively affect psychological health and job satisfaction. *"If a person wants to advance in his career and is not in the status he deserves,*

Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants in Semi-Structured Interviews

Participant No	Age	Sex	MaritalStatus	Education	Sectoral Experience	Occupation
Participant 1	38	M	Married	University	22 Years	Front OfficeManager
Participant 2	25	M	Single	University	5 Years	Receptionist
Participant 3	48	M	Married	High School	29 Years	Animation Manager
Participant 4	47	M	Married	ElementarySchool	30 Years	Kitchen Chef
Participant 5	22	F	Single	High School	5 Years	Animator
Participant 6	48	M	Married	University	29 Years	F&B Manager
Participant 7	34	M	Single	University	13 Years	Animation Chef
Participant 8	34	M	Married	University	18 Years	Front Office Manager Assistant
Participant 9	39	M	Married	ElementarySchool	24 Years	Pastry Chef
Participant 10	54	M	Married	High School	32 Years	F&B Manager
Participant 11	28	M	Single	High School	12 Years	Bellboy Captain
Participant 12	30	M	Single	University	10 Years	Animation Chef
Participant 13	19	M	Single	SecondarySchool	3 Years	Barboy
Participant 14	21	M	Single	University	5 Years	Waiter
Participant 15	19	M	Single	High School	3 Years	Cleaner

Source: *Created by the authors.*

this affects his mood greatly; he is not satisfied. But there is no problem for people who want to do the same job for their whole life, they are generally satisfied." P15

4.1.2. Customer-related risk factors

Customer arrogance and incomprehension: Participants stated that the customers' arrogant and incomprehensible attitudes and commanding behavior negatively affected them psychologically and that they were unhappy. *"Some guests are arrogant and incomprehensible, which disturbs our employees and creates unhappiness. For example, we may have guests who do not want to give their ID cards at the entrance."* P3

"It affects my psychology badly when some customers treat us like slaves. Customers think that they are buying from us with the money they pay. Their language can be hurtful and insulting." P14

Customers' unrealistic expectations: Participants stated that the unrealistic expectations of the customers regarding the service they will receive create pressure and a negative mood on the tourism personnel, and arguments may occur. *"Sometimes I can argue with the customer because the customer expects a high level of performance and service from us, but we cannot provide it. Because we cannot go beyond the hotel concept. Such problems affect my mood negatively."* P2

Customer dissatisfaction: Participants stated that it was psychologically tiring for them when some customers did not like any of the services. It has also been stated that customer dissatisfaction causes managers to increase the pressure on personnel. *"The customer says the food, the dessert, and the service are bad. He doesn't like anything. Local tourists make us more bored and tired."* P4

4.1.3. Staff-related risk factors

Lack of staff: Participants stated that their mental health was negatively affected when they had to do work outside their duties due to a lack of staff. *"When we cannot replace the missing staff, things go wrong. Work is interrupted, and this creates a lot of pressure."* P3

Neglect of duty: Participants stated that staff who neglect their duties affect the productivity of all other staff, increase the workload, and this decrease motivation. Especially the participants in managerial positions stated that the negligence of the staff negatively affected customer satisfaction and that they felt under pressure. *"If I get a negative reaction from the customer when staff do not follow my instructions and do not fulfill their duties, it is a problem for me. As a manager, I have to minimize it, and that puts pressure on me."* P11

Conflicts among the staff: Participants stated that conflicts and bullying behaviors among staff negatively affected all staff in that environment, and this was reflected in their work motivation. A staff member working in housekeeping services expressed the situation as follows: *"In general, there is a lot of pressure in the circle of friends; my friends in other departments belittle the work I do, which makes me feel bad, and my motivation decreases."* P9

Lack of training of the senior management: Lack of training of top management: Participants find the lack of knowledge of senior management personnel, who are the decision-makers, important for business efficiency. *"We attend all kinds of training, such as corporate communication training, crisis management training, and department management training. My supervisor needs this information more than I because I am not the decision maker."* P6

Pressure of senior management: Participants stated that the oppressive attitudes of the senior management increased their

Table 2. Distribution of Themes, Categories and Codes Obtained in Research

Theme	Category	Code	Frequency
Risk Factors	Workplace Related Risk Factors	Injustice	10
		Long working hours	8
		Technical glitches	7
		Work intensity and stress	8
		Insufficient budget	9
		Job insecurity	12
		Career prospects	10
	Customer Related Risk Factors	Customer arrogance and incomprehension	13
		Customer's unrealistic expectations	12
		Customer dissatisfaction	11
	Staff Related Risk Factors	Lack of staff	12
		Neglect of duty	9
		Conflicts among staff	13
		Pressure of senior management	6
		Lack of education of senior management	5
	Family Related Risk Factors	Not spending enough time with family	6
		Reflecting work stress on family	8
Protective Factors	Personal Protective Factors	Focus on work	5
		Usage of humor	3
		Positive thinking	4
		Moving away from the environment	3
	Social Protective Factors	Positive family relationships	5
		Positive relationships with colleagues	9
		Positive customer relationships	7
	Economic Factors	Financial gain	5
		Working in suitable career position	7

Source: *Created by the authors.*

stress and negatively affected their mood. *"We need to be under constant command in the work environment. This pressure, of course, increases my stress and lowers my mood."* P9

4.1.4. Family-related risk factors

Not spending enough time with family: Participants stated that they were unable to spend quality time with their families due to work intensity and stress, which negatively affected their mood and communication within the family. *"Since I work very hard in the tourism sector, I cannot spend much time at home, which negatively affects my relationships with my spouse and children as well as my mood."* P12

Reflection of work stress on the family: Participants stated that problems and stress at work are reflected in the family environment and that communication within the family decreases. *"We try not to reflect the problems at work to the family, but it inevitably reflects. I also communicate little with my spouse in stressful situations."* P4

"Work stress takes away quality time with my family because my hands and feet are shaking, and sometimes, I don't even feel like talking." P6

4.2. Protective Factors

Three categories emerged under the theme of protective factors: personal, social, and economic.

4.2.1. Personal Protective Factors

Work motivation: Some participants stated that work motivation supported them to feel good about themselves, and that focusing on their work contributed to improved mood. "Thanks to my motivation to work, my mood improves when I go to work. I get away from problems. The working environment is empowering for me." P5

Use of humor: Use of humor: Participants stated that using humor relieved them when they experienced a negative situation at work. *"We make jokes about it to cope with some problems at work. We joke with our friends. I'm trying to recharge myself by joking."* P4

Positive thinking: Participants stated that thinking positively helped them cope with the difficulties they experienced at work. *"I am a person who always thinks positively. This is how I overcome the problems I experience in the work environment and in general."* P13

Moving away from the environment: Participants stated that moving away from the environment is effective in cases of anger and other problems. *"I usually have explosions within myself. When there is a problem, I leave the problem area, calm down, and then solve the problem."* P2

4.2.2. Social Protective Factors

Positive family relationships: Participants stated that spending time with family has a supportive effect in coping with negative situations that arise at work. *"I spend more time with my family to cope with negative situations at work. When my shift is over, it feels good for me to get away from work and be with my family."* P15

Positive relationships with colleagues: Participants said that the positive relationships they built with their colleagues provided support and motivation to cope with negative situations and made them happy. *"My colleagues and I support and motivate each other to think positively. We are trying to impose that everything is going well."* P5

Positive customer relationships: Participants stated that they were happy and motivated when they received positive feedback from customers and were able to communicate well with the customer. *"When our guests who come to the hotel have good opinions about the hotel, I feel very good and happy. This increases my motivation."* P13

"Some of our guests can be P13.ry polite, thoughtful, and naive. They approach us well, and that makes us happy." P3

4.3. Economic Factors

Financial gain: Financial gain was identified as an important motivator to overcome sector challenges. *"If the work I do gives me financial satisfaction, it is a positive gain. It gives me strength and power to keep doing what I'm doing."* P11

Working in a suitable career position: Participants stated that they felt happier and developed a more positive outlook on the sector when they worked in a position appropriate to their training and equipment. "*Of course, when I work in an appropriate status, my mood is good. For example, since I have been promoted, I have become happier and think more positively.*" P15

5. Conclusions and Discussion

Participants identified unfairness, long hours, a busy and stressful workplace, technical breakdowns, lack of budget, job insecurity, and career prospects as risk factors related to the workplace. Similar findings have been reported in the literature. Shift work in employees of twenty-four-hour hotel businesses is significantly associated with depression (Moon et al., 2015); it is emphasized that job insecurity has significant effects on employee anxiety and depression levels (Aguiar-Quintana et al., 2021). In a similar study, depression was associated with excessive workload; it was linked to organizational resources in terms of staff, material supply, and general funding (Grey-Stanley et al., 2010). From this point of view, it can be argued that the identification and elimination of disruptions in the workplace has a significant impact on the mental health of employees.

Participants stated that the personality and work-related characteristics of managers and other personnel are determinants for workplace depression. When working with employees with depression, the work-related and individual characteristics of managers are considered important (Karatepe & Zargar Tizabi, 2011; Perko et al., 2014; Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2022). Because working with an unsupportive employer can make it difficult for depressed employees to work efficiently (Kalargyrou et al., 2023). However, many problems and conflicts may arise in hotel establishments where many people with different characters come together (Topaloğlu & Boylu, 2006). For this reason, it is important for the mental health of employees to identify problems related to personnel and take the necessary measures.

Customer-related risk factors identified by participants

included arrogance and lack of understanding, unrealistic expectations, and dissatisfaction. A similar study by Jeong and Lee (2022) found that poor customer behaviour increased employees' feelings of depression at work and reduced their work-related citizenship behaviour. Family-related risk factors are explained as not being able to devote enough time to the family and reflecting work stress on the family. In a similar study, the work-life balance of hotel employees was found to be closely related to life satisfaction (Toker & Kalıpçı, 2022). From this perspective, it can be assumed that customer behaviour and problems in the family environment have a significant impact on the mental health of employees.

Participants stated that injustice in the workplace, long working hours, technical glitches, work intensity and stress, insufficient budget, job insecurity, and unmet career prospects caused them to feel more depressed. On the other hand, customer arrogance and incomprehension, customer unrealistic expectations, customer dissatisfaction and lack of staff, staff neglect of duty, conflicts among the staff, failing to train senior management, and pressure of senior management were reported as factors that increased negative feelings at work. In addition, not spending enough time with the family and reflecting work stress on the family were also identified as risk factors for depressive mood.

Participants identified positive social relationships as a protective factor, in addition to several personality traits such as humor and positive thinking. Findings from the literature indicate that emotional exhaustion, positive emotionality, and internal motivation are related to depression (Karatepe & Zargar Tizabi, 2011). On the other hand, loneliness is closely related to work-related depression (Aslan & Kayar, 2023; Khan et al., 2021; Mishra et al., 2018), and social support can reduce the effects of social isolation (Kalargyrou et al., 2023) and make it easier to cope with depression (Netterstrøm et al., 2008). The quality of interaction between employees and customers has a profound impact on customer satisfaction and their willingness to share positive messages about an organization. The mental health status of employees at work plays a critical role in this process of employee-customer interaction (Lei & Chen, 2020). Consistent with these findings, personal coping skills and social support are strong protective factors against work-related depression. In the economic dimension, participants indicated that high financial gain and the opportunity to work in a suitable career position are protective factors. Research shows that meeting career expectations (Esen et al., 2023) and financial rewards (Erdil et al., 2004) are important in the work lives of hotel employees. In this sense, it can be assumed that financial rewards and career opportunities motivate employees and have a protective effect. Research shows that employees with depressive characteristics do not receive psychological support at work and are not aware of such a support program (Kalargyrou et al., 2023). In this regard, it can be recommended that top management in the organization should be more aware of the psychological health of their employees and create a healthy communication environment. Managers should be trained to recognize the characteristics of common mental health problems, such as depression, and provide the necessary referral services.

5.1. Practical Implications

Receiving regular feedback from employees is considered important to show them that they are valued and to identify existing problems in the organization before they escalate. In addition, taking the necessary precautions to address issues such as high workload pressure on employees and lack of resources, unfair distribution of tasks, and job insecurity can have a protective effect on employees' mental health. On the other hand, it is very important for hotel HR departments to focus on preventive mental health services, to strengthen the psychological health of employees, to identify individuals in need of mental health services and provide the necessary guidance for treatment, and finally to disseminate psychological counselling services in the workplace. Managers' leadership styles can be supportive in reducing the characteristics of depression in employees. Many people may experience some depressive feelings without a medical diagnosis of depression. However, it is important to remember that with appropriate mental health care, most episodes of depression can be treated or at least significantly reduced. Accordingly, hotels should focus on preventive and curative mental health services, such as psychoeducational activities to improve employees' psychosocial skills, such as stress management, communication skills, self-control, and conflict resolution skills. On the other hand, it is important for organizations to focus on mitigating the effects of psychosocial hazards in the workplace and developing work environments that are conducive to employees' psychological well-being.

5.2. Limitations and Suggestions to Future Research

This study is important because it brings together the disciplines of tourism and mental health. Given the limited number of interdisciplinary studies in the literature, it may be recommended to disseminate similar studies. In addition, this study only covers employees in the hotel industry; studies can be carried out with people working in different tourism enterprises. However, conducting research that includes sectoral differences can contribute to the literature. Most participants in this study are male employees. For this reason, there is a need for studies that examine gender differences in the mental health of participants. There is a need to develop intervention studies to reduce workplace depression, disseminate experimental studies on their effectiveness, and conduct research to unravel the relationship between managerial skills and employee depression. Finally, the data obtained in this study are limited to qualitative data on depression, risk factors, and protective factors. It is felt that more comprehensive studies integrating quantitative and qualitative data on the subject may be useful.

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