

**The effects of high-pressure
situations found in the kitchen and
how these situations influence the
chefs' personal lives.**

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Bachelors in culinary arts
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Declaration of Authenticity

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Declaration:

I hereby declare that this research study is based on the outcome of my own research. I, as the author, declare that this research study is my own composition which has not been previously produced for any other qualification.

The research study was conducted under the supervision of Ms. Carmen Rita Bugeja.

Date

Student's Signature

Abstract

This is exploratory research, designed to help with the understanding of this particular topic, done in a generic way. The aim behind this study was done to shed light for more research.

Being a chef is not easy, most people know this. This research is going to answer some of the following questions:

- 1- Does high pressure or any other issues chefs face at work, bring on any issues of mental health?
- 2- Is there a relation between alcohol, drugs, and stress? and
- 3- Do chefs 'seek therapy as a means of relief?
- 4- What are the coping mechanisms used by chefs?

This study will also discuss the subject of physical and verbal abuse chefs experience within the kitchen.

This research followed triangulation research methods, by using both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Data was gathered from questionnaires which were available to local and foreign chefs, to be able to compare the local and foreign working environment and experiences. The questionnaires were analysed with a qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Data was also collected by interviews with two local chefs, one male and one female who both have experience in working locally and abroad. Moreover, they both also study at the Institute of Tourism Studies.

Key Words: Mental health, substance abuse, physical and verbal harassment, chefs.

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Finally, I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to the chefs who took their own lives because of negative aspects of this profession. They will always be remembered for their passion and contribution to the industry.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1: Research background

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact that the high-pressure environment has, if any, on the personal lives of chefs and what kind of consequences the pressure has on the people who choose to pursue careers in this field. Another purpose of this research to determine whether or not working in a kitchen is a high-pressured job,

In addition, this research will analyse the issues with mental health, substance misuse, physical and verbal abuse, and harassment.

The aim of this study is to find out what working in the kitchen is like to the outside public and to publicize the lifestyle chefs live, on a day-to-day basis. The researcher's primary purpose in carrying out this study was to highlight the kinds of pressures that chefs employed in this sector faced on a daily basis, as a result of the nature of their job.

1.2: Research scope

This research was inspired by the researcher's first-hand experience gained, while working in the hospitality industry's culinary sector for accumulative total of six (6) years. Having this subjective experience unquestionably provided a useful insight into the day-to-day challenges that were experienced during this period, as a result of the high-pressure scenarios that affect professionals working in the business, with a particular emphasis on chefs.

Thanks to the experience gained from working in kitchens both domestically and internationally over the course of the past few years, the researcher has been able to observe and experience first-hand the effects of high-pressure, chefs endure in their line of work. As a result, we made the conscious decision to concentrate and ground this study on

the repercussions that the high-pressure environment of the kitchen has on their personal lives.

1.3: Research objectives

The Primary Goals of this research are as follows.

- To gain information about effects of high pressure in the kitchen.
- To learn about the impact of high pressure has on chefs.
- To find out the coping methods used by chefs to deal with the high pressure.

The purpose of this is to educate the general public about the stressful working conditions that chefs in the hospitality business are subjected to on a daily basis. The number of people interested in pursuing a career as a chef appears to be dropping on an annual basis, which may be one of the reasons why there is a scarcity of working chefs in the sector at the present time. This study may also help figure out why this is the case.

Chapter 2: Literature review

The kitchen is at its best in the morning (Gibney, 2014). This is how the kitchen is described by Chef Gibney.

'The kitchen is still fresh and clean, all pots and pans sparkle, and there is not a single person in sight. To someone who is not accustomed to the kitchen life, the kitchen might appear to be deserted if it were not for the new day's prep list hanging from the ticket racks. These are the relics of mayhem from the previous night that were scrawled in fury, hurry, and tiredness. They explain what happened in the kitchen the night before.' (2014, pg 5)

The life of a chef is consistent from one day to the next. Every morning, they must get themselves ready for what is waiting for them at work, wonder if it would be as busy as the day before, if they had done enough, and if they will get everything ready in time for the next service. Some people believe that becoming a chef requires no special training or education, and that it is a job that can be performed by anyone. Others believe that becoming a chef is one of the most straightforward professions possible. However, as one takes a closer look at what a chef goes through on a daily basis, they can discover that it is not as simple as it may initially appear to be. (Gibney, 2014)

2.1 Stress in the kitchen

The International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality conducted a study to find out the occupational stress in the chef profession and the coping behaviour and loss of control on stress outcomes. The approach the journal followed was by surveying forty (40) working chefs by having them fill out an occupational stress questionnaire. It was concluded that the reported stress had increased higher than in the previous studies, due to the excessive workload. The feeling of undervalue by their superiors was a common factor, as was bullying and threats of violence (Murray-Gibbons, 2007).

2.2 Harassment and abuse

Sexual, physical, and emotional abuse are unfortunately not uncommon in the kitchen profession as with any other profession in reality these days. Verbal berating, humiliation as well as physical violence are frequently used as punishments for mistakes, or as a form of hazing on new recruits. A few have described being punched for a slight delay of delivery of dishes, been scalded by hot liquids for making mistakes, and chefs branding staff with hot utensils (Wroe, 2014).

These methods are less used nowadays as more laws and unions are in place, but some chefs are still set on using methods like this even to this day (Centers, 2011).

In an article published by Jen Agg titled 'It's Not Just Kitchen Talk Its Abuse' she described her experience working with a damaging chef, who although did not physically assault anyone, would use words to badger the people working for and with him. She said the abuse would be directed towards all staff levels, ranging from the dish washer to even his sous chef who looked up to him the most. Using words like '*fag*' '*homo*' and '*pussy*' where among the words he would often use. He also often sexualized the service staff, by commenting on women's personal appearance, size, and shape (Agg, 2018).

Language can do lasting harm. Despite the schoolyard insistence that sticks, and stones do more damage than words, in this particular circumstance, smashed bones heal, while a caustic insult, mainly one constructed to exploit dishonour or insecurity, can rattle around the brain and mess with the ego for years. In relation to this, it is unfortunately women working in kitchens who endure constant badgering revolving around their and other women's bodies as well as jokes where rape is the punchline (Agg, 2018).

Gay men working in kitchens also encounter this by having their identities transformed into insults and slurs being just the tip of the iceberg. The language thrown at such individuals can have a profound effect on how they observe themselves. Sometimes, sending chefs through an abusive ritual sets them up to perpetuate it. The sous chef mentioned above, the one who so looked up to his abusive head chef, went on to be an abusive leader himself (Agg, 2018).

In an article published by The UK Independent, on a Movement Created by French chefs to end the violence in French kitchens, it is recounted that chefs where slapped in the face

with fish, stabbed in the calves with kitchen knives, and them having to wear shin guards in order to protect themselves from being kicked on a daily basis (Williams, 2014).

A particular chef mentioned in this article, Brian Strubbers (not his real name, changed in original article), accounts a time where he witnessed a chef throw a carving fork at a kitchen porter, he added that if the fork had not missed the porter, it would have killed him. Another experience of his was, when a head chef chased him around the kitchen (Williams, 2014).

'He grabbed hold of me, smashed me off the wall, banged me off another, banged me off a corner table and slammed me on to the tile floor. I was knocked out for half a second' (Williams, 2014).

Anna Hansen who is the chef-patron of Clerkenwell's The Modern Pantry, mentions that during her years of working as a chef, she has seen a lot of bad behaviour, including bullying and sexual harassment. She views the issue as a tight line between *'appropriate humour,'* which promotes a positive kitchen environment, and blatant bullying, in which the same individuals are repeatedly attacked for something that makes others laugh. She also views it as an issue with the industry's overall working conditions (Williams, 2014).

It all boils down to representation for Brian Strubbers. *'A good union is necessary. In the catering profession, employment law is often disregarded. It would be quite serious if things that occur in my work occurred in another one. It is just accepted as part of the culture'* (Williams, 2014)

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2.3 Mental health

Although it is not commonly discussed, many chefs experience difficulties with their mental health. This is because the lifestyle of working in a kitchen can be stressful, leading to conditions such as depression, burnout, anxiety, social isolation, and eating disorders (Gonzalez, 2019).

Chefs report experiences of excessive workloads, the feeling of undervalue and finding the difficulty of communicating in the workplace they are in (Murray-Gibbons, 2007).

Burnouts are common with shifts that fill up an entire day. Overpassing a normal 40hour week to almost double time, is quite common in a chef's life. With the burnouts and turnover of chefs every day increasing, the remaining chefs are left to cover the shortages of their colleagues. This means that they would have to pick up extra shifts, go in earlier for work and additional work added to their plate until a replacement is found, i.e. if it is even found as some employers might not be willing to pick up the extra cost of a new chef, and choose to over work the chefs they already have until they have no other choice (Murray-Gibbons, 2007).

The margins are razor-thin, and with a greater emphasis on cost-cutting, both businesses and workers are feeling the effects on their mental health. Long, antisocial hours, harsh working conditions, and performance expectations are just a few of the difficulties that hospitality employees face daily. Employees in the hospitality industry should be encouraged to talk about their mental health and get assistance from their coworkers and bosses if needed. Although mental health cannot be seen, it is critical that it be addressed, and policies evaluated on a regular basis. This should be the new "*medal of honor*" definition (Hall, 2020).

Kris Hall Founder of The Burnt Chef Project explains why he began the hospitality mental health focused business, after opening up about his own struggle with mental health.

Mr. Hall first started battling with his mental health when he was eighteen and just starting out with his carrier and lasted with him until he was thirty. Whilst dealing with his struggles he could see he was not alone. His chef friends were also struggling with relationships, suffering from alcohol or drug abuse and after hearing about a substantial number of suicides he decided to speak up and create this movement (Hall, 2020).

This is not the only movement created by chefs in aid of mental health. Another group of French chefs have signed a manifesto against violence, bullying and sexual harassment in kitchens in France. This was brought on due to a report of three-star Paris restaurant chef scalding his kitchen assistant with a hot spoon (Williams, 2014).

2.4 Symptoms of mental health.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, individuals who suffer from mental health, by time can end up developing substance abuse disorders and vice versa. Statistics display that more than 60% of adolescents who are enrolled in a substance abuse program, additionally meet the conditions for mental illness. For individuals who suffer from depression, suicide is an authentic threat, with 50% of all suicides being tied to severe figure of depression. It is necessary that we ascertain to peer these symptoms and react to them. Symptoms would include: (ROBB-DOVER, 2019)

- Feeling sad, empty, and anxious
- Feeling hopeless or helpless
- Constantly irritable
- Lack of interest in activities
- Difficulty concentrating
- Loss of energy
- Difficulty sleeping
- Changes in appetite
- Aches and pains

2.5 Substance abuse

Substance abuse occurs more frequently in brigades than in the general population. Food service workers have among the highest rates of alcohol consumption of any US occupation (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2007).

Combined data from 2008 through 2012 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Services Administration found that hospitality and food services had the highest rate of illicit drug use of any industry with 19% of respondents reporting illicit drug use within the previous thirty days (N.lipari, 2015).

Cocaine is especially prevalent with some chefs relying on it to stay alert and focused during long and demanding shifts (Ocean Hills Recovery, 2018). Chefs also smoke more tobacco

than the general population. According to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, food service workers, along with miners and construction workers, smoke more than individuals in other professions (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015).

There are a great number of people who are unaware of how closely the hospitality sector and substance misuse are intertwined. Nevertheless, the long hours, double shifts, and high levels of pressure that are frequently observed in the restaurant sector all contribute to the problem of substance abuse among workers at all levels of the industry. In fact, research has shown that individuals working in professions such as bartending, culinary, and serving are about twice as likely to engage in illicit drug use than the average person in the United States (Bickelhaupt, 2020).

Such substance misuse difficulties can be seen in fast food, casual, and fine dining establishments. Following a long day at work or to maintain performance, many chefs self-medicate with drugs and alcohol. This occurs independent of the chef's level of expertise in the field. The same is true for employees at Michelin-starred restaurants. In his journal *Kitchen Confidential*, issued in the year 2000, Anthony Bourdain first shed light on substance misuse in the food industry, and it has since cleared the way for further research into the problem (Bickelhaupt, 2020).

The earth of culinary arts is very competitive. Individuals in the industry frequently labour off hours in high-pressure environments, which repeatedly leads to emphasise and impacts on the mental health of the participants. Sometimes it adds days and days of repetition. Bourdain formerly said, *'admittedly, it's a life that grinds you down.'*

He further said that *'more importantly for us who live and function in the culinary underworld are in fundamental ways dysfunctional.'* This is a struggle several people in the culinary and restaurant industry face. The more successful Anthony Bourdain became in the entertainment industry, the more he immersed himself in another high-pressure world: the world of trying to host and produce an interesting television program while traveling across the world (ROBB-DOVER, 2019).

In one episode of *Parts Unknown*, the programme mentioned above, Bourdain travelled to Argentina and took part in a therapy session there to demonstrate how open people in that country are to receiving treatment for mental health issues. During that moment, he opened up about how anything, including a cheeseburger, could set off his mood swings. He made the following statement: *'for example, if I were to find myself in an airport, I would find airport hamburger. It is a trivial matter, it is a minor matter, and it is a hamburger; yet it is not a really tasty hamburger. Suddenly, I find myself staring at that cheeseburger, and I find myself falling into a downward spiral of despair that can last for days.* Bourdain frequently experienced feelings of isolation and remarked that it was difficult to explain how a meal could cause him to feel unhappy. Although it seemed like he just took part in the scenes of the show in question, in some ways his statements might have made sense to individuals who have gone through the beginning stages of despair and know exactly how it feels when it first sets in (ROBB-DOVER, 2019).

2.5 Job burnout

Occupational stress is determined by an assessment of the circumstances and the coping techniques available. Over the past fifteen to twenty years, a growing body of studies has revealed the elevated levels of occupational stress faced by chefs and the hospitality and leisure sector in general, as compared to other occupations (R.Murray Gibbons, 2007). Dissatisfaction with salary and supervisory treatment were major drivers of stress, followed by the number of hours worked and work constraints.

Johns and Menzel (1999) documented pervasive physical violence and psychological abuse in kitchens in an interview study of UK chefs. This included anything from kicking, shoving, and hurling of burned food or hot equipment. The research found a correlation between such behaviours and a stressful work environment, both in terms of physical factors like a crowded, hot, and loud atmosphere and psychological variables like the need to comply to kitchen standards. The belief that the head chef is "*an artist*," whose aggressive behaviour is born of artistry and creativity, with the implicit agreement that such aggressive techniques are required to drive younger chefs and other kitchen personnel, are examples of such norms (R.Murray Gibbons, 2007).

Escoffier, a famed early-twentieth-century chef, demanded complete devotion from his workers, and one method of demonstrating this commitment was to work long hours, typically fifteen hours a day, six days a week. This fosters the perception that working long

hours has a noble purpose, which is still true today. Chefs have been known to brag about working 80 hours a week as a "*macho*" accomplishment (Bloisi, 2018).

Working as a chef entails long hours and little compensation, but it seems that employees are willing to put up with not just terrible working circumstances, but also unpleasant behaviour. Putting up with such behaviour may be attributed in part to the hospitality industry's transitory character, since it is simple to move around; as a result, workers may quit rather than confront undesirable behaviour (Helge & Bloisi, 2008).

Tolerance of poor behaviour, on the other hand, shows that there is something constructive at work that keeps chefs employed. One of these reasons, according to (Bloisi, 2012) is team bonding.

2.6 Suicide in chefs

2.6.1 Anthony Bourdain (1956-2018)

In 2018 the culinary world experienced a great shock, Anthony Bourdain, a renowned chef, author, and TV personality, committed suicide. Bourdain was a cynical but sympathetic realist who was open about his struggles with depression and drug misuse, which helped him connect with many of his followers and admirers. Despite his forthrightness, the news of Bourdain's death startled and saddened many people (Mantey, 2019).

Bourdain's death was shocking, and it served as a sombre reminder that depression can strike anyone, no matter how successful or happy they appeared to be. However, Bourdain thought his death was a long time coming. The chef told in his biography, *'I should have perished in my twenties. In my forties, I got successful. I became a parent in my fifties. I feel like I have stolen a vehicle — a very gorgeous automobile — and I keep checking in the rear-view mirror for flashing lights. But there has been nothing yet'* (Spollen, 2018).

Unfortunately, no one can truly say the reason that brought the chef to end his life, but what could be said were the struggles he faced (Spollen, 2018):

- *'Drug addiction'*

- 'Depression'
- 'Loneliness'

2.6.2 Bernard Loiseau (1951-2003)

On 24th February 2003 Bernard Loiseau, was found dead in his room after he had shot himself in the head, because he had heard rumours that the Michelin Guide were removing one of his 3stars. That same year one of his stars was unfortunately removed from his restaurant La Cote d'Or's. The Constant battle to hold his title whilst not following with the ever-changing trends of the industry made him lose valuable clientele and slowly drove him into clinical depression. He managed to maintain the 3-star rating for 12 years, but it was not easy, it took over his life, with him working for long 17-hour days and even skipping sleep on some nights to keep his dreams alive. At the end, the pressure was too much for him, and the countless scrutinizing that his star, his dream might be taken away from him was the tipping stone for Loiseau, which caused him to take his life (Tapalga, 2020).

2.6.3 List of other chefs who committed suicide

- Rachel Brown, contestant of the TV show Hell's Kitchen.
- Benoit Valier, head chef of 3-star Michelin restaurant d'hôtel de Ville.

2.7 Effects on the family

In an article published by French Paper L'Express, it was claimed that the Michelin Guide played a role in the chef Bernard Loiseau suicide due to fear of the loss of his third star. Soon after the article was published, Dominique Loiseau wife of Chef Bernard, came out to clear the story about her husband's death (Danancher, 2013).

In the interview with Le Point, Dominique tears into the French Media, particularly to the L'Express. She expressed how the writer of the article Francois-Regis Gaudry claimed to know more about the suicide of Bernard Loiseau than his closest relatives. The widow also says the paper '*manipulated the truth*' and abused the family and her. While the L'Express story included an interaction between the Loiseau's and Michelin director Derek Brown as proof that the guide was on the approach of revoking Le Relais Bernard Loiseau's third star, Dominique Loiseau claimed that Brown's comment was meaningless. She said that '*the*

Michelin director did not spare us, but there was never any discussion of eliminating the third star.... this message demonstrates nothing; it is a fabricated scoop' (McKeever, 2013).

And that is not all. Loiseau also criticized François Simon, the cuisine critic for Le Figaro, for announcing his vindication in the suicide case after the L'Express story. Bernard Loiseau's co-workers informed Dominique that the chef had been '*shaken*' by Simon's 2003 article claiming that the restaurant had been '*legitimately threatened*' by Michelin. It was at this point that the widow '*began to see things more clearly*' from thereon. She further stated that '*It was from that point on that Bernard Loiseau's behaviour changed, he became incomprehensible, and we couldn't reason with him because he was convinced the media wanted his skin forever.*' She continued by saying that '*I am firmly convinced that if François Simon had a modicum of courage and uprightness to simply explain it with Bernard, maybe we wouldn't be here,*' she told Le Point, blaming Simon for refusing to explain his use of the word '*legitimately*' (McKeever, 2013).

2.8 Relationships with chefs

No specific studies have been done related to how chefs lifestyle effects their relationships with spouses, girlfriends, boyfriends and/or other loved ones.

A blog post found on 'Chef and Steward' titled 'What Is It Really Like Being Married to A Chef?' the author Kari Heron detailed her experience of being married to one. She spoke about the long hours, unpredictable days off and having to work on holidays. How most days she would be alone at home waiting for her husband to return home after a busy day, exhausted and almost unable to form sentences from how tired he was (Heron, 2011).

Although no studies were found, as a chef, the researcher witnessed countless colleagues juggling with their relationships and work. The researcher witnessed both healthy and happy relationships but also came across relationships which failed due to this profession.

The most common factor behind relationships failing and ending is the fact that after the long hours chefs would spend at work, they would have very little or no time for their significant others who most times are in completely different lines of work and thus hold different hours. Apart from that, there were also situations where the overwhelming stress

of the kitchen led chefs down a path of drugs and alcohol and brought an end to their marriages.

Another scenario seen is that of a married couple who started a very successful business, but the same success led to the end of their marriage. Having a close relationship with this couple while also working in their business, the researcher asked what led them to this and was told that the business became a priority in their lives. They spent every second of their days making sure everything was going to plan, leaving no time for their own personal relationship because he worked long hours in the kitchen, and she handled the day-to-day operations and running of the restaurant thus leaving them with hardly any time for themselves as a couple which led them to slowly drift apart.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

With the aid of the right research methodology, the objectives of this study will show through the fundamental results. The aim of this study was to find out the effects the high pressure in the kitchen has on the chef's personal life. The methodology used in this dissertation is of a triangulation type of data.

- Quantitative research method, recorded in a form of questionnaires distributed to chefs working in the hospitality industry from different countries around the world. In the questionnaires there is also qualitative data presented, as chefs were not only asked quantitative questions but also qualitative types of questions, since they were asked not just to answer yes or no questions but also give their experiences or opinions.
- Qualitative research methods, interviews conducted with two chefs, who have shared their personal experience working in the kitchen.

3.2 Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted with a couple of participants to see if the questions were clear and if the goals were accomplished. The questionnaire was then reviewed and revised in order to obtain the best possible results. The participants were all chefs with more than four years of working experience in the kitchen.

3. 3 Purposive sampling

This study followed a purposive sampling research method. Purposive sampling which can also be known by subjective or selective sampling, is a technique where the researcher decides who they want to participate in their study (Dudovskiy, 2010). In this case the researcher chose chefs as the participants.

Some advantages of this style of sampling, is that it is more cost-effective and time effective. It also aids if there is a limited amount of primary data sources that could contribute to the study. (Dudovskiy, 2010)

3.4 Research methods

The first step of the study was done by collecting secondary data from particular studies or articles related to this topic. Although not many in depth studies have been done in relation to this specific topic, the research found was more based on personal experiences shared by chefs found on online blogs and newspaper articles.

A questionnaire was constructed, using strategic questions related to the study being researched. The aim of this questionnaire was to get the perspectives on chefs' opinions on the high pressure in the kitchen, mental health, abuse, and harassment. The questionnaire was shared by means of social media on the researcher's Facebook page and posted in specific online groups of chefs. Since the researcher's Facebook is open to the public and so anyone could complete the questionnaire, a summary and introduction was put in the heading of the questionnaire to show that it was intended to be filled out only by chefs both local and foreign.

The questions were designed in a multiple-choice manner where the participants could choose either an answer or multiple answers in certain questions and also give their opinions or experience in other questions. Due to this the questionnaires were analysed in both quantitative and qualitative methods.

The data gathered by the questionnaire was then analysed in the context of the literature review, allowing for comparisons across a wide variety of respondents. This guaranteed that the topic of study was covered in depth.

The qualitative research approach was conducted in the means of interviews with two participants who have had different and similar experiences working in the kitchen. The chosen two interviewees were a young female who has worked in the kitchen for a couple of years now while still studying at the Institute of Tourism Studies and a male in his early twenties who has worked in the kitchen now for six years. The first interviewee was chosen to get a female perspective on working in the kitchen and to find out if there is any contrast between environments and behaviours. The second interviewee has had multiple work experiences both locally and in other countries while also studying at the Institute of Tourism Studies.

To maintain anonymity the names of both participants will be referred to follows.

Mr. Brown and Ms. Yellow.

3.5 Presentation of data

All academic investigations have been included in data presentation and analysis, which has been thoroughly explained and accurately described. The next chapter will convey these study results via an in-depth summative discussion, which will be accompanied by a graphical depiction of the gathered data. The data analysed using the surveys distributed with the aid of survey monkey.

3.6 Ethical consideration

During this investigation, the ethical code was followed. An introductory letter was issued to everyone who would be engaged in this study, detailing the scope of the research, and

promising that all information acquired would be utilized only for the purpose of this project and will be kept confidential throughout the process.

Chapter 4: Research findings and analysis

4.1 Introduction

The following data presented will be split up into two sections:

Section 1- Questionnaire

This will analyse the quantitative/qualitative data collected from the online questionnaires distributed to chefs from different countries, to compare the work experience locally and foreign and see if there are any similarities. The total number of chefs to answer the questionnaire were primarily 80, with different age ranges, working experience, both female and male, local and foreign chefs. But when filtering through the responses given in the questionnaires the researcher had to remove a substantial number of participants due to the inaccurate responses given such as:

- Duration of experience working in the kitchen being given in hours not in years (ex: 8 hours instead of 8 years).
- The age given was for example 20 but then the duration of experience working in the kitchen was 15 years, so this did not make sense.
- Some participants did not give opinions or personal experience in questions that asked for them to do so.
- The level of profession did not match with the age and duration of experience working in the industry, an example was a Head chef at the age of 20 with only 2 years' experience.
- A few participants also skipped more important questions and only filled out the generic, age, and nationality part of the questionnaire and so on.

Once removed the researcher was then only left with 50 participants, who's responses could be analysed for genuine and accurate data.

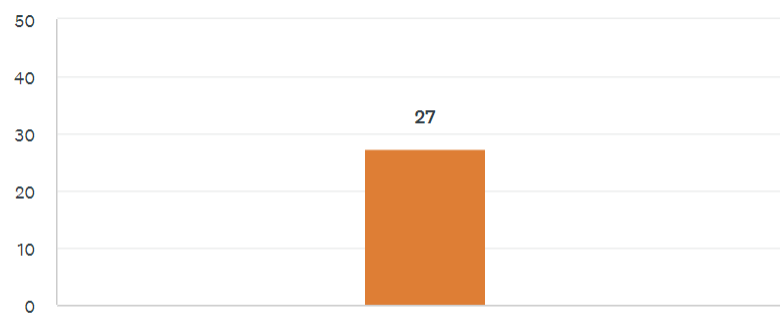
Section 2- Interviews

This will analyse the qualitative data collected from the interviews done with the two local chefs, narrating their experience working in the industry both locally and foreign. The interviewees will be kept anonymous to the study as already mentioned above and will be referred to as Mr. Brown and Ms. Yellow in the study.

Both sections will be compared to the relevant research found in the literature review.

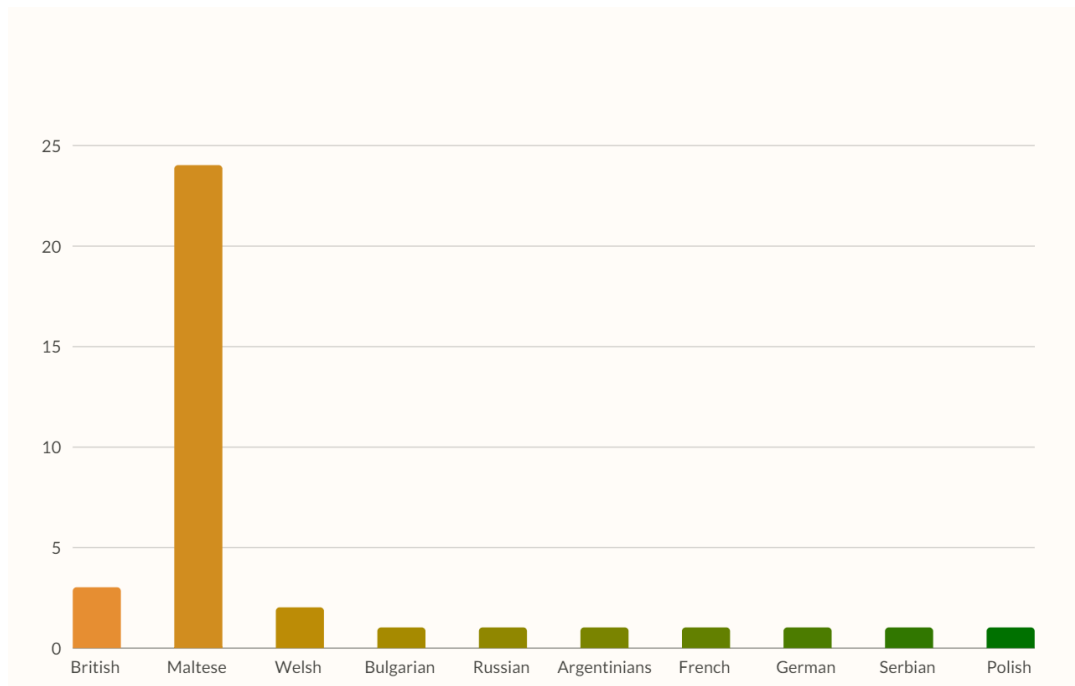
4.2: Analysis from questionnaires

Figure No 1: Age ranges of participating respondents.



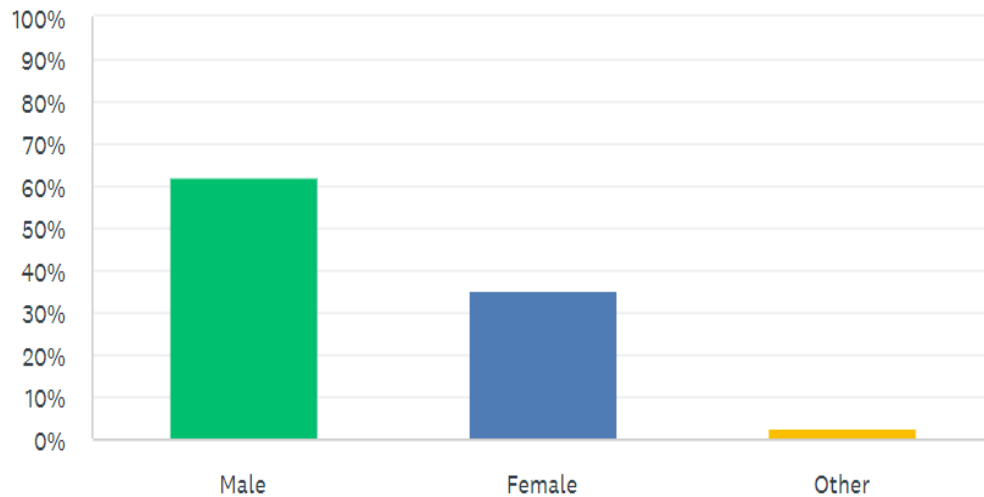
The average age number was 27, the youngest participant aged 18 and the eldest being 48.

Figure No 2: Nationality of participating surveys.



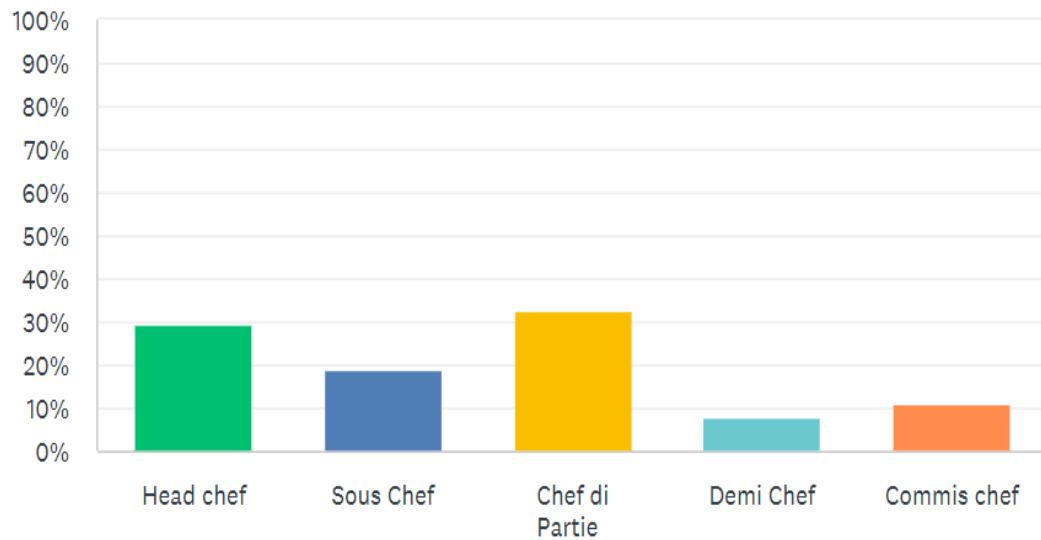
The highest number of chefs who took part in the survey came from Malta, with a total of twenty-four participants, followed by the United Kingdom with three participants, Wales with two participants, and one participant from each of the following countries: Argentina, Serbia, Wales, Germany, France, Bulgaria, Poland, and Russia. Having participants from different countries engaging with this study also aided in comparing working environments in kitchens from country to country.

Figure No 3: Gender



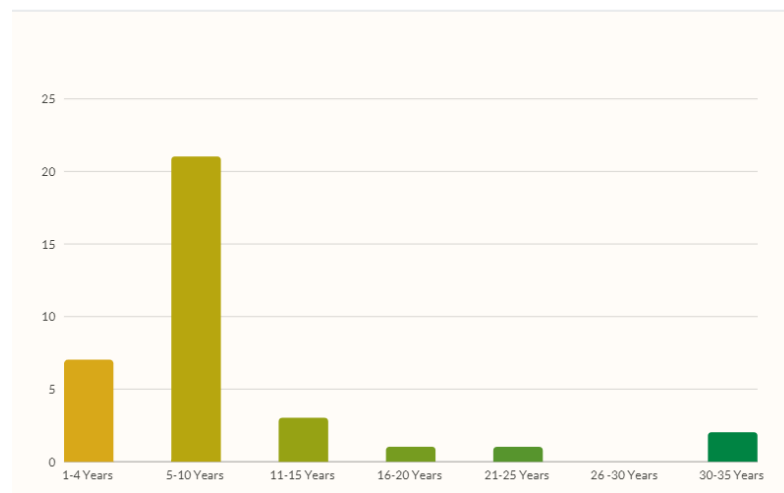
Female participants made up 35.14 per cent of the total number of participants, with men accounting for 62.16 per cent of those that took part in the study. It has been decided in this survey to allow people who do not wish to fit into either the male or female categories to select other which resulted in 2.70 per cent of the participants selecting other. Because of the physical demands and long hours, as well as the fact that females tend to be more family oriented, it is apparent that the chef sector is still overwhelmingly dominated by men.

Figure no 4: Level of position



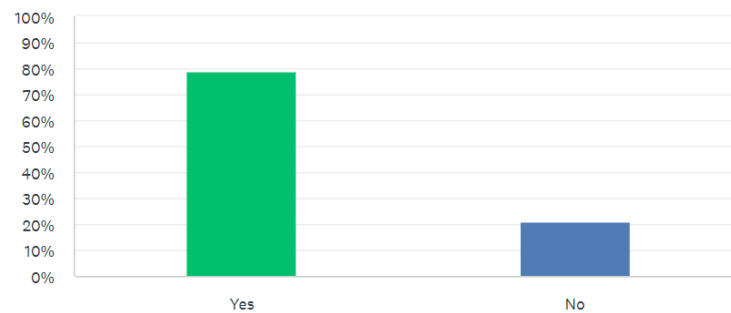
The level of positions held by the participating chefs was investigated at this stage of the study. As can be seen from the graph above, there was a well-balanced mix of levels in the kitchen hierarchy. There were 32.43 per cent of participants at the rank of Chef de Partie, followed by 29.73 per cent of Head chefs, 18.92 per cent of Sous chefs, 8.11 per cent of Demi chefs, and 10.81 per cent of the Commis chefs. The advantage of having participants with varying skill levels is that there could be a comparison whether or not they are experiencing the same impacts of high pressure or any other strains that the kitchen may place on them.

Figure No 5: Work experience



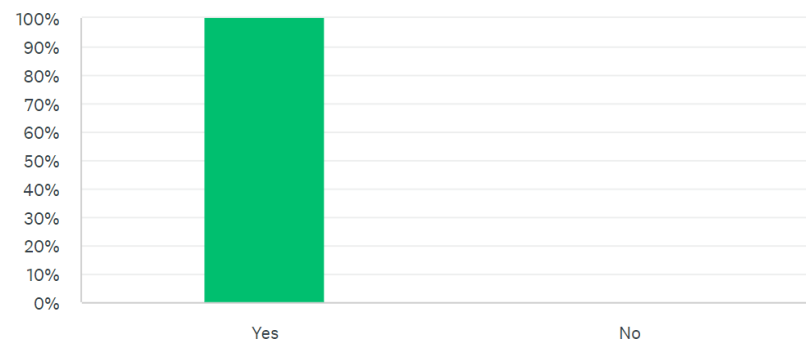
In this stage the participants were asked how long they have worked in the industry, from the graph shown above, the most common level of work duration was between the 5 to 11 years mark.

Figure No 6: Has working in the industry, specifically in the kitchen affected your mental health?



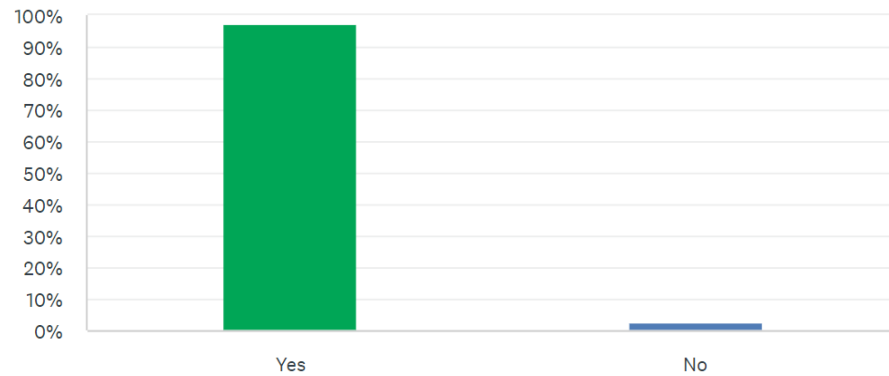
Question 6 asked participants if their mental health had been affected by their employment in the kitchen, with 78.38 per cent responded affirmatively and 21.62 per cent responded negatively. As evidenced by the wide disparity in responses, the majority of those who took part in the survey reported that their mental health had been adversely affected by their employment in the industry, and specifically by their job in the kitchen. The reasons for the high number of yes responses will be discussed in greater detail in the following questions.

Figure No 7: Have you personally experienced high pressure at work?



In relation to high pressure in the workplace, as shown in the graph presented above, all participating chefs where asked if they had ever experienced high pressure in the kitchen and as seen, all responded with yes.

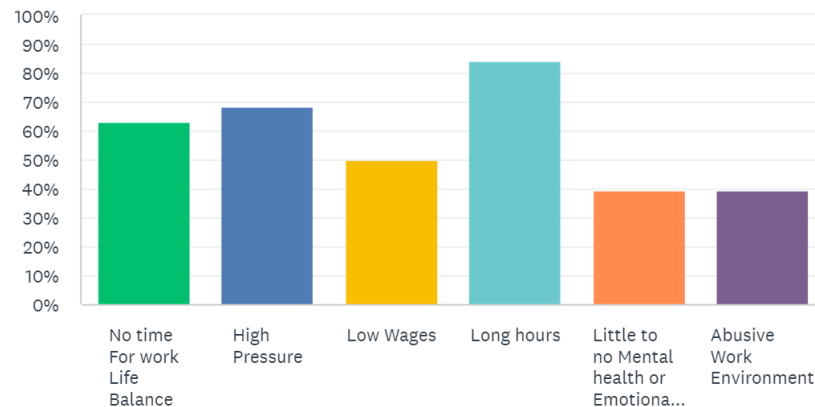
Figure No 8: Have you experienced work stress?



Participants were asked if they had experienced stress at work in conjunction with the prior questions concerning whether they had experienced high pressure in relation to it, as well as whether or not they had experienced high pressure in general.

According to the data presented above, 49 individuals (97.37 per cent) replied yes, and only one person (2.63 per cent) answered no, indicating not a positive outcome. When comparing questions, no 7 and no 8, it becomes clear that excessive pressure and work stress are extremely widespread in the kitchen. According to a study conducted by the International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality, it showed that the degree of stress had grown in comparison to earlier studies done in previous years.

Figure No 9: Was the work stress experienced brought on by any of the following below?
(Can choose more than one).



Following the previous questions, the participants were asked if they believed any of the following factors contributed to their work-related stress. In the survey, participants were given a choice from among the following options, and they were allowed to select more than one:

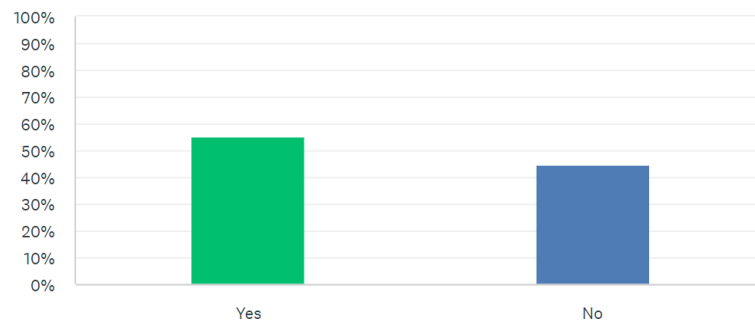
- a) no time for work-life balance;
- b) high levels of pressure;
- c) low wages;
- d) long hours;
- e) little to no mental health or emotional support; and
- f) an abusive work environment.

Long hours were the most often selected response by participants, with 32 people (84.21 per cent) choosing this option. High pressure was the second most popular choice, with (68.42 per cent) of 26 people choosing it as their answer. It was followed by a lack of time for work-life balance, which received (63.16 per cent) 24 responses, low wages, which received (50.00 per cent) 19 responses, and the same number of responses for little to no mental health or emotional support and an abusive work environment, which received (39.47 per cent) 15 participants.

In accordance with the findings of the study, the most common source of work stress encountered by chefs is the long hours they are required to put in at their jobs. As previously stated, several studies conducted in relation to job burnout in the kitchen found that the number of hours worked, insufficient wages, and work strains experienced at work were all

factors in the development of job burnout, which is clearly supported by the results of the survey collected from the participating chefs.

Figure No 10: Have you experienced or witnessed harassment and abuse in the kitchen?



Participants were asked if they had ever witnessed or experienced harassment and abuse in the kitchen in response to Question 10. In addition to providing yes or no responses, participants were asked to provide examples of instances they had personally experienced. According to the responses, 30 participants (55.26 per cent) said yes, while 20 participants (44.74 per cent) said no.

The scenarios that were described in the responses outlined the harassment that they had experienced or witnessed in the kitchen, which included the following:

- Numerous instances of verbal abuse directed at working employees, such as shouting and the use of vulgar language in front of a participant; and
- sexually inappropriate remarks directed at female chefs, were common responses.

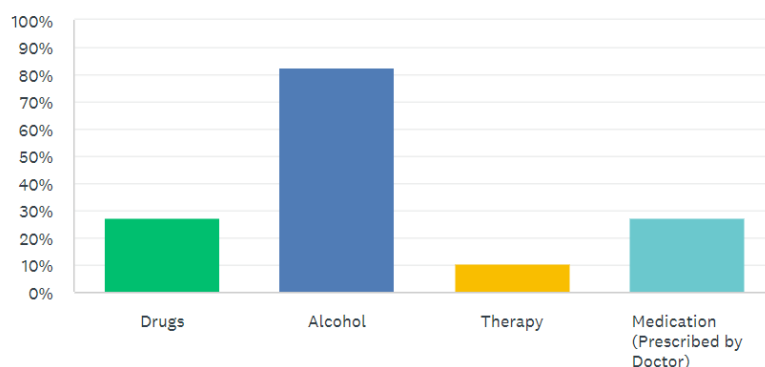
Regarding abusive behaviour, participants stated that they had witnessed pots and pans being hurled in the direction of other chefs on numerous occasions. One of the participants claimed that on one particular occasion his Head chef had placed a pair of hot tongs that had just come out of a deep fryer on his arms simply because the participant refused to touch a tray that had just come out of the oven.

Female chefs who took part in the study reported being verbally and sexually harassed, as well as degraded by being told that women do not belong in the kitchen by their male co-workers.

Aside from discussing specific instances of abuse or harassment, participants also discussed the pressure that management or business owners would put on them if business did not perform as expected.

Another major issue not related to harassment or abuse came out from this question, was the lack of rest or breaks, as well as the lack of sleeping time, because of shifts ending and starting so close together. One participant described a time when he was required to work 12 hours a day, seven days a week without taking a day off for a whole eight months due to a shortage of workers during the peak season of the sector.

Figure No 11: Due to the high pressure and stress experienced at work, have you had to use any of the following as a form of treatment? (Can pick more than one).



Respondents who had faced high levels of pressure or stress, as well as abuse and harassment in the kitchen, were asked what type of treatment they used to cope with the events stated above as a coping mechanism in the previous questions due to the extreme work environment in the kitchen. 34 participants (82.76 per cent) chose alcohol as a remedy, whereas ten participants (27.59 per cent) chose drugs and medication (prescribed by a doctor), and six participants (10.34 per cent) chose therapy. This study found that the most common mode of coping treatment chosen by chefs in the kitchen is still alcohol.

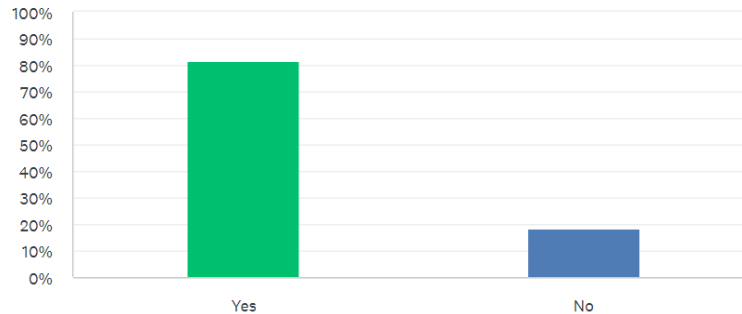
A participant in prior questions described a scenario in which she worked with a Head chef who consumed twelve pints of beer every day during service hours. When the participant inquired as to why the chef would consume so much alcohol during the shift, the chef replied by saying that it was the only way he would be able to get through the service in a good mood without becoming aggressive or angry towards the staff.

She went on to explain that while the alcohol would calm the chef in question down, it would also have adverse reactions. He would become too friendly in the workplace, pass inappropriate comments, or perform actions that would make her uncomfortable. When these matters were brought to his attention, he would become very apologetic but unfortunately his actions would repeat themselves again the following day.

The participant stated that not only did the chef drink, but other fellow chefs in the kitchen would do so as well. The participant wrote that during one particular shift, the head chef and a part-time chef were drinking wine during service; the part-timer became so inebriated during the shift that he disappeared mid-service and was later found unconscious on the floor at the rear of storage, completely intoxicated.

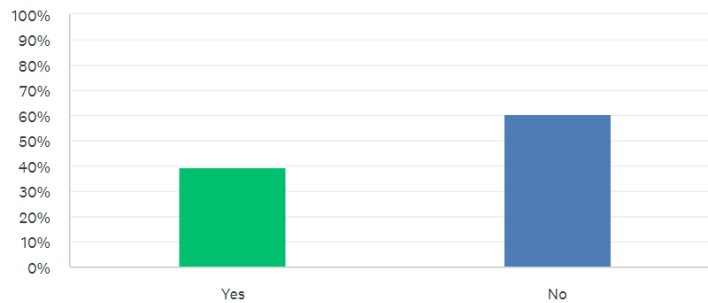
Another female respondent narrated that during her time working abroad in the United Kingdom there was a heavy substance abuse. Most chefs would go out for drinks, after their shift, get drunk and go to work in the morning as if nothing happened. This scenario was repeated on a regular basis. Alcohol was not the only substance used as she also said that there were times where chefs would take cocaine before starting service in order to keep them more focused.

Figure No 12: Have you ever had thoughts of leaving work due to the high pressure, stressful or abusive environment?



In the relation to the work environment chefs experience in the kitchen, as seen in the question above they were asked if due to the high pressure, stressful or abusive environment they had ever thought about quitting their job. As can be seen in the graph above the most chosen answer by 41 respondents (81.58 per cent) was yes and nine respondents (18.42% per cent) chose no. As seen in the difference in results it shows that the larger number of participating chefs have struggled with working in the kitchen and due to either the high pressure, stress or abusive environment has led them to think about leaving their current job.

Figure No 13: Do you feel like your mental health is valued at work?



Participants were asked if they believe their mental health is valued at their place of employment in the following question, which is depicted in the graph above.

The most popular answer was no, which was chosen by 33 respondents (60.53 per cent). yes, was chosen by 17 respondents (39.47 per cent). In this question, in addition to answering yes or no, respondents were asked to provide input on why they believe their mental health is undervalued at their place of employment. As per the responses received, a recurrent theme expressed by multiple respondents was that mental health is not a priority in the hospitality sector, and that it is not discussed at work or outside of work.

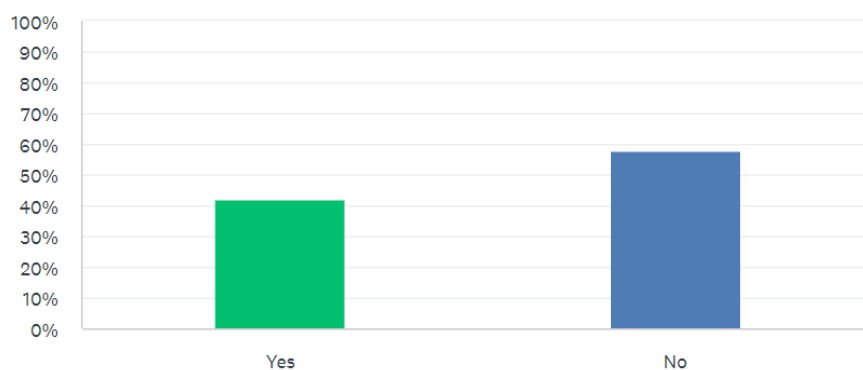
Customers are the primary focus of the hospitality industry, but employees who work for them are not well taken care of, according to one respondent, who believes supervisors or managers are solely concerned with profit margins.

Many who responded also claimed that they do not believe their job is appreciated. As a result of the long hours and lack of time due to a lack of people to work shifts, chefs would be expected to simply deal with the situation and carry on with their work without complaining. They went on to say that they would receive no benefits from working such long hours. They would struggle with mental health because they would feel like they were working for nothing and for no reward or satisfaction, that their wages would not improve,

and that simply providing them with a few extra days off to use for self-care would not be of much help in improving their mental health.

A few respondents also shared their thoughts on how superiors should prioritize checking on their employees' mental health, determining whether or not they are struggling as a result of challenges at work, and taking steps to improve their situation if so.

Figure No 14: Do you feel confident enough to discuss your mental health struggles being brought on by the work environment to your superiors?



The final question asked of the chefs who took part in the study was whether or not they felt confident enough to speak with their supervisors about their issues with mental health as a result of their workplace environment. 30 participants (57.89 per cent) answered no, whereas 20 respondents (42.11 per cent) said yes. As can be seen in the graph, the numbers are not significantly different, but a greater number of respondents still stated that they did not feel confident enough to speak with their supervisor about their mental health. Respondents were also asked to elaborate on why they did not feel confident enough to speak with their supervisor about their mental health. Participants have expressed concern about not being taken seriously if they had to speak up about such mental issues.

They also expressed concern about being mocked and made fun of if this topic was ever brought up at work. Some employees also stated that if they had to tell their superiors the difficulties they were going through, they would probably be replaced shortly after as they would be considered unfit for the position or too weak to withstand the strain. One respondent also mentioned that his own superiors were struggling with mental health but keeping it under wraps.

One particular response from a male's perspective mentioned the fact that it is very difficult for male chefs to admit weakness in this kind of situation. Male chefs are expected to be able to deal with these kinds of situations without asking for help. He went on to say that any male chefs who display a desire to be helped are normally degraded and told to man up and deal with the situation on their own. A female respondent stated that women working in the business are already not taken seriously, and that speaking out about the difficulties they have at work will deepen the stigma that women are unable to cope with the demands of the job.

4.3: Analysis from interviews

Questions asked to the interviewees were kept on a broad subject due to the relation to mental health, harassment, and substance abuse. The questions asked in the interview were more of a guideline than direct questions. The reason being that if any interviewee had experienced any of these traumatic events, the study would not want to cause them any discomfort or distress during the interview.

The two interviewed chefs in this study were Mr. Brown a 23-year-old male, residing locally with seven years of experience working in the industry, both local and foreign, and Ms. Yellow a twenty-year-old local female who has been working since the age of sixteen in the kitchen as a part timer while studying full time. Both interviewees are currently studying at the Institute of Tourism Studies.

The first subject discussed with both participants was if they thought working in the kitchen was a high-pressure work environment. Both responded with yes, as was the common answer shown in the above analysis of the questionnaires. Mr. Brown also said that people outside the industry do not understand nor know how much stress there is in being a chef, stating that even when he first started working at his first job as a waiter, he saw how hard the chefs he worked with were working. He continued by saying, that '*he had no idea how much weight the chef must carry on his back*'. Despite seeing this he chose to switch from being a server to study and become a chef.

As a response to this, both Mr. Brown and Ms. Yellow were asked if it is common knowledge how much working in the kitchen is stressful to people who have never worked in such an environment. To this Mr. Brown responded by admitting that people just think it is *'just like they are cooking for themselves.'* Ms. Yellow also added that people seem to not realize that when most people are out celebrating holidays, and/or dining out with their families, the chefs that are preparing their meals are away from their families and that most of the time chefs spend more time with their co-workers than with their actual families.

On being asked if he had ever thought about leaving the industry due to the pressure Mr Brown said no. He did however say that he left a previous job due to the negative environment he was surrounded with. A topic which will be discussed further on in this study.

Another important point brought out by Mr. Brown from this question was that chefs who had left the industry due to the high pressure never spoke about the related issues, so the environment never changed and never improved but got more strained for the workers.

Ms. Yellow on the other hand continued by saying that when she first started working in the industry, she was not given any guidance and left to fend for herself in a very busy kitchen. She further said that there is a huge difference between working in a hotel and working in a restaurant. The pressure in working in a restaurant kitchen, more so if it is fine dining, is much higher than that of working in one of hotels.

Ms. Yellow also mentioned that the pressure did not only come during the rush hour times of service, but from the fact that she felt she had to prove herself as a young female chef and do everything possible to fit in a male dominated work environment. Ms. Yellow said she constantly felt the pressure of being expected to have the same level of skill as that of a more experienced chef even though she was only sixteen years of age at the time.

The questions which followed were related to the effects this kind of pressure had on their mental health. They both agreed that yes, they both faced issues with same and both opened up about the struggles they faced, experiences they went through and what they endured throughout the years.

Ms. Yellow recalled how during the time when she worked in a restaurant with an all-male team, they would belittle her and how they would make her do their work for them so they would go for cigarette breaks instead. And tell her the work she was doing was not as important as theirs.

Mr. Brown also said that although he enjoys working in the industry he has had to deal with many obstacles throughout the years. It is not just the job in itself that causes the issues with his mental health but other factors which demoralize him, such as the high expectations from superiors and colleagues constantly trying to make life difficult and bring him down.

Their struggles with mental health were not only brought on by pressure of working in hectic and demanding kitchens, but also by the fact that both Mr. Brown and Mr. Yellow had experienced first-hand physical and verbal abuse from their superiors and colleagues.

Ms. Yellow spoke about how her superiors would use their authority to take advantage of her. How they would constantly yell at her and engage in physical violence by hitting her on certain occasions. On one occasion, her sous chef threw a fish at her. Another time she got slapped in the face with butter. The sexual jokes towards her were also constant and never ending. Ms. Yellow also said that she found no safety defence at work. She had no one to turn to for relief or support for what she was enduring, so most days she would just go home, cry, feel depressed and hate the fact that she had to return to that kind of work environment again and again.

Mr. Brown also shared similar experiences. Despite being a man working in a male dominant field he also had endured physical and verbal abuse from his previous superiors. He recounted an experience whilst working in Scotland where his Head chef would constantly grab the male staff's behind, be yelled at and called names. Inappropriate sexual remarks were a daily thing. When Mr. Brown could not take it any longer and stood up to this situation with the individual in question he faced a period of humiliation by being called names, being belittled, and told that he was worth nothing at work.

Mr. Brown's only way out in this situation was to try to avoid the Head chef with any means necessary in order to keep himself sane. Mr. Brown also went on to say how overworked he was in Scotland, and that the hotel he worked at didn't pay overtime but gave time off in instead, but he never got the full amount of time off he was entitled to.

Following this experience and on his return to Malta from Scotland Mr. Brown had to seek therapy to deal with the trauma, and it took him almost 6 months to get out of depression

As seen in the results of the above analysis of the questionnaires, there is a common cycle of harassment in the kitchens. From pots and pans being thrown at chefs, to being burnt intentionally, to the constant verbal abuse given to lower ranking staff as well as sexual remarks and actions being made towards both male and female chefs.

Previous studies analysed in the beginning of the study also showed how common this cycle is, woefully nothing is being done to change the scenario. Although foundations have been set up in a few countries to stop the cycle of bullying in the kitchens, there is still not enough awareness on what goes on in the kitchen to the outside public. As mentioned earlier, most chefs who leave the industry because of all of this, do not speak up about what the situation, thus the environment stays the same.

Following the similarities of harassment both Mr. Brown and Ms. Yellow experienced they were asked if they believe men and women working in the industry are treated equally, and when comparing the responses already provided in the preceding questionnaire also, it became clear that both have had quite comparable experiences, regardless of their gender.

Both Mr. Brown and Ms. Yellow stated that they do not think male and female chefs are treated the same, but they differed in their explanations as to why they did not agree. Ms. Yellow responded that, in her opinion, the only way for a female chef to be treated and taken as seriously as a male chef in the kitchen would be if she held a high-ranking position.

Her reasoning comes from the fact that she was always inundated with comments and remarks such '*are you ok,*' '*do you need help,*' or '*be careful.*' She was made to feel less capable than her male co-workers because these questions were never directed to any of them.

On the other hand, Mr. Brown brought up a different debate about what men deal with. He stated that the women he worked with were always treated like babies, given less work, and given more attention than the men as previously pointed out by Ms. Yellow, whereas the men were given more work and reprimanded more harshly than the women when they made mistakes.

When asked why he believes this is the case, he responded that it is because men are expected to be able to manage such matters, that they are expected to be stronger than women and therefore able to endure more. Unfortunately, most of the time no one takes into consideration the fact that even men have their struggles when pushed too hard, that they too can suffer from depression and mental health. Although men are deemed to be strong by nature, they are humans and can have to deal with good days and bad days. Mr. Brown added that men are just expected to show no weakness, be consistent in their work, be able to deal with all sorts of situations and problems that occur.

It is all this pressure and stress built up in chefs that makes them end up looking for alternative means to cope with their struggles, rather than talking about them. This has been made evident both in previous studies as well as the from the results of the questionnaires conducted in this study.

From research gathered in the literature review, it showed that most chefs find a coping method to deal with the high pressure at work. For some it could be alcohol, for other drugs or smoking. Both Mr. Brown and Ms. Yellow were asked if they had ever turned to any of the previously mentioned coping methods, to which they answered no. Mr. Brown also added that he witnessed a lot of substance abuse during his work experience in Scotland. He described a moment where a colleague of his had a book filled with pre lined cocaine ready for use in his dorm room. He also added that marijuana was also used by most chefs after a long day of work as a means of relaxation and de stress.

Mr. Brown also opened about how he tried using alcohol to help him forget his troubles and fall asleep at night, but he did not like how it made him feel so he turned to other ways of coping. He explained that since living accommodation was on the grounds of the hotel he worked in, he did not feel there was an escape from work when going home. The only way he could find solace in escaping from the stress and negative environment that he was facing at work, was by leaving the hotel grounds and heading to the city centre to watch movies. He said that he would even sometimes watch two movies after each other, just to

keep his mind off the work environment, all stress related to it and prolong as much as possible his return to the dorm.

Ms. Yellow said she never turned to any of the coping methods mentioned above but she had also witnessed a lot of her co-workers indulging in substances especially at work. A specific instance she remembers was that one day as she walked into the kitchen, she found a few of her chefs using cocaine on kitchen pass before service started. She went on to say that this shocked her as this was the first time, she had seen something like this happen.

The common use of substances in the kitchen could be also seen from results in the above questionnaires. It is clearly shown that most participants who responded had turned to some of the coping methods listed, such as drug and alcohol abuse as a means to cope with the stress from work.

5.0 Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The primary objective of this study was to determine the impact that the high-pressure environment of the kitchen has on the personal lives of chefs, it also analysis the effects it has on chefs and if they had to turn to any coping mechanisms to deal with the strain.

The researcher found that due to the high pressure, the lack of pay, the long hours, the unfair or mistreatment face at work, many chefs have had to deal with the issues related to mental health and that as a result most chefs have ended up turning to alcohol, drug use, therapy and medication prescribed by doctors and other methods to cope with the trauma. This was confirmed both in the primary and secondary data gathered, that is from already existing sources and from the questionnaires and interviews conducted as part of this study.

5.2 Research limitations

The limitations facing this study were that not that much research data has been done in relation to the high-pressure chefs' experience in the kitchen.

The stigma with talking about or admitting to one's struggles with mental health in any profession still seems to be a problem even in today's world especially in the hospitality industry, as shown in this study. On most occasions talking about mental health issues comes with, stares and judgment, hence people are still very reluctant on sharing their experiences with others.

The effect of Covid-19 also impacted this study, as during the beginning stages of investigation, the pandemic was still a major problem to the industry, due to restrictions. The researcher could not hold more face-to-face interviews or distribute the questionnaires to a larger number of participants. The pandemic did not only affect the hospitality industry in Malta but in other countries too. The tourism sector took a big hit, and most of its workers lost their jobs or opted to look for positions in other more stable industries. Even though nowadays the restrictions have eased, the effects from the pandemic are still being felt as there are not enough workers working in the tourism sector, especially as chefs.

5.3 Recommendations for future Studies

When it came to researching on this specific subject, the researcher did not find as much information as expected, especially in relation to the chefs' profession. Therefore, below is a list of recommendations which can be further researched in order to create more awareness on the health and lifestyle of chefs.

5.3.1 Mental health struggles in chefs.

Mental health is already a stigma on its own without it being linked to any profession, but if more studies and research had to be done on the subject it would become more normal for people to speak up about their struggles, especially if their mental health issues are being

caused by their place of work. The line of investigation can be done by researching more specifically on depression, job burn out and exhaustion. These could all be related or caused by the kitchen environment. This cannot only be done in relation to the profession of a chef but in all professions of the hospitality industry.

5.3.2 The harsh working environment of the kitchen.

It is no secret chefs work long hours, weekends, and holidays but research on the extreme number of long hours chefs work and the physical and mental strains that come along with it are limited.

5.3.3 The difference between men and woman working in the kitchen.

When trying to find existing studies on the different experiences of men and woman working in the kitchen there was little to no information provided. Although the researcher was able to compare the experiences from the gathered data of the questionnaires and interviews, there was hardly any other studies already done which related to the subject that could aid the researcher.

5.3.4 Stigma behind woman working in the kitchen.

From the experiences shared by the female participants of the questionnaires, interviewees and the subjective experiences of the researcher, there was a common issue brought up of the feeling of inferiority women experience at work, simply because of their gender. Further studies on this topic could be made.

5.3.5 The abusive work environment chefs must deal with.

From existing research found and research gathered in this study, the issue of abuse and harassment in the kitchen environment is seen both locally and foreign and does not seem to be decreasing by the changing times. Studies detailing the abuse and harassment that goes in the kitchen could be made to bring more awareness to the subject and potentially put an end to this vicious recurring cycle.

5.3.6 Emotional support for chefs

From information analysed in the questionnaire of this study, it showed that there is a lack of emotional support for chefs, especially by their superiors. This was also brought up by one participant of the study who suggested that Human Resources personnel should pay more attention to their employees to see if they are coping well at work or if they are dealing with struggles.

5.4 Conclusion

If more awareness was done to correct the negative sides of working in a professional kitchen, life would improve drastically for all those working in it, especially chefs. Less chefs would turn to substance abuse, have to deal with mental health issues and any other strains brought on by the profession.

This study is aimed at bringing out the importance of tackling all the issues mentioned to make the profession more manageable and make people who have never worked in it interested and willing to step into this carrier.

Everything found in this study aligned with the research question on the topic while also bringing out more lines of investigation on topics that could be further discussed as stated before.

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Appendices

Questionnaire

I, Yazmin Ebejer, am perusing a bachelor's degree in culinary arts at the Institute of Tourism Studies. As part of our studies, we are to conduct research, and the topic I have chosen is the effects the high-pressure situations found within the kitchen has on the chefs' person lives. To find out the following information I am conducting this questionnaire.

All information obtained will remain confidential and anonymous.

High Pressure In the kitchen

Question Title

1. Age

0

100

Question Title

2. Nationality

Question Title

3. Sexuality

- ☒ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other

Question Title

4. Level of Position

- ☐ Head chef
- ☐ Sous Chef
- ☐ Chef di Partie
- ☐ Demi Chef
- ☐ Commis chef

Question Title

5. Duration of time working in the industry?

Question Title

6. Has Working in the industry, specifically in the kitchen affected your Mental Health?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Question Title

7. Have you personally experienced high pressure at work?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Question Title

8. Have you Experienced Work stress?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Question Title

9. Was the work stress experienced brought on by any of the following below? (Can choose more than one).

- ☐ No time for work Life Balance
- ☐ High Pressure
- ☐ Low Wages
- ☐ Long hours
- ☐ Little to no Mental health or Emotional Support
- ☐ Abusive Work Environment

Question Title

10. Have you experienced or witnessed Harassment and Abusive Kitchen?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please Give experiences

Question Title

11. Due to the High Pressure and stress experienced at work, have you had to use any of the following as a form of Treatment? (Can pick more than one)

- ☐ Drugs
- ☐ Alcohol
- ☐ Therapy
- ☐ Medication (Prescribed by Doctor)

Question Title

12. Have you ever had thoughts of leaving work due to the high pressure, stressful or abusive environment?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Question Title

13. Do you feel like your Mental Health is valued at work?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If no, give suggestions have things that can improve

Question Title

14. Do you Feel confident enough to discuss your Mental Health struggles being brought on by the work environment to Your Superiors?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If No, Give Reason Why?

Done

Interview transcripts from recordings

Interview- Mr. Brown

Interviewer: What is your age, nationality, and gender?

Mr. Brown: 23 years old, male, and Maltese.

Interviewer: How long have you been working as a chef?

Mr. Brown: I have been working in the industry for almost 6 years locally and I also spent a year working in Scotland.

Interviewer: Do you think working in the kitchen is a high-pressure work environment?

Mr. Brown: yes, definitely. A problem the industry also faces is that people who don't work in the industry do not know or understand what high pressure it is. Even when I worked as a waiter, I didn't expect that much pressure to be on a chef back.

Interviewer: So, do you think it is not publicised enough the amount of pressure chefs have?

Mr. Brown: Definitely, people who do not work in the industry simply tell you to treat it as if you are cooking for yourself. And people who used to work in the kitchen and left because of the high pressure, long hours, or any other reasons, never spoke up and just left so the environment never changed.

Interviewer: Have you ever thought about leaving the job due to the high pressure?

Mr Brown: I left a job my previous job, not because of the pressure, because I was respected of treated right.

Interviewer: Has since working in the kitchen effected your mental health?

Mr Brown: Defiantly, in my year abroad was my worst experience. I do this job because I love it but there are lot of factors which work against you doing your job, high expectations, people constantly bringing you down.

Interviewer: Have you ever witnessed of experienced any abuse, both verbal and physical?

Mr. Brown: Yes unfortunately, the most recent one was a part time waiter I work with, who constantly calls me inappropriate names like gay or tries to undermine my authority. But when I try to defend myself, I made to be the bad guy in the situation. Even sometimes when I try to stand up for myself, I am just told to man up and ignore his constant insults. Sometimes I think he does it on purpose for me lash out and hit him so then I would get fired.

The worst experience I had was when I lived in Scotland, unfortunately it pretty normal for men in the kitchen to grab each other's ass, as a way of joking although I don't see it as that. To put things into perspective a 50-year-old grabbing the behind of an 18-year-old and them constantly telling him to stop, that they don't like it. On one occasion I didn't want to shake his hand coz I knew he was going to grab my behind again, and the following morning he told me I am just an apprentice, we are not friends we will never be friends. From that moment on I had to avoid him at work as he would ruin by day. When I returned back to Malta, I had to seek therapy. And I took a good 6 months to get out of depression caused by that experience.

Interviewer: Do you think it is because you are a man you just expected to deal with it.

Mr. Brown: A part of it yes, if the situation was done to a woman the story would be completely different, and on men we just expected to handle it. During the time it happened I couldn't return home immediately I still had 5 months of working at that place. Even when it came to time off, from all students working in the hotel, I was the least one to get time off. During my year I only come to Malta twice whereas a certain female come over 8 times.

Interviewer: Do you think men and woman are treated differently in the kitchen?

Mr. Brown: In my experience, the woman I have worked with were always babied and give the less difficult work, while I was given the more intensive work and if I made a mistake I would be reprimanded more.

Interviewer: Do you think having a lower level of rank determines how you are treated in the kitchen?

Mr. Brown: Yes and No, even now with a higher rank I still endure some mis treatment or disrespect, but with time you learn to only pay attention to the people who give you respect.

Interviewer: Apart from therapy did u turn any other mean to cope any problems? Such as alcohol or drugs?

Mr. Brown: I tried alcohol a couple of times in Scotland, but it was only a means to fall asleep, but I didn't like the way it made me feel. I used movies to cope. Since we lived on the hotel grounds so when your off work it still felt like you were at work. So, leaving the grounds was the only way to sort of escape, sometimes I would even watch two movies after each other in order to keep my mind off my problems. I found it best as I wasn't harming my health with it.

Interviewer: Did you ever get tempted by other chefs to take drugs or alcohol?

Mr. Brown: Not really even though there was a heavy use of drugs and alcohol in Scotland. A colleague of mine once told me that while he was playing video games in other college of our room, he opened a book and inside there was ready to go pre lined cocaine to use on the go. Hearing the story made me realize that I would never want to end up in position like that.

Interview - Ms. Yellow

Interviewer: what is your age, nationality, and gender.

Ms. Yellow: 20 years old, Female and Maltese.

Interviewer: How long have you been working as a chef?

Ms Yellow: I have been working in the kitchen since I was 16, since I am still in school, I have mostly worked part time during summer. But I am currently doing my 1-year work placement.

Interviewer: Do you think working in the kitchen is a high-pressure working environment/

Ms. Yellow: Yes, especially if you are new to the job and have had no experience prior, in my experience I was just thrown into the job with no guidance and help and left to figure it out on my own. I have also seen the difference in pressure from working in a hotel to a restaurant, and in a restaurant, it is much worse.

It is also not just the pressure during the service rush, but also the pressure to fit in, in the kitchen, especially being young and female. The expectations were also high in my experience, as I was expected to have the same level of skill as a more experienced older chef.

Interviewer: Has the kitchen effected your mental health?

Ms. Yellow: yes, especially while working in my previous job. I was the only woman working in the kitchen and I wasn't treated like the other chefs. The older male chefs would always pass inappropriate comments at me, make me do their work even though I had my work to do. They would also treat me like a child. They would also hit me and constantly yell at me, and I would end up going home crying.

Interviewer: Did you experience a lot of abuse?

Ms. Yellow: Yes, my sous chef would hit me, he once threw a fish at me, slapped me with butter in other occasion. And he would constantly yell at me for no reason.

Interviewer: How did this make you feel?

Ms. Yellow: This made me feel horrible, I would go home depressed not wanting to return to work but being forced to due to my contract. This greatly affected my mental work.

Interviewer: Do you think men and female chefs are treated the same in the kitchen?

Ms. Yellow: In my opinion it depends on the level of rank the woman has in the kitchen. If a female chef has a high-ranking position, it is more likely she is treated with the same respect as a male chef, then a lower ranking female chef.

Interviewer: Have you ever turned to drugs or alcohol to cope with the strains from work?

Ms Yellow: No, so far, I haven't had to turn to drugs or alcohol.

