An exploratory study of Stress symptoms in front office agents in 5 stars rated hotels in Malta - a snapshot of the current situation.

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Abstract

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Research/Project Title: An exploratory study of Stress symptoms in front office agents in 5 stars rated hotels in Malta - a snapshot of the current situation.		**Number of words** **4495 excluding abstract, references and appendices**

The aim of this study was to investigate the current stress symptoms of the front office agents within 5 stars hotels in Malta. Due to the obvious nature of the tourism industry and the emotional labour, the hospitality business has a greater risk of occupational stress. Simultaneously, people are one of the most precious assets in hotels, making it even more critical to tackle the problem. As a result, the current study aims to address this understudied topic.

An interview and the Occupational Stress Index were used to collect data. Frontline workers reported experiencing work-related stress as a result of a lack of support, control, and the sheer volume of work demands. Stress affects individuals physically, emotionally, and cognitively, according to the majority of them. However, the pressures were not enough to impair their productivity; in fact, they stated that even in stressful conditions, they were able to provide a service that met the norms y just taking a small 5–10-minute break. These findings suggest that more research in this area is required.

Keywords

Stress at work, Front office Agents, Causes of Stress, Consequences of Stress, Management

Declaration of Authenticity

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Research Title: An exploratory study of Stress symptoms in front office agents in 5 stars rated hotels in Malta - a snapshot of the current situation.

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.Cristina Christabelle Tabone.

Date: 27/05/2022

Students Signature: G.Hili

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My deepest appreciation,

Gabrielle Hili

Table of Contents

List of Tables:

List of Figures:

1. Introduction

The world is changing at a breakneck rate. Change is one phenomenon that might be defined as a constant in our universe. The corporate and business arena has become extremely competitive in today's swiftly changing globe. To deal with this ferocious rivalry, businesses employ a variety of methods and strategies. Aside from these approaches and practices, one component that may play a significant role in assisting an organization in gaining a competitive edge is its personnel. Workers are the quintessential component and heartbeat of every business enterprise. To ensure that all corporate processes run smoothly, personnel must perform effectively to meet the organization's goals. There really are organizations that work hard and design effective techniques to keep their staff happy and stress-free.

1.1 Research Background

Stress is an inevitable part of everyone's life, and its significance in the workplace is demanding attention. Individuals are faced with a variety of pressures at work and in their personal lives. Not every stressor has the same effect on everyone. Because of the amount of time spent at work, Erkutlu and Chafra (2006) believe the workplace to be a potentially significant source of stress. The prevalence of stress in the hospitality business is recognized in academic literature (Kim et al., 2007; Papadopoulou-Bayliss et al., 2001; Wildes, 2007).

 Employment in the hotel business is characterized by long hours of work, a lack of employment regulation, and competing work expectations, which are regularly recognized as stressors by various writers (Bitner et al., 1994; Faulkner & Patiar, 1997; Karatepe & Uludag, 2007; Papadopoulou-Bayliss et al., 2001; Zohar, 1994).

 Role stress and over time, lead to poor job performance and a high intention to leave whilst leading to burnout. Employee role stress has piqued the interest of academics over the past two decades, although research has mostly focused on nursing, accounting, and sales (Jaramillo et al., 2006; Kelly and Barrett, 2011; Kuo et al., 2014). Despite being viewed as more stressful; the hotel business has received less attention (Jones et al., 2007; Cho et al., 2009). As a result, to fill this gap in the research, this study investigates role stress in the context of the hotel sector with a focus on front office agents.

1.2 Research Aim, Objectives and Hypothesis or Question

The primary goal of this study is to identify stressful factors for hotel personnel focusing on Front Office agents. To achieve this goal, more sub-objectives are being established.

These goals aim to:

1. Investigate elements that contribute to occupational stress and its factors which inspire employees in the hotel business.
2. To investigate the influence of stress on employee performance in the hotel business.

The following are the hypotheses that this study seeks to prove:

1. Job stress has a detrimental impact on employee performance in the hotel business.
2. When employees in the hotel business are driven/ motivated with incentives, it leads to job satisfaction.

These are the research questions that have been developed:

1. Which variables contribute to job stress in the hotel industry?
2. Which things inspire hotel employees?
3. How do job stress impact employee performance in the hotel industry?

2. Literature Review

According to Paula (2010), a literature review is an objective appraisal of data and knowledge currently available. Embarking on a trip to uncover previously unknown components and facets, studying the literature serves as an itinerary. Similarly, doing a review of the literature is essential for this investigation. The next section of the article discusses important material that has been evaluated.

2.1 Defining 'Stress'

The idea of stress is seen to have both good and bad elements; when thought correctly, stress may stimulate and boost performance by activating adaptive reactions (positive aspect) or it might impact worker well-being by impairing their health conditions (negative aspect) (Faulkner and Patial 1997). The bad or good consequences are solely determined either by individuals' personal perception of stress or one's capacity to cope with it (Beheshtifar et al. 2011)

2.1.1 Job Stress

When there is a mismatch in job specification and job task it is when Woek-related Stress develops. In certain circumstances, stress may be beneficial to the workplace by encouraging employees to fully utilize their strengths and by increasing their alertness of the employees (Ricardo, Amy and Rohit, 2007, 4). If there is a specific degree of stress, it might offer potential benefits to the organization's efficiency. However, when stress gets severe and persistent, it becomes dangerous. In this scenario, it not only impairs employee performance, but it also adds to the organization's costs, such as healthcare costs and greater turnover.

2.1.2. Job Stress and Employees

According to Dyck (2001), occupational stress can have an impact on an employee's quality of life (Dyck, 2001, 52). Occupational stress is amongst the most serious health concerns to which workers are exposed in both developed and emerging countries (Paul, 2002, 9; Danna and Griffin, 2002, 101).

According to Paul (2002,9), there are a variety of variables that contribute to occupational stress. These workplace pressures may make employees' tasks challenging and unpleasant, regardless of whether they work in the manufacturing or service industries. Furthermore,

stresses such as interpersonal relationships at work, such as disputes with management regulations, disagreement with the supervisor's behavior, the conflict involving subordinates, and disagreement with coworkers, might exist (Paul, 2002, 9)

2.2 Causes of work-related stress

According to Cohen et al. (1983), humans suffer stress whenever they perceive their lives to be unpredictable, unmanageable, and overburdened. According to Young and Corsun (2009), occupational stress is caused by the stimulation of uncertain circumstances at work. The causes of stress, for instance, may be classified into four macro-groups: job content, workplace conditions, employment terms, and social connections at work (Malik 2011). Similarly, Sampson and Akyeampong (2014) classified them as follows: occupational demands, management, assistance, connections, position, resort visitors, and earnings. This study will use the seven-category classification since it is seen to be the clearest and recent one.

2.2.1 Occupational requirements.

Whether frontline personnel are under time constraints or have a large volume of work, they are expected to work at a fast pace, handling demanding situations, and excessive hours (Chianget al. 2010). As a result, the idea of workload relates to (1) the quantity of work that an individual must finish in a specific period and (2) the mental effort required to execute the activity (Nixon et al. 2011). Anxiety and frustration are produced when strain is recognized (Spector and Jex 1998)

2.2.2 Management.

Work-related stress is mostly caused by a lack of autonomy and heavy managerial monitoring, which does not include people in decision-making (Karasek 1979). Furthermore, according to Sampson and Akyeampong (2014), professional stress is caused by a shortage of time as well as a lack of involvement over specific goals.

2.2.3 Assistance.

Communication with consumers is incredibly crucial in the hospitality sector. Nevertheless, interaction could be hampered if primary personnel are emotionally weary; this occurs whenever they perceive they lack employment abilities (Babakus et al. 2009). For such circumstances, it is vital to train staff to improve their abilities and capacity to do work successfully (Sampson and Akyeampong 2014).

2.2.4 Connections and Human relations in the workplace.

The significance of social interaction in alleviating misery cannot be overstated. Developing a positive professional connection with one's coworkers can help to decrease or eradicate job pressure (Lo and Lamm 2005). One of the most stressful factors inside an organization is an unpleasant situation (bad relationships with coworkers). It is probable to provoke stress, despair, and dissatisfaction in the short term; nevertheless, overall, individuals may grow worried about showing up for work, particularly if they fail to create a relationship with others (Spector and Jex 1998)

2.2.5 Position.

The idea of role has two distinct aspects: (1) role ambiguity and (2) role conflict. When the owner's needs and obligations are not obvious or appropriately articulated, there is role conflict (Wang and Hsu 2014). Relationship conflict, on the other hand, results whenever a worker is pushed in opposite ways by competing demands, impeding his or her capacity to properly execute all duties at the same time (Babakus et al. 2009). These scenarios are especially significant in the hotel business because the employees must respond quickly while also being subjected to inconsistent and conflicted needs and assumptions of several parties (Kim et al. 2009)

2.2.6 Travelers at the resort

Client sovereignty (the guest is always correct) has a detrimental impact on staff since (1) it indicates uneven authority in the customer-service interaction and (2) it empowers visitors to misbehave. Clients that act in a careless or aggressive manner, causing issues for the company, its personnel, and other customers, are referred to as jay-customers by Lovelock (2007, p.73) in (www.scirp.org, n.d.). They may break social standards such as civility and decency, or they may plan to violently injure someone (Kim et al. 2014). Frontline personnel are continuously exposed to stressful circumstances, and visitors' misbehavior is an extra cause of stress (Yagil 2009)

2.2.7 Wages and earnings

In comparison to certain other businesses, certification criteria are minimal, and revenue is solely dependent on seasonal activity. As a result, tipping is an important source of money in several industries. Work-related pressure, on the other hand, is created when employees are required to finish duties after the job without any cash reward. (XinYuan and Ghiselli, 2016)

3.Methodology

The road plan that serves as the itinerary for the researcher to achieve the aims of the research journey is known as research methodology. The section that follows outlines the research technique that was employed in this study to achieve the study's objectives.

3.1 Research Design

The research design guides the overall strategy to allow the researcher to obtain answers to the research questions generated for the study and to evaluate the developed hypotheses. The design of the research for this study is carried out in a "step by step" manner. According to (Olaniyi, 2013), the research technique is chosen initially, followed by the research methodology, the sampling size and sampling method, and finally, the data analysis approach is detailed. The study design that is used directs these steps. The nature of the research design reveals both the nature of the study and its structure (Flick, 2002, 12). The procedure of research design is also carried out for this study to make it legitimate and to obtain correct findings connected to the research questions that are established for this study. The research design employed in this study is primary research.

3.1.1 Primary Research

When current data or secondary surveys do not give sufficient and significant data, a tentative original study is undertaken to solve the research issue. The main research design is one based in which data is gathered, analyzed, and interconnected using a specific technique for a specific aim. Interviews, experiments, direct observations, and surveys are some of the most popular methods used in primary research (Turabian, 2006, 68).

3.1.2 Advantages of face-to-face interview

The fundamental benefit of face-to-face interviews is that the interviewer may ask the necessary questions, clarify the queries to the participant, and avoid conflicts. Direct interviews also allow the interviewer to be more adaptable; for example, if the question is not clear to the respondent, the interviewer can quickly reword it. If the interviewee is tense or uncomfortable, it can be recognized from his/her behaviors and gestures, but it is not feasible to tell through phone surveys. Sekaran and Bougie (2010) (p. 193)

3.1.3 Disadvantage of face-to-face interview

Geographical constraint is the primary drawback of face-to-face interviews. Face-to-face interviews would be difficult to perform if a major survey with massive resources was required at the national or worldwide level for these reasons. For starters, the expenditures are significant, such as the cost of training interviewers and interviewing people throughout a large geographical region. The second disadvantage is the lack of time, and the third disadvantage is the respondents' views about the anonymity of their comments. Sekaran and Bougie (2010) (pp. 193-194). Due to Covid-19 pandemic risks and restrictions limited meeting people face to face, since there were Healthy and safety precautions to be taken.

3.2 Research Approach

According to Monique, Inge, and Ajay (2010), the qualitative research strategy is one in which researchers use a variety of techniques to explore ideas, views, and experiences in detail. Using this strategy, an investigator can investigate concepts and experiences linked to the subject under investigation (Monique, Inge, and Ajay, 2010, 91).

3.2.1 Quantitative Method

The key challenge in the present research was the challenge of contacting a large sample size, which was mostly due to the limited restricted policies of hotels. It took longer to obtain an official agreement from the three hotels than it did to gather information, which was completed two weeks after the questionnaires were delivered. This displays the method's limited lifetime. Furthermore, these results were simply analyzed since the replies could be understood and implemented because the queries measured the opinion of the respondents.

Strengths	Weaknesses
1. Reliability by critical analysis.	1. No human perception and beliefs.
2. Brief period for administered survey.	2. Lack of resources for large-scale research.
3. Facilitated numerical data for groups and extents of agree or disagree from respondents.	3. No in-depth experience description.

Table1: The model of Strengths and Weaknesses of Quantitative Research. Amended from (Choy 2014).

3.2.3 Mixed Research Method

In the mixed research approach, the study is based on a mixed methodology, which includes both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The combined research according to (Base, K. and research, A., 2021) this technique yields the most dependable outcomes. The qualitative research method was used for this study to investigate the symptoms of job stress in employees in the hotel sector and how they manage their return to work subsequently.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Analysis of the "best of both worlds": When you combine the two forms of data, you get comprehensive, contextualized ideas of qualitative research as well as generalized, externally valid views of statistical data. The advantages of one form of data frequently outweigh the disadvantages of the other.	Workload: It is extremely time-consuming. Collecting, evaluating, and integrating two kinds of data into a single study takes a significant amount of time and work, and it frequently requires diverse teams of investigators rather than individuals. Consequently, this method has the potential to be more expensive than solo investigations.
Method adaptability: Mixed methods research is less bound by disciplines and well-established research paradigms. They allow you to integrate parts of multiple types of studies to extract the most informative data, giving you greater freedom in planning your study. In addition, mixed methods research may integrate theory production and hypothesis testing inside a single study, which is rare for independent qualitative or quantitative investigations.	Contrasting or contradictory outcomes: If the analysis produces contradictory results, it might be difficult to determine how to evaluate them in such a research methodology. If the statistical and qualitative findings do not match, or if there is fear that one of the factors may be confusing, it might be difficult to know how to proceed. Because these data take two quite distinct forms, it might be challenging to develop strategies to compare the results consistently.

Table 2: Strength and Weaknesses of Mixed Research Method. Amended from- (Base and research, 2021)

In this study, an Occupational Stress Index originally developed by Srivastava and Singh (1984) was used as a quantitative research instrument in the interview. The scale is intended to assess the level of stress that employees perceive because of various job elements and situations. The same template will be used in the exact format published by them to reach the outcomes. The figures and data summarized the targeted population's behavioral patterns. This design has helped to get more detail from the participants whilst still following ethical procedures.

3.3 Sampling

When the process of practical research begins, the first and most important stage is sampling. One of the most important components of sampling is identifying all those people who can supply true and accurate motivation and information that can be used to answer specified and established research questions (Fals, 2009, 124). As a result, it can be deduced that sampling is a procedure through which it is identified which section of the population must be researched to get insight into the population.

3.3.1 Sample Method

Random sampling was used for this study. Simple random sampling technique is a type of sample selection in which a selection of participants is chosen at random from a population. Each participant does have an equal probability of getting chosen. The information is collected from as big a percentage of this random selection as feasible.

Random sampling guarantees that the findings received from your sample are close to those obtained if the full population was surveyed (Shadish et al., 2002). An email was sent to all 5-star hotels in Malta to seek a reply from them. Once a hotel answered, a confirmation of 2 people working within the Hotel's front Office was randomly chosen to take part in this study. However, from a specific hotel, only 1 interviewee wished to participate.

3.3.2 Sampling limitations for this research.

The main limitation was the lack of reply from certain hotels at all. In specific hotels, there was no response, yet the individual participants made contact demonstrating interest in participating out of their own volition. As a result, this resulted in additional constraints. It is critical to have an adequate sample size while performing a study to provide reliable results. The greater the size of the sample, the more exact the findings will be. It will be tough to locate meaningful links in the data if the sample size is too small. (Fitzpatrick, 2015)

3.4 Bias

Confirmation Prejudice was found as a prevalent bias. Confirmation bias is defined as the act of obtaining or interpreting facts or results in a way that confirms the researcher's current ideologies or expectations. (Confirmation bias, 2018) Furthermore, a leading question is one that persuades a person to deliver a specific response. It is critical that questions are written

in such a manner that they do not limit the participant's ability to respond. It is worth noting that the sequence in which questions are answered during an interview might have an impact on the outcome.

Preceding questions offer context and altering this background might result in a different outcome. Finally, one could remark that interviewer bias is possible. This is when the interviewer unconsciously replies in a way that leads the participant to respond in a way that is slanted towards the interviewer's emotions. This can be expressed verbally or in more subtle ways such as body language or facial expression. (Interviewer Bias - SAGE Research Methods, 2018)

3.5 Ethical Consideration

While gathering data, numerous ethical considerations were considered. The purpose of the interview is explained to the study participants at the first step of the interview. To maintain an ethical standard, respondents' consent was acquired prior to the recording of interviews for research purposes which can be found in Appendix 1. One of the primary tasks of the researcher is to keep the information gathered from respondents' confidential and to avoid invading respondents' privacy. The data collection was carried out in an entirely anonymous manner. As a result, the identities of the respondents are not published in the research report for the same reason.

4. Results, Analysis and Discussion

This chapter of the study, at first, presents the information gathered from participants, which will then be thoroughly evaluated by the investigator using the appropriate data analysis approach.

4.1 Participants Demographics
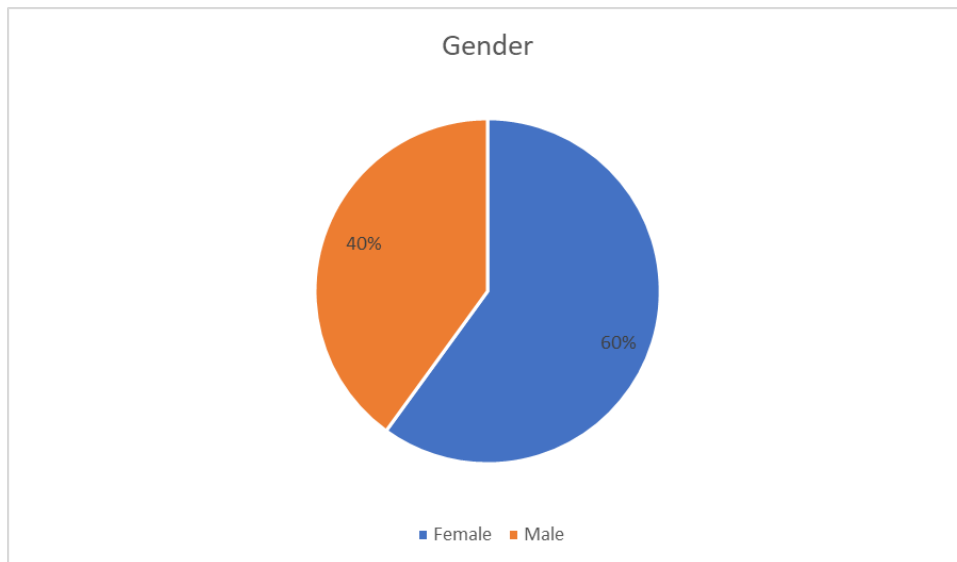
Figure 1- Participants Gender

The gender of the selected individuals is depicted in the table above. This plainly shows that there were more female participants than male ones.
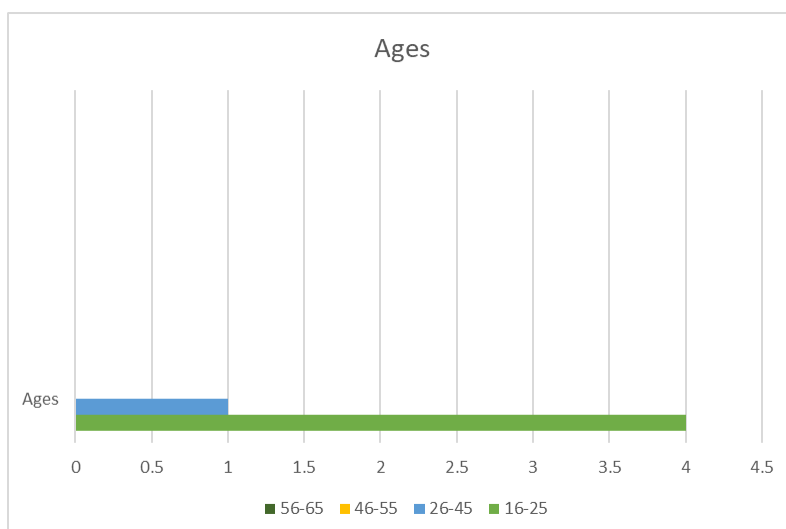
Figure 2- Ages of Participants

The ages of the selected individuals are depicted in the table above. This indicates that age demographics represent young employees.
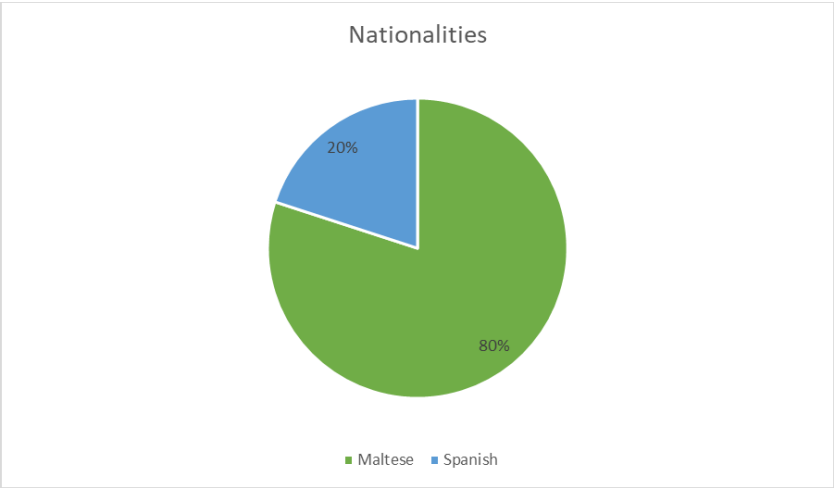
Figure 3- Nationalities.

Majority of the participants are Maltese, whereas only 20% are foreign.
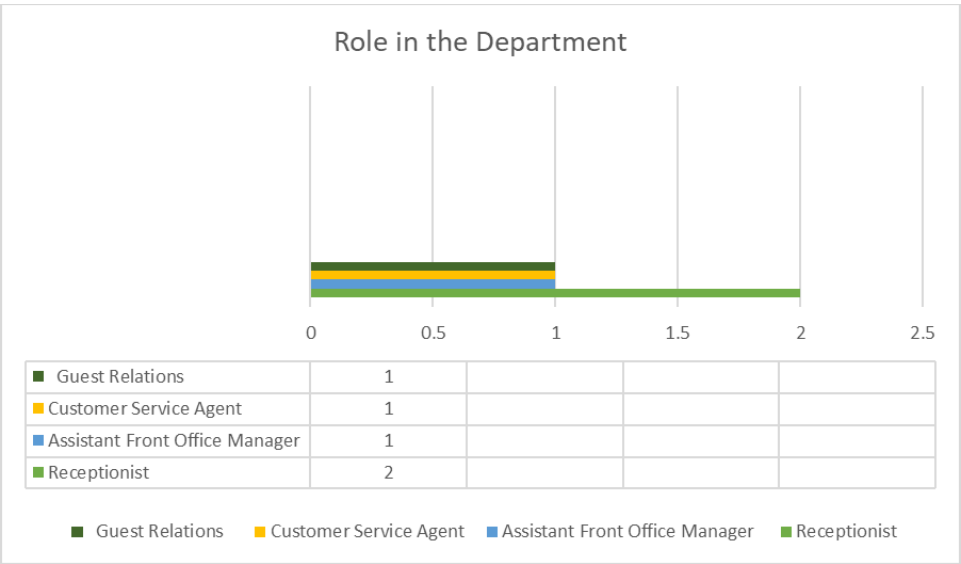
Figure 4- Position within the Department

This figure shows us the variety of people working within the front office; thus, this can help the researcher understand the different opinions from distinct positions within the front office.
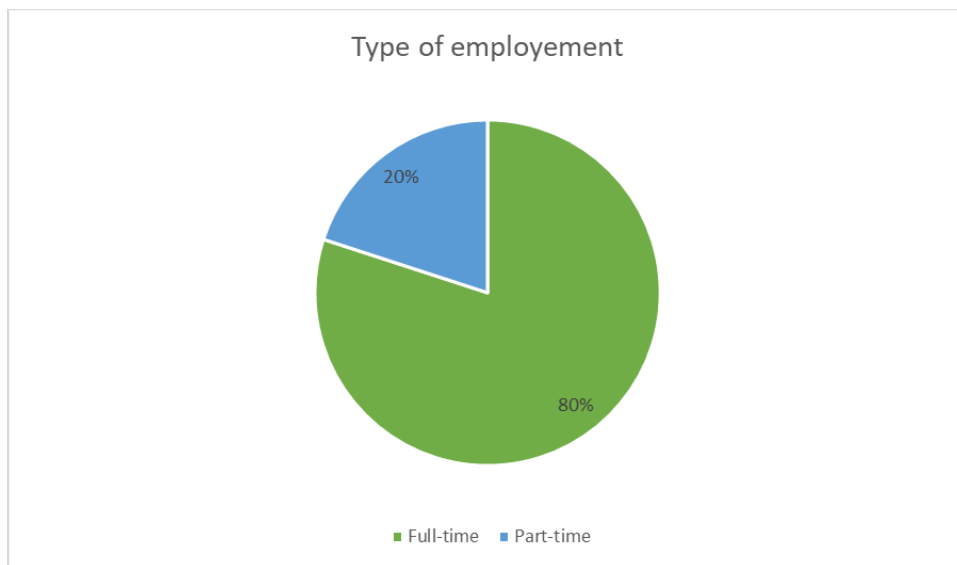
Figure 5- Type of employment
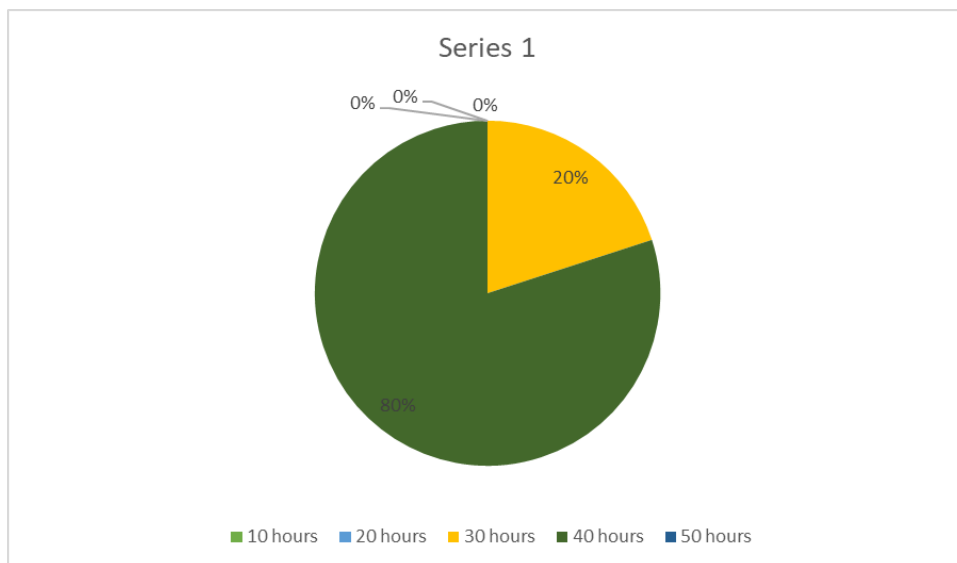
Figure 6- Working hours per week
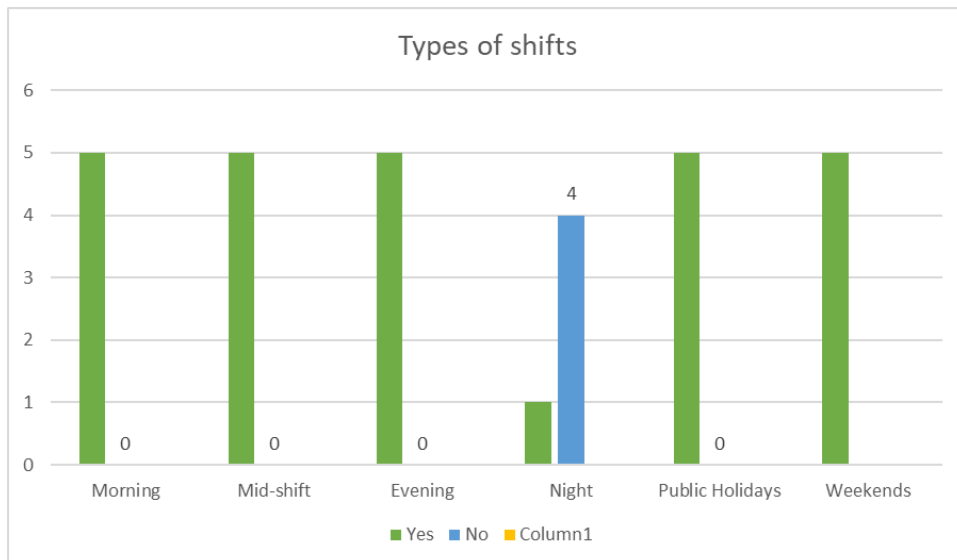
Figure 7 – Types of Shifts

4.2 Findings and Analysis

4.2.1 Full and Part- Time.

According to Figure 5, the majority work full-time basis with 40 hours shifts. As per figure 6, the part-timer is still working 30 hours, so this might implicate that part-timer tends to work extra hours to cover the demand. As noted in Figure 7, all the interviewees work on weekends and public holidays. In addition to that, all of them work morning, mid-shift, and evening shifts but only 1 male interviewee works night. It came out that majority of the 5-star hotels either have their night receptionist or in certain hotels, only males do the night shift.

An interesting thing that came out was that people tend to calm down with treats such as donuts or pizzas. This might imply that the interviewees might be emotionally eating. Even though they have their normal break they resort to food to comfort themselves after a hard long shift.

4.2.2 Train the Trainer Duties: Expectations and Limitations.

Another factor that emerged was in relation to the task of train other people. It can be stressful since some of them might not know English or the system itself. (This is indicative of language barriers and highlights that while being employed, they still lack the skills especially in relation to technology/ digitized systems. As mentioned in the Literature Review, it is essential that hoteliers train their staff as to improve their abilities and capacity

to do work successfully (Sampson and Akyeampong 2014) without putting extra pressure on other individuals. In addition to that it would be ideal to have in-house trainers with experience to avoid further stress.

4.2.3 Demanding and Challenging Guests.

Another stressful thing would be rude, demanding, and challenging guests. Such guests' behaviors tend to affect the front office employee by impacting their mood and emotional states. A previous study (Jeung, D.-Y. et Al, 2018) has shown that emotional labor relates to negative attitudes, behaviors, and poor employee wellbeing. Therefore, it would be beneficial if hotels invest in Emotional intelligence skills training. Emotional intelligence is significant because it aids in the resolution of workplace problems, the reduction of team member stress, the development of better connections, and the enhancement of overall job satisfaction. Better employee performance results from building teams with higher emotional intelligence. (Jeung, D.-Y. et Al, 2018)

4.2.4 Organizational Culture and Managerial Styles.

Common organizational factors pointed out were giving tasks one could not handle, organizing shifts, Emails, Supervisors, and managers who are not willing to help, Turnover, having to train fresh staff, difficult customers, more responsibilities, and not enough time off. Organizational Culture is relevant here since hoteliers can ease such situations. Another issue is that if Managers use the ''Command and Control'' approach which is the norm in Malta, this will lead to more turnover. This is because if employees do not find help from their supervisors they will get discouraged. (McIlroy, Parker and McKimmie, 2021)

4.2.5 Individualistic factors.

Common individual factors included: fresh staff, running late for work, and colleagues. Commuters also claimed higher levels of psychological stress, more health problems, primarily of a psychosomatic origin, and increased absence from work owing to illness. In addition to rotating shifts, commuting exacerbates sleep issues, psychosomatic ailments, and difficulty with family and community. The reason for fresh staff could be since majority of hotels are working with interns or else since there are a lot of labor shortages due to Covid-19 redundancies.

4.2.6 Importance of rest periods and Humor to de-stress.

During the interviews, the importance for adequate breaks emerged. People mentioned that this really helped them to calm down during stressful periods, even if it is just for 5 minutes. Also, joking around with one another helps to reduce the stress of the shift. Rest periods are important so that the employees can focus more, but more importantly are the rest days, since this is the time to relax one's body and have some time to enjoy themselves. Working at one's peak for a shorter length of time is preferable to working at a decreased capacity for a longer period. (Conlin, Hu, and Barber, 2020) discovered that even 40-second 'microbreaks' increased workers' sustained attention.

4.2.7 Stress related illnesses and management.

The last part of the interview was regarding managing sickness from stress. Only one interviewee was directly affected by illness due to work experiencing Symptoms like ulcers, throwing up blood, and insomnia. It was noted that after recovering they did not want to return to work. This proves how severe stress can affect one's body and not by having the common symptoms. In fact, a common factor shown during interview was to take time and things slow. Therefore, this indicates that there is a connection between stress, illness, and maintaining well-being in the workplace.

4.2.8 Occupational Stress Index

The second and final part of the interview was the Occupational Stress Index, which the researchers used the same one professor use to see how the employees' stress levels are, a copy is found in Appendix 2.

OSI Questions 1-5

	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5
Strongly Disagree	0	1	1	0	0
Disagree	2	4	0	5	0
Uncertain	0	0	3	0	2
Agree	3	0	1	0	1
Strongly agree	0	0	0	0	2

Figure 8- Questions 1 to 5

OSi Questions 6-10

	Question 6	Quesstion 7	Question 8	Question 9	Question 10
Strongly Disagree	0	0	1	0	0
Disagree	1	0	0	3	1
Uncertain	1	0	2	2	2
Agree	2	5	1	0	1
Storngly Agree	1	0	1	0	1
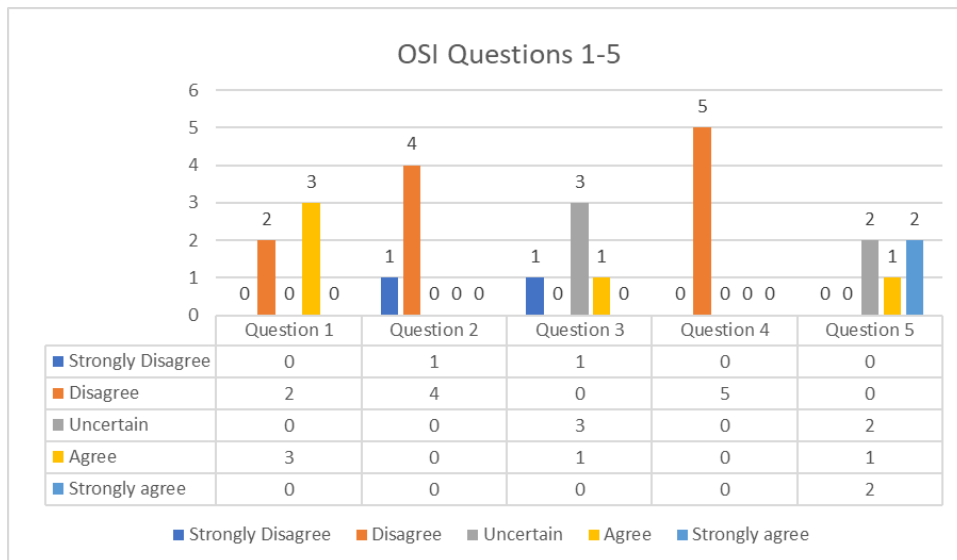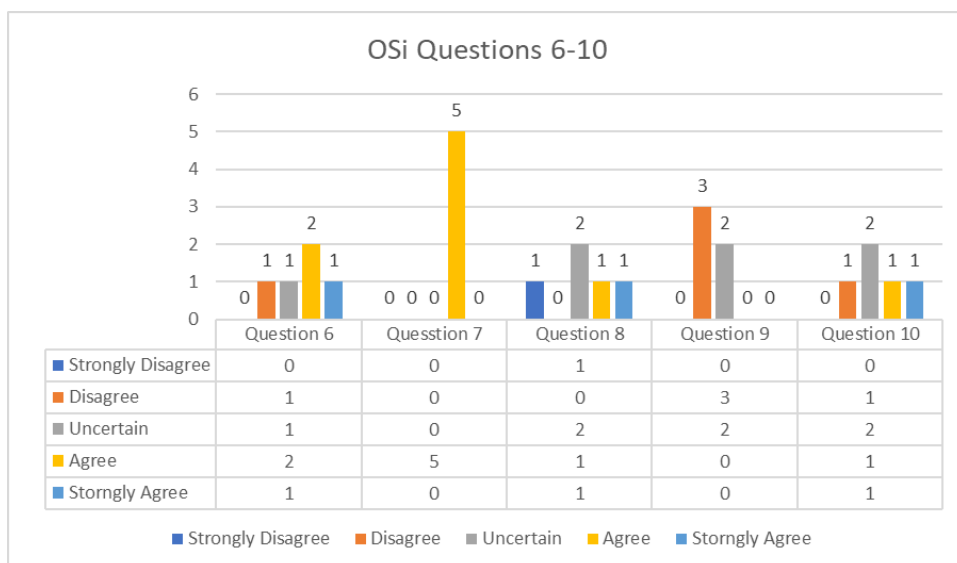
Figure 9- Questions 6 to 10
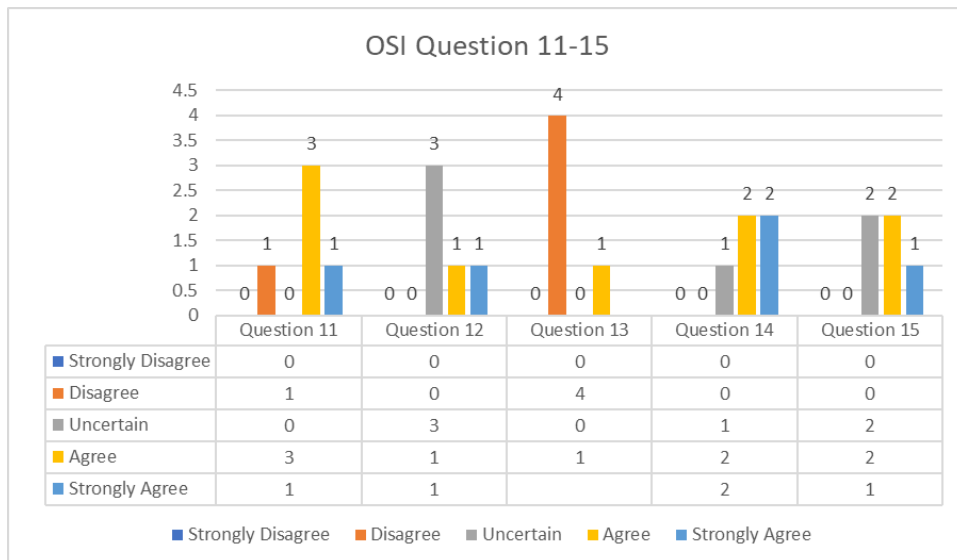
Figure 10- Questions 11-15
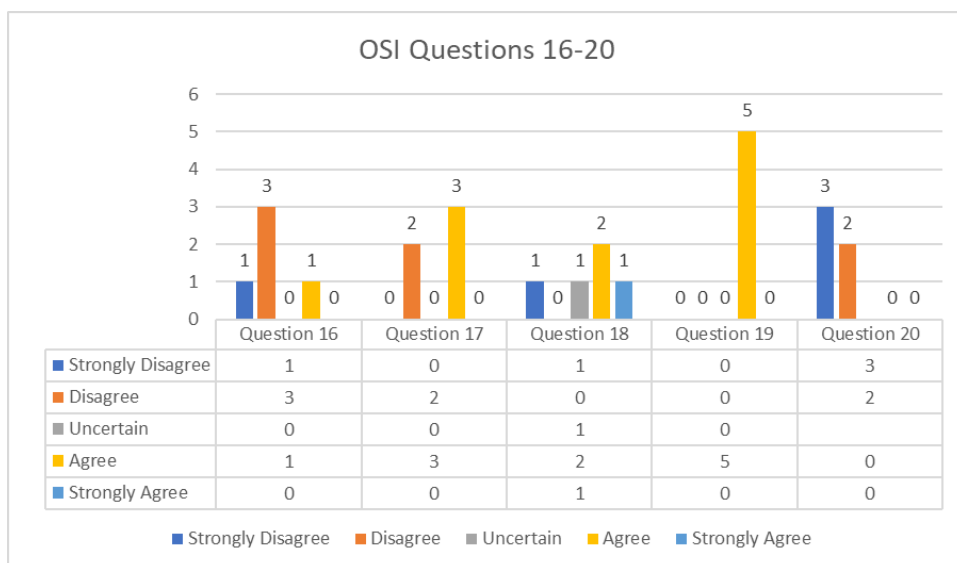
Figure 11-Question 16 to 20
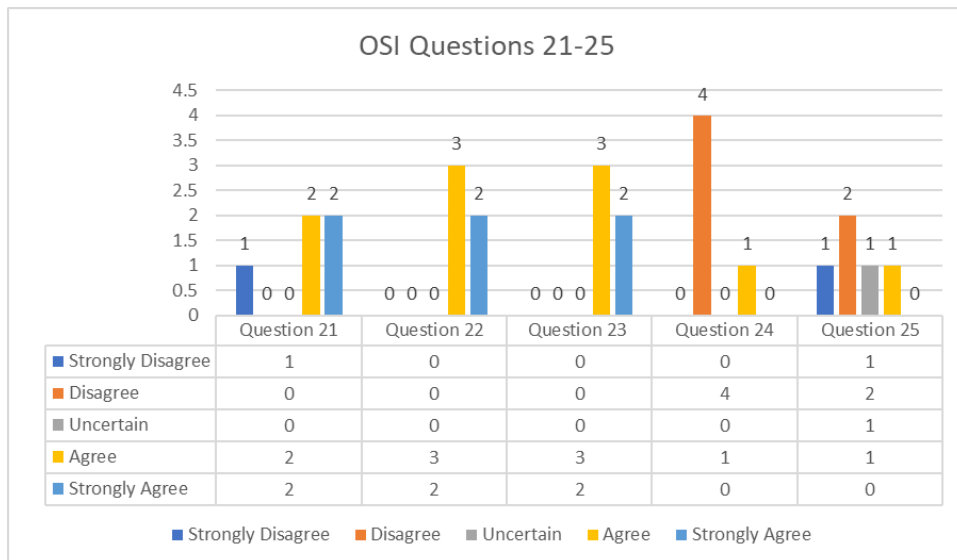
Figure 12- Question 21 to 25
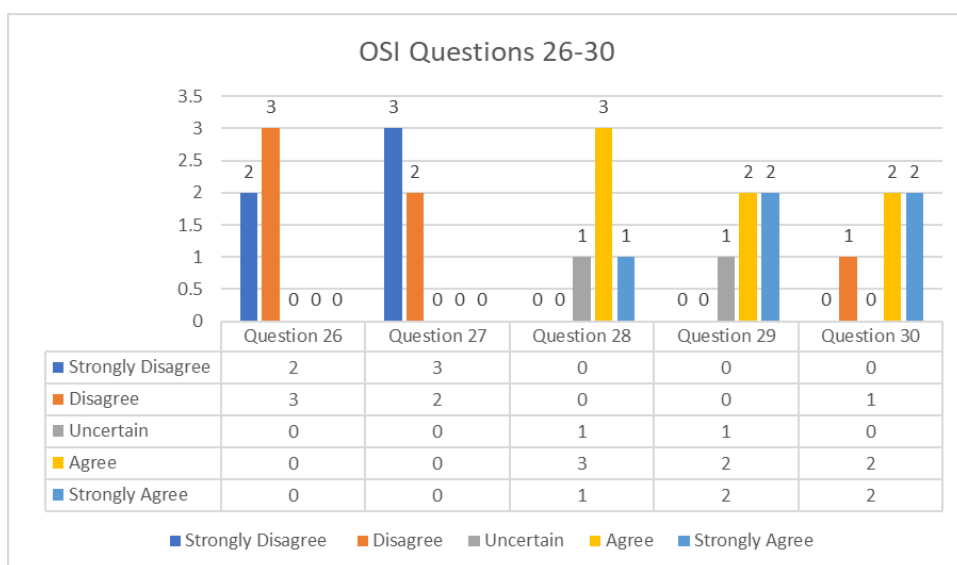
Figure 13- Question 26 to 30
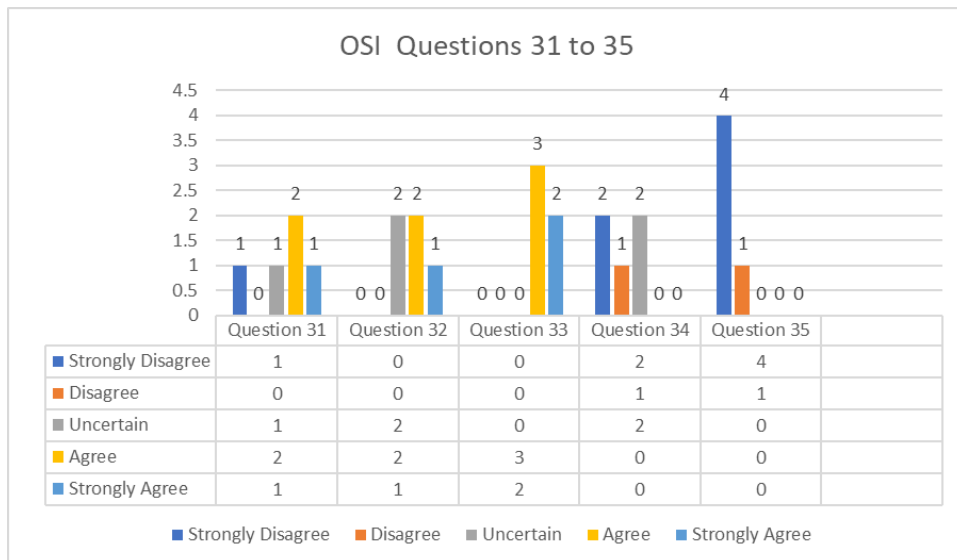
Figure 14- Question 31 to 35

	Question 31	Question 32	Question 33	Question 34	Question 35
Strongly Disagree	1	0	0	2	4
Disagree	0	0	0	1	1
Uncertain	1	2	0	2	0
Agree	2	2	3	0	0
Strongly Agree	1	1	2	0	0

Figure 15- Question 36-40

	Question 36	Question 37	Question 38	Question 39	Question 40
Strongly Disagree	3	3	0	2	0
Disagree	0	2	0	2	0
Uncertain	0	0	3	0	1
Agree	2	0	2	1	2
Strongly Agree	0	0	0	0	2
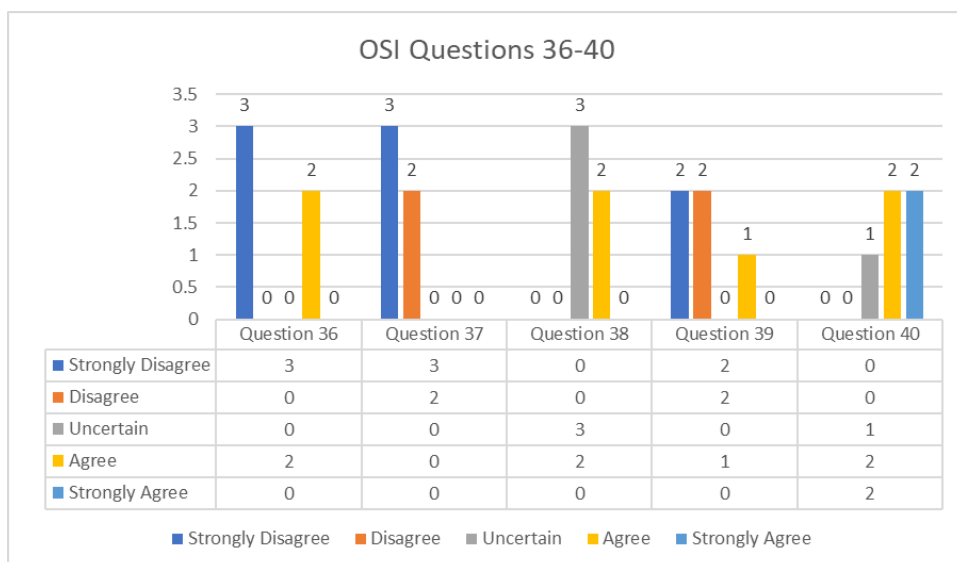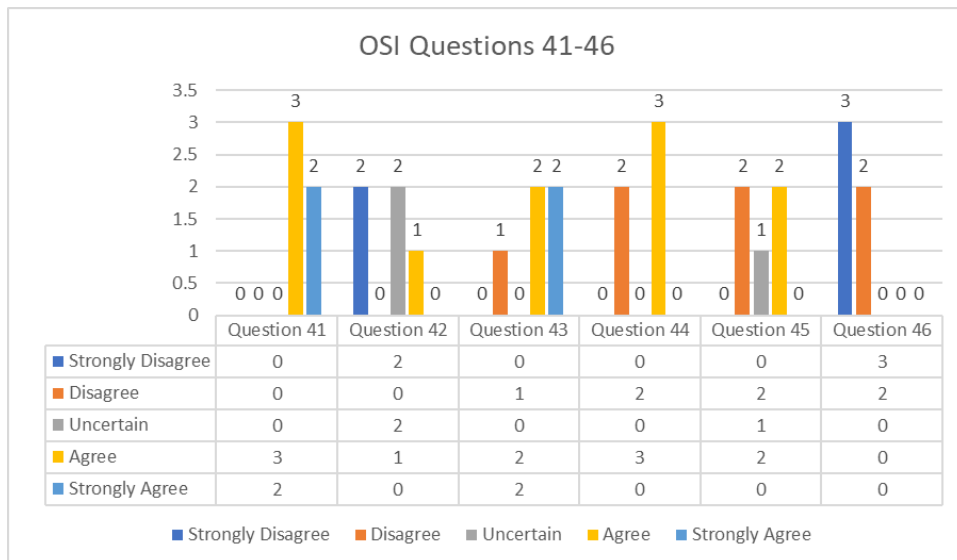
Figure 16- Question 41-46

Most of the answers were close to each other in this questionnaire. However, there were some discrepancies in specific questions. The research will be analyzing each one of them.

Question number	Reason why this might be
3	Different Managerial Skills might affect how they give their instructions and if they are contradictory on each other.
10	There are mixed feelings of how authorities care for employee's feelings. This could be because people show feelings in various ways.
11	Some say they have enough salary; however, some say the opposite. This could be the fact that receptionists complain about their wages whilst people in different positions within the front office gain more wage.
25	Issues regarding excessive work are different for each person some find it more stressful.

Table 3: Major Differences in OSI Index

This proves that the factors which emerged from the Literature review match with the fact that it is what happens within 5-star hotels in Malta.

5. Final Arguments

This chapter offers the results of the analysis of the findings. It comprises the attainment of goals and objectives (5.1), Recommendations (5.2), Evaluation, Reliability and Validity (5.3).

5.1 Conclusion

For many years, occupational stress has indeed been intensively researched by a broad group of individuals. However, the focus has been minimal on the hotel business. Knowledge and research gaps exist regarding this. The study detailed in this investigation aimed to focus on the topic of stress for hotel front office employees. After conducting this research, the following was reached. One of the hypotheses mentioned in regard to this study: ''Job stress has a detrimental impact on employee performance in the hotel business'' has been proven. Whilst the hypothesis '' When employees in the hotel business are driven/ motivated with incentives, it leads to job satisfaction'' was not fully reached since there was not much information to prove this.

The research questions that have been answered for this study where the following:

1. What are the variables that contribute to job stress in the hotel industry?

3. How do job stress impact employee performance in the hotel industry?

These questions have been discussed in the previous section. The other question:

2. What are the things that inspire hotel employees?

Was not answered within the interview.

5.2 Recommendations

Even though hotel employees have demanding tasks, it is vital for management to guarantee that the staff are supplied with the finest working circumstances and that employee stress is reduced to a minimum. The guidelines below should be addressed by hotel operations to sustain great services by lowering staff stress.

- To deal with stress at work, managers must be alert to any indicators that people are being overworked. Management must take corrective actions immediately, and work

should be assigned correctly to ensure that no one is overburdened. Employees should be given frequent breaks and holidays. This can also boost employee happiness and motivation.

- Employees must not be motivated to perform long hours; instead, workers are allowed to leave at a suitable hour.
- Management should be open to compromise; if staff have been unable to turn up to work due to sickness or even other circumstances, they should feel comfortable discussing their concerns with management and be permitted to take time off. Workers will feel as if they are a part of the organization if management is eager to comprehend the problem.
- Stress management training should be part of the internal training policies.

Finally, the researcher highly advises managers to analyze staff stress levels on a regular basis to apply methods that increase worker well-being by regulating and lowering stress. Managers should pay attention to the suggestions of their frontline personnel since they have direct touch with customers and may provide a competitive edge for the company.

5.3 Evaluation, Reliability and Validity

The study included two fundamental flaws. First, the respondents were mostly front-line employees or lower-level management at hotels. Because job stress is experienced differently by various levels of employees, future research might cover all staff levels. In addition to that, the sample size was too small to cover all the hotels in Malta. Therefore, the researcher believes larger-scale scale research would make a study more valid.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Template of Consent Letter

ITS INSTITUTE OF TOURISM STUDIES
IN ACADEMIC AFFILIATION WITH THE
EMIRATES ACADEMY OF HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT

Consent Form for Research Study

Title of Research - An exploratory study of Stress symptoms in front office agents in 5 stars rated hotels in Malta - a snapshot of the current situation.

Researcher   - Gabrielle Hili, 0336600L

Degree   - Higher National Diploma in Travel and Tourism

Dear Sir / Madam,

I, Gabrielle Hili, a student at the Institute of Tourism Studies am currently in the final year of my Higher National Diploma in Travel and Tourism. I am carrying out research on An exploratory study of Stress symptoms in front office agents in 5 stars rated hotels in Malta - a snapshot of the current situation. I would like to explore your views on this matter by asking you some questions. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information so you can decide whether to participate in this study. Any questions you may have will be answered by the researcher.

There are no known risks related with this research project other than possible discomfort with the following:

- You will be asked to be honest when answering questions.

The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential. All data will be stored securely and will be made available only to those individuals conducting the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study.

Your identity will not be revealed in any publications that result from this study.

- You will be recorded as to keep the evidence in fulfillment of research purpose. All anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process. Once the essay is done will be discarded in a safe and secure manner.

You can terminate your participation at any time without prejudice. You also do not have to answer individual questions you don't want to answer. Your name will not be attached to the questionnaire and I will ensure that your participation remains confidential.

Participant's declaration

I have read this consent form and am giving the opportunity to the researcher to ask questions. I hereby grant permission to use the information I provide as data in the above mentioned research project, knowing that it will be kept confidential and without use of my name.

_____   _____   _____

Participant's name   Participant's signature   Date

Gabrielle Hili   G.Hili   23.03.22

| Researcher's name | Researcher's signature | Date |

Appendix 2: Sample of Interview Questions

Some questions were derived from (Bhui et al., 2016).

Interview Number X

Demographics of the respondents:

Gender:	
Ages:	
Nationality / ies:	
Role and/or Position in Department:	
Type of employment contract:	
Duration of employment:	
Working hours per week:	
Weekends and Public Holidays: Do you work during the weekends and Public Holidays? Yes () / No ()	
Working shifts:	

Occupational Stress:

- What is the situation at your job regarding demands, pressure, working hours, etc.?
- Is your job stressful?
- Are there any elements that you find stressful?
- What would do you think that are the most significant factors that can cause stress at work
- Which are the common organizational factors that can cause stress at work?
- Which are the common individual factors that can cause stress at work?

Managing stress at work (both managing yourself and other people)

- Any tactics how do you manage yourself in terms of stress at work?
- If you manage other people, how do you manage stress?
- Have you had any experience of managing other people?
- How do you manage other people's stress at work?
- How do you deal with this?
- What were/are the challenges?
- What would you say are the best (individual and organizational) stress management interventions (or practices) for yourself and for other employees? Can you give any examples?

Managing return to work

- Have you ever been off sick because of stress?
- How do you manage your return to work after sickness?
- How do/did you manage their return to work after sickness?
- What were/are the challenges?
- What would you say are the best (individual and organizational) interventions (or practices) for managing employee return to work after sickness leave? Can you give any examples?

Any further comments.

N.B. Srivastava and Singh (1984) created the English version of the 0SI at Banaras Hindu University in Uttar Pradesh (UP), India. The scale is intended to assess the level of stress that employees perceive as a result of various job elements and situations, therefore the same template was used to keep the same intention.

Appendix – 1

Occupational Stress Index (OSI)

Please read each statement carefully and decide how you feel about your occupation described by the following statements.

Scale:

1.	=	Strongly Disagree	(SDA)
2.	=	Disagree	(DA)
3.	=	Uncertain	(U)
4.	=	Agree	(A)
5.	=	Strongly Agree	(SA)

Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5; for example, encircle 5 If you Strongly Agree (SA), or encircle 1 if you Strongly Disagree (SD) and so on.

S.#	Statements	SDA	DA	U	A	SA
1.	I have to do a lot of work in this job	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The available informations relating to my job-role and its outcomes are vague and insufficient.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	My different Officers often give contradictory instructions regarding my works.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Sometimes it becomes complied problem for me to make adjustment between political/group pressures and formal rules and instructions.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	The responsibility for the efficiency and productivity of many employees is thrust upon me.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Most of my suggestions are heeded and implemented here.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	My decisions and instructions concerning distribution of assignments among employees are properly followed.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I have to work with persons whom I like.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	My assignments are of monotonous nature.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Higher authorities do care for my self respect.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I get less salary in comparison to the quantum of my labour/work.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I do my work under tense circumstances.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Owing to excessive work load I have to manage with insufficient number of employees and resources.	1	2	3	4	5

14.	The objectives of my work-role are quiet clear and adequately planned.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Officials do not inerfere with my jurisdiction and working methods.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	I have to do some work unwillingly owing to certain group or political pressures.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	I am responsible for the future of a number of employees.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	My co-operation is frequently sort in solving the administrative or industrial problems at higher level.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	My suggestions regarding the training programmes of employees are given due significance.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Some of my colleagues and subordinates try to defame and malign me as unsuccessful.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	I get ample opportunity to utilise my abilities and experience independently.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	This job has enhance my social status.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	I am seldom rewarded for my hard labour and efficient performance.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	Some of my assignments are quite risky and complicated.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	I have to dispose of my work hurriedly owing to excessive work load.	1	2	3	4	5
26.	I am unable to perform my duties smoothly owing to uncertainty and ambiguity of the scope of my jurisdiction and authorities.	1	2	3	4	5
27.	I am not provided with clear instructions and sufficient facilities regarding the new assignments trusted to me.	1	2	3	4	5
28.	In order to maintain group conformity sometimes I have to do/produce more than usual.	1	2	3	4	5
29.	I bear the great responsibility for the progress and prosperity of this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
30.	My opinions are sought in framing important policies of the Organization/Department.	1	2	3	4	5

31.	Our interest and opinions are duly considered in making appointements for important post.	1	2	3	4	5
32.	My colleagues do cooperate with me voluntarily in solving administrative and industrial problems	1	2	3	4	5
33.	I get ample opportunity to develop my aptitude and proficiency properly.	1	2	3	4	5
34.	My higher authorities do not give due significance to my post and work.	1	2	3	4	5
35.	I often feel that this job has made my life cumbersome	1	2	3	4	5
36.	Being too busy with official work I am not able to devote sufficient time to my domestic and personal problems.	1	2	3	4	5
37.	It is not clear that what type of work and behaviour my higher authorities and colleagues expect from me.	1	2	3	4	5
38.	Employees attach due importance to the official insructions and formal working procedures.	1	2	3	4	5
39.	I am compelled to violate the formal and administrative procedures and policies owing to group/political pressures.	1	2	3	4	5
40.	My opinion is sought in changing or modifying the working system, instrument and conditions.	1	2	3	4	5
41.	There exists sufficient mutual co-operation and team-spirit among the employees of this Organization/Department.	1	2	3	4	5
42.	My suggestions and cooperation are not sought in solving even those problems for which I am quite competent.	1	2	3	4	5
43.	Working conditions are satisfactory here from the point of view of our welfare and convinience.	1	2	3	4	5
44.	I have to do such work as ought to be done by others.	1	2	3	4	5
45.	It becomes difficult to implement all of a sudden the new dealing procedures and policies in place of those already in practice.	1	2	3	4	5
46.	I am unable to carry out my assignment to my satisfaction on account of excessive load of work and lack of time.	1	2	3	4	5

Sub-scales of Occupational Stress Index (OSI) with their Items Serial Numbers

S. No.	Sub-scales of OSI	Serial of the Items in OSI
1.	Role Overload	01, 13, 25, 34, 44, 46
2.	Role Ambiguity	02, 14*, 26, 37
3.	Role Conflict	03, 15*, 27, 38* ,45
4.	Unreasonable Group and Political Pressure	04, 16, 28, 39
5.	Responsibility for Persons	05, 17, 29
6.	Under participation	06*, 18*, 30*, 40*
7.	Powerlessness	07*, 19*, 31*
8.	Peer Group Relations	08*, 20, 32*, 41*
9.	Intrinsic Impoverishment	09, 21*, 33*,42
10.	Low status	10*, 22*, 34
11.	Strenuous Working Condition	12, 24, 35, 43*
12.	Unprofitability	11, 23
Total		46

*False keyed Items

The true keyed items were rated as 5 for strongly agree, 4 for agree, 3 for undecided, 2 for disagree and 1 for strongly disagree while the false keyed items were rated as reversed.

 Thank you for the participation.

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