

Examining the Predictors Influencing Emotional Exhaustion among Food and Beverages Staff at 4-and 5-Star Hotels in Selangor

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Abstract: Employees at upscale hotels in the hospitality sector are expected to provide exceptional service, which frequently results in a great deal of stress. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the factors that influence emotional exhaustion among food and beverage (F&B) staff at 4- and 5-star hotels in Klang Valley. Specifically, factors including work overload and demographic profiles like gender, age, marital status, work experience, and job position were considered. The study utilised a quantitative methodology through a survey via an online poll, which was answered by 110 F&B staff members of 4- and 5-star hotels. The responses were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28. Descriptive and correlation analysis were used to assess the presented hypotheses. The findings showed that among F&B hotel employees, work overload and demographic characteristics (age, marital status, work experience, and job position) had a substantial impact on emotional exhaustion. The regression analysis results demonstrated that, in comparison to gender, factors like age, marital status, work experience, work overload, and job position within the F&B department had a more substantial impact on the emotional exhaustion that F&B hotel employees experienced. The findings of this study may help managers and HR specialists forecast when work burnout will start and what factors lead to the early identification of burnout.

Keywords: Job burnout, emotional exhaustion, food and beverage staff, hotel staff, high-end hotel, demographic

Introduction

In Malaysia, tourism is the country's second-largest source of foreign exchange gains. This came as a result of the actions of the Malaysian government, who had actively promoted tourism to diversify the economy and reduce the nation's reliance on exports, leading to its rise in the country. In 2022, tourism contributed 14% to Malaysia's GDP (The Sun, 2023). This marked a growth from 2000 and 2018, where Malaysian hotels had an average occupancy rate of 60% (Tourism Malaysia, 2020).

The continued growth of Malaysia's hotel industry has led to numerous career prospects in the field. Malaysia's hotel and tourism sector, which account for just under 25% of all employment, have become essential to the nation's job growth (Thommandru et al., 2023). In 2022, 3.61 people were employed in the tourism sector including hotels in Malaysia (Siddartha 2023). However, as the hospitality business, particularly hotels, continued to employ more people, their susceptibility to stress related to their jobs also increased. Previous research has indicated serious issues concerning occupational stress and turnover in the hotel industry (Park & Min, 2020; AlBattat & Som, 2013).

Occupational stress is a common type of stress in the workforce today (Crandall, 2020). According to Ehsan and Ali (2019), stressful events occur when competence is not up to par, leading to job-related pressures. Stress have also been found to lead to burnout (Vidotti et al., 2019), which was reported by Salama et al. (2022), who found a favourable correlation between employee burnout and intention to leave the company with working stress. Based on the research by Harjanti and Todani (2019), burnout is far more likely among workers in hotels and used to be a common occurrence for workers in the hospitality sector (Asensio Martinez et al., 2019; Saira et al., 2020). As a result, hotel workers experience physical health problems, fatigue, and lower productivity (Cerasa et al., 2020). Job burnout also jeopardises an individual's health and well-being at work, leading to mental health disorders such depression and anxiety (Hassim et al., 2022). This leads to losses as companies need to pay for medical costs, turnover, absenteeism, and lost productivity, among others (Gill et al., 2006; Koo et al., 2020).

Bradley (1969) stated that job burnout is a severe form of stress that is not indicative of occupational stress. Rather, it is the outcome of poorly managed stress at work (Vidotti et al., 2019). Furthermore, job burnout was defined by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) as a psychological condition that develops when workers are assigned to a demanding workplace with limited support systems. Previous research on job burnout by Maslach et al. (2001) indicated that long-term, chronic emotional exposure is a common occurrence for workers with high stress levels, which can lead to job burnout. There are three main aspects to burnout. Maslach and Leiter (2005) and Lubbadah (2020) identified emotional exhaustion as the first dimension, followed by depersonalisation and personal accomplishment. This study focuses on emotional exhaustion as it is the initial aspect of job burnout that people experience.

A hotel is a sophisticated business that requires resolute employees to function properly. Working in a hotel involves a lot of physical labour as well as frequent in-person interactions with clients (Goh & Baum, 2021). Hotel employees are required to pay attention to details such as reservations, room cleaning, event scheduling, and maintaining the building's structure to ensure visitors are comfortable. This results in long hours, working in shifts, and close departmental coordination (Arnieyantie, 2023; Sangaran & Selvanayagam, 2021) where several departments work together, including the food and beverages (F&B) department.

The F&B department manages the preparation, presentation, and serving of F&B for customers in restaurants, cafés, bars, and other dining venues. The department is divided into two divisions: front-of-the-house (FOH) positions, like waiters and hosts, and back-of-the-house (BOH) jobs, like cooks and stewards (Hollander, 2022). Despite limited resources and long hours, both divisions work together to provide and deliver high-quality service to satisfy tourists' requests (Said & Tanova, 2021). However, the need to fulfil the high standards of management and customers by producing high-quality goods and services at a short notice can be highly demanding, particularly for the F&B department (Green, 2021). Consequently, employees may become nervous if they appear unhappy in front of clients (Shi et al., 2022).

A previous study discovered that the demands of visitors in the hospitality industry boosts employee stress levels and increase one's susceptibility to emotional exhaustion (Xu et al., 2017; Shi et al., 2022). For F&B department employees especially, who must multitask but frequently require greater task clarity, role conflict can occur in their daily work, which leads to further stress (Arnieyantie, 2023). Furthermore, unsociable work schedules, excessive workloads, poor training, and dysfunctional guest behaviour make hotel employees susceptible to stress and job burnout (Aydin, 2018; Harjanti & Todani, 2019). As a result, the hotel business could be described as stressful (Schwepker & Dimitriou, 2021).

Numerous scholars from across the globe have examined the factors that contribute to occupational burnout (Cavanaugh et al., 2020). Heavy workload, lack of social support, unfavourable working conditions, lack of coworker camaraderie and communication, the perception that one is paid less than one deserves, lack of recognition, and dissatisfaction with one's current position are all general causes of job burnout. Based on Maslach and Leiter (2005), there are two categories of causal factors for workplace burnout: situational predictors, such as workload, and individual predictors, like sex, marital status, age, experience, education level, and job position. However, several factors, including low job autonomy, excessive workload, task features, role ambiguity, role conflict, inadequate management, poor communication, demanding clientele, and low job autonomy, all

predict job burnout in the hotel industry (Xu & Cao, 2019). Since workers are a valuable resource for raising hotel output, the management and researchers should concentrate on addressing these issues, particularly in stressful work settings.

Outstanding and productive people are most likely to experience job burnout (DeBoeck et al., 2018). F&B department workers, who deal with customers on a regular basis and who need to demonstrate a cheerful façade, are particularly vulnerable to emotional exhaustion (Hori & Chao, 2019). This is supported by the study of Afuye (2020), who found that as the F&B department is the most complicated area of hotel operations, managers in this department experience higher levels of job burnout than managers in other departments.

Based on the study by Tanözü (2021), burnout was observed to rise with occupational stress faced by staff at five-star hotels. However, it is difficult to determine the exact number of stressed-out hotel employees in Malaysia due to the low reporting rate, which makes burnout almost undetectable. Nonetheless, the rise in turnover rates may serve as an oblique indicator of this. Based on reports, Malaysia's hotel industry has an annual employee turnover rate of up to 66% (Halim et al. 2021).

Prior studies have demonstrated that role conflict, work stress, and work overload are some of the factors that cause hotel employees to leave their jobs (Wen et al., 2020), which in turn increases the turnover rate (Kosnin et al., 2021). Additionally, although earlier research has indicated that personal traits like age, gender, marital status, experience, and job position are associated with job burnout (Odonkor & Frimpong, 2020), not enough information has been found in relation to Malaysian hotels, thereby calling for additional study.

Therefore, this study focuses on situational and individual (personal) predictors that influence emotional exhaustion, which is the first dimension and most obvious manifestation of burnout (Lubaddeh, 2020). This classification of job burnout predictors is based on Maslach and Leiter's (2005) work. Furthermore, the Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) serve as the basis for the research framework as the model is widely used to investigate determinants of job burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

This study examines the situational and individual factors affecting emotional exhaustion in workers at F&B hotels. The goal of the study is to examine how work stress affects employees' emotional exhaustion and identify the demographics that affect emotional exhaustion among F&B hotel employees. This study aims to investigate the relationship between work overload as a situational predictor and demographic profile as an individual predictor in relation to emotional exhaustion.

Literature Review

An overview of the food and beverage industry

The F&B sector is vast, encompassing everything from basic agricultural items to high-end food and drinks. The F&B department manages the preparation, serving, and presentation of F&B to patrons at restaurants, cafés, bars, and other dining venues. FOH employment, such as waiters and hosts, and BOH jobs, such as cooks and stewards, make up the two divisions of the F&B department (Hollander, 2022). Despite limited resources and long hours, both divisions work together to provide and deliver high-quality service to satisfy tourists' requests (Said & Tanova, 2021). Hotel staff are susceptible to stress and job burnout due to unsociable work hours, severe workloads, inadequate training, and dysfunctional guest behaviour (Aydin, 2018; Harjanti & Todani, 2019). Due to the hard nature of the work, working in the F&B industry can be exhausting. Due to the need to meet the high standards of management and guests, hotel staff, especially those in the F&B department, require exceptional skills to provide high-quality goods and services within stringent time constraints (Green, 2021; Siganidou, 2020).

Job burnout definition and its dimensions

In the rigorous and hectic hotel sector, job burnout is a well-researched problem, having initially been theorised by American researcher Freudenberg in 1974. Maslach and Jackson (1981) provided a

three-dimensional model of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal efficacy, characterising it as a state of fatigue brought on by ongoing work-related stress. Siren and Patel (2018) defined job burnout as failing in one's work and not being able to accomplish anything. The adverse effects of job burnout have been linked to health issues, anxiety, and depression (Koutsimani et al., 2019), deteriorating wellbeing (Adil & Baig, 2018), and job dissatisfaction (Cheng & O-Yang, 2018).

Emotional exhaustion

Prior studies have indicated that hotel staff are prone to emotional exhaustion due to the hospitality industry's emphasis on the requirements of its patrons, which increases employee stress levels (Shi et al., 2022). (Xu et al., 2017). Emotional exhaustion is one of the three-dimensional models of job burnout exhibited by feeling weary and exhausted, according to Maslach and Jackson (1981). According to Alonso et al. (2020), emotional weariness is often caused by significant workloads and performance issues. Employee annoyance and job stress can also result from not having the necessary tools to do their tasks.

Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) Model

The most recent idea regarding employee burnout as reported by Demerouti et al. (2001) and Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) is the JD-R model. Job characteristics, or predictors of job burnout, are divided into two areas in this model: job resources and job demand. Job burnout happens when workload rises, where lack of resources is an example factor that drives employment demand. The JD-R expands on the factors by including components of the job's organisation as well as physical, psychological, and social traits. The JD-R model focuses on both positive and negative employee happiness measurements, considering a broad range of likely operating scenarios. Consequently, the JD-R model can be applied to a wide range of positions and can enhance worker performance and well-being (Bakker et al., 2003b).

Work overload as situational predictor of emotional exhaustion

The increased task demands in the hospitality industry has led to frequent work overload (Haldorai, 2019). This refers to the work that an employee is required to accomplish, which is also often linked to stringent deadlines (Ahmed et al., 2019). Based on Grobelna's (2021) assessment, when job demands exceed an employee's skills, high workloads can also considerably contribute to stress at work. Certain businesses, like the hospitality industry, have cyclical business conditions, where employers expect their employees to handle additional work without adding more staff (Tan et al., 2020). As a result, workers in the hospitality industry may experience mental health issues (Zhang & Farboudi, 2019). Grobelna (2021) found a substantial correlation between work overload and emotional exhaustion. As a result, the following hypothesis was put forth:

H1: *Work overload as a situational predictor significantly influences emotional exhaustion among F&B hotel employees.*

Demographic characteristics as individual predictors influencing emotional exhaustion

This study focuses on the individual predictors of emotional exhaustion among F&B employees in 4- and 5-star hotels in the Klang Valley, measured through their demographic profiles. Based on a prior study by Odonkor and Frimpong (2020), personal traits contribute to work fatigue. As a result, the following hypothesis was put forth:

H2: *Demographic characteristics as individual predictors significantly influence emotional exhaustion among F&B hotel employees.*

Gender

Over the past few decades, the gender disparity in the labour market participation rate in the United States has significantly widened, with women today making up roughly 47% of the workforce (Primkina & de La Flor, 2020) compared to previous workforce trends that reported higher male workers. Gender differences in job burnout have therefore been the subject of various research, with differing outcomes. While some studies (Roskam & Mikolajczak, 2020) contend that job burnout is more common among women than men, other studies (Anastasiou & Belios, 2020) have found that job burnout is more common among men. One study by Hui et al. (2021) found statistically significant gender variations in emotional exhaustion, with males scoring higher on average than females. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H2a: Gender significantly influences emotional exhaustion among F&B hotel employees.

Age

Age-related studies related to job burnout have demonstrated that age is an example of a more reliable demographic factor. For instance, older nurses were found to have a higher level of burnout than younger nurses based on the study by Borges et al. (2021). Furthermore, compared to older nurses, younger nurses are more prone to emotional tiredness, according to Wallace and Coughlan (2023). Nonetheless, there is a dearth of studies in literature that examined the connection between aging and emotional exhaustion in the hospitality sector. Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed considering the empirical data and literature review:

H2b: Age significantly influences emotional exhaustion among F&B hotel employees.

Marital Status

An employee's marital status is an important aspect that has been discovered to influence burnout. Previous research has indicated that married workers experience distinct kinds and amounts of stress compared to single workers (Zheng et al., 2022). Married employees may experience greater stress than single employees while handling issues related to their spouses. Sharma and Jain (2020) also reported a strong correlation between stress level and marital status. However, there are few empirical studies in the hospitality sector that compared the stress levels of personnel who are married to those who are single. As a result, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H2c: Marital status significantly influences emotional exhaustion among F&B hotel employees.

Work Experience

Burnout is an issue that should be addressed early in a person's career due to the correlation between age and work experience. However, the evidence regarding this is inconclusive as few studies have examined the reasons behind this interpretation. Survival bias holds that individuals who experience burnout early in their careers are more likely to retire, leaving behind the survivors who have lower degrees of burnout; however, these findings should be interpreted cautiously. Jovanovic et al. (2019) claimed that emotional exhaustion is predicted by work experience. Regarding the connection between work experience and job burnout, earlier research has produced contradictory findings (Lebares et al., 2018). However, findings from the survey conducted by Galaiya et al. (2020) showed that the longer a person's experience in a task, the higher the burnout. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H2d: Work experience significantly influences emotional exhaustion among F&B hotel employees.

Job Position

Burnout has been documented in several studies conducted over the past fifty years involving nurses, teachers, doctors, police officers, and managers. These demanding careers all revolve around people and call for long, steady hours. Regular human interaction, which usually entails high emotional demands, can become draining over time, raising stress levels and resulting in burnout. Frequent interactions with guests also make the hotel business part of the group. The results of the study by Kuruüzüm et al. (2008) found that because the F&B department is the most difficult area of a hotel's operation, managers of these establishments experience higher levels of job burnout than managers of other departments. Due to their close interaction with guests, frontline personnel are more susceptible to emotional tiredness (Li et al., 2017). Furthermore, Zhang et al. (2023) reported that employee burnout differs by job, with general staff exhibiting the lowest levels of interpersonal and self-evaluation burnout. Middle managers, on the other hand, show greater levels of personal stress. As a result, the following theory is put forth:

H2e: Job position significantly influences emotional exhaustion among F&B hotel employees.

Research Framework

The JD-R model (Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) was modified and used in this study by considering the variables to be studied and the model's applicability in the study's context in the F&B department, as illustrated in Figure 1.

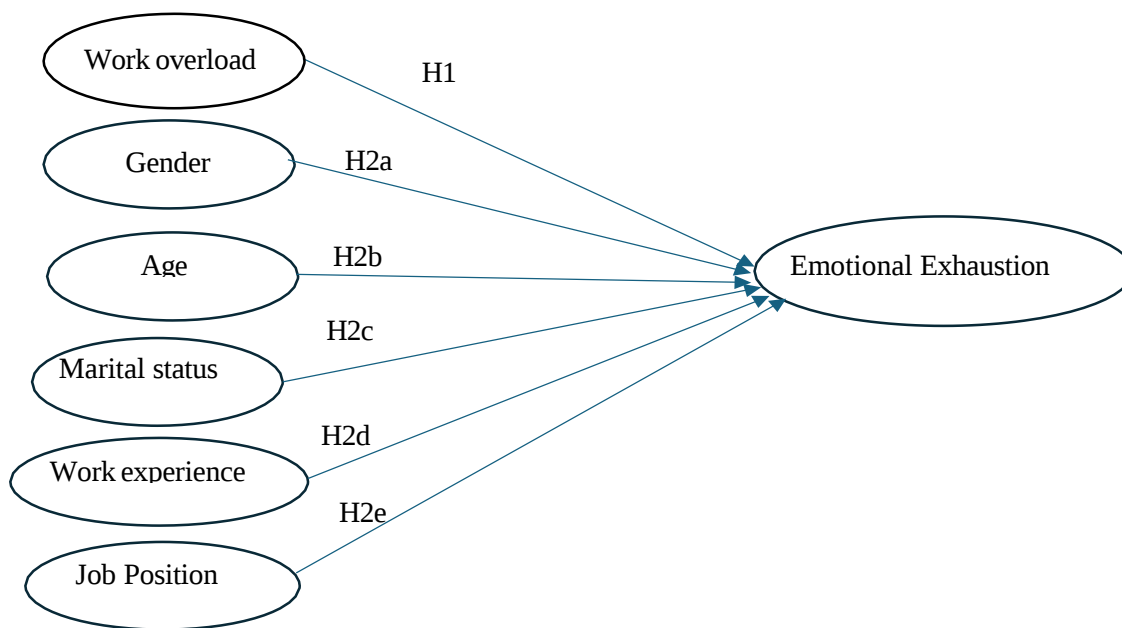


Figure 1. Proposed Research Framework

Methodology

The quantitative methodology was utilised through the implementation of an internet-based questionnaire. The study was undertaken to examine the factors leading to emotional exhaustion among F&B workers of 4- and 5-star hotels in the Klang Valley. The items in the questionnaire were taken from earlier studies on the subject. Employees in the F&B departments of 4- and 5-star hotels in the Klang Valley region made up the target population. Two academics in related domains verified the validity of the instrument. Afterwards, 30 respondents who were fully conversant with the research issue participated in a pilot study to evaluate the survey's accuracy. The purposive sampling approach was used to define the respondent criterion. In addition to being employed at a 4- or 5-star hotel in the

Klang Valley, respondents must be at least 20 years old, have at least one year of experience, and work in the hospitality sector. G-Power software was used to calculate the sample size of 110 responders using a 0.05 alpha threshold. Eight 4- and 5-star hotels in the Klang Valley received this survey. A 5-point Likert scale was used in the survey's design to allow respondents to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each of the items, with the scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Based on the variables, the survey is separated into three sections. Section A addresses the participants' demographics, including gender, age, marital status, experience, education level, and departmental position. Work overload was covered in Section B, with five items adapted from Deeb et al. (2020). Meanwhile, emotional exhaustion was covered in Section C with nine items adapted from Arnieyantie et al. (2018). The statements "I think I have reached my breaking point" and "I am stressed because of my workload" are examples of work overload and emotional exhaustion. The Cronbach's alpha values for the sections ranged between 0.919 and 0.96. This indicates very reliable results, as indicated by Sekaran and Bougie (2016). As a result, it was determined that the survey was trustworthy. SPSS version 28 was then used to examine the data for correlation and descriptive purposes.

Findings and Discussion

A descriptive analysis was conducted on the demographic results. The questionnaire had five distinct demographic groups, segregated through gender, age, marital status, work experience, and job position within the F&B department. Table 1 displays the demographic profiles of the respondents.

Table 1: Respondent demographic profile (N=110)

Demographic Characteristics		Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	47	43%
	Female	63	57%
Age	20-25 years	48	44%
	26-30 years	39	35%
	31-35 years	19	17%
	37 years and above	4	3.6%
Marital status	Single	67	59.8%
	Married	43	40.2%
Working experience	1-3 years	57	52%
	4-6 years	40	36%
	7 and above	13	12%
Position in F&B Department	Server	11	10%
	Bartender	13	11.8%
	Manager	6	5.2%
	Chef	80	73%

Based on Table 1 above, 47 respondents were male and 63 were female. In addition, 48 respondents, or 44%, were in the 20-25 age range, constituting the majority age group. Next, 40.2% of respondents were married, while the majority (59.8%) were single. Furthermore, 57 respondents

(52%) had one to three years of work experience, 40 respondents (36%) had four to six years of experience, and 13 respondents (12%) had seven or more years of work experience. Most respondents (73%) were chefs, followed by bartenders (11.8%), servers (10%), managers (5.2%), and other roles (11 respondents).

Correlation analysis

The correlation coefficient is the statistical measure of the strength of the linear relationship between two variables. It can take on values ranging from -1 to 1. A correlation coefficient of -1 indicates a perfect negative correlation. A coefficient of 1 denotes a direct relationship, often known as a complete positive correlation. A linear relationship cannot be identified when the correlation coefficient is 0. The study investigates the potential correlation between situational factors, such as workload, and individual factors, such as gender, age, marital status, work experience, and departmental position within the F&B division, in connection to the development of emotional exhaustion among employees of F&B hotels. Table 2 displays the p-value coefficient result for situational predictors (work overload), which was reported at <0.05. This indicates that the factor influences the level of emotional exhaustion experienced by employees of F&B hotels. The p-value for gender was >0.05, indicating that it is not significant. Therefore, emotional exhaustion among F&B hotel employees was unaffected by their gender. However, p-value for age that was less than 0.05 suggested that employee age also affects emotional exhaustion. The marital status of F&B hotel employees was also significantly correlated with emotional exhaustion, as indicated by the p-value of less than 0.05.

Table 2. Correlation analysis between variables

			Work Overload	Gen	Age	Marital status	Work experience	Job position	Emotional exhaustion
Spearman's Rho	Work Overload	Correlation Coefficient	1.00	.159	-.321**	-.313**	-.277**	.205*	.822**
		Sig. (2 tailed)	-	.096	.001	.001	.003	.032	.000
		N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
	Gender	Correlation Coefficient	.159	1.000	-.290**	-.113	-.416**	.140	.129
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.096	-	.002	.239	.000	.144	.179
		N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
	Age	Correlation Coefficient	-.321**	-.290**	1.000	.469**	.557**	-.048	-.300**
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.001	.002	-	.000	.000	.622	.001
		N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
	Marital status	Correlation Coefficient	-.313**	-.113	.469**	1.000	.509**	.038	-.207*
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.001	.239	.000	.	.000	.690	.030
		N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
	Work experience	Correlation Coefficient	-.277**	-.416**	.557**	.509**	1.00	-.089	-.289
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.003	.000	.000	.000	-	.356	.002
		N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
	Position	Correlation Coefficient	.205*	.140	-.048	.038	-.089	1.000	.194*
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.032	.144	.622	.690	.356	-	.042
		N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
	Emotional exhaustion	Correlation Coefficient	.822**	.129	-.300*8	-.207*	-.289**	.194*	1.000
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.000	.179	.001	.030	.002	0.42	-
		N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Based on the p-value of less than 0.05, emotional exhaustion was influenced by job experience. The job in the F&B department had a p-value of less than 0.05, indicating that it impacted the emotional exhaustion of F&B hotel employees.

Model Summary

The R Square value of this study was 0.74. This indicated that there was a 74% variance of the dependent variable (emotional exhaustion) that was explained by the independent variables, which were situational predictors (workload) and individual predictors (gender, age, marital status, working experience, and position in F&B department), which were statistically significant at a p-value <0.05. Table 3 shows the model summary.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.870 ^a	.757	.738	4.00790	.757	39.399	8	101	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant) situational predictor, gender, age, marital status, working experience, and position in the F&B department.

b. Dependent Variable: Emotional exhaustion

Table 4: Hypotheses Results

Hypotheses	P<0.05	Result
H1: <i>Work overload significantly influences emotional exhaustion among F&B hotel employees.</i>	P = 0.000 (P<0.05)	Accepted
H2a: <i>Gender significantly influences emotional exhaustion among F&B hotel employees.</i>	P = 0.341 (P>0.05)	Rejected
H2b: <i>Age significantly influences emotional exhaustion among F&B hotel employees.</i>	P = 0.012 (P<0.05)	Accepted
H2c: <i>Marital status significantly influences emotional exhaustion among F&B hotel employees.</i>	P = 0.025 (P<0.05)	Accepted
H2d: <i>Work experience significantly influences emotional exhaustion among F&B hotel employees.</i>	P = 0.011 (P<0.05)	Accepted
H2e: <i>Job position significantly influences emotional exhaustion among F&B hotel employees.</i>	P = 0.026 (P<0.05)	Accepted

Table 4 displays the findings of the hypothesis. Work overload had a p-value of 0.000, which was less than 0.05, indicating that it was significant. Gender's p-value was 0.341, which was greater than 0.05 and suggested it was not significant. On the other hand, age had a significant p-value of 0.01. In contrast, the p-value of 0.025 showed that the marital status variable was significant. Employment experience had a p-value of 0.011, indicating significance. At a p-value of <0.05, job position in the F&B department was likewise significant. As a result, only the gender's null hypothesis was not rejected. H1, H2b, H2c, H2d, and H2e were therefore accepted. Due to the p-value of (0.00) <0.05, the null hypothesis on work overload was rejected. Employees at F&B hotels experience a strong correlation between emotional exhaustion and work overload. The results corroborated those of Li et al. (2020), who had earlier documented that overworked hotel contact personnel were vulnerable to emotional exhaustion despite being necessary to deliver top-notch service quality. Moreover, demanding jobs often lead to burnout and increased workplace pressure,

negatively affecting workers' attitudes and behaviours (Dlouhy & Casper, 2021). The heavy workload of the department and workforce shortages would also result in a high employee turnover rate in the hotel industry. The null hypothesis for age had been rejected as the p-value (0.012) was less than 0.05.

Additionally, the results showed a substantial correlation between the age of employees and emotional exhaustion. A lower age was associated with a higher risk of burnout in the general population (Maslach et al., 2001). Those aged 37 and older were less likely to experience burnout than those in the 20-29 age range. Given that the p-value (0.025) < 0.05 indicated a significant relationship between married status and emotional exhaustion among employees of F&B hotels, the null hypothesis regarding marital status was rejected. Gómez-García et al. (2020), who found that married people often experienced less burnout than single persons, corroborated the findings. When managing problems with their spouses, married workers may feel more stressed compared to single workers. Furthermore, as the p-value (0.011) was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis related to working experience was rejected. The results indicated a notable correlation between work experience and emotional exhaustion. Mükikangas et al. (2021) also found that workers who have held the same position for a longer duration had lower burnout rates. Since there is a strong correlation between employment position and emotional exhaustion among F&B hotel employees, the null hypothesis regarding position in the F&B department was rejected (p-value (0.026) < 0.05). Restaurant managers had the greatest rates of burnout among individuals employed in the F&B business (Gordon & Parikh, 2021). Table 5 displays the hypothesis's conclusion. The results showed that only gender did not significantly influence emotional exhaustion, thus, H2a was rejected, while the others were accepted.

Conclusion

In summary, various factors, such as work stress and individual traits like age, gender, marital status, job title, and work experience, can contribute to emotional exhaustion. This study examined the causes of emotional exhaustion in the F&B departments of 4- and 5-star hotels in the Klang Valley. The results showed that work overload had a greater impact on emotional exhaustion among F&B hotel employees than individual predictors. The emotionally taxing nature of the hospitality industry, especially in 4- and 5-star hotels, puts a great deal of strain on its workers' emotional health. It is imperative to acknowledge these underlying problems to address the staff's emotional well-being. This can be done by implementing measures that improve the establishment's overall standard of care for employees and the management, such as by providing a supportive and accommodating work environment. Subsequent studies should examine the factors contributing to emotional exhaustion and the effective measures implemented to tackle the problem among F&B employees in Malaysian hotels. The staff can gain from this practice, which will also contribute to the profitability and excellence of the hospitality sector in Klang Valley and beyond.

Suggestion for Future Research

This study solely pertains to the area within which it was conducted in due to its narrow geographic focus. Application-wise, the hotel management can use the data to predict the rise in employee burnout among workers in the F&B industry and create strategies to prevent and mitigate it. The supervisor can determine the group of employees that is most susceptible to burnout by looking at their demographic profile. This will enable them to swiftly implement stress-reduction strategies for that group. The study's conclusions can help managers and HR specialists identify early signs of job burnout and associated risk factors. In addition, the hotel management is also advised to focus on effective internal communication between the management, supervisors, and employees to enhance their well-being (Acheampong et al., 2024) thus helping to reduce work stress. Furthermore, from an academic standpoint, the research summary will advocate for new paradigms that will be important in future conversations among scholars regarding hotel employee burnout within the same field. As more research is undertaken, this study may assist in increasing our understanding of the situation.

Co-Author Contribution

Author 1 completed the literature review and conducted the fieldwork. In addition to performing the statistical analysis and result interpretation, Author 2 also drafted the research methodology. Author 3 conducted the first level editing and writing. Both Authors 3 and 4 collected the data. Overall, all authors contributed to the completion of the paper.

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