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# Impact of Covid-19 Induced Job Insecurity on Psychological Wellbeing of Tourism and Hospitality Sector Employees in India

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*Abstract Present study assesses the status of the covid-19 induced job insecurity, psychological wellbeing and their correlation in case of tourism and hospitality sector employees of India. Data for the study was collected from 497 respondent employees of tourism and hospitality sector undertakings. The findings indicated that Covid-19 has enhanced the feeling of job insecurity amongst study population as well has resulted in decreased well-being of employees and there exist a negative correlation between the two i.e. increased job insecurity due to covid-19 results in diminished psychological wellbeing of employees. COVID-19 undoubtedly is most devastating and disruptive phenomenon of recent times. Severe lockdowns were imposed by various governments with India being no exception, has drastically impacted almost all the industries including tourism and hospitality. While there have been studies on the nature and possible impacts of this disease, possibility of vaccine, economic effects of this pandemic, the psychological wellbeing of employees' remained an ignored area. More so, tourism and hospitality sector being worst hit by this pandemic, employee of these sectors faced the most severe burnt of this pandemic. To fill this research gap concerning the impacts of Covid-19 induced job insecurity on employees psychological wellbeing with special reference to tourism and hospitality sector employees, present study has been undertaken. This study attempts to assess the feeling job insecurity due to COVID-19 as well as tries to correlates the same with psychological wellbeing of employees.*

**Keywords:** Job Insecurity, COVID-19, Psychological Wellbeing, Tourism And Hospitality Employees.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism and hospitality or service industry is one of the most severely affected segments of economy which has been rendered disrupted on account of lockdowns imposed by various governments for containing the spread of Covid-19.(Akhtar, Akhtar, Moazzam & Siddiqi, 2020). On account of its multiplier effect tourism and hospitality sectors accounts for not



only foreign exchange earnings but also it remain one of the major employment generators especially in developing countries like India. However, tourism and hospitality sector is also quite vulnerable to natural calamities and pandemics, which results in significant financial losses (Dube, Nhamo, & Chikodzi, 2020). COVID-19 has emerged as worst nightmare for tourism and hospitality sector on account of incessant rise in cases since it being declared as a pandemic in March 2020 by WHO (Wang, Zhao, Zhang, Zhang, Xiang, 2020). As of now (May 2021), total Covid-19 cases across the world has neared 200 million with nearly 4 million deaths, USA, Brazil and India being the highest death toll sufferers. (World Health Organization, 2021).

The tourism and hospitality hotel industry is one of the worst affected industries due to COVID-19 pandemic on account of demands of social distancing and travel bans which have caused deaths, layoffs and stress, while forcing many employees to work from home (Gossling, Scot, & Hall, 2020). As per WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council), “50 million jobs globally are at risk due to this pandemic. WTTC has further stated that the tourism industry is “already facing an imminent collapse” and is “in a fight for survival” mode, because of the havoc created by the COVID-19 pandemic (Jiang & Wen, 2020). Despite an increasing number of research studies on the spread of COVID-19, there exist a scarcity of research on the psychological aspects of COVID-19 especially for the employees and the resultant effect on their psychological wellbeing induced by risk to their jobs (Cullen, Gulati, & Kelly, 2020). There exist a clear gap in terms of studies concerning psychological impact of Covid-19 on employees in general and on tourism and hospitality sector employees in specific. (Dube, Nhamo, & Chikodzi, 2020). Strict lockdowns imposed by governments resulted in closure of airports, railways stations, bus stands, hotels & restaurants as well as monuments, parks, zoos etc. All this resulted in existential crisis for tourism and hospitality organizations, making the employees feel insecure about future of their jobs (Dube, Nhamo, & Chikodzi, 2020). For the March to May in the year 2020, tourism and hospitality sector in India witnessed near 100% business losses (De Freitas & Stedefeldt, 2020). Many hotels and tourism undertakings either closed their businesses or reduced their staff by lay-offs, forced leave or reduced salaries. In view of the devastating impacts of COVID-19 on tourism and hospitality industry, it becomes significant to probe employee’s psychological wellbeing in response to impending job insecurity and suggest some practical solutions to mitigate their stress.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The World Travel and Tourism Council (2020) has estimated that that around 50 million jobs in tourism and hospitality sector are at risk now due to continuous spread of COVID-19 and these figures might increase further if virus continues to spread. Tourism & Hospitality industry contributes around 10% towards the world’s GDP and in employment generation. (WEF, 2020). At present tourism and hospitality is one of the worst impacted industries by this global pandemic of Covid-19, duration and scope of which remains unknown. Countries whose economy is dependent on tourism are staring at most damning and unprecedented economic crisis. The impact of COVID-19 on tourism and hospitality sector is inviting some serious concern from world leaders. Declining revenues are putting tourism and hospitality industry employees’ jobs at risk (Yousef, Zeqiri & Dedaj). Massive job losses has



already occurred in tourism and hospitality sector worldwide and more expected if this pandemic continues (Kasare, 2020). Job insecurity refers to individual perceptions about the fear of losing one's in job, (Jiang & Probst, 2016). Feelings of job insecurity gets heightened during periods of economic downturn (Cheung, Gong & Huang, 2016). Financial stress among employees make job insecurity a further agonizing experience, which in turn further intensifies financial stress and a vicious cycle continues. (Choi, Heo, Cho, & Lee, 2020). Kein, Landsis Pierce and Ernest (2014) have argued in their meta-analytical study that future studies are needed to probe psychological stressors induced by the feeling of job insecurity. It has been realized that job insecurity increases stress among workers regarding their mental and physical health (Soelton, Amaelia & Prasetyo, 2020). Job insecurity may also results into financial stress amongst employees (Choi, Cho, & Lee, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has put financial burdens and stress on people effecting their psychological wellbeing (Colenda, Applegate, Reifler & Blazer, 2020). Therefore it seems to be the need of the hour to look into psychological well-being employees of tourism and hospitality sector. In general, people prefer to engage in social interactions, however the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a "new normal", in which people are forced to observe social distancing (Serverson & Yaffe-Bellany, 2020). Majority of people are housebound except those associated with essential services (Goddard, 2020). This homeboundness has made individuals perceive themselves more prone to unemployment and at risk of losing their jobs (Goddard, 2020). Psychological wellbeing, which has been defined as state of psychological happiness and feeling of security (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), has various dimensions that include personal growth, positive relation, personal autonomy, self-acceptance, and self-worth. The concept of psychological well-being has its origin in western culture, though this concept has already been in vogue in collectivistic cultures of Asia (Markus & Kitayama, 1998). Employee well-being is one of the important perquisites if organizations want to be sustainable and successful (Wilson, Dejoy, Vandenberg, Richardson & Megrath, 2004). For its significance, the concept of employee's well-being has been researched intensely (Iies, Puut, & Aw, 2015). Perception of job insecurity is one of the major employment related stressor among employees and is independent of industry or economic segment in which the employees are working (De Wite, Vander, Elst, & De Cuyper, 2015). Job insecurity is one of the major stressors which lead to negative consequences specifically for health and well-being of employees such as psychological wellbeing, job satisfaction and burnout (De Wite, Vander, Elst, & De Cuyper, 2015). Job insecurity as a stressor is considered significant psychological risk which may also result in poor relations with others (Leks, Jain & Organization, 2010). Previous pandemics as recorded in history also gave indications that such stressors effect psychological responses and wellbeing of employees (Ripp et al., 2020). Further, job insecurity is linked with unemployment which further impairs employees' health and wellbeing (De Wittie, Vander, Elst, & De Cuyper, 2016). Many research studies have emphasized on maintenance of employee's psychological health to cater many other needs like self-determination, survival, and relatedness (Van dan Broeck, Vanseteenkiste, De Wittie & Lens, 2008).

In backdrop of above discussion, hypothesis for present study can be formed as follows -

**Hypothesis:** Covid -19 induced job insecurity has a negative relationship with tourism and hospitality employee's psychological wellbeing.



**Data Collection**

Data for the study was collected from employees working in tourism and hospitality sector undertakings of India. Researcher’s prior experience of more than five years and personal contacts in tourism industry helped in collected the data for this study. Questionnaires were sent as google form links over mails and whatsapp. A mix of convenient and snowball sampling was used. Data for the present study was collected over a period of six months from October 2020 to March 2021. Total of 700 surveys were sent out, of which 497 were received back with an unexpectedly healthy response rate of 71%. Survey items for job insecurity, and psychological wellbeing were measured on a five- point Likert scale with “1 = Strongly Disagree” to “5 = Strongly Agree”. Job insecurity was measured by suitably modifying the 4 items scale developed by De Witte (2000). Psychological wellbeing was measured with a modified six-item scale originally developed by Zheng, Zhu, Zhao, and Zhang, 2015.

**Analysis and Results**

Demographics of the respondents have been shown in table 1. There were 75.2% male and rest were female respondents, 43.3% belonged to age 25 and below, 32.2% were between the ages of 26-35, 16% were between the ages 36-45, and 8.5% where 46 and above. Regarding education, 19.8% were having qualifications of intermediate, 47.9% had qualification of bachelors, and 32.3% had qualifications of Master’s degrees.

Table 1. Demographics of the respondents.

<b>Demographic Parameters</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>	<b>CumulativePercent (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	373	75.2	75.2%
Female	124	24.8	100%
<b>Age</b>			
25 and below	215	43.3	43.3
26-35 Years	160	32.2	75.5
36-45 Years	80	16	91.5
46 & Above	42	8.5	100
<b>Education</b>			
Intermediate	98	19.8	19.8
Bachelors	238	47.9	67.7
Masters	160	32.3	100

Job insecurity was measured using modified 4 items scale developed by De Witte (2000). Each item was assigned values on likert scale with 1 being strongly agree to 5 being strongly disagree. In order to assess the status of job insecurity in tourism and hospitality sector employees, responses for each item of job insecurity scale were calculated as percentage of total respondents and are shown in table 2.



Table 2. Prevalence of Job Insecurity

Job Insecurity Items	Strongly Agree 1*	2*	3*	4*	Strongly Disagree 5*
<b>JI 1</b> - I am sure that I will not be able to keep my job due to Covid-19	24.6%	39.5%	20.1%	10.4%	5.4%
<b>JI 2</b> - There is a risk that I will lose my present job due to Covid-19 in near future	25.5%	41.1%	18.5%	8.9%	6.0%
<b>JI 3</b> - I feel uncertain about the future of my job due to Covid-19	34.8%	40.7%	13.3%	7.4%	3.8%
<b>JI 4</b> - I think that I will lose my job in the near future due to Covid-19	30.8%	35.7%	8.3%	17.4%	7.8%

\*\*\*% of total respondents Further the prevalence of job insecurity was checked across the demographic variables. For this purpose “Mode” was used and each item of job insecurity scale was cross referenced with different demographic variables. Table 3 shows the response having maximum frequency for various job insecurity items across the demographics.

Table 3. Prevalence of Job Insecurity across Demographics

Demographic Parameters	JI 1*	JI 2*	JI 3*	JI 4*
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	02	01	02	02
Female	02	02	02	01
<b>Age</b>				
25 and below	02	02	02	02
26-35 Years	02	01	02	03
36-45 Years	02	02	02	02
46 & Above	02	01	02	02
<b>Education</b>				
Intermediate	01	02	02	02
Bachelors	02	02	01	02
Masters	02	01	02	02

\*\*\*Response with maximum frequency

In order to assess the status of psychological wellbeing, each item of scale was assigned values from 1 to 5 with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree. Again responses for each of the scale item were calculated as percentage of total respondents and are shown in table 4



Table 4. Status of Psychological Well Being

Psychological Well Being Items	Strongly Agree 1*	2*	3*	4*	Strongly Disagree 5*
WB1 – I feel I have grown as a person.	12.20%	23.40%	10.50%	28.70%	25.20%
WB2 – I handle daily affairs well.	9.40%	23.60%	17%	23.80%	26.20%
WB3 – I generally feel good about myself and I am confident.	11.50%	21.30%	15.70%	32.80%	18.70%
WB4 – People think I am willing to give and share my time with others	14.20%	11.40%	24.40%	34.70%	16.20%
WB5 – I am good at making flexible timetables for my work	20.40%	9.60%	19%	22.40%	28.60%
WB6 – I love having deep conversations with family and friends so that we can better understand each other.	11.50%	26.30%	16.70%	27.10%	18.40%

\*\*\*% of total respondents

In order to test a hypothesis with regard to relationship between various study variables, correlation analysis is the first tool that comes to the mind of researcher. Undoubtedly correlation analysis is one of the apt statistical tools to probe the interrelation between various variables. Hypothesis to be tested in present study is with regard to interrelation between covid -19 induced job insecurity and employee’s psychological wellbeing; hence a bi-variate correlation analysis was done. Likert scales can be treated both as ordinal as well as interval, in the present study since we are not sure if the data is normally distributed hence spearman correlation was found to be an apt fit to test the study hypothesis. In order to probe the relation on both sides of the normality curve and to avoid any bias with regard to nature of correlation two tail test with level of significance ( $p < 0.01$ ) was run using SPSS. A negative correlation value (-0.879) was found at  $p < 0.01$  (Table 5), which indicates a significant negative correlation between the variables under consideration i.e. covid-19 induced job insecurity and psychological wellbeing of the employees. Therefore study hypothesis can be safely accepted.

Table 5: Covid-19 induced job insecurity and psychological wellbeing of the employees

Covid-19 induced job insecurity	psychological wellbeing
Spearman’s rho Coefficient of Correlation	-0.879*
Sig (2 tailed)	0.000
N	497

(\* Correlation is significant at  $p < 0.01$ )



### **3. DISCUSSION**

As we can see from table 2 with regard to assessment of the job insecurity amongst tourism and hospitality sector employees, for all four items of job insecurity scale the composite number of respondents having the response to strongly agree or near to strongly agree was more than 50% . All the four statements from job insecurity index were affirmatives acknowledging the feeling/perception of job insecurity among respondents. For the statement “I feel uncertain about the future of my job due to Covid-19” more than 75% respondents have shown agreement or near agreement. This further confirms to the discussion held in literature review that pandemic situations in past as well the present pandemic situation has created the feeling of job insecurity amongst tourism and hospitality sector employees. To further probe the perception of job insecurity in tourism and hospitality sector employees across the various demographic variables, each of the job insecurity scale item was cross referenced with various demographic variables and values with highest frequency were found and tabulated in table 3. As we can see across all the demographic variables the highest frequency response have been 1 and 2 except for JI 4 in 26-35 years age group where maximum frequency was recorded for the neutral response 3. This further strengthens the earlier findings with regard to prevalence of job insecurity amongst tourism and hospitality sector employees irrespective of demographic variations. To assess the status of employee’s psychological wellbeing, again the responses to various scale items were calculated as percentage to total respondents are presented in table 4. Here the scale items are again affirmative statements confirming the good psychological wellbeing. However for 5 out of total 6 wellbeing items, the composite score for strong disagreement and disagreement was more than 50 percent, which implies that more than 50 percent of the respondents were not in good state of psychological wellbeing. Taking together table 2, 3 & 4 we can say that tourism and hospitality sector employees of India are facing the feelings of job insecurity due to covid, which goes beyond various demographic parameters like gender, age, education etc. As well as, the employees are not in good state of psychological wellbeing which may have an association with their perception of job insecurity. This study has shown that tourism and hospitality sector employees are having significant perceptions of job insecurity due to COVID-19 and are also experiencing decreased psychological wellbeing with regard to their happiness and job security. Study results are in conformity with the previous studies on the subject wherein it had been argued that job insecurity is a threat to workers, and it often leads to the employees’ poor wellbeing (De Witte et al., 2016). According to Charkhabi (2018) also job insecurity affects employees’ psychological wellbeing significantly.

#### **Implications, Limitations and Pointers for future**

This study offers some significant practical recommendations for the managers of tourism and hospitality undertakings in India. Study findings suggest that perceived job insecurity may reduce an employee’s psychological wellbeing. Slaski and Cartwright (2003) had found in their study the benefits of emotional intelligence and stress related training of employees to decrease their anxiety. Combining these finding with those of present study, managers can arrange to provide the employees with training as well as development programs to manage their emotions during the pendency of current pandemic of COVID-19. This study also acknowledges several limiting factors like that of most data being from national capital region (NCR) and surrounding only. Also, the content validity and reliability of survey



instruments was not statistically confirmed. Sampling used for the study was not fully random sampling, rather a mix of convenience and snowball sampling which might have affected the results with some personal biases creeping in. Future studies may undertake more comprehensive aspects with mediating variables like financial stress as well as some personality traits of employees like resilience and their effect on employees feelings of job insecurity and psychological wellbeing.

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